

MISCELLANEOUS.

DR. RADAU'S CREATION-STORY OF GENESIS.¹

Dr. Radau has written a stimulating little book. It is also a book which contains much information for the Assyriological specialist; indeed it may be feared that the long lists of divine names given in it with the copious references to cuneiform literature will terrify the "general reader." The latter, however, will find much to interest and instruct him in the main subject-matter of the book.

Briefly put, Dr. Radau's contention is that in the Creation-Story of Genesis I. we have a Hebrew adaptation of the Babylonian story of the Creation which unconsciously approaches very nearly the Sumerian original of the latter by representing the Creation as the result, not of a contest between the powers of light and darkness, but of a natural process of generation and perpetuation. The seven days into which the work of creation is divided he believes to be due to the Biblical writer, who also dealt "critically" with his authority, rejecting whatever in the Babylonian legend was inconsistent with his conceptions whether theological or otherwise. That in one important point the Hebrew and Babylonian stories differ entirely from one another has been recognised by all scholars; while the Babylonian account is polytheistic, the Hebrew is aggressively monotheistic. It is, in fact, the emphatic way in which certain polytheistic aspects of the Babylonian story are negated that seems to me the best proof of the dependence of the one upon the other. The Biblical author must have had the Babylonian version of the story before him when he made the Creator exist from all eternity like *Tehom* or Chaos itself, when *Tehom*, the demon-dragon of Babylonian belief was transformed into merely dead and formless matter, and when, as Dr. Radau points out, the names of the Sun and Moon were avoided in the history of the work of the fourth day on account of their polytheistic associations. Samas, Sin and Istar have become for him the "two great lights" and the "stars" of heaven.

I agree, therefore, with Dr. Radau in believing that the writer of Genesis I. had a Babylonian account of the Creation before him. Whether, however, it is the Assyrianised epic which we have recovered from the library of Nineveh, and which is really a pæan in honor of Merodach, is quite another matter. The author of the Epic drew his materials from older compositions, and it may have been one of these that was used by the Hebrew writer. On the other hand, the Creator in the Babylonian story was already Merodach; Ea of Eridu and El-lil of Nippur had already been dethroned in favor of the younger god of Babylon. Dr. Radau

¹*The Creation-Story of Genesis I. A Sumerian Theogony and Cosmogony.* By Dr. Hugo Radau. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Co. 1902. Pages, vi, 70. Price, Boards, 75 cents net (3s. 6d. net).

is clearly right in holding that the creation of the light on the first day in the Biblical narrative is the monotheistic rendering of the birth of Merodach the god of light at the beginning of the creation. But I am not so sure that he is equally right in saying that the creation of light was thus made to antedate that of the sun and moon in order to "make out" the requisite number of seven days. The vegetation which was created on the third day needed light, and the very fact that the creation of light is separated from that of the heavenly luminaries shows that in the author's mind light was independent of either sun or moon. Indeed such a belief would be natural to an Oriental familiar with the afterglow.

There will doubtless be plenty of discussion over the details in Dr. Radau's volume. I do not think, for instance, that the Hebrew word *arets* is used in different senses in Gen. i. 1, 2. The verb in verse two is a pluperfect and the translation is: "Now the earth had been"—not as yet the earth of the present creation, but—" *thohû* and *bohû*," whatever these words mean. Consequently it is not certain that the Tehom or "chaos" and "the breath of Elohim" are convertible. In the words "darkness upon the face of Tehom" we have the Babylonian conception; in the addition, which is a supplement rather than a parallel clause, "the breath of Elohim ever brooding upon the face of the waters"—we must see the Hebrew gloss. The "breath of Elohim" was the vital principle which when combined with the creative voice brought life and order into the world; the darkness, on the contrary, was devoid both of light and of creative power. In the Assyro-Babylonian Epic of the creation the "word" of Merodach creates and destroys; perhaps if we knew more about Babylonian cosmologies we should find that, in some schools at least, the animate creation was believed to have received its life from the inspiration of the divine breath.

Limits of space prevent me from entering into further details, and I can only add that Dr. Radau's book should be read by the theologian as well as by the Assyriologist. Both will find in it food for thought. And to the Assyriologist the pages in it devoted to Sumerian mythology will be especially acceptable.

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MAURICE MAETERLINCK.

Le Temple Enseveli, by Maurice Maeterlinck, contains six essays on the hidden foundations of the Temple of Life. Descending into the heart of existence, he returns to point out the deep meanings hidden in common beliefs, common phrases. Throwing the search-light of his genius on these household words, of which, to paraphrase a famous line, it may be said, "custom makes stale their infinite variety," he flashes through the fog of environment and illumines once more the jewel obscured by its dull and time-worn setting.

The first essay is on that Justice, believed in by most men, but which, apart from the law and order maintaining the equilibrium of the world, conveys to the ordinary mind at best a vague greatness—something which must exist somewhere or somehow, unless all ancient faiths are to fall on the head of the believer. But on closer examination, where can this exterior Justice be found? "Ni la terre, ni le ciel, ni la nature, ni la matière, ni l'éther, ni aucun des forces nous connaissons, hors celles qui sont en nous, ne se préoccupe de justice, n'a la moindre rapport avec notre morale, avec nos pensées, nos intentions;" there is only the relation of cause to effect. The ignorant and unthinking mind may consider the catastrophes of nature—earthquakes, eruptions, and so forth—as the judgments of a ter-