ASSYRIAN AND BABYLONIAN INSCRIPTIONS IN THEIR BEARING ON THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES.

I.

I HAVE thought it might be useful to many readers of Scripture to bring before them the results of the investigations that have been carried on during the last twenty or thirty years, into the inscriptions which have been brought to light by the researches of Sir Austen Layard, Sir Henry Rawlinson, Mr. George Smith of the British Museum, and other explorers, and which have been interpreted by the Rev. A. H. Sayce, Mr. Fox Talbot, M. Oppert, M. Lenormant, Mr. S. Birch, and other scholars. For the most part their interpretations lie in volumes of *Transactions* not easily accessible to the general reader; and where, as in the "Records of the Past," published by Bagster and Sons, under the sanction of the *Society of Biblical Archæology*, they are in a form more easily consulted, they are presented without any chronological order, and without any systematic attempt to indicate in what way they connect themselves with the Biblical narratives or what light they throw upon them. Such an attempt I have now taken in hand. It is right to state that in doing so I do not lay claim to the character of an Assyriologist. I am not an expert in these matters and cannot read a single cuneiform character. As regards the translations of the inscriptions, I rely therefore entirely on the authority of those who are experts, accepting them as authoritative where I find an adequate *consensus*, indicating differences where the experts are not agreed, endeavouring, according to my power, to trace their connexion with the histories or prophetic utterances of the Old Testament. Books like Mr. George Smith's "Chaldæan History of Genesis," Sir Edward Strachey's "Hebrew Politics in the Times of Sargon and

Sennacherib," and the Rev. T. K. Cheyne's "Commentary on Isaiah," shew what a full harvest awaits a careful and conscientious study of these materials. My own part, indeed, in following in their footsteps is hardly more than that of a "gleaner of the grapes when the vintage is done." All that I venture to hope is that in this case it may be true, in the old biblical phraseology, that the "gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim may be better than the vintage of Abiezer" (Judges viii. 2), that labour bestowed upon the facts which have been brought to light from the long buried past may be more fruitful than the vague speculative conjectures of earlier commentators who had no such facts to build upon, and whose horizon was bounded by the second-hand reports of later Chaldæan historians like Berosus and Sanchoniathon, or the third-hand traditions of compilers and epitomists like Herodotus and Justin.

As a matter of convenience for the reader, I purpose referring chiefly to the "Records of the Past" already mentioned, under the initials *R. P.*, and Lenormant's "Manual of the Ancient History of the East," under the form *Len.* Other references, as occasion may require, will be given more fully.

I. The History of the Creation and the Fall.

Genesis i.–iii.

The writings of the Chaldæan scribe Berosus had long ago led scholars like Grotius to the conclusion that a tradition of the Creation and the Flood, more or less parallel to that of Genesis, had been handed down from a distant age, in the plains of the Euphrates. He describes a mythical hero-monster, half-fish and half-man, named Oannes, who, coming from the Erythræan sea, played the part of a Prometheus, instructing men in language and the arts. From him had come a narrative of the creation of the world.

"There was a time in which there existed nothing but darkness and an abyss of waters." The waters were peopled with monstrous forms, half-human and half-bestial, or strange combinations, such as are seen in Babylonian seals and cylinders as well as in their larger sculptures, of the body of one animal, with the head or tail of another. They were governed by a female deity, named Omoroca, which was the Chaldæan for the Greek Thalatta or Sea, but might also mean the Moon. Things being so, Bel, or Belus, came, and cut the woman in twain, and of one half formed the earth, and of the other the heavens. "This," Berosus goes on to say, "was an allegory." His explanation of it is itself hardly less allegorical. The whole universe consisted of moisture, and as living creatures were produced by it, Belus cut off his own head, and from the earth, with which the blood mingled, man was formed, and so had the gift of reason, and Belus, whom Berosus identified with Zeus, "divided the darkness and separated the earth from the heavens and reduced the universe to order. The living creatures could not bear the new light that thus streamed in upon them, and died, and he created others such as we now see. He made also the stars, the sun, the moon, and the five planets."

