

MONOTHEISM.¹

BY DR. FRIEDRICH DELITZSCH.

THE ETHICAL ASPECT.

IN his *Der Kampf um Babel und Bibel*, p. 20 ff., Professor Samuel Oettli says: "The materials transmitted to us in the Old Testament have been plunged into an atmosphere of *ethical monotheism* and purified by this bath from all ethically or religiously confused and confusing elements. We no longer find the deluge here as the product of the blind wrath of a god, but as the ethically warranted punishment sent by a just god upon a degenerate race."

This is an error. Even the report of Berosus shows us that to the Babylonians also the world-flood was a sin-flood.² Consider his words: "The others cried aloud when a voice commanded them to fear God, as Xisuthros had been translated to the gods because he had been godfearing." While we may assure ourselves from this alone that the Babylonian Noah escaped from the judgment of the deluge because of his piety and the remainder of mankind were destroyed because of their ever-increasing sinfulness, the inference is confirmed by the words in the cuneiform inscription, spoken by Ea after the deluge to Bel who had caused it: "Lay up his sin against the sinner," etc.

Professor Edward König, in his essay *Bibel und Babel*, p. 32, says: "The spirit of the two traditions (Babylonian and Hebrew) is totally different. This is shown by a single feature: The Babylonian hero rescues his inanimate as well as his living property, while in both the Bible accounts we have the higher point of view represented by the rescue of the living creatures only." What

¹ Compiled from the notes written to the Revised Edition by Friedrich Delitzsch in reply to the critics of his first lecture on *Babel and Bible*. Translated by Prof. W. H. Carruth, University of Kansas.

² An untranslatable German pun and popular etymology (Sintflut = "universal flood": Sündflut = "sin-flood").

blind zeal! Even in the fragment of Berosus we read that Xisuthros was commanded to "take in winged and fourfooted animals," and the original cuneiform account says expressly: "I brought up into the ship the cattle of the field and the wild beasts of the field." Accordingly, the "higher point of view" must be conceded to the Babylonian account by König himself.

THE PRIMORDIAL CHAOS.

With reference to mythological features in the Biblical account of the creation something further may be said. Oettli remarks with much truth, p. 12, on the presumption of the existence of a chaos: "The notion of a primitive matter which was not derived from God's creative activity but which had rather to be overcome by it, cannot have grown up on soil of the Religion of Israel, which is strictly monotheistic in its thought, at least on the prophetic heights, and consequently excludes the dualistic conflict of two hostile primitive principles." I call attention here to the remark of Wellhausen also: "If we take Chaos for granted, everything else is developed out of this; everything else is reflection, systematic construction, which we can figure out with little difficulty."

TRACES OF POLYTHEISM.

In the Elohist account of the creation also there are traces of polytheistic elements. When we read (Genesis i. 26): "Let us make men in our¹ own image, after our semblance," Oettli says with justice: "Moreover, that plural of self-appeal preceding the creation of man is not so easily to be reconciled with the later strict monotheism, nor the 'image of God' in which man is created, with the spirituality of Yahveh which is afterwards so strongly emphasised, when once, rejecting all exegetic arts, we give to words their simple and obvious meaning. And this, notwithstanding the fact that the Biblical author, in accordance with his religious position, has given a higher value to these originally foreign elements."

In fact, Genesis i. 26 and Isaiah xlvi. 5 are in irreconcilable opposition. The polytheistic coloring of Genesis i. 27 with its implied distinction of gods and goddesses would appear peculiarly drastic if the three members of the sentence are thought of as quite closely connected: "And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them." But we cannot regard this as sure.

¹ The assumption that we have here a case of *pluralis majestaticus* is not, indeed, precluded by general Hebrew usage, but it is far-fetched; compare iii. 2, the saying of Yahveh: "Lo, man has become as one of us."

BABYLONIAN MONOTHEISM.

It may be recalled that I said in my first lecture: "Despite the fact that free and enlightened minds publicly taught that Nergal and Nebo, moon-god and sun-god, the thunder-god Ramman and all the other gods were one in Marduk, the god of light, polytheism remained for three thousand years the state religion of Babylon."

Jensen has felt warranted in accompanying this remark with the following observations, which have been carried further by König and others with much gratification, as was to be expected: "This would indeed be one of the most significant discoveries ever made in the realm of the history of religion, and therefore we must regret exceedingly that Delitzsch does not cite his source. I believe that I may declare with all positiveness that nothing of the sort can be derived from the texts that are accessible to me. Therefore we beg urgently that he publish soon the text of the passage which deprives Israel of the greatest glory that has hitherto illumined that race,—that of being the only one that worked its way out into pure monotheism."

