

beginning. Think more about the unseen world. Read more. Read in the Bible first and foremost, and in the best religious meditations of the best religious minds. Have your conversation in heaven, through direct and earnest prayer. Be on the watch, too, for every passing disclosure. Be on the outlook for every transient hint. These disclosures will grow. These hints will multiply and expand. I remember once standing on the *col* of a high Swiss pass, the ledge of a perpendicular precipice, where I waited for the morning view. There was nothing as I gazed ahead but mist,—mist puffing, circling, swirling, like steam from the depths of some tremendous caldron. But I watched, and there was a break

for a moment far down to the left, and a flash of emerald green; it was meadowland. Then there was a break to the right, and a cluster of houses appeared, with a white church steeple you could almost have hit with a well-aimed stone. Then they were covered, and the mist hid the scene as before, till it parted again, this time in front; and there was blue sky, and against the blue sky a vision of glittering snow-peaks. So it went on, peep after peep, rift after rift, here a little and there a little, till at last, as if worked on unseen pulleys, the mist curtain slowly drew up, and from east even unto west there stretched the chain of the Italian Alps, sun-smitten, glorious, white as no fuller on earth could white them.'

The Seven Heavens.

AN EARLY JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN BELIEF.

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VARIOUS conceptions of the Seven Heavens prevailed largely in the ancient world alike in the far East and in the West. With these we shall deal only in so far as they influenced, or were in any degree akin to, the views that prevailed on this subject among the Jews and early Christians.

For the sake of clearness, it may be well to indicate the direction our investigations will take. We shall first set forth or merely mention the beliefs of this nature that prevailed among the Babylonians and the followers of Zoroaster in the East, and the speculations of certain great philosophers in the West. We shall next touch briefly on certain indications in the Old Testament that point in the direction of a plurality of the heavens, and show that Israel was not unaffected by the prevailing traditions of the ancient world. That we have not misinterpreted such phenomena in the Old Testament we are assured, when we descend to Jewish apocalyptic writings, such as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Slavonic Enoch,¹ 4 Ezra, and to the Talmud and

the Mandäish Religion. Having thus shown that speculations or definitely formulated views on the plurality of the heavens were rife in the very cradle of Christendom and throughout its entire environment, we have next to consider whether Christian conceptions of heaven were shaped or in any degree modified by already existing ideas on this subject. We shall then find that there is undoubted evidence of the belief in the plurality or sevenfold division of the heavens in the Pauline Epistles, in Hebrews, and in the Apocalypse. In early Christian literature such ideas soon gained clearer utterance in Christian Apocalypses, such as the Ascension of Isaiah, the Apocalypses of Moses, Ezra, John, Isaac, Jacob, and the Acts of Callistratus. Such writers also as Clement of Alexandria and Origen are more or less favourably inclined to such conceptions. But shortly after this date, these views fall into the background, discredited undoubtedly by the exaggerations and imbecilities with which they were accompanied. And thus though a Philastrius declares disbelief in a plurality of the heavens a heresy, Chrysostom is so violently affected against such a conception that he denies any such plurality at all. Finally, such conceptions, failing in the course of the next few

¹ An edition of this recently discovered work will be issued by the Clarendon Press towards the end of October. This *editio princeps* is based on a translation of Mr. W. R. Morfill from the Slavonic MSS.

centuries to find a home in Christian lands, betook themselves to Mohammedan countries where they found a ready welcome and a place of authority in the temple of Moslem theology. We shall now proceed as we have above indicated.

