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## I. Literary.

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### THE PASSING OF USSHER'S CHRONOLOGY.

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JAMES USSHER (1581-1656), Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of Ireland, will always be held in honor for his high character, his great learning, and his decided Calvinism. He was twice appointed by the Long Parliament a member of the celebrated Westminster Assembly of Divines, but, on account of the opposition of the King, never took part in the proceedings. Cromwell respected him, though he was a steadfast royalist, and, at his death, honored him with a splendid funeral, his remains being interred at Westminster Abbey. Ussher's name, however, would never have become a household word but for his scheme of Biblical chronology, which, though only one of a hundred and eight different views of the same Biblical data (some of which differ from others by no less than two thousand years), had the extraordinary good fortune to be printed in the margin of the Common English Version of the Bible. It thus became fastened upon the popular mind, and was gradually invested with a reverence akin to that with which the people regarded the sacred text itself. For these dates were first placed in the margin in 1701, and the custom of printing them along with the text has continued to the present time, so that for fully two hundred years the people have been drilled in the habit of regarding them as authoritative. Being familiar and convenient, the scheme has been generally adopted by historians also, and has thus gained still wider currency. But its inaccuracy has been fully established, and the scheme is now obsolete. This has been generally recognized for some years as to certain parts, such as

his underestimate of the duration of the Israelitish sojourn in Egypt, in which he is 215 years out of the way, and his overestimate during the period of the dual kingdom, from the disruption to the fall of Samaria, in which his figures are generally about forty years too high. But the gravest difficulties caused by Ussher's computation do not belong to either of these periods, but to the much earlier period extending from the creation to the time of Abraham.

Ussher's date for the creation is B. C. 4004, and for the flood, B. C. 2348. Our readers have probably seen accounts of the recent excavations at Nippur, in Babylonia, by the expedition sent out by the University of Pennsylvania, under the leadership of Professor Hilprecht and Mr. Haynes, and of their claim that the ancient temple of Bel there unearthed must have been founded not later than about B. C. 7000. This is a staggering figure, and we shall do well not to accept it too hastily, though, as a matter of fact, it is accepted by nearly all expert Assyriologists, so far as one can judge from opinions published.

Their calculation rests largely on the alleged date of Sargon I., *i. e.*, B. C. 3800, and the controversy in regard to that date itself is not yet closed. The controversy arose in this way. In 1881 Mr. Hormuzd Rassam, the Babylonian explorer, discovered in the mound of Abu-Habba, the ancient Sippara, on the Euphrates, two terra-cotta cylinders of Nabonidus, the last native king of Babylon, who lived about B. C. 550. Nabonidus was a student and had a special fondness for archæology. He inscribed various cylinders with accounts of the researches he made while repairing the temples of the gods. On one of the two cylinders above mentioned he says that in his excavations under the temple of the Sun God in Sippara, which had been rebuilt by Nebuchadnezzar, he was disappointed by his failure to find the foundation-stone, the one bearing the records, and therefore dug deeper. When he had gone eighteen cubits farther, he made a great discovery, which he records as follows: "That temple I excavated, its ancient foundation-stone I sought; eighteen cubits I dug down to the foundation-stone of Naram-Sin, the son of Sargon, *which for thirty-two hundred years no king before me had seen.*" This is the statement which twenty years ago so startled all students of Oriental antiquity. And well it might, for, adding the date of Nabonidus, B. C. 550, to the 3200 years he mentions, we have B. C. 3750 as the date of Naram-Sin; and, as we know

independently that Sargon, his father, had a very long reign, Sargon's date was, according to this, about B. C. 3800. "There is no reasonable doubt," says Prof. J. F. McCurdy, "that the reckoning made by the experts of Nabonidus was correct. . . . That they had a documentary basis for their calculation is hardly to be doubted. . . . It lay in the very nature of temple-worship among a nation of astrologers like the Babylonians, that there should be a yearly notation of festivals and other great religious events, as well as of the duration of the reign of the priestly kings. . . . In Erech, in 645 B. C., there was kept the record of the loss of one of the city deities to the Elamites 1635 years before" (*History, Prophecy, and the Monuments*, I., '97-98). And to this agree Sayce, Driver, Evetts, Nicol, Rogers, Hommel—radicals and conservatives alike.

