

The Early Narratives of Genesis.

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III.

THE STORY OF PARADISE.

WE are brought to the consideration of the second section in the Early Narratives of Genesis which seems to offer itself for separate treatment. In these two chapters (ii. 4-iii.) the narrative falls naturally into two divisions, of which the first (chap. ii. 4-25) is occupied with a description of the creation of man, his first dwelling-place, and the formation of the vegetable and animal world; the second (chap. iii.) narrates the account of the Temptation, the Fall, and the Judgment consequent upon it.

We can do very little more than just touch upon some of the more important points to be noticed in the literary structure, origin, and religious teaching of this important narrative.

(a) *Structure.*—Many a reader has been surprised to notice that a description of the Creation occurs in the second chapter, when the successive stages of the Creation have already formed the theme of the previous passage. According to the explanation that has generally been given, the double narrative is intended to furnish an account of the same events regarded from different points of view. And, undoubtedly, in the first chapter the Creation is described in its relation to the Physical Universe, the formation of man marking the concluding feature of the whole, whereas in the second chapter it is described in its relation primarily to Man, each portion of the universe being called into existence in order to contribute to the benefit of the human race. No one would contest the existence of this difference of view in the two descriptions, nor the possibility of the same writer describing the same events in different ways. But the divergence of view is not sufficient to account for the absence in chap. ii. 4-25 of any reference to the Days of Creation, or for the statements which differ so widely from the contents of chap. i., as ii. 5-7, where we read that when man was made neither plant nor herb yet existed; and ii. 8, 9, 19, where it appears that the

vegetable and animal world owed their origin to the purpose of satisfying the needs of man; and ii. 21-23, where we find that the formation of woman as a help-meet for man was an act of Divine favour consequent upon his inability to find true companionship in the brute creation. Now it may fairly be said that we certainly do not expect a writer, who is going a second time over the same facts for the purpose of describing them from a different standpoint, to refrain from any hint of his change of purpose, to give no sign that he is conscious of going over the same ground, and to make no allusion to his first narrative. This, however, is what we find on a comparison of Gen. ii. 4b-25 with Gen. i. 1-ii. 4a; and, as Hebrew scholars have pointed out, the anomalous character of the two chapters as a piece of literature, emanating, on the traditional view, from a single writer, strangely coincides with a change in the style and diction. For although the change in the use of the Divine Name from "Elohim" to "Jehovah Elohim" has been accounted for (but with insufficient reason) on the ground of a change in the general attitude of thought, the alteration both in the literary style of the narrative and in the choice of words and phrases has been conclusively demonstrated.

Modern criticism has removed the difficulty. Scholars have proved—and men of all schools now recognise—that this section (ii. 4-iii.) is not homogeneous with chap. i.-ii. 4a. The compiler of Genesis has here incorporated material from another source, to which the name of "Jehovist" (or "Yahwist") has been commonly given by critics. The first portion of Genesis was drawn from the so-called Elohist source, and, as has before been mentioned, belongs to the "priestly" group of writings; the second section is derived from the prophetic group. The style of the former is formal and methodical; the style of the latter is varied, full of incident, and replete with descriptive details and personal allusions. (Further discussion

of this point is not needed by readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, who may be referred to the clear and useful article of the Rev. F. H. Woods on the subject in the February number of this year.)

The compiler of Genesis selects from two recognised Hebrew traditions parallel extracts descriptive of the work of Creation. He places them side by side, so that we are able to compare their different characteristics. This plan of selecting from different sources he pursues in other portions of the history, and we shall have occasion to observe a noteworthy example in the double account of the Deluge, where he has pieced together extracts from the different sources.

The fact that the compiler makes no attempt to harmonise them rigorously illustrates his method of work. He had no desire to obliterate the characteristic feature of the writings out of which he constructed his continuous narrative. His sole object was to furnish his countrymen with an authoritative narrative, which should preserve the traditions of his race at the same time that it was the means of embodying the essential teaching of the Religion of Jehovah.

(b) *Origin*.—It is not perhaps to be wondered at that an inquiry into the origin and growth of the Paradise narrative should be involved in much obscurity. It is certainly strange that no reference is made to it in the writings of the earlier Hebrew prophets. The garden of Eden is alluded to by the prophets of the Captivity, e.g. Ezek. xxviii. 13, xxxi. 9, Isa. li. 3. A mention of it occurs in the Book of Joel (ii. 3), but the age of that work is much disputed, and no conclusive evidence as to pre-exilic usage could be drawn from it. The Book of Proverbs, in the occasional mention of "the tree of life," very possibly contains allusions to our narrative. But any other early reference to it is so meagre, and at the best so doubtful, that we are compelled to infer either that the Israelite narrative was hardly known before the Exile, or that the form in which it has come down to us was not generally known, and, at least, was not in early times recognised as a portion of sacred tradition.