Among the Babylonians we find that hell was divided into seven parts by seven concentric walls (see Jensen, *Die Kosmologie der Babylonier*, Strassburg, 1890, pp. 232, 233¹). Hence, we may here observe, this view passed over into the Talmud (Feuchtwang, *ZA.* iv. 42, 43). This sevenfold division of things² in general was a familiar one among this people. Thus the cities, Erech and Ecbatana were each surrounded by seven walls, modelled no doubt, as Jensen conjectures, on their conception of the seven world zones (*op. cit.* 172). For the world was held to be divided in this fashion according to the Gudia (*op. cit.* 173). This division was due either to the overwhelming importance of the sacred number seven, or else specifically to the number of the planets (*op. cit.* 174). We should observe also that the temple of Erech was called the temple of the seven divisions. Since, therefore, both earth and hell were divided into seven zones, it is only reasonable to infer that a similar conception was entertained regarding the heavens. Jensen, indeed, says that he can find no trace of such a division in the inscriptions. But since the sevenfold division of the planets gave birth to the sevenfold division of earth and hell, it is next to impossible to avoid the inference, with Sayce and Jeremias, that this same division must have been applied to the heavens through which the planets moved.

In Parseeism we find the doctrine of the seven heavens. This does not appear in the earliest writings, but in the Ardâi-virâf-nâme there is an account of the seven heavens through which Sosiash made a progress in seven days. In the first heaven are men who felt heat and cold simultaneously. (If we might infer from corresponding ideas in the Slavonic Enoch, and other apocalypses, we should conclude this heaven to be an abode of the wicked and not of the good. There is, however, a hell independently of this.) The inhabitants of the second heaven shine as the stars; of the third, as the moon; of the fourth, as the sun. The blessedness of endless light is reserved for heroes,

¹ See also Jeremias, *Die babyl.-assur. Vorstellungen vom Leben nach dem Tode*, 1887, pp. 34-45.

² Sayce, *Babylonian Religion*, p. 82, note.

lawgivers, and the pre-eminently pious. In the seventh heaven, Zarathustra sits on a golden throne. As we have already remarked, there is only one hell mentioned in the Ardâi-virâf-nâme. On the influence which such ideas had on the Talmud, see Kohut, *Zeitschrift DMG.* xxi. 562.

If we now turn from the East to the West, we meet, first of all, with the Pythagorean tenfold division of the universe. In the centre there was the central fire around which revolved from West to East the ten heavenly bodies. Farthest off was the heaven of fixed stars; next came the five planets; then the sun, the moon, the earth, and finally the counter earth.³ According to the Timæus of Plato, the universe is shaped as a sphere, at the centre of which is placed the earth. Next follow the sun, the moon, and the five other planets; revolving round the earth in orbits separated from each other by distances corresponding to the intervals of the harmonic system. The outermost circle is formed by the heaven of fixed stars.

When we turn to the Stoics, we find kindred conceptions. In the centre of the universe the earth is placed in a state of repose. Nearest to the earth revolves the moon, and next in their appropriate orbits the sun, Venus, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn.

We have thus seen that speculations were rife throughout the ancient world on the plurality of the heavens. It is clear, further, that these speculations were based mainly on astronomical considerations. That ancient Judaism was not unaffected by such views, we may reasonably conclude from certain passages in the Old Testament. The plural form of the word for 'heaven'⁴ in Hebrew probably points to a plurality of heavens; and such phrases as 'the heaven of heavens' (Deut. x. 14; 1 Kings viii. 27; Ps. cxlviii. 4) cannot be adequately interpreted, unless in reference to such a belief. In Job i. 6, 7, ii. 1, 2, 7, we find a further peculiar feature in the ancient conception of heaven. Satan there presents himself along with the angels in the presence of God.⁴ The place indicated by the context is heaven. The presence of evil in heaven, though offensive to the conscience of later times, seems to have caused no offence in early Semitic

³ For further details, see English translation of Zeller's *Pre-Socratic Philosophy*, i. 444, 445.

⁴ In like manner an evil spirit presents himself among the hosts of heaven before God in 1 Kings xxii. 19-23.

thought. We shall find, in the course of our investigations, that this peculiar idea reasserted itself from time to time in Judaism and Christianity till, finally, it was expelled from both.

