

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

---

VOL. I.

JULY 1897.

No. 3.

---

## Doctrinal Theology.

---

### BIBLIOLOGY.

(Continued.)

The Author of the Bible is God; not man under God; not man and God; but simply God. The Old Testament Scriptures are "the oracles of *God*."<sup>1)</sup> What Moses said in the Pentateuch was "the word of *God*."<sup>2)</sup> The words of the Psalmist are words which "the *Holy Ghost* saith."<sup>3)</sup> By that which is written in Jeremiah, the Prophet, "the *Holy Ghost* is a witness to us."<sup>4)</sup> The things that Paul, the Apostle, writes to the Corinthians, "are the commandments of the *Lord*,"<sup>5)</sup> even as what Isaiah wrote was spoken *by* the prophet, but "*of* the *Lord*,"<sup>6)</sup> and *by* the mouth of His servant David, the *Lord God* said what we read in the Psalm.<sup>7)</sup> In short, every part of Scripture is the *word of God* and can not be broken;<sup>8)</sup> and "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,"<sup>9)</sup> not certain parts of Scripture, of

---

1) Rom. 3, 2.

2) Mark 7, 10. 13.

3) Heb. 3, 7. coll. Ps. 95, 7. 8.

4) Heb. 10, 15. 16. Cf. Jer. 31, 33. f.

5) 1 Cor. 14, 37.

6) Matt. 1, 22: τὸ ρηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου. Cf. Is. 7, 14.

7) Acts 4, 24 f. coll. Ps. 2, 1. 2.

8) John 10, 34. 35. coll. Ps. 82, 6.

9) 2 Tim. 3, 16.

might. He can not bear the self-love and desires which impede the soul. . . .

"But to know God as the Christians do, it is also necessary to know one's wretchedness and unworthiness, and to recognize the need of a mediator to facilitate our union with Him. To know God and not our wretched state causes pride. To know our wretchedness without knowing Christ causes despair. But knowing Christ takes away both pride and despair. For in Him we find God, [know] our misery, and the only means of bettering it. We may know God and not our wretchedness, or know that and not God. Or we may even know both God and our wretched state without knowing the means of delivery from the evils which overwhelm us. But we can not know Jesus Christ without knowing God, our wretchedness, and the remedy. For Christ is not God only, but God who saves us. We ought therefore to strive solely to know Jesus Christ, since through Him alone we are enabled to know God in a way that is of benefit to us." (Partie 2. A. XV. Paragraph II.)

(Contributed by F. H. S.)

---

## THE TELL EL-AMARNA TABLETS.<sup>1)</sup>

Tell el-Amarna is the name of a town in a ridge of hills on the eastern bank of the Nile, about midway between the ancient capitals Thebes and Memphis. By the natives the name is applied also to the entire ridge. In 1887 a peasant woman in collecting antiquities for the market, a common occupation among the natives, found

---

1) From a manuscript submitted by Prof. Carl W. Belser, Ph. D., of Boulder Colorado University.

here a tablet inscribed with cuneiform, that is wedge-shaped, characters. This curiosity led to more careful and systematic research, resulting in a recovery of about 320 tablets, all in a more or less complete state of preservation. The bulk of these were secured for the Royal Museum of Berlin, where I first saw them in 1889 while prosecuting my Assyriological studies in the Museum. Drs. Winckler and Abel were at that time engaged in making accurate copies of the text which they published in the year following. The rest of the tablets are divided between the British Museum and that at Bulaq in Egypt. Bezold, a German professor, published a carefully prepared text of the British collection in 1892, and most if not all of the Bulaq tablets have been given in some or other of the numerous Assyriological journals of Europe. The process of interpretation encountered many difficulties, and there are few noted European Assyriologists that have not tried their ingenuity and learning upon them, with the result that their contents are now generally accessible.

Hitherto cuneiform inscriptions upon tablets of clay had been found only in Mesopotamia. Great was the surprise in Assyriological circles over the discovery of such tablets in Egypt, and greater still when it was learned that they contain the purest literary Babylonian. For, not everything written in cuneiform is Babylonian, as the Achemenean inscriptions and those of Lake Van and even some of the Tell el-Amarna tablets show. In this last named collection there are some in an unknown, probably Hittite tongue, that have thus far eluded interpretation. There are numerous hieroglyphic inscriptions of the ancient Hittites, and it will not be a great wonder if these tablets shall prove the Rosetta-stone of their understanding some day. But the greatest surprise of all was the discovery that the Tell el-Amarna tablets were mostly official documents of correspondence from Palestine and other Bible lands of the generation before the Exodus.