The former of these alternatives has been somewhat hastily adopted by some eminent scholars. The narrative of the Fall, they have asserted, received its literary form after the Captivity; the

narrative itself was derived from Babylon. With this reasoning I find myself quite unable to agree. For, apart from the consideration mentioned in a previous paper, that the captive Jews were little likely, and the pious members of the community least of all, to enrich the sacred traditions of the chosen people from the legends of their captors, it appears to me to be defective in two other ways:—(1) Criticism has fairly established it, that this section belongs to the Jehovistic group of writings; large portions of this group incontestably existed at a much earlier date than the Exile; the general character of the Paradise narrative favours the supposition that it does not belong to the later but rather to the earlier portions of the Jehovistic narrative. (2) There are details in the descriptive language which forbid us to look for any direct derivation from a Babylonian source. It is not probable that Jews residing in Babylon would have accepted the geographical description in ii. 11-14, which contained such an indefinite allusion to "Assyria," or would have introduced a mention of the "fig-tree" (iii. 7), a tree which happens not to be a native of Babylonia.

It is better to account for the absence of allusion to the Paradise narrative in the earlier prophets by the supposition that the narrative was not for a long time cleared from the mythological element, and could not therefore have been admitted among the most sacred traditions of the religion of Israel. Of course it would be useless to deny that the Paradise narrative possesses an affinity with the religious traditions and myths of Assyria and Babylonia. But the affinity is not that of direct derivation at the late period of the Babylonian Exile. It is rather an affinity arising from the ultimate derivation of the narrative from an Assyro-Babylonian source, and from the conservative transmission of it through many generations. Thus it has been shown, with every appearance of probability, that some of the most important names and words in the Hebrew narrative reproduce Assyrian words, and that some of the most distinctive features in the story are best illustrated from Assyrian inscriptions. The Assyrian names Diglat and Bura appear in the Hebrew equivalents, Hiddekel (Tigris) and Prâth (Euphrates); the Hebrew Gihon is possibly the Guhan-di, an artificial branch of the Euphrates. In the name of Eden we have the sound of the Assyrian word

"idinu," a "field," or "plain," adapted to the Hebrew root meaning "pleasure"; in the "shôham"-stone (bdellium) we find possibly a Hebrew form of the Assyrian "samtu"; in the name of Abel we discern the Assyrian root for a "scion" or "shoot," the Hebrew transliteration of which suggested the play on the Hebrew word for "a fleeting breath"; in the Hebrew word "*arom*" for "subtle" in Gen. iii. 1, Mr. Boscawen suggests there is a recollection of the Assyrian "*Lu Erim*" or "magician, the greatest foe of man." (Cf. Schrader, *Cuneiform Inscriptions*, vol. i.)

As regards the main features of the story, it is impossible not to trace in the sacred trees of "the knowledge of good and of evil" and "of life," a resemblance to the coniferous sacred trees which are depicted in almost every emblematical Assyrian and Babylonian representation. The appearance of the serpent, as the agent of temptation, suggests the Assyrian Tiamat, the evil serpent overthrown by Merodach; and the fact that in several inscriptions the serpent is *aibu ilani*, "the enemy of the gods" (so Boscawen) illustrates the resemblance of the Genesis narrative to the mythology of Assyro-Babylonia. The cherubim which were stationed to guard the approach to the garden of Eden have suggested comparison with the colossal griffins that stood at the entrance of Assyrian temples.

These points of resemblance, however, only touch the outer framework of our Paradise narrative. So far, the most that could be said would be that the Assyrian dialect was visible through the Hebrew form of certain proper names, and that features in the story were capable of being illustrated in an interesting manner from Assyrian and Babylonian monuments. Until a few months ago it could not be asserted, with any confidence, that the inscriptions showed any trace of an Assyrian or Babylonian counterpart to the biblical narrative of the Fall. Even the famous representation upon the seal, adduced by George Smith, on which appeared the sacred tree with its clusters of fruit, with the figures of a man and woman on either side of it, and of a serpent in an erect posture standing behind the woman, did not convince scholars that this was an allusion to the narrative of the Fall. "We certainly," said Schrader (Eng. trans., i. p. 38), "have no right to assert that the Babylonians had no story of a Fall, although no written

accounts bearing upon it have hitherto come to hand. We merely contend that it is not presupposed in the above figured representation."

