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JASTROW'S 'CIVILIZATION OF BABYLONIA AND ASSYRIA'

The Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria. Its Remains, Language, History, Religion, Commerce, Law, Art, and Literature. By MORRIS JASTROW, JR., Ph.D., LL.D., Professor in the University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia and London: J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY, 1915. pp. xxv + 515, with Map and 164 Illustrations.

A LARGE volume is required to cover the whole ground of Assyriology which has ramifications in many directions. It is not a simple task to assimilate the results attained by specialists in all the branches of this science and to present them in a form attractive to the general reader, for whom the present volume is primarily intended. This difficulty explains why 'this is the first time that the attempt has been made on a somewhat large scale to cover the entire subject of Babylonian-Assyrian civilization for the English reader'. And, with all due regard to the great merits of other scholars, we may say that there are not many so capable for the execution of such a difficult enterprise as the author of this book. It is indeed a striking and delightful work, popular in the best sense of the term, and it contains the most recent results of research in Assyriological studies. Its perusal will therefore be useful not only for the general reader interested in the civilization of a region where tradition places the cradle of the human race, but also for the student of the Bible, as it calls his attention to most recent opinions on a variety of subjects which have an important bearing upon many biblical problems. The liberal use which has been made of illustrations greatly contributes to the clearer setting forth of the results.

The book consists of eight chapters, the first of which contains the story of the excavations at Babylonian and Assyrian

sites. It surveys the work done by explorers and excavators in the past hundred years intervening between the first efforts inaugurated, on a very small scale, by Claudius James Rich and the present date. The story is told without troubling the reader with too many details, but with due regard to the merits of each one of the pioneers to whom the world owes a lasting debt. Those who desire fuller information on this subject are recommended to the new edition of Rogers's *History of Babylonia and Assyria* (1915), which contains a charmingly written and detailed account of these matters. The second chapter gives the story of the decipherment of the cuneiform scripts. It illustrates lucidly the course of the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions with the aid of reproduction and selection of cuneiform signs and combination of such signs into words, in order to make clear to the reader how it was possible to find a key to the reading of the puzzling combinations of wedges which became the medium of written expression in the Euphrates valley.

The third chapter contains a general outline of the History of Babylonia and Assyria, from the oldest times of which we possess records down to the Persian period. Of special interest is the part which deals with the early Babylonian history, since it is largely based on contemporary records which have been published in recent years. As far as the details are concerned, there are several points to which we take exception. The author assigns to the overthrow of Lugal-zaggisi the approximate date of 2675 B.C.E., and accordingly dates the dynasty of Sargon of Akkad, which lasted 197 years, about 2675-2475. This date is highly improbable, if we accept with the author, as is now generally done, the date 2123-2081 B.C.E. for the reign of Hammurabi, based on Kugler's calculations. We see that the Dynastic Lists of Nippur assign to the dynasty of Sargon 197 years, to the rule of Gutium 125, to the dynasty of Ur, founded by Ur-engur, 117, and to the dynasty of Isin 225. The rule of Gutium was preceded by a dynasty of Uruk, which overthrew the Sargon dynasty. The downfall of the dynasty of Isin occurred in all probability in the year of Hammurabi's accession, if not

three years earlier. Now we have not the least reason to doubt the accuracy of these dates, or to assume that the reigns of these dynasties overlapped one another. We further learn from another source that the rule of Gutium was terminated by Utu-ḫegal, the founder of a new dynasty of Uruk. If we allow for the latter a period of about thirty years, as indeed the author does, we find that about 700 years, if not more, must have intervened between the accession of Sargon and that of Hammurabi, and we ought to assign to the former 2800 at least, as an approximate date. Furthermore, while the author fixes the overthrow of Sargon's dynasty in the year 2475 (p. 137), he places Gudea approximately at 2450 (p. 138). He assigns the same date to the Ur dynasty (p. 140). But it is hardly possible that the reign of Gudea and the establishment of the Ur dynasty, which are quite correctly dated by the author, should have been separated from Sargon's dynasty by the short interval of twenty-five years. Moreover, on these points the author seems to contradict himself. He places the invasion of the GUTI after Lagash had reached its climax under Gudea, and observes: 'For a period of about fifty years a GUTI dynasty actually occupied the throne, presumably choosing Uruk as the seat of residence' (p. 138); 'Utu-ḫegal . . . succeeds in driving the GUTI out of the country' (p. 139); '30 years after Utu-ḫegal's accession Ur-engur succeeds in making Ur once more the capital of a united Sumerian kingdom' (p. 140). Thus a period of more than eighty years must have intervened between Gudea and the Ur dynasty. However, as far as I can see, the rule of Gutium must be placed about 2600-2475, the reign of Utu-ḫegal about 2475-2450. Gudea was in all probability a contemporary of the latter and of Ur-engur, the founder of the Ur dynasty. I was also surprised to find that, notwithstanding that the date of 2675 was assigned by the author to the overthrow of Lugal-zaggisi, he gives to Urukagina, who was in turn overthrown by the latter, the approximate date of 2800 B. C. E. (p. 130). This date does not seem to be a misprint, as from Eannatum, whom the author dates about 2920, to Urukagina could not have been more than 120 years. And even this figure is most likely

too high, as Urukagina was the immediate successor of Lugal-anda, who succeeded his father Enlitarasi. The latter had been chief priest of Ningirsu under the reign of Entemena, the nephew of Eannatum.

