

"But what more oft in nations grown corrupt,  
And by their vices brought to servitude,  
Than to love bondage more than liberty—  
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty."

And he further notes how such are wont

"At last  
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds."  
"Samson Agonistes," lines 268-276.

J. J. LIAS.



### ART. III.—THE BOOK OF GENESIS (*continued*).

WHEN we leave the first three chapters of Genesis behind in our investigations into the credibility of the narrative, which we hope have not been wholly profitless, we expect to come into less troubled waters. But the modern critic never seems to be so happy as when he is upsetting cherished notions. At the same time, he occasionally omits to clear up difficulties. One could not tell, for instance, from the book with which we are more immediately concerned, that there was any difficulty as to the interpretation of the last words of chap. iv., "with *the help of the Lord*"; but such there is.

It would be impossible to deal exhaustively with all the points that are suggested by a perusal of each chapter of Genesis in succession. The following, however, may be mentioned:

1. It is implied by the commentators that Abel and Cain were uncivilized persons. This is, of course, a pure assumption. It is also asserted that no such motive as thankfulness for the fruitfulness of the ground and of the herds and flocks is alluded to in the account of their offerings. This bare assertion is simply based upon one theory of sacrifice that is now current, and is, to say the least, far from being established. Noah, at any rate, would appear to have offered up burnt-offerings in thanksgiving for his deliverance from the Flood.

2. Many more statements are made as to the history of Cain and Abel, which to most minds will be held to be incapable of proof. Such are the following: That (*a*) according to the existing Book of Genesis it is plain that there could have been no one (in existence in the world at the time) to slay Cain; and (*b*) that the presence of Jehovah is regarded as confined to the garden of Eden and its immediate neighbourhood.

We have dealt partly with the former of these statements in a previous article. Again, it is assumed that Cain had a wife before the murder of Abel. Where the wife came from we are not told. More than one explanation can be given; we have already suggested one. A considerable number of inhabitants is not, as is asserted, necessarily required by the statement of chap. iv. 14, "whosoever findeth me shall slay me." As to the second of the statements mentioned above, we find the Lord's presence recognised in later passages of the same document (J), and not limited to that particular locality.

3. The statement as to the discovery of certain arts and institutions is ascribed to the inventive faculties of the Hebrews of a later day; and these discoverers are to be regarded as in their origin demi-gods or heroes, whose semi-divinity was cut out of the tradition about them by these same later Hebrews. At least, that is the explanation which Dr. Driver adopts as his own, using the language of the present Bishop of Winchester.<sup>1</sup> Although there may be, as no doubt there were, such inventors, who were surrounded in later times among some peoples with a heroic or semi-divine atmosphere, it does not follow that there was not a human element behind them. Certainly there is nothing heroic, to say nothing of anything semi-divine, about the inventors of Gen. iv. Moreover, we need not be astonished by the omission of the Stone Age. The fact is, as we have asserted before, that both before and behind these inventors there may be many cycles of ages in the world's history. At any rate, it is interesting to note that the narrative here recognises with the scientists a *Bronze*<sup>2</sup> and *Iron* Age; it only omits to tell us what preceded it. That did not fall within its scope.

A caution may also be given. We must not imagine, because the birth of Seth is not mentioned sooner, that therefore it did not take place till the days of Lamech. The author of Genesis, or of the chronicle called J, was anxious to dismiss the history of Cain and his descendants from his narrative, and therefore dealt with them first. Chap. iv. 25 really connects itself with chap. iv. 15. Further still, it is to be noticed that this part of the narrative owes nothing, so far as we know, to Babylon, and has most affinity with other Semitic legends, perhaps derived from the Bible narrative or running parallel to it (Eus., P.E., i. 10).

4. It will surely appear unreasonable or almost puerile to

<sup>1</sup> "Early Narratives of Genesis," p. 81.

<sup>2</sup> Bronze or copper (R.V., marg.), not brass, is the right rendering in modern English of the word used in Gen. iv. 22.

most minds that they should be asked the question, "Was the knowledge of these arts preserved in the ark, or had they to be rediscovered afterwards?" and then, being given the answer, "No; both these alternatives are improbable," that they should be told that behind the narrative as they read it were two cycles of traditions, one of which had no Flood in it, and that, too, when it is admitted that the tradition of a Flood was almost universally prevalent in the East.