It is obvious that this reads like a distorted and grotesque counterpart of the narrative of Genesis i. Berosus professes to base it upon ancient Chaldæan records, but, as he was a contemporary of Alexander the Great (*circ.* B.C. 330–260), it is, of course, impossible to say how far his narrative might have been based upon the sacred history itself, which, through the Babylonian exile and the continued residence of the Jews on the shores of the Euphrates, must have become more or less known to the Chaldæan men of letters. A comparison with the *Theogonia* of Hesiod, with its Chaos, Gaia (=Earth), Ouranos and the like, or with the history of creation in the religious poems of India, might, on the other hand, suggest that it was a case of parallelism

without derivation, and that these were the natural lines of thought in which the minds of men ran when they attempted to construct a cosmogony and to solve the problem of the *Origines* of the Universe.

Another Chaldæan account has been preserved by a Greek writer Damascius,[1] who lived *circ.* A.D. 550, and this has, it will be seen, the interest of presenting a closer agreement with the actual Chaldæan records that have been recently discovered.

"The Babylonians speak not of *one* origin of all things, for they make two original beings, Tauthe and Apason, making Apason the husband of Tauthe, whom they call the mother of the gods. Their only son was Moymis. And another race proceeded from them, namely Dakhe and Dakhos. And again a third race proceeded from the same, namely Kissare and Assoros. These had three children, Anos, Illinos, and Aos. And the son of Aos and Daukè was called Belos, who they say was the Demiurgus or fabricator of the world."[2]

The Chaldæan tablets, in which the following account of the creation was given, were first discovered and published by Mr. George Smith, in the *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, iv. 363, and again in his "Chaldæan History of Genesis" (p. 62.) The version that follows is by Mr. H. Fox Talbot (*R. P.*, ix. 117). The date of the tablets is approximately fixed by inscriptions on the back which record the fact that the history of the creation had been copied by Assurbanipal (King of Assyria, B.C. 667–647), and placed in his palace for the instruction of his people. The first tablet itself runs thus:—

I.

"When the upper region was not yet called heaven,
And the lower region was not yet called earth,

[1] Cory's "Ancient Fragments," p. 318. [2] *Ibid.*

And the Abyss of Hades had not yet opened its arms,
Then the chaos of waters gave birth to all of them,
And the waters were gathered to one place (Gen. i. 1–6).
No men yet dwelt together: no animal yet wandered about;
None of the gods had yet been born,
Their names were not spoken; their attributes were not known.
Then the eldest of the gods,
Lakhmu and Lakhamu, were born,
And grew up . . . .
Assur and Kissur were born next,
And lived through long periods.
And . . . . ."

Here the fragment is broken and the inscription stops. The next three tablets are too mutilated for continuous translation, but appear to have described the stages of creative work. Words like "earth," "heaven," "firmament," "sea," "the gods," "the dwelling of man," have been sufficiently identified.[1]

II.

The fifth tablet is at once more complete and more important.

"He constructed dwellings for the great Gods,[2]
He fixed up constellations, whose figures were like animals.
He made the year. Into four quarters he divided it.
Twelve months he established, with their constellations, three by three,
And for the days of the year he appointed festivals.
He made dwellings for the planets, for their rising and setting. (Gen. i. 14)
And that nothing should go amiss, and that the course of none should be retarded,
He placed with them the dwellings of Bel and Hea.

[1] Smith's "Chaldæan History of Genesis," p. 63.

[2] Mr. Smith translates, "It was delightful, all that was fixed by the great Gods," and compares it with "God saw that it was good," of Gen. i.

He opened great gates on every side:
He made strong the portals, on the left hand and on the right.
In the centre he placed luminaries.
The moon he appointed to rule the night (Gen. i. 14),
And to wander through the night, until the dawn of day.
Every month without fail he made holy assembly-days.
In the beginning of the month, at the rising of the night,
It shot forth its horns to illuminate the heavens.
On the seventh day he appointed a holy day
And to cease from all business he commanded. (Gen. ii. 1–3.)
Then arose the sun in the horizon of heaven . . . ."
[Here the fragment becomes too mutilated for translation.]