The city, in the ruins of which these tablets were found, had a remarkable, though very brief part to play in Egyptian history. It owed its origin to an attempt to reform the religious system of the Egyptians on the part of King Amen-hoteph IV, who, however, failed in his endeavor and was even afterward branded as "the Heretic." For many years previous an effort had been made to reduce their heterogeneous worship to some unity, and considerable progress had been made when "the Heretic" ascended the throne. His precipitous zeal encountered violent opposition and finally ended in the overthrow of his house and the establishment of a new dynasty, the XIXth. We can understand something of his zeal from our knowledge of the history of the XVIIIth dynasty. The Hyksos, or shepherd kings, had been expelled, and the victorious Egyptians extended their conquest over western Asia as far as the Euphrates river. Here they came in contact with a powerful people called the Mitanni, the inhabitants of the region known in the Old Testament as Aram-Naharaim. The daughter of the Mitannian king, given in marriage to Pharaoh, became the mother of Amen-hoteph III, and through a similar alliance his son Amen-hoteph IV was more than half Asiatic in blood as well as in education. He espoused the cause of Baal, the Syrian sun-god, and even changed his native name to Chuen-Aten, "the splendor of the solar disk." The ancient city of Thebes was so completely under the dominion of the native priesthood that he voluntarily abandoned it and built himself a new city at the present site of Tell el-Amarna, that thus unhindered he might carry out his reforms the more successfully. The architectural splendor of the new capital is sufficiently attested by the ruins. Hither he transferred the royal archives, containing the official correspondence of his reign as well as of his father's. Here he surrounded himself with his reform sympathizers and his oriental devotees. But an untimely death suddenly ended his monotheistic in-

novations. By the time the civil disturbances that followed his demise had been quelled, a new dynasty had entrenched itself in Thebes and the capital of Chuen-Aten lay in the ruins under which it has until recently been buried.

The Tell el-Amarna tablets consist for the most part of letters received from various parts of Asia, as Assyria, Babylon, Mesopotamia, Kappadocia, Syria and Palestine, and in their contents deal with the most varied matters. It is somewhat singular that while several different languages are represented in the cuneiform collection, the Egyptian is never used. This is sufficient to prove that Babylonian was the language of diplomacy during at least the XVIIIth dynasty. For the letters sent in reply no less than those received were written in this language. Further, the discovery of mythological fragments, adapted to school reading, shows that this oriental influence extended to religion and literary culture generally.

Again, regarding the sources from which they come, that Babylonian should be used by so many persons of the most diversified nationalities throughout Western Asia, testifies to a remarkable diffusion of Babylonian culture. This inference is incidentally corroborated by a number of other facts; as, for instance, Palestinian towns bearing Babylonian names, the seemingly irrepressible abomination of the Ishtar worship; the habit of some of the correspondents substituting in their compound names the Babylonian names of gods for their own, much in the same way as the Romans after the diffusion of Greek culture identified Greek gods with their native Italian. Nay more, so thoroughly domesticated and localized had Babylonian culture become, that the archaeologist has no difficulty in assigning a given document when he sees it, to a certain locality. This differentiation into characteristic types of cuneiform writing, a parallel to which we find in the palaeography of Latin manuscripts, can only be explained on the supposition that such culture was general for an indefinitely long period

prior to the XVIIIth dynasty. In this inference we are again borne out by the Babylonian and Assyrian annals.

Thus, king Sargon of Akkad, a monarch scarcely less famous for his literary patronage than for his military conquests, extended his domains to the shores of the Mediterranean and left a record of himself upon the rocky cliffs of the coast. Four times he led his victorious armies against the Aorites, the general term by which at that time the inhabitants of Syria and Palestine are designated. His son, Naram-Sin, pressed southward as far as the Sinaitic peninsula, and a Babylonian cylinder has been found in Cyprus in which the owner calls himself the "worshiper of the deified king." Think of Babylonian writing in Cyprus thousands of years B. C. The next inscription is dated about 2400 B. C., in which the Elamite prince Eri-Aku of Larsa (the Arioch of Elassar in Genesis XIV) tells us that his father Kudur-Mabug was the "father of the land of the Amorites." Again, we possess an inscription of Ammi-Satana, who ruled B. C. 2241—2216, in which he styles himself "king of the Amorites." About 1100 B. C. Tig-lath-pileser crossed the Mediterranean in the ships of Arvad, receiving presents from the Egyptian king.

From these different inscriptions we learn what was surmised from the Tell el-Amarna tablets, that Palestine had been under the dominion and influence of Babylonia, off and on, for many generations prior to the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites returning from Egypt, and thus was rendered possible that wide-spread culture and acquaintance with literature, which the above-named tablets presuppose. We are the less surprised at this when we remember how much the Babylonians were devoted to literature and libraries, and that it was their unvarying policy in all their conquests to extend simultaneously their religion and their culture.