All doubt, however, on the subject has recently been removed. There can now be no longer any question that a narrative of the Fall was included in the literature of the Assyro-Babylonian religion. The conclusive evidence was brought to light by the eminent English Assyriologist, Mr. W. St. C. Boscawen, who made known his discovery in an article on "The Babylonian Legend of the Serpent Tempter," in the October (1890) number of *The Babylonian and Oriental Record*. The most important fresh testimony which he adduces is obtained from a translation of a passage contained in the much mutilated Third Creation Tablet, "which describes the various wicked acts of the Serpent Tiamat."

The important fragment, as rendered by Mr. Boscawen, runs as follows:—

"The great gods, all of them determiners of fate,
They entered, and, death-like, the god Sar filled.
In sin one with the other in compact joins.
The command was established in the garden of the God.
The Asnan (fruit) they ate, they broke in two,
Its stalk they destroyed;
The sweet juice which injures the body.
Great is their sin. Themselves they exalted.
To Merodach their Redeemer he appointed their fate."

"It is almost impossible," continues the translator, "not to see in this fragment the pith of the story of the Fall, while the last line at once brings Merodach before us as the one who would defeat the tempter and restore the fallen. . . . The more we examine the position of Merodach in the Babylonian mythology the more we see how closely it approaches the Hebrew conception of the Messiah. He was the son of the great earth-mother Dav-Kina, the wife of Ea, and bore as his own name that of *Mar-dugga*, 'the Holy Son.' He was the mediator between gods and men, healing sickness, forgiving sin, raising the dead, not by his own power, but by that of his father Ea; and now we find him acting as the redeemer of the fallen pair. We may be sure that the importance of this small fragment to biblical students is very great indeed."

Mr. Boscawen further points out that the tree is called "the Asnan tree," and that the word "Asnan," being a derivative from the root "to

repeat," means "double fruit" or "double tree," and may account for the double form given to the tree in sculptures and for the mention of the two trees in the garden. Again, he calls attention to the mention of the gods entering "in a death-like manner," which may be understood to illustrate the words of the Hebrew narrative, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17).

It remains to be seen how far Mr. Boscawen's rendering is confirmed by other scholars. But the main character of it is not likely to be widely different. And without committing ourselves to all the inferences which Mr. Boscawen would be prepared to draw from his translation, we may heartily welcome the discovery. The gap that had seemed so strange is now filled up; the Israelite narrative of the Fall stands in the same relation to Assyro-Babylonian legend as the narrative of the Creation and the Flood.

As in their case, so also in the case of the Paradise narrative, the resemblance is best explained on the assumption of derivation from an ultimately common source in the religious mythology of Mesopotamia. The original tradition, marred with the intricacies of a bewildering polytheism, was received from their Mesopotamian ancestors by the founders of the Israelite branch of the Semitic race. The manifestation of a purer religion made itself felt upon the heritage of popular tradition. The form in which it was eventually incorporated among the sacred writings of Israel still bore a genuine resemblance to the kindred legend of Babylonia; its story, which still carried in words and names the impress of its origin, was invested with the simple dignity characteristic of pure monotheism, and was inspired to express vividly and pictorially some of the profoundest truths which distinguished the spiritual religion of Israel above all religions of antiquity. Thus did the Holy Spirit overrule the preparation of the volume of "The Word of Life."

Many are the ingenious and many the absurd speculations which have been started for the purpose of identifying the locality of the garden of Eden. The most interesting, and by far the most plausible contribution to this investigation, was the celebrated *brochure* of Prof. Fried. Delitzsch, entitled, "Wo lag das Paradies?" This was an

attempt to identify the site of the garden of Eden with a district of Babylonia between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, and formerly intersected by artificial canals. The ingenuity of the arguments by which this eminent Assyriologist maintained his view cannot be denied; but, on the whole, the impression produced by its elaboration was that it was more clever than convincing.

It is possible to be prejudiced in the matter; and I confess I am one of those who have neither the wish nor the expectation that the site of Paradise will ever be identified. In my opinion the possibility of identification rests upon the erroneous supposition that the language used in Gen. ii. 8-14 is intended to convey an accurate geographical description. The proper names of the original tradition have been transliterated in the Hebrew narrative into forms in common use among the Israelites, and most nearly resembling them in pronunciation. One example will suffice. The word "Cush," in ver. 13, would inevitably convey to the Hebrew reader the meaning of "Ethiopia"; but it is evident that no river near the Tigris and the Euphrates could be associated with Ethiopia, and the suggestion is possible that the Hebrew word "Cush" was here used in consequence of a confusion between Cas, a district in Babylonia, or the Cossaei, the dwellers of Southern Babylonia, and Cush, the well-known name of African Nubia. Thus even supposing, as I for one should not be prepared to do, that the language of the original tradition indicated a well-known locality in Western Asia, the transmutation of the Assyrian proper names into similarly sounding Hebrew names makes all attempts at recognition doubtful guesswork. But surely accurate geographical description is not to be expected from even the earliest form in which this Semitic "myth" was known to the dwellers in Mesopotamia. And are we to expect a greater degree of accuracy from its later forms, whether Assyrian or Hebrew, which have been altered and modified in order to be brought into harmony with the religious thought of a more advanced period in the history of the race?

