

BIBLE CHRONOLOGY AND THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS.

ARGUING against the theory of the "Higher Critics," that the Bible Chronology is thousands of years shorter than it should be, Rev. W. F. McCaulay says:

The genealogies of the Hebrews taken in connection with occasional definite dates, enable us to determine with a good deal of accuracy the length of various periods. The suggestion that these genealogies are not always those of father and son in direct descent, but of ancestor and descendant immediate or remote, is contrary to the ascertained method of Hebrew genealogical record as shown by examples where we know that immediate succession is meant. The occasional omission of names, through copyist's errors, or for other reasons, could not affect the result more than a few hundred years at most, nor alter the fact that the word "begat" bears no other generic meaning than that of direct generation.

The theory that dynasties are intended by the names of individuals involves us in the absurdity of translating, "And the dynasty Arphaxad lived five and thirty years, and begat the dynasty Salah. And the dynasty Arphaxad lived after it begat the dynasty Salah four hundred and three years, and begat male and female dynasties." Equally untenable is the idea that Abraham and Isaac were but the personifications of tribal [R3498 : page 37] histories, as though we should read that the tribe Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide, and the tribe Rebecca alighted from her camel and put a veil over her face, and was brought by the tribe Isaac into the tent of the tribe Sarah. Would not a people gifted in producing such personifications observe also the incongruities of these statements? Evidently they understood the language to apply to individuals.

There can be no question but that the early Hebrew records were intended to be a circumstantial account of the beginnings of human history. The tenth chapter of Genesis is the great ethnological register of the world, showing that the Hebrew writers had the necessary data and the true historians' interest in the facts. The very persons are named by whom the isles of the Gentiles were divided. Gomer is mentioned, whose radical letters GMR or KMR we find used in Cymmerians, and, by metathesis, in Crimea and Germans. Ashkenaz, by metathesis, Aksenaz, may be the name of the country lying upon the Black Sea, which the Greeks called 'axenos, euphemized into 'euxeinos, or Euxine. And Javan equals Iwan and the Ionians, or Greeks; not to speak of probable references to the Scythians, Medes, Thracians, Celts, Armenians, Etruscans, and others. These are Japhethites; and the record of the Hamites and Shemites is far more extended.

The statement is made that in the days of Peleg the earth was divided. Peleg was born 101 years after the Flood, and died 340 years after. The confusion of tongues, leading to the division of the earth, therefore, occurred in his lifetime. That the early historian believed he knew the time when this division of the earth took place is shown by his associating it with this particular person. The rise of Babylonia is also clearly described. Nimrod, a Hamite, becomes a mighty hunter before Jehovah, and so ingratiates himself into the good will of the people by protecting them from the wild beasts that had accumulated in large numbers since the Deluge, that he becomes their leader in governmental affairs, and builds cities. The very names of these cities are given: Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, the latter probably identical with the city now called variously Neffer, Nippur, and Nuffar. The conclusion of archaeologists that the latter city dates back to the earliest age corroborates the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures do describe the beginnings of history; and if their accounts of the remotest facts are definite and correct, why distrust their chronology?

That Nineveh and its neighboring cities were founded after the Babylonian towns, is also set forth in the Bible. The hunting instinct of Nimrod or of his descendants led to the making of new conquests from the wilds of nature and the founding of outposts of civilization far beyond the plain of Shinar. The subjugator of

beasts and men and refractory nature was, according to the Revised Version, the founder of Assyria as well as of Babylonia; and this early overflowing of the population has an important bearing upon the subject of chronology.

BABEL AND ITS RESULTS.

The historicity of the confusion of tongues is corroborated by the Borsippa inscription of Nebuchadnezzar, and elaborated by the tradition that the work was stopped by lightning from heaven--a strong proof for those who accept as true whatever comes from a heathen source, however much they may deny Bible authority.

It is not necessary to suppose that every individual of the race joined in the migration from the vicinity of Ararat to Shinar. There is no evidence that Noah and Shem assisted in the building of Babel. Indeed, there is strong probability that the ancient Shemites did not suffer from the confusion of tongues as much as others. The Semitic tongues preserve to this day their general characteristics, as though symmetrically established in a remote age; but the jargon of Hamitic, or Turanian, tongues gives evidence of having originated in some such catastrophe as that of Babel. The Hebrews, with a constant language, preserved the true records, but the Hamites, losing their mother tongue, lost also the connected narrative of events and involved their history in myth and fable, producing also polytheism and idolatry.

EARLY POPULATIONS.