Very good, if indeed Jensen stands by his expression, Israel is now actually deprived of this its greatest glory, and this by the Neo-Babylonian cuneiform tablet 81, 11-3, 111, known since 1895 and published in the *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* by Theo. G. Pinches,—a tablet which is indeed preserved only as a fragment, but the remaining portion of which shows us that upon it all the divinities of the Babylonian pantheon (or at least the chief ones) are indicated as being one with and one in the god Marduk. I quote only a few lines:¹

"The god Marduk is written and called Ninib as the possessor of power, Nêrgal or perhaps Zamama as lord of combat or of battle, Bêl as possessor of dominion, Nebo as lord of business (?), Sin as illuminator of the night, Samas as lord of all that is right, as lord of rain."

Accordingly, Marduk is Ninib as well as Nergal, moon-god as well as sun-god, etc., in other words, the names Ninib and Nergal, Sin and Samas are only various designations of the one god Mar-

1 il Nin-ib	Marduk sa allî
il Nêrgal	Marduk sa kablu
il Za-má-má	Marduk sa tahazi
il Bê'l	Marduk sa bê'lûtu u mitluku
il Nabû	Marduk sa nikasi
il Sin	Marduk munammîr mâsi
il Samas	Marduk sa kênâti
il Addu	Marduk sa zunnu

duk; they are all one with him and in him. Is this not "indogermanic monotheism, the doctrine of the unity which develops only out of variety"?

THE NAME "EL."

On il, אל God.—All Semitic prepositions were originally substantives. For the preposition אל, which is originally *il*, "toward, to, at," the fundamental significance which from the start seems most probable, "aim, direction," is still preserved in Hebrew, although this was until recently overlooked. It is found in the phrase, "This or that is בְּיָדְךָ אֵלַי," that is, "at the disposal of thy hand," "it is in thy control."

The opinion that אל in this phrase means "power" may have the support of tradition, like thousands of other errors in the Hebrew lexicography, but it has never been demonstrated, and therefore it is not true, as König declares (p. 38), that "*el* is surely equivalent to 'power' or 'strength.'" The only meaning that can be demonstrated is "aim, direction," which carries with it as a matter of course the concrete significance "that toward which one directs himself, end, goal."

The Sumerians conceived of their gods as dwelling up above where the eye of man is directed, in and over the sky; we ourselves use "heaven" figuratively for "God" (comp. Daniel iv. 23); and furthermore, a Babylonian psalm calls the sun-god *digil irsitim rapostim*, the "goal of the wide world," that is, the end toward which the eyes of all the earth-dwellers are directed, and, finally, the poet of the Book of Job (xxxvi. 25), in harmony with an abundance of other passages in Semitic literatures, glorifies God as the one "on whom all eyes hang, toward whom man looks from afar." And just so the earliest Semites called the "divine" being whom they conceived of as dwelling in the heavens above and ruling heaven and earth *il, el*, "that toward which the eye is directed," (cp. the analogous application of אל to God and things divine in Hosea xi. 7). In my opinion the first and original meaning of the word is "goal of the eye," as is the case with the sun and the sky.

Inasmuch as *il* is thus demonstrated to have the meaning "aim, goal," and as the designation of the deity by this word is perfectly in accord with the Semitic habit of thought, and it is therefore not permissible to assume another primitive noun *il*, my interpretation of *el*, the name of God, is established in every point.

It is just as useless and impermissible to seek after a verb corresponding to such a primitive noun as *il* (see König, p. 38), as to

seek after a verbal stem to match others of these most ancient bi-consonantal nouns, such as *jim*, "day," or *mut*, "man."

Besides, the etymology of the word *il*, *el* is not the most important consideration. The chief thing is rather the fact that those North-Semitic tribes which we find established about 2500 B. C. both north and south of Babylon, and whose greatest monarch in later times (about 2250) was King Hammurabi, conceived of and worshipped God as a unitary, spiritual being. Let it be observed that this applies to the North-Semitic tribes which had in part immigrated to Babylonia and afterwards established themselves there, *not* to Sumerian-Semitic Babylonians.

A number of journals have represented it as my opinion that "even the Jewish conception of God was derived from the Babylonian cosmology"; and Oettli (p. 4) says that in my view even "the name and the worship of Yahveh himself, united with a more or less definitely developed monotheism, was a primitive possession of Babylon." But these are misrepresentations.