The significance of the Tell el-Amarna tablets rightly interpreted implies the existence of schools and systematic

instruction, such as we know to have been common throughout Babylonia. This is practically evident from the language itself. No language of antiquity compares in point of difficulty with the Babylonian. This is due in a large measure to the complexity of the Babylonian syllabary or method of writing, the learning of which is no easy task. Aside from the fact that each of the 500 signs has a phonetic value of two or more syllables, each has also one or more ideographic values, entering into numerous compounds. More than 16,000 of these have already been classified. Indeed, Palestine appears to have been dotted with literary centers. In the Tell el-Amarna collection letters are dated from Jerusalem, Lachish, the two Gazas, Megiddo, and Bashan as well as from the northern towns of Tyre, Sidon, Gebal, and Zemar. Many of these letters are in reply to or in continuation of previous correspondence, some anticipating immediate answers. Of course, this collection gives us but one end of the correspondence, that received in Egypt. The other end still lies buried in Palestine and awaits the excavator's spade. That we may confidently look for startling revelations also from the other end of the correspondence is warranted by the recent discovery of Lachish, where among the last things picked up was a clay tablet from the Pharaoh in reply to one of the tablets in the Tell el-Amarna tablets. This is truly history stranger than fiction. We must not forget that Palestinian exploration is still in its infancy; that with the exception of a few shafts sunk at Jerusalem, the only scientifically conducted work was that of Petrie at Lachish in 1890 under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund. Here the ruins were piled up to the height of sixty feet, commemorating the rise and fall of successive cities, like those through which Schliemann had to dig at Hissarlik before he came to the site of ancient Troy. Lachish, it will be recalled, was destroyed by the Israelites on entering the Holy Land. Several centuries later it had again become prominent until it was razed to

the ground by Sanacherib's army at the close of the eighth century B. C. Thus history is again verified by the results of archaeology.

What has been found at Lachish can be expected from many other ancient sites, and much more. The Babylonians generally centered their libraries about some oracle or temple. We have reason, then, to look for extraordinary returns when Bethel, Hebron, Salem (a part of Jerusalem) and like cities shall yield up their priceless treasures. The existence of Kiryath-sepher, "the city of books" (Joshua 15, 15), testifies to the early existence of such libraries in Palestine, for the name was presumably derived from its predominating activity as a literary center. The name Kiryath-sannah, "city of instruction" (Joshua 15, 49), is probably, as we shall see later on, a mere variant designation of the same place. While even its site is forgotten now, tradition has always connected it with Hebron and in one of the Tell el-Amarna tablets seems referred to and hence was doubtless a place of prominence at the time of the Israelitish invasion and may have shared the same fate as Lachish at the hands of the conquerors.

The ordinary mode of writing was by means of a long sharpened reed upon plastic potter's clay and then baked to render it imperishable. The more important inscriptions, like the achievements of kings, laws, etc., were engraved upon stone. . . .

The Tell el-Amarna tablets give us the most minute account of the geography of Western Asia that we possess. If we compare these and other facts of our increasing knowledge of ancient geography with the genealogical table in Gen. X, one difficulty after another of this puzzling chapter is being solved, and the testimony of our present information is not at variance with the biblical canon, which assigns its composition to Moses. It represents the geography of his time.

There are also internal evidences in the chapter itself which preclude a late origin. In verse 12, for instance, we



read of Calah, "the same is a great city." This famous residence of Assyrian kings was already destroyed before the Jews went into the Babylonian captivity. The gloss finds a satisfactory explanation only in an early origin. Another illustration is the Nimrod episode in verse 8 ff., in which "son of Kush," i. e., the Kassite, is used synonymously with Babylonian. This cannot have been of later Hebrew origin, because the Babylonians are invariably referred to as *Kashdim*. Likewise it could not have been of native Babylonian origin, because the Kushites were not Babylonians at all. The Kushites, however, exercised a long dominion over Babylonia. In the Tell el-Amarna tablets the Babylonians are always referred to as the *Kasi*, i. e., the Kushites, and hence the narrative is in perfect harmony with a Mosaic origin. It certainly could not be assigned to a later date. Its Palestinian origin is further attested by the current saying (verse 9), "Even as Nimrod, the mighty hunter before the Lord," which likewise precludes a pre-Mosaic composition.