The claim that the dates of the Hebrew Bible do not give sufficient time between the Flood and Abraham for the rise of the great nations existent at the time of that patriarch, is based upon an assumption of the greatness of those nations. Resen is the only one of the ancient cities recorded as great at the time of the writing of Genesis. Nippur, where excavations have recently been made, was not a vast city. Its area within the walls, exclusive of its educational and religious section, seems to have included only 90 to 100 acres. The fact that Abram with 318 of his servants defeated the army of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, and chased them from Dan to Hobah, (or "hiding place"), probably some forty miles, or perhaps further, if Dan in Gilead is meant, recovering Lot and his goods, with the women and people,--does not indicate that Chedorlaomer's foray was any more serious than the incursion of a marauding band of Indians upon frontier settlements. Enough people could come into existence in 150 years to attempt the building of the Tower of Babel; and it is reasonable to suppose that in 427 years, at the time of the call of Abram, the world might have had a population of 2,000,000 at least. If we assign 500,000 of these to Egypt, and an equal number each to Babylonia and Assyria, there would remain another half million for the **[R3499 : page 37]** beginnings of other nations. If half the inhabitants of the ancient world were gathered in cities, five cities of 50,000 might have risen in each of the three leading monarchies, and five more of equal size among the scattered populations of other nations, leaving still a million for rural districts.

The race began in the new world where it let off in the old. Tubal-cain had learned to work in brass and iron and Jubal to play upon the harp and organ. When the people journeyed from the hill country near Ararat they went west to Shinar, and finding there a country favorable for agricultural development, the building of a capital commended itself to them as an important step. There the lust of world-power found its first post-diluvian expression, of which Babylon became the symbol to this day, typifying the "Babylon the Great" of Revelation. After the confusion of tongues, the people still were Babel builders, and began to erect other works. When, by conquest, a city became a ruined heap, there they built again, kings making frequent use of the material of their predecessors. "Hundred-gated Thebes" **[R3499 : page 38]** seems to belong to an early Egyptian period, and Menes, the first king is credited with founding Memphis and building a dyke still to be traced. His son wrote a work on astronomy, and his grandson built a pyramid at Sakkara 394 feet square and 196 feet high. In the fourth dynasty, Cheops [?] erected the great pyramid of Ghizeh; and in the fifth, the Book of Egyptian Wisdom was composed, whose contents resemble in style the Proverbs of Solomon. Primitive man was not only a capable being but possessed sufficient literary training to enable him to record

his deeds in written characters. The highest form of literary ability, as well as the highest regard for exact and truthful statement, we find among the theistic Hebrews.

RAPIDITY OF CHANGE.

Babylonia and Chaldea are studded with mounds from north to south. Mr. Layard found the whole country between the Tigris and the Khabour in upper Mesopotamia covered with mounds, the remnants of early Assyrian cities. Hilprecht says that at the time of Ur-Nina, Babylonia was divided into a number of petty states, and that first one and then another exercised hegemony over the rest. Frequent changes in government and population would thus be a natural result, and cities would be overthrown by conquest, and new ones rise in their places, with astonishing rapidity. Archaeologists follow a scientific method based upon the idea of slow processes, and overwhelm us with dissertations upon a remote past lost in the grey mist of fable.

Rapid change is to be looked for in the early days of the race, when customs were plastic, and when great migrations like that of the Israelites from Egypt were possible. To predicate slowness of change of a formative period, is contrary to natural order. The startling conquests of the old world-rulers is proof of the mobile conditions that then existed. The world had in it the hot blood of youth, that has been cooling with age.

The great antiquity claimed by heathen nations is no doubt due to their desire to trace their descent from the gods, and to appear the first of nations; but the Hebrews, having in their possession the ethnological register of the world, that showed all mankind to be of a common origin, and God to be their Creator, had no such motive, and adhered to the facts as laid down in the records. Exaggerated heathen chronologies are not relieved of oriental extravagance by being placed on monuments, or clay or alabaster tablets. Nor are the inscriptions otherwise always credible. For two hundred years after the Israelitish king Omri, Assyrian inscriptions speak of Canaan as the "land of Omri" and the "land of the house of Omri," and Jehu is referred to as the "son of Omri," though of another dynasty. We might no doubt go through the whole polytheistic polyglot of heathen tongues without finding anything reliable on which to predicate their origin. So prevalent is this tendency to fabulousness among them that some critics are misled into thinking that the origin of every nation is involved in fable, that of the Hebrews along with the rest.

The Egyptian priests mentioned to Herodotus but two kings of historic note, the second of whom had not been dead 900 years when the historian visited that country. But they had a papyrus roll containing the names of 330 monarchs, who they said were of no importance. Many of these kinglets were perhaps contemporaneous, ruling over different parts of the country simultaneously, yet the priests filled up this space with 341 generations lasting for 10,000 years. They also said that twice since Egypt was a monarchy the sun had risen where it sets and set where it rises!