Now this Sargon and his son, Naram-Sin, built a temple of Bel at Nippur, as Sargon tells us in one of his own inscriptions, published by Hilprecht in 1893. When Mr. Haynes was working on these ruins at Nippur, after clearing away eleven metres of accumulated rubbish, he came to the platform of the Bel temple erected by Sargon, the platform being identified by its bricks of peculiar size and form, stamped with the names of Sargon and Naram-Sin. Accepting B. C. 3800 as the date of Sargon, the accumulation of rubbish since that date gave Haynes an approximate measure of the rate of accumulation, and he continued the excavations below Sargon's platform to the depth of nine metres before reaching water and virgin soil, from which he argued that as the eleven metres above that platform represented an accumulation of 4000 years, since the Bel temple was completely destroyed about A. D. 200 (B. C. 3800 + A. D. 200 = 4000), the nine metres below must represent an accumulation of about 3000 years; and thus he reaches his conclusion that the original temple was founded not less than 7000 years B. C.

This is but a hasty and meagre statement of the evidence which he adduces for this remote antiquity, but we cannot pause to enlarge upon it here, or to refer to the inscriptions of the priest kings of Sirgulla, who were still earlier than Sargon. Suffice it to repeat that B. C. 3800 is generally accepted as Sargon's date. But, even should it be rejected, "still in no case can Sargon and Naram-Sin be brought further down than C. 2700 B. C." (*Hommel, Expos. Times*, Vol. VIII., p. 106). So that,

in any case, the results of archæological research discredit Ussher's date for the flood, since they take us far back of B. C. 2348.

We must assume that our readers are familiar with the grounds of Hommel's statement, just quoted, as we have not space to present them. If any one wishes to see how completely the case is closed against Ussher, he may do so by referring to any recent work on Assyriology, such as R. W. Rogers' *History of Babylonia and Assyria*, T. Nicol's *Recent Archæology and the Bible*, J. F. McCurdy's *History, Prophecy and the Monuments*, B. T. Evetts' *New Light on the Bible*, or any recent Bible Dictionary, such as that of Prof. J. D. Davis, of Princeton, on *Babylonia, Chronology, &c.* The same general conclusion has been reached by the Egyptologists. Prof. W. M. Flinders Petrie assigns to the pre-dynastic kings the date of 4800 B. C. (*Harper's Monthly Magazine*, October, 1901), and argues that civilization began in the Nile Valley about 7000 B. C. We need not accept these high figures yet, perhaps, but the fact remains that both Assyriology and Egyptology contradict Ussher.

This is to say nothing of other lines of scientific investigation concerning the antiquity of man, the results of which are more generally known, yet comparatively few Bible readers seem to have considered by what method Ussher's error may be corrected without impeaching the statements of Scripture. About twenty years ago Dr. A. A. Hodge, speaking of the length of time since the creation, did say that "there is no reason to believe it was more than fifteen or sixteen thousand years; but whether more or less, revelation has not informed us." But he made no attempt, so far as I know, to show how his statement could be reconciled with the Biblical data upon which Ussher based his calculation. These data are found in the genealogical lists given in the fifth and eleventh chapters of Genesis, and, at first view, they certainly seem to bear Ussher out and to require us to admit that man was created about four thousand years before Christ. For the age of each patriarch is given at the birth of his son, and it seems a simple sum in arithmetic to add up these numbers from Adam to Noah to arrive at the length of the interval from the creation to the flood, and to add to this the sum of the numbers from Noah to Abraham to get the whole interval from the creation to Abraham.

It is the object of this paper to indicate one method by which

it has been sought to solve this difficulty, simply stating it here and referring to fuller statements of it elsewhere. It was first proposed by the late Prof. William Henry Green, of Princeton, in 1863, long before the recent discoveries as to the enormous antiquity of Babylonian and Egyptian civilization, and was suggested to the present writer by the late Dr. Thomas E. Peck, who said that the symmetrical arrangement of the two genealogical tables in the fifth and eleventh chapters of Genesis, each including ten names, and each ending with a father having three sons, raised the presumption that it was the author's purpose to tabulate in an easily remembered form certain selected names for the purpose of indicating a line of descent, rather than to give a complete list for chronological purposes. And that statement is the core of Professor Green's theory, viz., that there are omissions in these genealogical tables; that many names are left out; that all the links in the chain from Adam to Abraham are not given. The most complete and convincing statement of the theory ever published may be found in an article of twenty pages, entitled "Primeval Chronology," which Dr. Green contributed to *Bibliotheca Sacra* for April, 1890. A briefer statement of its essential points was published by Dr. Green in the *Independent* of June 18, 1891, and reprinted in the *Sunday-School Times* of July 4, 1891.