Comparing this with the narrative of Damascius we have to note, (1) that his Tauthe answers to the *Tamti* (="sea," or "waters") of the inscription; (2) his Apason, to Abzes (=abyss) of i. 3; (3) his Moymis to Mummu (=chaos) of i. 5; (4) his Dakhe and Dakhos, to Lakhmu and Lakhamu of i. 10. In the last instance the philologist will recognise a phonetic change common enough in all languages, such as transforms the same root into the Greek δάκρυον and the Latin *lacryma*, Odysseus into Ulysses, Polydeukes into Pollux, Ægidius into Giles, and the like.[1] The two last names are said to represent the male and female principles of motion and reproduction. The identity of Assoros and Kissare, of Anos and Aos, and Belos with the Assur, Kissur, Anu, Hea, and Bel of the tablet is sufficiently obvious. The student cannot fail to be struck with the coincidence which this inscription presents to the Genesis narrative as indicated by the references given above. The connexion of the sun and moon with "signs and seasons and days and years," and the observance alike of the new-moon festival and of the Sabbath, point with hardly a shadow of uncertainty to the conclusion that both, prominent as they were in the religion of Israel (Num. x. 10, xxviii. 11; 1 Sam. xx. 5;

[1] Key's "Alphabet," Letters D and L, pp. 55, 73.

2 Kings iv. 23), did not originate there, but in the land from which Abraham, as the father of the faithful, had started on his wanderings. The relation of the two narratives to each other presents a somewhat more difficult problem. Is the Genesis record based upon that of the Chaldæan, purified by the wisdom of a higher monotheistic faith, with the names of the genealogy of gods struck out? Is the Chaldean narrative a later form of the Hebrew, blended with the polytheism into which the Assyrians and Chaldæans fell when they had lost the primitive tradition of a purer faith? Either theory is tenable enough, and compatible with the recognition that in the Genesis history we have the teaching of an inspired wisdom, by which the writer was guided to record what he found in the materials before him, without the intermixture of baser and incongruous elements. If we assume, as seems probable, without entering into vexed questions as to the actual authorship of Moses, that the book had an Egyptian origin, it seems to shew that the writer, though "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (Acts vii. 22) was learned also in that of the Chaldæans. With that wisdom he may have become acquainted either through a tradition handed down from Abraham, or by direct communication with Assyria. If, with most recent Egyptologists, we identify the Pharaoh of the Exodus history with a king of the Eighteenth or Nineteenth dynasty,[1] there had been ample openings for such communication, in the conquests of Thothmes I. and III., which reduced the kings of Nineveh and Asshur or Ellasar to the rank of tributary princes (*Len.* i. 233).

It is obvious that the first chapter of Genesis stands, with this light thrown upon it, in a clearer relation to the religious history of mankind than it did before. There are

[1] *Adhuc sub judice lis est.* M. Lenormant (i. 95, 243) fixes on Seti I. (= Menepthah) of the Nineteenth; Canon Cook (*Excursus* in "Speaker's Commentary," i. 458) on Thothmes III. of the Eighteenth dynasty.

no adequate grounds, except those of an arbitrary *à priori* theory, for regarding it as having the character of a full-orbed revelation, which had had no previous foreshadowings, and was to be, for all time, the limit beyond which science was not to pass, and the outward form of which it might not dare to modify. That outward form was conditioned, it is obvious, by the pre-existing beliefs. The writer used a symbolic language such as his readers could understand. The distinguishing excellence of his narrative is, that he had the wisdom given him from above, which taught him to preserve that which represented a divine and eternal truth, from the baser admixture of human imaginations. The Sabbaths and the New Moons which the law of Moses enjoined were not then heard of for the first time, but were surviving memorials of that earlier faith and worship which Abraham had known before he began his wanderings from Ur of the Chaldees, and which continued to be observed there for centuries before the Fourth Commandment was proclaimed on Sinai.

II. The Fall of the Angels.

Both Jewish and Christian traditions have, it is well known, interpolated into the history of the creation that which is not in the record. They have invented a narrative, more or less legendary in character, of the creation and fall of the angels, or messengers, of God. In the period in which the teachers of theology did not shrink from any imaginable problem, intruding into things which they had not seen, it was debated whether angels were created before the seven days' work began, or on one of the seven, and if so, on which; whether they were created in the empyrean heaven or in the visible firmament; whether the sin of the Devil was that he desired to be like God; whether he fell in the first moment of his existence or after an interval of greater or less

duration, and so on almost *ad infinitum*.[1] The silence of the primeval record in these matters is itself sufficiently significant. The pride of Lucifer, son of the morning, the war in heaven, the expulsion of the rebels,—these, which mediæval tradition, popularized by Cædmon and Dante and Milton, has made almost or altogether part of the creed of Christendom, are there passed over without a word. Whatever explanation, symbolical or otherwise, was to be given of the mystery of evil, this was not to form part of it.