It is not precluded in what has been said that the author of the Pentateuch might have quoted from earlier written documents. Where writing was so prevalent it would have been strange, indeed, if records had not been accessible. The Babylonian flood epic in some form or other might have lain before the writer, but the differences far exceeding the resemblances both in number and character mark the independent hand of the Hebrew writer. The different use to which the material is put as well as its pervading tone stamp it at once as a new production of a higher order. Another illustration we find in the Chedorlaomer and Melchizedek episodes of Gen. 14. The historical character of this narrative has been sufficiently vindicated by the Babylonian annals. We have learned that Arioch of Elassar was the Babylonian prince Eri-Aku of Larsa. While the name Chedorlaomer, in Babylonian Kudurlagamor, has not been found, he was probably a brother of Eriaku.

His name would then be like that of his father Kudur-Mabug, only compounded with a different name of the Elamite pantheon. Kudur-Mabug, as was stated above, had overrun Palestine and hence claimed to be "father of the land of the Amorites." The unique character of Melchizedek now finds some interpretation from the Tell el-Amarna tablets. Aside from his double character as priest-king of the most high God, no information is given about him in the Old Testament. But the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews supplements our knowledge with the strange statement, "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." Ebed-tob, king of Jerusalem, in several letters to the Pharaoh claims for himself such a unique position. "Behold, I am not a governor, a vassal, of the king, my lord. Behold, I am an ally of the king and I have paid the tribute of the king, even I. Neither my father nor my mother, but the oracle of the Mighty King, established me in the house of my father." In another letter he informs us that the name of the Mighty King, his god, is Salim. The etymology of Jerusalem is clearly seen in the mode of writing employed in the tablets, Uru-salim, i. e., city of Salem, showing that the city grew up about the oracle or temple of Salim. In like manner Melchizedek is called the king of Salem. It is this royal priesthood that has been made typical of Christ.

"Now there arose a new king over Egypt which knew not Joseph"—Exodus 1, 8. This statement finds decided confirmation indirectly through the Tell el-Amarna tablets, in so far as they enable us to see the strong contrast that must have marked the policy of the government towards the Israelites under the XVIIIth and the XIXth dynasties. The Asiatic connections of the XVIIIth dynasty, with its imported civilization and monotheistic religion, must have begotten a lenient rule for the Israelites. The XIXth dynasty embodies the popular reaction against this foreign

influence and naturally vents itself against the foreigners in their midst. This is the dynasty of the Ramsides. The discovery of Pithom in 1885 by Naville and the monumental evidence there found naming Ramses II as its builder, make it clear that we have in him the Pharaoh of the oppression "which knew not Joseph." He was indeed the great Egyptian builder and there is scarcely a nook or corner in all his realm in which he has not left some trace of his enterprise during the sixty-seven years of his reign. In the detailed account of the vigorous campaigns which he conducted against Palestine, the Israelites are not named among the many peoples he encountered, showing that the exodus had not yet taken place. Indeed it is his successor Ramses III, known as Menephthah, with whom the popular tradition as preserved in Josephus has connected the Mosaic exodus. The great insurrection of Lybia, assisted by the known civilized world, which took place in the fifth year of his reign, may have furnished the opportunity to the oppressed sons of Jacob. This interval of time also harmonizes fully with the Biblical narrative, according to which forty years passed from the time that Moses interfered in behalf of his oppressed countryman, slaying the Egyptian officer, and his return from his Midian seclusion to liberate his people. It should not be ignored that the Tell el-Amarna tablets mention the existence of nomadic Palestinian tribes in that region of Egypt where Goshen lay and that they were there by permission of the Pharaoh. Interesting, too, is the account of the escape of two of the King's officers, for in their flight they seem to have taken precisely the same route taken later by Moses.

In conclusion, the Tell el-Amarna tablets already foreshadow the political conditions that enabled Israel to become a mighty power under David. The Egyptian inscriptions at Medinet-Habu, seventy-five to one hundred years later, confirm what we learn from the tablets and what is stated in Judges 3, 8 when the Israelites were "sold into

the hand of Cushan-rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia," for eight years. Palestine had been for centuries the battleground of the armies of the East and the South. Now these dreaded powers were falling into political decay and kept busy at home with civil strife. In the latest of the Tell el-Amarna tablets we already learn of the rise and encroachments of the Mitannian kingdom on the north. Assyria rose upon the ruins of the Babylonian empire. There was an extended conflict with the Mitannian nation before the armies of the new monarchy penetrated Palestine. During this period of comparative rest, David under the consummate leadership of Joab established his kingdom, but it was only of short duration, for soon after the disruption of the empire, the Assyrians began their inroads which finally ended in the political and to a large extent national downfall of the Israelitic people.

---