That it was the custom of the sacred writers to abridge the genealogical lists in this way may be quickly shown. In the genealogy of our Lord, as given in Matthew i., where the writer wishes to arrange the names in three groups of fourteen each, he drops three names in verse 8 between Joram and Ozias (Uzziah), viz., Ahaziah (2 Kings viii. 25), Joash (2 Kings xii. 1), and Amaziah (2 Kings xiv. 1); and also drops Jehoiakim after Josiah in verse 11 (2 Kings xxiii. 34; 1 Chron. iii. 16)—in order to make out his symmetrical scheme of fourteens (Matt. i. 17). Let the reader observe carefully that Matthew says in verse 8 that "Joram begat Ozias," though Ozias was the great-great-grandson of Joram. We shall have use for this fact presently.

In the genealogy of Ezra, as given in the book which bears his name, six consecutive links are omitted, as may be seen by comparing Ezra vii. 1-5 with 1 Chronicles vi. 3-14.

In a list of appointments made by King David we read (1 Chron. xxvi. 24) that Shebuel, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was ruler of the treasures. If no abridgement be

granted here, we have a grandson of Moses living still in the time of David.

That the genealogy of Moses and Aaron, as given in the sixth chapter of Exodus, has been abridged in like manner, may be seen from the fact that while only four links are mentioned from Jacob to Moses, eleven links are mentioned from Jacob to Joshua (1 Chron. vii. 23-27), though Moses and Joshua were cotemporaries; and from the further fact that Kohath (who was the grandfather of Moses if the genealogical list is complete), had 8,600 male descendants in the lifetime of Moses (Num. iv. 36).

If, then, it was customary to abridge the genealogical lists, why should it be necessary to hold that those of Genesis v. and xi., with their suspiciously symmetrical arrangement in groups of ten,<sup>1</sup> are complete, embracing all the links in the line of descent from Adam to Noah and from Noah to Abraham? If it be urged that we must regard these as complete because each patriarch is said to have "begotten" the next one named (thus, Adam lived 130 years and begat Seth, Seth lived 105 years and begat Enosh, Enosh lived 90 years and begat Kenan, Kenan lived 70 years and begat Mahalalel, &c.), Dr. Green answers that in the language of the genealogies this simply means that Kenan was the progenitor of Mahalalel, and Enosh the progenitor of

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Green's statement as to this point is as follows: "The structure of the genealogies in Genesis v. and xi. favors the belief that they do not register all the names in these respective lines of descent. Their regularity seems to indicate intentional arrangement. Each genealogy includes ten names, Noah being the tenth from Adam, and Terah the tenth from Noah. And each ends with a father having three sons, as is likewise the case with the Cainite genealogy (iv. 17-22). The Sethite genealogy (chap. v.) culminates in its seventh member, Enoch, who 'walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.' The Cainite genealogy also culminates in its seventh member, Lamech, with his polygamy, bloody revenge, and boastful arrogance. The genealogy descending from Shem divides evenly at its fifth member, Peleg; and 'in his days was the earth divided.' Now as the adjustment of the genealogy in Matt. i. into three periods of fourteen generations each is brought about by dropping the requisite number of names, it seems in the highest degree probable that the symmetry of these primitive genealogies is artificial rather than natural. It is much more likely that this definite number of names fitting into a regular scheme has been selected as sufficiently representing the periods to which they belong, than that all these striking numerical coincidences should have happened to occur in these successive instances."

Kenan, &c., just as, according to Matthew i. 8, Joram *begat* his great-great-grandson Ozias, and, ver. 11, Josias *begat* his grandson Jechonias. Thus, in Genesis xlvi. 18, after recording the sons of Zilpah, her grandsons and her great-grandsons, the writer adds, "These are the *sons* of Zilpah . . . and these she *bare* unto Jacob, even *sixteen* souls." The same thing recurs in the case of Bilhah, ver. 25. See also ver. 15, 22. "No one can pretend here that the author of this register did not use the terms understandingly of descendants beyond the first generation." See also 2 Kings xx. 18; Isaiah li. 2. In Gen. x. 15-18 it is said that Canaan "*begat*" several whole nations, the Jebusite, the Amorite, the Girgashite, etc. "Nothing can be plainer, therefore, than that in the usage of the Bible, 'to bear' and 'to beget' are used in a wide sense to indicate descent, without restriction to the immediate offspring."

But it may be objected that, while these considerations effectually dispose of the argument for the completeness of the genealogies in Genesis based upon the use of the word "*begat*," they do not explain the writer's statements as to the ages of the patriarchs. "Do not the chronological statements introduced into these genealogies oblige us to regard them as necessarily continuous? Why should the author be so particular to state, in every case, with unfailing regularity, the age of each patriarch at the birth of his son, unless it was his design thus to construct a chronology of this entire period, and to afford his readers the necessary elements for a computation of the interval from the creation to the deluge, and from the deluge to Abraham? And if this was his design, he must of course have aimed to make his list complete. The omission of even a single name would create an error."