The reticence, remarkable in itself, becomes all the more so when we learn that the legend existed, almost in its full-blown form, in those Chaldæan records which embodied the history of the creation in a shape presenting so many striking parallelisms to the narrative of Genesis. What follows, from a fragment which has been translated by Mr. Fox Talbot, in *R. P.* vii. 127, reads almost like an extract from the earliest of the poets named above.

THE REVOLT OF HEAVEN.

(The first four lines are broken.)

"The Divine Being spake three times, the commencement of a Psalm.
The God of holy songs, Lord of religion and worship,
Sealed a thousand singers and musicians; and established a choral band
Who to his hymn were to respond in multitudes . . .
With a loud cry of contempt they broke up his holy song,
Spoiling, confusing, confounding his hymn of praise.
The God of the bright crown, with a wish to summon his adherents
Sounded a trumpet-blast which would wake the dead,
Which to those rebel angels prohibited return.
He stopped their service, and sent them to the gods who were his enemies.

[1] The student who does not shrink from the unprofitable task may consult Thomas Aquinas, *Summ. Theol.*, I. Qu. l.–lxiv. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, xi. xii. Peter Lomb. *Sentt.*, ii. Dist. 1–10.

In their room he created mankind.
The first who received life, dwelt along with him.
May he give them strength never to neglect his word,
Following the serpent's voice whom his hands had made!
And may the God of divine speech expel from his five thousand that wicked thousand,
Who in the midst of his heavenly song had shouted evil blasphemies!
The god Ashur, who had seen the malice of those gods who deserted their allegiance
To raise a rebellion, refused to go forth with them."
[Nine or ten lines follow which are too broken for translation.]

It will be noticed that the one point which the narrative has in common with the Genesis record is, that the serpent appears as the symbol of evil, tempting and seeking to destroy mankind. The gradual infiltration of the Chaldæan legend into the creed of Israel remains, however, to be briefly traced. Partial parallels, the gathering of angels round the throne of God, are found, as Mr. Talbot has pointed out, in the poetry of Job, where the "sons of God" are represented as "shouting for joy" when "the foundations of the earth were laid" (Job xxxviii. 7), perhaps also in the imagery which paints those sons of God as presenting themselves before Jehovah, and Satan among them as the mocking and malignant accuser of the righteous sufferer (Job i. 6–10; ii. 1–6). So far as this is so, we have to remember that the land of Uz was not far removed from the attacks, and therefore the influence, of the Chaldæans (Job i. 17), and that the writer of the great poem may have adapted the current belief to his own higher purpose. It is possible that the language of Isaiah xiv. 12–14, in its bold dramatic presentation of the daring God-defying ambition of the king of Babylon,—language in which both Jewish and Christian interpreters have seen a direct reference to the fall of the angels, and which, through the Vulgate and the Authorized Version, has stamped on the name of "Lucifer,"

(the light-bearer, the star of the morning), its modern connotation,—may have had its starting-point in a knowledge of the Chaldæan tradition. The king of Babylon, the prophet may be understood to say, was reproducing, in his plans for a world-embracing all-subduing empire, the rebellious self-asserting spirit of the leader of the rebels among those earlier "sons of the morning," and like them was destined to fall from the heaven of prosperity and power to the Sheol, the Hades, of the "sides of the pit."