The probability of an Old Testament belief in the plurality of the heavens is heightened, if we consider the fact that the Jews were familiar with, and attached names to, the planets. Thus Kronos, Aphrodite, Ares, Zeus, Hermes are mentioned respectively in Amos v. 26; Isa. xiv. 12; 2 Kings xvii. 30; Isa. lxv. 11, lxvi. 1. The Jews were acquainted also with the signs of the Zodiac (Job xxxviii. 32), and offered them an idolatrous worship (2 Kings xxiii. 5). Since, therefore, we have seen that in the East astronomical considerations, *i.e.* the sevenfold division of the planets, led in due course to a similar division of the heavens, it is not unlikely that this knowledge gave birth to a like result among the Jews. However this may be, the reasonable probability we have already arrived at is converted into a certainty when we come down to the apocalyptic and other writings of the Jews. Of these, the Slavonic Enoch and the apocalyptic sections of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs were written about or before the beginning of the Christian era. As the description of the seven heavens in the latter is very brief, we shall deal with it first. The rendering that follows presupposes an emendation of Dr. Sinker's text, which I cannot justify here, but hope to do so later in an edition of this work. The third chapter of the Testament of Levi runs: 'Hear, then, concerning the seven heavens. The lowest is the gloomiest, because it witnesses every iniquity of men. The second has fire, snow, ice ready against the day of the ordinance of the Lord, in the righteous judgment of God. In it are the spirits of the lawless ones, which are confined for punishment (cf. Slav. Enoch vii.). In the third are the hosts of the armies (cf. Slav. Enoch xvii.), which are appointed against the day of judgment to execute vengeance on the spirits of deceit and of Behar. . . . In the highest of all the Great Glory dwells, in the holy of holies. . . . In the heaven next to it (*i.e.* the sixth) are the angels of the presence of the Lord, who minister and make propitiation to the Lord for all the sins of ignorance of the righteous. . . . And in the heaven below this (*i.e.* the fifth) are the angels who bear the answers to the angels of the presence of the Lord. And in the heaven next to

this (*i.e.* the fourth) are thrones, authorities, in which hymns are ever offered to God.' In chapter ii. of the same Testament there is a short reference to the first three heavens: 'And I entered from the first heaven into the second, and I saw there water hanging between the two. And I saw a third heaven far brighter than these two.'

We cannot pause here to deal with the details of the above account. We shall only draw attention to the description of the denizens of the second heaven. These are the fallen angels who are reserved for punishment. Although the description of the seven heavens just given is short, it is too definitely conceived to have appeared thus for the first time in Judaism. In the Slavonic Enoch, whose evidence we shall presently briefly summarise, we have, so far as I am aware, the most elaborate account of the seven heavens that exists in any writing or in any language. 'The Book of the Secrets of Enoch,' as it is named in the Slavonic MSS., in which it is alone preserved, but which for the sake of brevity I call 'The Slavonic Enoch,' was written in the main in Greek at Alexandria, although portions of it are merely reproductions of a Hebrew original. In the first heaven there is: 'a very great sea, greater than any earthly sea' (cf. Rev. iv. 6). This sea seems to be described in the Test. Twelve Patriarchs as 'water hanging between the first and second heavens' (see above). In this heaven also are 'the elders and the rulers of the orders of the stars.' Although the number of these is not given, it is twelve: and then we have here an account related to Eth. En. lxxxii. 9-18, 20; or possibly it is twenty-four, and thus there may be a remote connexion, on the one hand, between this class of 'elders and rulers . . . of the stars' and the twenty-four elders in Rev. iv. 4; and, on the other, between it and the Babylonian idea set forth in Diodorus Siculus, ii. 31, *εἰκοσὶν καὶ τέτταρας ἀφορίζουσιν ἀστέρας, ὧν τοὺς μὲν ἡμίσεις ἐν τοῖς βορείοις μέρεσι, τοὺς δ' ἡμίσεις ἐν τοῖς νοτίοις τετάχθαι φασί, καὶ τούτων τοὺς μὲν ὀρωμένους τῶν ζώντων εἶναι καταριθμοῦσι, τοὺς δ' ἀφανείς τοὺς τετελευτηκόσι προσωρίσθαι νομίζουσι, οὓς δικαστὰς τῶν ὀλῶν προσαγορεύουσιν* (quoted by Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos*, p. 308, who establishes a connexion between Rev. iv. 4 and this Babylonian idea). The first heaven, further, contains treasures of snow, ice, clouds, and dew.