It seems that the Egyptians had no era from which to date events; and, notwithstanding the frequent oriental custom of a king associating his son with him on his throne in the latter years of his reign, it seems that they did not distinguish between a sole and a joint reign. It is said that, save in a few instances, the Egyptians were without the chronological idea. Rawlinson says that it was the unanimous confession of Egyptologists that chronology upon the monuments was almost non-existent. Even Baron Bunsen says that chronology can not be elicited from the Egyptians; and he was obliged to reduce the accession of Menes, the first king, from his former estimate of 3623 to 3059 B.C. Mariette, Director of Conservation of Egyptian Antiquities, says that the Egyptians never had any chronology at all. Even if they had, it would be difficult to compute the gaps of centuries, the times of convulsion or dismemberment, of weakness and internal or external troubles, and of obscure history of kings.

Berosus, the chronicler of Chaldea, wrote about 260 B.C. Of his writings, only some fragments are extant, and these give enormous distortions of facts, condemning Chaldean sources of information and by

implication confirming the Hebrew Scriptures. The remark of De Wette, that where tradition leaves blanks, imagination steps in and fills them up, is exemplified in the chronological scheme of Berosus; which is: Ten kings reign 432,000 years; eighty-six kings, 33,080 (or 33,091); eight Median kings, 224; and so on down to Pul, or Tiglath-pileser, who came to the throne 745 B.C. The whole *historical* period of Berosus reaches back only to about 2245 B.C.--well within the period of Hebrew chronology. The ten mythical kings, who reign an average of over 43,000 years each, correspond with the ten Hebrew patriarchs before the Flood, whom Chaldean tradition turned into fabulous characters; and the second list of kings, whose reign averaged less than four hundred years, corroborates the Hebrew account of the gradual shortening of human life subsequent to the Deluge. Comparing the modest and rational Hebrew chronology with the extravagant claims of other oriental nations, who for one moment could regard even the historical records of Chaldea as of equal credibility with those of the Hebrews?

Sargon I. took pains to have the sacred books of the earlier Accadians translated, and thus preserved the Hamite, or so-called Chaldean, tradition of the Deluge, which is part of an epic poem, "The Adventures of Izdhubar"; but Sargon instead of being placed at 3800 B.C. is assigned by another authority to a period nearly 2000 years later. Hammurabi, of whose code we have heard lately, may possibly belong in the sixteenth century before Christ instead of being contemporaneous with, or previous to, Abraham. It was this king who overran the whole country down to the Persian Gulf, and called himself king of Sumir and Accad and the four nations. He was a builder and restorer of temples, palaces, and cities. He made Babylon his capital, and [R3499 : page 39] added to the magnificence of the worship of Bel, thus raising that idol to the chief position in the Babylonish religious system. He built the royal canal, one of the greatest in Babylonian territory. Sargon I. before him had ruled from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea, but the country broke up into various states, affording a field for a new conqueror. This illustrates the tendencies of the times--frequent changes and conquests, the enslavement of nations, the grinding into ruin, and building again. The Book of Judges and the captivities of Israel throw additional light upon the storm-swept eras of antiquity.

The Chinese carry back the history of the world for several hundred thousand years, but those who regard their literature most favorably believe that authentic accounts go back but to the twenty-second century B.C. and only respectable traditions carry back the history four centuries earlier. One of the native accounts places Yao at the beginning of their historic records. He ascended the throne 2357 B.C. A great deluge occurred in his reign. Our date for the Noachian deluge is 2348 B.C., within the reign of Yao. His son and successor was Shum, which recalls the name of Shem. Another source of information makes Fohi, or Fuh-hi, to be the same as Yao, and makes him reign after the Flood to the very year that Noah died; while his successor reigns 146 years after him, to within a few years of the death of Shem. The correspondence between these Chinese dates and Ussher's chronology is remarkable, and amounts to much more than mere coincidence. That the Chinese preserve some reminiscences of the beginning of human history, is partly confirmed by the fact that their word-symbol for "covet" is a woman under a tree-- recalling the temptation in Eden.

SCIENTIFIC DATES TOO LONG.

