

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

GENESIS NOT A COPY.

Those modern theologians who insist that the opening chapters of Genesis, containing the accounts of the creation, the fall, the flood, etc., are but condensed translations of much older Babylonian works on the same subjects, the existence of which has in late years been revealed through the labors of explorers, have but little claim to be heard until they are able to explain with some degree of probability when such translations could have taken place. For, if no period could be pointed out in the history of the Hebrews, as now known to us, in which such a transcription could have been made, the whole theory is of course worthless.

The time of the exile has been suggested. During the seventy years that the Jews in Babylon were prohibited from returning to Canaan, there were undoubtedly some who had access, at various times, to the royal libraries and who might be supposed to have had the qualifications necessary for the deciphering of the ancient Babylonian inscriptions. We need only mention Daniel, who for a number of years held the position of prime minister in the vast empire; and Ezra, who was much favored by the emperor, Cyrus, and who is supposed to have been a man well versed in the sciences of his age. But notwithstanding this, on reflection it will appear how absurd the supposition is, that Genesis during this period received an addition from Babylonian sources. On this subject a writer in the July number of the *Revue Semitique*, Paris, remarks with much force:

Without shutting his eyes wilfully to the light, no one will believe that during the half-century that the exile lasted, an Israelitish priest would study the polytheistic documents of the destroyers of Jerusalem, in order to extract from them an edifying recital, with the object of explaining the origin of the holiness of the Sabbath. This hypothesis is the more senseless because an author of the time of the exile would have been incapable, without having lost all patriotic sentiments, of fixing the place of the Garden blessed by Yahwe amid those accursed waters of Babylon which had witnessed so many tears and heard so many lamentations of his countrymen. [The theory generally accepted by the theologians.] No such a monster ever existed among any people, and the very fact of having imagined it does no honor to the critics.

The alleged addition must certainly have taken place previous to that time.

The era of David and Solomon was a golden era in many respects. intercourse with foreign nations flourished as never before. Cuneiform inscriptions were understood by the scholars of the country. Literature was encouraged and the language developed to its highest perfection. But with all this the impossibility of engraving upon the sacred Scriptures anything foreign to them ought to be apparent. At this time particularly, when the spiritual interest of the nation was centered in the temple and the religious observances connected with the holy place, any attempt at adding to

those books or taking anything from them would have been detected immediately. And when we go beyond this point and reach the reign of the Judges, it is obvious that no literary importations from the far east are possible. The only rational conclusion is that the first chapters of Genesis, as the rest of the Pentateuch, belong to the age of Moses.

It has been supposed, because the Babylonian accounts are older than those in Genesis, that the latter must be copies of the former. The supposition is not sound. It has about the same logical value as the hypothesis once advocated that China was first settled by colonists from Egypt, because a resemblance was discovered in the feast of lamps of the Chinese and a similar feast described by Herodotus as observed by the Egyptians. All the ancient nations exhibit many striking similarities in traditions, history, habits and religious ideas. It is related that sepoys who at one time joined the British army when seeing the ruins of the ancient temples of Egypt, thought they had found temples dedicated to their deities, and that they proceeded to worship according to their own customs. Babylonians, Egyptians, Hindoos and Hebrews, all had similar accounts of the creation, the fall, the deluge, etc. But it does not follow that one nation had copied the records of another.

A far more rational conclusion is that the agreement found is the result of instructions received when mankind was but one family, which instructions spread through the diverging lines as people multiplied and settled in the various countries. This accounts satisfactorily both for the similarities and discrepancies in the accounts.

As for the Hebrews, their knowledge of the first history of mankind may have been received through Abraham, who, according to the chronology of Genesis, might have heard it from Shem, the oldest son of Noah, with whom he was cotemporary for some years at least. That the descendants of Abraham should have retained the instructions of their illustrious ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, is certain. Moses had therefore no need of Babylonian works for his historical part of Genesis. Further, Abraham had, as is well known, visited Egypt and gained considerable influence at the court. Joseph's influence in Egypt was also second only to that of the king. There is no doubt that the influence of such men was exerted to give the Egyptians a knowledge of the true God and His dealings with men from the beginning. But the Egyptian priests guarded with the utmost care their learning. Moses was educated as a prince and had consequently access to any historical works or traditions left by Abraham or by Joseph. It will therefore be seen that Moses, even if his own people should have forgotten the teachings of their ancestors, had been placed in a position where he could obtain full and authentic information on the subjects pertaining to the world's history.

Genesis is evidently an introduction to the law. It contains the groundwork for the Theocracy, the development of which is recorded in the following books of the Bible. Only those who would like to make of the whole sacred volume a work of fiction can find any difficulty in believing that Genesis is the work of the inspired pen of the founder of the Mosiac Theocracy.

THE NAME OF THE LORD.

A subject that should receive special consideration from religious people is the proper and reverential use of the name of the Supreme Being. Reflecting upon certain very common practices when referring to the Father of all, we cannot but reach the conclusion that in many quarters this subject does not receive the class and measure of attention to which its importance entitles it. Judging by what frequently salutes the ears upon the streets and in public halls, it would seem that there are many, even among those who have a belief in the Deity, who fail to inquire whether the frequent or vain repetition of the sacred name of the Almighty does or does not diminish the measure of veneration which they profess to accord to Him.

It is a fact, as unpleasant as it is true, that there are many people who have little or no desire to obtain an understanding of correct principle in making reference to the Ruler of the universe, and probably it would prove a waste of time to attempt to reason with them on that topic. It would be vain to call the attention of those who profane the name of the Deity to the means for an increase or diminution of respect for Him, since that feeling has been crowded from their hearts. The preparatory work necessary with them is to implant in their minds the idea that there is a Being to whom they owe reverence. Another class of society consists of those who flippantly introduce the name of the Most High into trivial conversation and jests, or who irreverently use it to emphasize some expression on which they wish to lay particular stress. They are not as vicious as the wilful blasphemer, but their offense differs only in slight degree. A very necessary qualification to constitute them good members of society is to bring them to realize that it is a sin to trifle with sacred things.

There is still another class of people whose situation is such that the theme under consideration is an appropriate one for serious reflection. This division comprises those who have a deep feeling of reverence for that which is sacred, and whose desire is to be guided by the Holy Spirit and to show their love of God by obeying His commandments. Among these there are many whose frequent use of the name of Deity in their prayers, their conversations, and their exhortations, is so marked that it causes a feeling of revulsion in those who listen, even though the latter at times do not recognize what it is that is objectionable. How many, too, there are whose position is that of religious instructors to the people, who reiterate the name of the Most High in their discourses until the devout and sensitive worshiper is made to shudder at the