Is not the real conception of the locality to be derived from the language in which it is described? It is a garden in which the Almighty walked, and in which the serpent spoke. It is a place where

man, after the Fall, could no longer remain; and at the gates of it winged dragons were stationed to prevent man from attempting to re-enter it.

(c) *Religious Teaching.*—The description belongs to the poetry of the early Israelite legend. The spiritual teaching which the narrative conveys comprises some of “the deep things” of the Israelite religion.

It taught how in the ideal state, before sin came into the world, man could dwell in the sunlight of the Divine Presence. The true Paradise was the place where God had put him; there he enjoyed the ideal existence. He lived in the exercise of his physical powers; he tended the garden. He enjoyed the command of his intellectual faculties; he named and discriminated the animals. He was a social being, and received, in the institution of marriage, the perfecting of human companionship.

But the blessing of the Divine Presence was conditional upon obedience to the Divine will. Paradise is forfeited by the preference of selfish appetites over the command of God. The expulsion from Paradise was the inevitable consequence of sin; the desire of man for the lower life was granted. He who asserts his own against the Divine will has no place in the Paradise of God. The very powers of the sky, which testify to His might, seem to bar the way to the Most High, and exclude the fallen ones from hope of return.

The very simplicity of the sin, which stands in

such startling contrast to the tremendous character of its consequences, is not un instructive. For it taught how the purpose, even more than the act, is judged in God's sight. It was not the harmfulness of the act but the rebellion and disobedience against God that brought the condemnation.

The motive impulse to sin was not inherent in man's nature. The temptation came from without him. He was not doomed by nature to fall, but he was gifted with the God-like faculty of free-will. The submission of free-will to something lower than the Divine will led to the Fall.

The Fall brought sin and evil in its train. It was no isolated act of wrong-doing. It was infinite in its results. Its effects were felt in the Universe, shared by the creatures, and transmitted to all generations among men. Thus does the narrative illustrate the solidarity of the human race. Modern investigations into heredity have strangely and unexpectedly confirmed its teaching. The thought of such “original sin” were enough to overwhelm us in despair, were it not that in the Person of the Second Adam we have a far more exceeding hope of glory—not the self-preservation but the corporate reunion of our race in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The length to which this paper has already grown makes it advisable to break off at this point, and to defer till another number the remainder of our investigation into the religious teaching of this narrative.

The Joshua Miracle.

IN the May number of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES an account is given, from the *Homiletic Review*, of the late Dr. Howard Crosby's views on the miracle which occurred during the battle of Beth-horon, as related in the Book of Joshua. When non-scientific writers enter into discussions respecting matters in which science is involved, the results are often unfortunate, and the present is a case in point. Dr. Howard Crosby thinks that the miracle took place in the early part of the day. And this was undoubtedly the fact, as is evident from the geographical position of the locality, situated to the north-west of Gibeon, so that the sun must have been in the south-east, and therefore rising, or shortly about to rise, over the latter place. But Dr. Howard Crosby goes on to suggest that the apparent upward movement of the sun was arrested for some considerable time by an abnormal refraction, causing it to remain apparently stationary in the heavens. Now the effect of refraction is always to *elevate* the apparent position of a heavenly body; so that an abnormal amount of refraction when the sun was rising, or in any part of the morning, would

be not to arrest, but to accelerate, its upward apparent movement.

I have very little doubt that the true exposition of the Joshua miracle is that which was first suggested by the late Dr. Pratt of Brighton, and has more recently been ably worked out in detail with much wealth of illustration by the Rev. A. Smythe Palmer in his work, published in 1888, under the title *A Misunderstood Miracle*. It consists in this, that what was prayed for was a prolongation not of daylight, but of darkness at a time when the object of the forced night-march seemed about to be frustrated by the sun approaching its rising and bringing on broad daylight. The darkness was, therefore, by the Divine favour prolonged by a very thick and dark atmosphere, which enabled the Israelites to carry out their unexpected attack upon the bewildered Amorites, and complete the rout of their surprised host; the gathering storm shortly afterwards culminating in a shower of hail so violent that we are told the stones killed more of them than the swords of the Israelites had done.

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