The answer to this, the only remaining point of importance, we will let Dr. Green give in his own words. He denies that we are really justified in supposing that the author of these genealogies entertained the purpose of constructing a chronology.

"It is a notable fact that he never puts them to such a use himself. He nowhere sums these numbers, nor suggests their summation. No chronological statement is deduced from these genealogies, either by him or by any inspired writer. There is no computation anywhere in Scripture of the time that elapsed from the creation, or from the deluge, as there is from the descent into Egypt to the Exodus (Ex. xii 40), or from the

Exodus to the building of the temple (1 Kings vi. 1). And if the numbers in these genealogies are for the sake of constructing a chronology, why are numbers introduced which have no possible relation to such a purpose? Why are we told how long each patriarch lived after the birth of his son, and what was the entire length of his life? These numbers are given with the same regularity as the age of each at the birth of his son; and they are of no use in making up a chronology of the period. They merely afford us a conspectus of individual lives. And for this reason doubtless they are recorded. They exhibit in these selected examples the original term of human life. They show what it was in the ages before the flood. They show how it was gradually narrowed down. But in order to do this it was not necessary that every individual should be named from Adam to Noah and from Noah to Abraham, nor anything approaching it. A series of specimen lives, with the appropriate numbers attached, was all that was required. And, so far as appears, this is all that has been furnished us. And if this be the case, the notion of basing a chronological computation upon these genealogies is a fundamental mistake. It is putting them to a purpose that they were not designed to subserve, and to which from the method of their construction they are not adapted. When it is said, for example, that "Enosh lived ninety years and begat Kenan," the well-established usage of the word "begat" makes this statement equally true and equally concordant with analogy, whether Kenan was an immediate or a remote descendant of Enosh; whether Kenan was himself born, when Enosh was ninety years of age, or one was born from whom Kenan sprang. These genealogies may yield us the minimum length of time that it is possible to accept for the period that they cover; but they can make no account of the duration represented by the names that have been dropped from the register, as needless for the author's particular purpose.

The abode of the children of Israel in Egypt affords for our present purpose the best Scripture parallel to the periods now under consideration. The greater part of this term of 430 years is left blank in the sacred history. A few incidents are mentioned at the beginning connected with the descent of Jacob and his family into Egypt and their settlement there. And at its close mention is made of some incidents in the life of Moses and the events leading to the Exodus. But with these exceptions no account is given of this long period. The interval is only bridged



by a genealogy extending from Levi to Moses and Aaron, and their contemporaries among their immediate relatives. (Ex. vi. 16-26). This genealogy records the length of each man's life in the principal line of descent, viz., Levi (ver. 16), Kohath (ver. 18), Amram (ver. 20). The correspondence in the points just indicated with the genealogies of Genesis v. and xi., and the periods which they cover, is certainly remarkable. And as they proceeded from the same pen, we may fairly infer from the similarity of construction a similarity of design. Now it has been shown already that the genealogy from Levi to Moses cannot have recorded all the links in that line of descent, and that it could not, therefore, have been intended to be used as a basis of chronological computation. This is rendered absolutely certain by the explicit statement in Exodus xii. 40. It further appears from the fact that the numbers given in this genealogy exhibit the longevity of the patriarchs named, but cannot be so concatenated as to sum up the entire period; thus suggesting that the numbers in the other genealogies, with which we are now concerned were given with a like design, and not with a view of enabling the reader to construct the chronology." . . . . .

"It may further be added that if the genealogy in chap. xi. is complete, Peleg, who marks the entrance of a new period, died while all his ancestors from Noah onward were still living. Indeed Shem, Arphaxad, Selah and Eber must all have outlived not only Peleg, but all the generations following as far as and including Terah. The whole impression of the narrative in Abraham's days is that the flood was an event long since past, and that the actors in it had passed away ages before. And yet if a chronology is to be constructed out of this genealogy, Noah was for fifty-eight years the contemporary of Abraham, and Shem actually survived him thirty-five years, provided xi. 26 is to be taken in its natural sense, that Abraham was born in Terah's seventieth year. This conclusion is well-nigh incredible. The calculation which leads to such a result must proceed upon a wrong assumption.

On these various grounds we conclude that the Scriptures furnish no data for a chronological computation prior to the life of Abraham; and that the Mosaic records do not fix, and were not intended to fix, the precise date either of the flood or of the creation of the world."