We have little to add to what we have said already as to the next chapters of Genesis. Considering how little we know about man's environment in the earliest ages of the history of the human race, it seems a somewhat rash assertion to make that "longevity, such as is here described, is physiologically incompatible with the structure of the human body" (p. 75). Many might be found, we imagine, to assert the contrary. The conditions of life may have been, and doubtless were, so different from those of the present time that it is difficult to say what might be then compatible or incompatible with the structure of the human body. As it is, science nowadays sometimes occupies itself with endeavours to prove the reverse, and the possibility of prolonging human life. But even if it be so, there are other ways of explaining the statements made, as we have seen in a previous article. It must be remembered that the "higher critic" does not claim to know, any more than others, upon what principle the figures given were computed. And instead of saying, as some do, that the names and narrative were derived from the Babylonian stories, we should be inclined to think it more reasonable to infer that the Babylonian form of the history, especially considering its character,<sup>1</sup> was a corruption of the account which we have in a much purer and more original form in Genesis. There is no doubt a tradition common to both; but the Scriptural one is so much more modest in its assertions and probable in its circumstances that we look to it as without doubt containing a more reasonable form of that which has been exaggerated for the aggrandizement in popular opinion of the Babylonian kingdom. The differences between the narratives are thus accounted for, and are as noticeable as their agreements.

Once again, we have already had something to say about the sons of God and the daughters of men. As to their giant issue, though no traces of any such race have been found, we cannot see why they need be treated as if it were impossible

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, according to Berossus' account of the Babylonian records, there were ten kings before the Flood whose united reigns amounted to 420,000 years.

that such could have existed. Several of the mammals existing upon the face of the earth at the present time can claim relationship with beasts of much more gigantic form in the earlier days of the world's history. Our museums are witnesses to that, and the discoveries of such creatures as the elephants embedded, flesh as well as bones, in the tundras of Siberia, and the fragments of the flesh and skin of a gigantic form of sloth in the caves of Patagonia. If this be so, there may very well have been *anthropoids*, if not *anthropoi*, of considerably greater stature than any existing in the world at the present time, especially when we remember the differences of stature that do occur in men of different races at the present time.

I turn now to the

#### HISTORY OF THE FLOOD,

with which I have already dealt in part. It remains to consider the alleged difference which, it is asserted, exists between the various documents as to the duration of the Flood. Of course, if the fragments of the so-called P and J be taken by themselves as they stand, as if each contained the whole narrative as to the Flood, and not only a part, it is possible to make out that P's flood lasted one year and eleven days and J's sixty-one days. But this was not what the writer who combined the records, if they were so combined, intended. To him they were sections combined to make up a whole, and the whole and the parts, with thirty days to a month, are perfectly consistent and concordant. The years are reckoned by those of Noah's life, commencing with his six hundredth birthday. The first seven days of the year (vii. 10) are days of waiting. Then the rain begins to fall, and for forty days and forty nights, till the seventeenth day of the second month (vii. 11), follow days of combined incessant descent of rain and ascent of water from the fountains of the earth (vii. 11). At the end of those forty days there are 150 days, during which there is no perceptible diminution of the flood (vii. 24). This makes 197 days in all, equivalent to six months and seventeen days of the seventh month (viii. 4). Then the ark rests on the mountains of Ararat. In that district there is a mountain, if identical with the Mount Ararat of to-day, standing alone, with its lofty peak of about 17,000 feet.<sup>1</sup> Then the subsidence of the waters continues till the first day of the tenth month (viii. 5), when the lower heights and hills appeared

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<sup>1</sup> Mount Ararat is apparently about 12,000 feet higher than any of the neighbouring mountains.

above the water. The cautious Noah waits forty days more (this brings us to the tenth day of the eleventh month), and after three weeks more (here we arrive at the first day of the first month, Noah's six hundred and first birthday) the surface of the ground is dry (viii. 13), though it is not till another eight weeks (viii. 14) have passed that the earth can be called dry. If these calculations are right, no inconsistency on this ground can be asserted between the two documents. We have already drawn attention to the many occurrences of weeks of seven days in the narrative.

The whole narrative, then, whether derived from other sources or not, is consistent with itself in its marks of time.

As to the Flood itself, the following statements may, I think, be made without gainsaying: (1) The date of the Flood cannot be fixed from the Biblical statements, if what we have said already deserves consideration, at either *circa* 2501 B.C. or (LXX.) *circa* 3066 B.C. It may have been an event far away earlier than that. (2) The Ararat of Gen. viii. 4 is not a mountain, but a district, and need not necessarily be the Armenia of to-day, though it was identified with it in later times. The narrative does not, as we have assumed above for argumentative purposes it does, presuppose one high mountain several thousand feet higher than anything round about it, but rather the contrary. (3) The historical character of the Flood is implied by the Flood stories current in many different parts of our globe, for the attempts to explain away such a universal belief are not convincing (see, *e.g.*, Driver, p. 102). Not least among these Flood stories is the narrative of the Babylonian tablets. But, because we acknowledge this, it does not follow that the Bible story *must be* derived from the Babylonian. It is equally possible to assert that they both came from an earlier source, which has been much more elaborated and dramatized in its Babylonian form. (4) What remains alone open for discussion, and always will so remain, is whether the Flood was a universal one—and this seems the most difficult theory to maintain—or whether it was a Flood in a far-off cycle of the ages of the world's history, which only affected the parts of the world then inhabited by reasoning man. If this latter view be adopted, and Oriental modes of description be taken into account, we do not think that there need be any difficulty in accepting the historical character of the narrative.

(*To be continued.*)