The author being generally recognized as an authority on all matters pertaining to the Babylonian and Assyrian religion, and thus quite at home in this special department, it is natural that the chief value of the book should lie in the fourth and fifth chapters, which deal with the Babylonian and Assyrian gods, cults and temples. The sixth chapter, entitled Commerce and Law, discusses chiefly the Code of Hammurabi; the seventh describes Babylonian-Assyrian art; and the last chapter gives specimens of Babylonian-Assyrian literature, such as the stories of Creation and Deluge, prayers, penitential psalms, &c.

The author has certainly, as a whole, carried through his task admirably. But there is still one important point that ought not to be left undiscussed. The author holds with Eduard Meyer that the Semites were the first to arrive in the Euphrates valley, and makes this view the starting-point for his treatment of Babylonian-Assyrian history and religion. Now this view is based upon the fact that the Sumerians in the earlier historical periods frequently represented their gods with abundant hair and long beards, while the Sumerians themselves shaved their own heads and faces. It has been found also that the garments in which the gods are represented do not resemble those worn by contemporary Sumerians. Seeing that man forms his god in his own image, it is surprising that the gods of the Sumerians should not have been of their own type. Owing to this phenomenon, Eduard Meyer maintains that the Semites and their gods had been in the country before the Sumerians came upon the scene. He regards the Semites at this period as settled throughout the country, and being a primitive and uncultured people, possessed only of sufficient knowledge to embody the figures of their gods in rude images of stone and clay. The Sumerians who invaded the country settled in the south and drove the Semites northward, and took over from them the ancient centres of their cult.

However, were the Semites the only people in the universe whom nature endowed with hair and beard? We should think that primitive man everywhere let his hair and beard grow freely. Hence is it not more reasonable to assume that the Sumerians retained the primitive cult-images dating from a period when the Sumerians themselves had worn long hair and long beards? The garments of these Sumerian gods have little in common with the Semitic plaid. If the Semites had been the earliest settlers of Babylonia, we should find abundant traces of Semitic influence in the earliest Sumerian inscriptions. But, as a matter of fact, no Semiticism occurs in any text from the period of Ur-Nina down to that of Lugal-zaggisi, who left a Semitic inscription, with the exception of a single doubtful word, *dam-ḫa-ra*, on the stele of Entemena, and that belongs to a time when the Semites had already been in the country for a long period. If the Sumerians had retained the cult-images of the Semites, owing to their sacred character, would they not have retained, in a few instances at least, their former names as well?

Now it must be admitted that the author does not fully concur with the view of Eduard Meyer. The latter is always reluctant to give credit to Semites for their contributions to the progress of the human race, if historical facts do not absolutely demand it and there is some way of evading such a judgement. The author assumes that the Sumerians had brought a certain degree of culture with them, which through contact with the Akkadian population was further stimulated and modified until it acquired the traits distinguishing it at the period we obtain our earliest glimpse of political, social, and religious conditions in the Euphrates valley (p. 121). But then how can the author explain the absence of traces of Semitic influence in the earliest Sumerian texts? Moreover, for the hybrid character of this civilization it is quite irrelevant whether the Sumerians or the Semites were the first inhabitants of Babylonia. It is a pre-historic problem, and Eduard Meyer's view does not furnish any explanation for the progress of religious thought of the Babylonians in historical times, since 'the mixture of the two factors is so

complete that it is no longer possible to specify the features contributed by each' (p. 187). Nor does this view shed light upon the political conditions in historical times.

We may call attention to the fact that Hebrew tradition apparently indicates that the first inhabitants of the Euphrates valley were non-Semites, and thus confirms the current opinion concerning this problem. We are told: 'And the whole land was of one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there' (Gen. 11. 1, 2). The tradition evidently refers to that remote period when there was only one language in Babylonia, before it became a bilingual country. And it is said that the first inhabitants arrived there from the east. If they had been Semites, they would certainly have come from the west, the Arabian desert, the original home of the Semitic nomads, whence all the Semitic waves came to Babylonia in historical times. But there is hardly any room for doubt that the Sumerians actually came from the east. In accordance with this Hebrew tradition, the Table of Nations represents the aborigines of Babylonia as non-Semites (Gen. 10. 8-11).

JACOB HOSCHANDER.

Dropsie College.