As to those names of persons which occur so frequently in the time of the first Babylonian dynasty, König is utterly mistaken in declaring (p. 40, 42) that among notorious polytheists the names must needs be translated and interpreted as "a god hath given"; and so is Oettli (p. 23) when he asks: "Who can prove that those names are not to be taken polytheistically, 'a god hath given,' 'a god be with me'?" To say nothing of other reasons, this interpretation breaks down in the case of such names as *Ilu-amranni*, "God consider me!" *Ilu-tûram*, "God, turn thee hither again!" and others. Or, on the other hand, are we to cease to render *Bâb-ilu* "Gate of God," and say "Gate of a god"? No! For the time of Hammurabi we hold fast to those beautiful names which signify so much for the history of religion: *Ilu-ittia*, "God be with me," *Ilu-amtahar*, "I called upon God," *Ilu-abi*, *Ilu-milki*, "God is my father," or "my counsel," *Iarbi-ilu*, "Great is God," *Iamlîk-ilu*, "God sits in power," *Ibsi-ina-ili*, "Through God came he into being," *Avel-ilu*, "Servant of God," *Mut(um)-ilu*, "Man of God" (= Methuscha'el), *Ilûma-le'i*, "God is mighty," *Ilûma-abi*, "God is my father," *Ilûma-ilu*, "God is God," *Summa-ilu-lâ-ilia*, "If God were not my God," and so on.

The names must of course be judged collectively. In the case of certain of them (as in certain Assyrian names, like Na'id-ilu) we might certainly see in "God" merely an appellative, as perhaps in the phrase from the laws of Hammurabi: *mahar-ili*, to assert anything "before God"; or in the phrase that occurs hundreds of

times in the Babylonian contracts of that period, "to swear by God (*ilu*) and the king" (cp. 1 Samuel xii. 3, 5: "by Yahveh and the king"), but taking them all together it seems to me that they make it impossible to think that *ilu* means a "city or family god," or the "special tutelary deity."

Precisely in "the endeavor of a people without philosophical development to be as concrete and specific as possible in its notions and expressions," we should inevitably expect to find in each case the name of the particular divinity intended, or on the other hand if the tutelary divinity of the family or of the infant was meant we should expect to find "my God," or "his God." An unprejudiced and unsophisticated consideration of all these and other names of the Hammurabi period leads rather to the renewed assumption that they are rooted in a religious conception different from the polytheistic views that were native in Babylon. What was the nature and value of that monotheism the contemporary sources do not enable us to determine, but only to infer them from the later development of "Yahvism."

THE NAME "YAHVEH."

We must insist with all positiveness that in the two names *Ya-a'-ve-ilu* and *Ya ve-ilu* the reading *Ya've* is the only one that can be regarded as within the realm of possibility.

The assault upon my reading—which in the light of our present knowledge is irrefutable—has revealed a lamentable state of ignorance in the critics: this ignorance may account for the miscellaneous insinuations which have been indulged in, as when Professor Kittel ventures to speak of my reading as a "partisan maneuver."

In order to at least correct this ignorance, I beg to make the following brief and condensed exposition of the matter for the benefit of my theological critics and of certain of the Assyriologists who have volunteered to advise them. The sign *vu* has the following syllabic values: *pi*; *tal*; *tu*; *tam*, and besides in Babylonian in particular: *me/ve*; *mà/và*; *à*; (*vu*), or as would be perhaps better: *ve*; *và*; *à*; (*vu*). But any one who has become measurably familiar with the style of writing of the Hammurabi period knows that, even if the reading *Ya-'u-mà* be granted, this *mà* cannot possibly be interpreted as the emphasising particle *ma*. Accordingly König (p. 48 f.) and Kittel and others are mistaken; on the contrary, *ma* is without exception written with its customary sign.

Thus the interpretation of the names in question as "Ya, Ya'u is God" is absolutely precluded. Let him who denies this cite one single instance in which the emphatic particle *ma* is written with the character *vu*. And in the case of *Ya-ù-um-ilu*, I may remark incidentally, the *m* may be only mimation and not an abbreviated *ma*.

Neither is the reading proposed by Bezold, *Ya'-a-bi-ilu*, possible, for in the time of Hammurabi the sign *bi* does perhaps represent also the syllable *pi*, but the reverse, sign *vu* for *bi*, is never the case. And on mature reflection the reading *Ya-(a)'-pi-ilu* cannot be considered. It is true that the sign *vu* is found for *pi* in the time of Hammurabi, as frequently in the contracts published by Meissner in his *Beiträge zum altbabylonischen Privatrecht*, and also in the Code of Hammurabi, but the regular sign for *pi* occurs much more frequently. For instance, in the 79 letters from this very period, published by King, *pi* is represented exclusively by its regular sign.

Besides this, a "canaanitish" verb form *ia'pi*, *iapi* could be derived only from a stem הִפֵּה, which does not exist. Instead of *Ya(')ve ilu* we might then at most read *Ya-(a/w-)vâ/u-ilu*, with radical *v*, but by this very emendation we should expose ourselves to the dreaded recognition of a god יהוה. Accordingly my reading *Ya-a'-ve-ilu*, *Ya-ve-ilu* remains the most obvious as well as the only one deserving serious consideration.