In the second heaven (vii.) 'Enoch saw the

prisoners suspended, reserved for and awaiting the eternal judgment. And these angels were gloomy in appearance . . . they had apostatised from the Lord, and transgressed together with their prince.' For a similar account, see Test. Levi above.

In the third heaven (viii.) we have the garden of Eden and the tree of life, and likewise 'an olive tree always distilling oil,' i.e. the *arbor misericordiae* (cf. *Evang. Nicodemi*, ii. 3). We shall observe that the location of Paradise in this heaven agrees with the Pauline account (2 Cor. xii. 2, 3). But (x.) in the northern region of this heaven Enoch sees the place of the damned. 'That place has fire on all sides, and on all sides cold and ice, thus it burns and freezes.' When Enoch exclaims, 'Woe, woe! how terrible is this place!' his escort reply, 'This place, Enoch, is prepared for those who did not honour God; who commit evil deeds on earth, sodomy, witchcraft, enchantments . . . stealing, lying, calumnies, envy, evil thoughts, fornication, murder' (x. 4).

In the fourth heaven (xi.-xv.) Enoch sees the course of the sun and moon and the angels and the wonderful creatures, the phoenixes and the chalkidri which wait upon the sun. In the midst of this heaven (xvii.) is 'the armed host serving the Lord with cymbals and organs and unceasing voice.' Cf. Test. Levi on third and fourth heavens above.

In the fifth heaven (xviii.) are the watchers whose fallen brethren Enoch had already seen undergoing torments in the second heaven. These are troubled and silent on account of their brethren.

In the sixth heaven (xix.) are 'seven bands of angels, very bright and glorious,' who arrange and study the revolutions of the stars and the changes of the moon and the revolutions of the sun, etc.: and the angels over all the souls of men who write down all their works and their lives before the face of the Lord. 'In their midst are seven phoenixes and seven cherubim and seven six-winged creatures.'

In the seventh heaven (xx.) Enoch sees all the heavenly hosts, the ten great orders of angels standing before the Lord in the order of their rank, and the Lord sitting on His lofty throne.

With regard to this scheme, I will content myself with calling attention to the fact that a preliminary Tartarus is situated in the second heaven (cf. second heaven in the Test. Levi), and that hell is placed in the north of the third heaven, and that evil in various forms is found in the second and

third heavens, and dissatisfaction and trouble in the fifth.

In 4 Ezra (vi. 55-74) there is a detailed description of the seven ways of the wicked and the seven ways of the righteous. These ways are represented in a form so essentially abstract that, as Gunkel rightly remarks (p. 309), they must be derived from what were originally concrete conceptions, such as the seven heavens and the seven hells. To the latter conception there is no reference in the Slavonic Enoch.

Passing onward we come to the Talmud. In the Talmud the views of the Rabbis waver. Some thought, as the Rabbi Jehuda, that there were two heavens, *Chagiga 12b*, but R. Simeon ben Lakish enumerated seven. The latter view was the usual one. In the *Beresh. rabba*, c. 6, and the *Chagiga 12b*, the seven heavens are as follows: The lowest, which is called *vilun*, is empty. In the second, named *rakia*, are the sun, moon, and stars. In the third, named *shechakim*, are the mills which grind manna for the righteous. In the fourth heaven, *zebul*, are the heavenly Jerusalem, the temple, the altar, and Michael. In the fifth, *maon*, are the angels who sing by night, but are silent by day, in order that God may hear the praises of Israel. In the sixth, *machon*, are the treasuries of the snow, hail, rain, and dew.

In the seventh, *aravoth*, are judgment and righteousness, the treasuries of life, peace, and blessing, the souls of the departed pious, as well as the spirits and souls yet to be born, and the dew wherewith God will awake the dead. Finally, there are the Seraphim, Ophanim, Chaiioth, and other angels of service, and God Himself sitting on the throne. See Weber, *Die Lehren des Talmud*, pp. 197, 198; Eisenmenger, *Entdecktes Judenthum*, i. 467; Wetstein on 2 Cor. xii.