In addition to all these facts and inferences, is the further consideration that, if the civilizations of Egypt and Babylonia existed for 7000 years or more before Christ, those countries ought to have overflowed and carried their civilizations to every part of Europe, Asia, and Africa. We can not think of such teeming populations [R3500 : page 39] as must in that case have existed as being confined to the narrow limits to which every argument shows that they were confined. It was not long, as we have seen, till Babylonia did flow into Assyria. This tendency ought to have spread civilization throughout the whole Eastern Hemisphere thousands of years before Christ, had there been such extensive lapses of time. If the dates of our Hebrew Bible are too short to account for all the changes traced, the dates of the archaeologists are too long. A possible solution of the question may be in the suggestion that some of the remains assigned to post-diluvian time may in fact be ante-diluvian.

ANCIENT WRITING.

The enormous difficulty of deciphering the inscriptions may well cause us to pause before accepting the translations as final. There are three kinds of cuneiform inscriptions. The Persian is the simplest, the Scythian more difficult, and the Assyrian, or Babylonian, the most complicated of all. One group of wedge-shaped characters may represent the noun "country" and the verb "to take"; it may also stand for the syllables *mat lat, sat, kur, nat*. This difference in reading depends upon whether the character is an ideograph or a phonograph--that is, whether it represents an idea or is used in the spelling of a word without reference to its inherent meaning. Older than the cuneiform, we find such a language as that stamped upon bricks of Ur of the Chaldees which only three scholars in the United States can read. It may be seriously questioned whether the cuneiform is not less ancient than has been supposed. The fact that the monumental cuneiform always runs from left to right would indicate that it is comparatively modern. In general, the Semitic races wrote from right to left, and the Aryan from left to right. The Assyrians did have a writing that ran the other way, but the cuneiform seems to have been reserved for monumental purposes, as representing their idea of the best development of the art--a modern method superseding the ancient. The hundreds of characters in the Assyrian cuneiform and "the great apparent laxity in the use of letters and the grammar" make the matter of decipherment one of difficulty. The liability to error in deciphering ancient inscriptions is shown in the mistake of the learned Professor Delitzsch, who claimed that Yahveh was Babylonian because he found it combined with a Babylonian proper name, *Yahveh-ilu*, which he translated, "Yahveh is God"; but it has since been proved that the word should be read *Yapi-ilu*. The theory that Hebrew monotheism developed from a Babylonian polytheism may receive a needed check by the discovery of this error. Even if scholarship were equal to the task of making infallible translations, we would still have to make allowance for the oriental tendency to extravagance in footing up the chronologies.

HILPRECHT'S VIEWS.

Professor Hilprecht's explorations at Nippur were conducted almost entirely by Peters and Haynes, though the professor translated the inscriptions. He was on the ground eleven weeks at one time, and ten at another, and devotes considerable space in his recent book to criticisms of Haynes and Peters, the latter of whom had taken the chief initiative in the explorations. However, Professor Hilprecht says that he had ignored personal attacks, and spoke only of "fundamental differences on important technical and scientific questions." While such differences exist among the savants, the rest of humanity may well wait for more light before accepting conclusions. You may look in vain in Hilprecht's book for an explanation of the method by which he arrives at his chronological deductions, unless it be the assumption of a working hypothesis. A sentence, in which he says that it doubtless took centuries for a certain people to subjugate another, reveals the general method--"doubtless." He found above Naram-Sin's pavement thirty-six feet of accumulations, *supposed* to represent more than four thousand years of Babylonian history. Below the pavement were thirty-one feet, representing another period--how long? He says: "I do not hesitate, therefore, to date the founding of the temple of Bel and the first settlement of Nippur somewhere between 6000 and 7000 B.C., possibly even earlier." His method seems to be well comprehended by these two principles-- "doubtless," and "I do not hesitate." It is said that to call Hilprecht, as some fulsome magazine writers do, the "foremost authority on cuneiform paleography," is some way from the truth, as he is yet too young a scholar to have surpassed certain others, among them [R3500 : page 40] his teacher, Delitzsch, who, as we have seen, is not above the possibility of error.

THE SCHOLARLY FABLE.

The disposition of scholarship falsely so-called to deny divine control in the development of the Hebrew national life and writings, and to regard all present faith as the result of a natural process of human thinking, is one of the refinements of evil. It is the application of the theory of physical evolution to the realm of mind and morals, to the practical exclusion of God from human history. Some scholars have no doubt followed the methods of this cult unconsciously, through not knowing the Scriptures and the power of God, while others

have been allured by scientific mirage. Satan tried to destroy the world, first by lust, then by idolatry, next by self-sufficiency, and now by over civilization and unbalanced scholarship. ([1 Tim. 6:20,21](#).) This scholarship does not necessarily attack the Bible, but presents a system of dogma as a substitute for it, as Gnosticism and Neo-platonism attempted to do in the early centuries of Christianity, but the effort will end only in failure, and will leave, like the buried cities of the past, only the titles of its former greatness.

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