I venture on the interpretation of the name *Ya(')ve-ilu* with less confidence than on the reading of it. The interpretation proposed by König (p. 50), "May God protect" (why not, "May a god protect"?), from Arabic *hama*, "to protect," as well as that of Barth (p. 19), "God gives life" (*Ya-ah-ve-ilu*), is highly improbable. As names from a foreign language they would needs appear as *Yahve-ilu*, not *Ya've-ilu* or even *Yâve-ilu*, and only in the last extremity would one be justified in the assumption that these foreign personal names had gradually been Babylonised in pronunciation, at the same time becoming wholly unintelligible. No, if we are to concede that there is a verb-form contained in *ya've*, *yâve*, then it is certainly the most obvious thing to think of the verb הוּה, the older form of הָיָה which is assumed in Exodus iii. 14, and to interpret it with Zimmern as "God exists." My interpretation, "Ja've is God," would accordingly remain by far the most probable in and of itself.

THE NAME "YAHUM-ILU."

The name *Ya-ú-um-ilu* is and remains a foreign name. It belongs among the North-Semitic tribes, more precisely Canaanitic. Among these tribes there is no other god *Ya-ú* but the god יָהוּ, *Yahú*, that god who is contained in the name *Ya-ú-ha-zi* and others.

Now this name of the divinity *Yahú* which is found at the beginning and especially at the end of Hebrew names of persons, is the shorter form of Yahve, "the Existing," and consequently presupposes the fuller form Yahve. Now even to the Jews of the exilic and post-exilic periods the name Yahveh was by no means a *nomen ineffabile*, as is shown by the many names of this later time: *Ya-se'-ya-a-va* = Isaiah (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), *Pi-li-ya-a-va*, and others. So much the less could it have been such to that primitive period in which the name of God, *Yáhveh*, was very far from possessing the sanctity which it was to attain later in Israel.

The name *Yahum-ilu*, therefore, presupposes a fuller equivalent name *Ya've-ilu*. Now when such a name is really twice documented, in *Ya've-ilu*, *Ya-ve-ilu*, should it not be recognised as such without reserve, and the more so as the refusal to recognise it will after all not obliterate the fact of the existence of the North-Semitic ("Canaanitic") name of the divinity *Yahú*, which is perfectly identical with Yahveh, nor the existence of a name *Yahú-ilu*, "Yahu is God," similar to the Hebrew יְהוָה (Joel), a thousand years before the prophet Elijah's utterance upon Carmel, "Yahveh is God" (1 Kings xviii. 39)?

It needs no demonstration to convince competent judges that Barth's interpretation (p. 19) of *Ya-hu-um-ilu* as abbreviated from *Ya-ah-we-ilu* must be rejected.

Jensen too regards it as "certainly in the highest degree probable that both composita contain the name of God *Yaveh-Yahu*," adding very correctly: "Now since the *Ya'wa* in the name cannot be of Assyrio-Babylonian origin, it is surely of foreign origin, and hence, in all probability, the whole name is 'Canaanitic,' and its wearers, or wearer, also 'Canaanites.'" But when he goes on to say: "But because a Müller or a Schultze is met with in Paris, we are not warranted in assuming that the Germans are the prevalent race in Paris; and just as little does an *Ya'wa-il(u)*, appearing in Babylon 2000 years ago, need to prove anything more than that the bearers of this name occasionally came to Babylon,"—when he

reasons thus I confidently leave it to the unprejudiced reader to decide whether, in view of all the names like *Yarbi-ilu*, *Yamlík-ilu*, and so on (not to mention *Hammurabi*, *Ammi-zadûga*, and other Canaanitish names), the delicate parallel of Müller and Schulze is even remotely justified. Furthermore, even Jensen is compelled, as we see, to admit that the evidence is good for the existence of the divine name *Yahve* (*Yahvu*) before 2000 B. C. Moreover, Zimmermann makes this concession: "Even supposing that we have in *ya-ù-um* the name of a divinity, *which is not improbable*, and even the name *Yahu*, *Yahve*, *which is possible*." That is enough for the present; the admission of the reading *Ya-(a')ve* and of my interpretation will probably follow.

And accordingly, if *Ya-ù-um* holds its own as equivalent to יהוה, יהו, then the names of that same period: *Ilu idinnam*, "God hath given," *Sá-ili*, "Belonging to God," *Ilu-amtahar*, "I called upon God," *Ilu-tûram*, "God, turn to me," etc., may with double right be regarded as equivalent in their content to the corresponding Hebrew names.