It is well to observe here that, though the Talmudic description of the seven heavens is puerile in the extreme, its character attests the influence of a growing ethical consciousness. To such a consciousness the presence of evil in heaven could not but seem incongruous. In banishing, however, evil from the precincts of the heavens, the Rabbis necessarily weakened the vigour of the old conceptions, for they were not masters of sufficient imagination to fill up adequately the gaps brought about by their righteous zeal.

In connexion with the Jewish evidence on this subject, we might point out that the same division

of the heavens probably prevailed in the Mandaic religion, since, at all events, one of its dogmas was the sevenfold division of hell (Brandt, *Die mandäische Religion*, p. 182).

We have now found that among the Babylonians, the later followers of Zoroaster, the Greeks, in all probability in ancient Judaism, and certainly in Judaism generally from before the Christian era onward, speculations and as a rule clearly defined

conceptions were rife on the plurality of the heavens. We have seen also that the prevailing view was that of the sevenfold division of the heavens; and we have observed, further, that a feature impossible in modern conceptions of heaven shows itself from time to time in pre-Christian religious conceptions, *i.e.* the belief in the presence of evil in the heavens.

(To be concluded.)

The Expository Times Guild of Bible Study.

THE new session of 'The Expository Times Guild of Bible Study' commences this month. We have chosen the Books of Haggai and Malachi for the Old Testament, and the remainder of the Acts of the Apostles (xiii.-xxviii.) for the New. This completes in each case not merely a portion of Scripture, but a period of Sacred History.

The sole condition of membership in 'The Expository Times Guild' is the promise to study one or both of the appointed portions of Scripture between the months of November and June. That promise is made by the sending of the name and address (clearly written, with degrees, etc.) to the Editor of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, at Kinneff, Bervie, N.B. There is no fee, and the promise does not bind anyone who, through unforeseen circumstances, finds it impossible to carry it out.

The aim of 'The Expository Times Guild' is the study, as distinguished from the mere reading, of Scripture. Some commentary is therefore recommended as a guide, though the dictionary and concordance will serve. Recent commentaries on Haggai and Malachi are not so numerous as on Zechariah. But Orelli's *Minor Prophets* (10s. 6d.) could scarcely be excelled for more advanced study, while Dods' *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi* (2s.¹) is more easily mastered and extremely useful. Archdeacon Perowne has a volume on the same prophets in the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (3s. 6d.), and *Malachi* may be had alone (1s.).

Messrs. T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, have again kindly agreed to send a copy of Orelli direct to any Member of *The Expository Times Guild* on receipt of six shillings.

¹ Not 2s. 6d. as stated last month.

For the study of the Acts, nothing new has appeared since last year. We may, therefore, again mention Dr. Lumby's volume in the Cambridge Bible (4s. 6d.), and Professor Lindsay's in the Bible Handbook Series, which is conveniently issued in two parts (Acts i.-xii. and xiii. to end, 1s. 6d. each), and is surprisingly cheap. For those who are ready to work on a Greek text, nothing can surpass Mr. Page's little book (Macmillans, 3s. 6d.).²

As the study of these portions of Scripture advances, short expository papers may be sent to the Editor. The best of them will be published in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, and the writers, seeing them there, may send to the publishers for the work they select out of a list which will be given.

During the past session fewer papers than usual have been published. This is owing, not to any lack of papers or of ability in them, but to their length. Again and again, papers have had to be rejected which would certainly have appeared had they been half their present length. We must recognise the fact, however, that some subjects cannot be adequately discussed within the limits we have to prescribe. We wish, therefore, this session to offer, in addition to the books sent for published papers, ten volumes for the best unpublished papers received during the session which exceed two columns of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES in length. And inasmuch as many of the members of the Guild are laymen or ladies, five of the volumes will be reserved for them. The result will be published in the issue for August or September.

² A new edition in English at 2s. 6d. is just published.