It was natural that the long sojourn of the Jews in Babylon, and their subsequent intercourse with it, should make the Chaldæan tradition more familiar to them, and in the first century of the Christian æra, it appears in something like complete proportions. So St. Peter, in the second Epistle commonly ascribed to him, speaks of God as "having cast the angels that sinned into Tartarus and delivered them to chains of darkness" (2 Pet. ii. 3, 4). So, in an Epistle obviously drawn from the same source, St. Jude, though here the reference seems to be to a sin of sensual lust like that of Genesis vi., rather than to one of rebellious pride, speaks of the "angels who kept not their first estate" and "were reserved in everlasting chains under darkness" (Jude, Verse 6); and the Apocryphal Book of Enoch (Chaps. vii. and viii.) narrates that fall with fuller and more legendary details. In the two latter cases, however, as in the Jewish legend that appears in the Talmud (*Nischmath Chaim*, quoted in Nork's "Rabbinische Quellen und Parallelen," p. 363), the fall of the angels appears as *subsequent* to the creation of man, and the rebellion of Satan and his hosts has by the consensus of Jewish and Christian belief been placed at a date *prior* to that creation, and so reproduces the more primitive tradition of the Assyrian tablet. It is, perhaps, not altogether without significance that the Epistle in which St. Peter mentions the fall of the angels in words which at least admit of its being referred to the sin of

rebellion and not of lust, was probably written, like his first Epistle, from Babylon (1 Pet. v. 13), where the old tradition may have survived among the Jews who dwelt there.

We note, lastly, that the Assyrian tablet so recently brought to light, appears to record (l. 15) the belief which, flowing through various channels, Jewish and Christian, became almost the received dogma of the mediæval schoolmen, that the Divine purpose in the creation of man was to fill up the gap that was left by the angels that fell. The belief was current in the time of Augustine, who names it in his "Enchiridion" (c. 29). Peter Lombard ("Liber Sentt." ii. 9), referring to Augustine (*ut supra*), speaks of it as held by some, but prefers, as more orthodox, the view that the number of the saved would be equal to that of the angels who remained faithful. In the dogmatic spirit which first starts and then answers all imaginable questions, it was assumed that the fixed and predestinated number of the saved among mankind would be identical with that of the rebellious, or else with that of the faithful and steadfast, angels. A survival of this belief may perhaps be traced in the prayer of the Burial Service of the Church of England, that God would be pleased "shortly to accomplish the number of his elect," and so to bring about more speedily the great far-off event of the final judgment, which was assumed to be waiting for the attainment of that number as the goal of all the earthly past, and the starting-point of the glorious eternity.

It will be admitted, I think, that there is something suggestive in the fact that the popular belief in the history of the revolted angels, which has almost become part of the creed of Christendom, but which the writers of the Old Testament passed over with so significant a reticence, is found to run up to the distant period indicated by the Chaldæan tablets which were reproduced by Assurbanipal. To discuss the relation of the two, as the result of derivation, or as an example of unconscious parallelism, lies, as before,

outside the range of my present enquiry. That enquiry, as far as this subject is concerned, will best end by recalling the fact that the Chaldæan legend is not without parallels in the cosmogony and mythology of other nations, and presents many striking resemblances to the revolt of Ahriman and his angels against Ormuzd, which formed part of the Zoroastrian faith, and the revolt of the Titans against Zeus as related by Hesiod (*Theogon.* 729). The Mahometan account of the rebellion of Eblis [1] as given in the Koran (*Sur.* xxxviii.), representing, as that book does, the confluence of decayed faiths, may have flowed from the traditions either of a corrupt Judaism or a corrupt Christianity.

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THE HISTORICAL CHRIST OF ST. PAUL.

I. THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS (*Continued.*)

ROMANS iii. 25 has a theological significance with which we have here no concern; it constitutes one of the Scriptural proofs of what is called the doctrine of Atonement. The doctrine of Atonement, as is well known, is differently interpreted by different schools; and we have here nothing to do with any of them: we are in search of simple matters of fact. We are trying to discover what was the historical belief of the primitive Church regarding the person of the Christian Founder; and we ignore all questions and statements which do not bear upon this subject. It frequently

[1] The Koran legend, following one of the Rabbinic traditions, gives an account of the fall of Eblis which differs, on the one hand, from the popular mediæval theory, and on the other, from the story of the loves of the Angels as related in the Book of Enoch. Allah created man, and bade the angels do homage to him. All did so but Eblis, who was puffed up with pride, and deemed himself, made out of fire, nobler than man who was made of clay. And so he was banished from heaven, and allowed to roam on earth, seducing all but the true servants of God.