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ART. I.—THE BABYLONIAN LEGEND OF CREATION.* IS IT THE ORIGINAL OF THE STORY IN THE FIRST CHAPTER OF GENESIS ?

[A paper read before the New York Academy of Science; and also before the Victoria Institute, London.]

AMONG the interesting "finds" on the banks of the Tigris are tablets which are said to contain the original of the Hebrew account of the creation, the fall, and the deluge. As to the last, there can be no doubt that the tablets give a distorted version of that great cataclysm. This is not surprising. The comparative nearness of the event accounts for the accuracy of some of the details. As to the fall, Professor Sayce, in his revised edition of Mr. George Smith's *Chaldean Genesis*, says: "No Chaldean legend of the fall has been found." Whether Professor Sayce is right, Assyriologists must decide. The sole question I propose to consider is this: Whatever may or may not be true as to other matters, did the Hebrews derive their cosmogony from the Chaldeans? Is the story on the tablets the original from which the Bible story of creation was taken?

It will, I think, conduce to clearness of thought if we state what is necessary to constitute one document the original of another. 1. It must be older. 2. It must treat of the same subject. 3. There must be great similarity, amounting almost to identity, in thought, language, order of statement, and mode of treatment. The first and second are of no importance without the third.

* As given in the versions of Mr. George Smith, Profs. Sayce and Lenormant.
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THE RELATION OF THE PRESBYTERIAN PRINCIPLE TO THE HISTORIC EPISCOPATE.

The Presbyterian principle is usually summed up in the three propositions of the rights of the people, the parity of the ministry, and the unity of the Church. More largely stated, that is to say Presbyterianism holds that, (1.) The visible Church of Christ consists of all those who profess the true religion (together with their children); and that it is in the Church as a whole, not in any part of or class in it, that the continuity, life, and all the functions of the Church subsist and all Church power radically vests, and by it that all Church powers ultimately are exercised: (2.) To this Church Christ has given a ministry for its instruction, government and administration, which, by apostolic appointment, consists fundamentally, in each local church, of a body of presbyters with their helpers the deacons; but normally, by a differentiation of function which we believe to have apostolic sanction, of a "bishop" (or "pastor," or "teaching elder,") standing as *primus inter pares* at the head of a board of presbyters, together with the helping deacons: (3.) The visible Church is universal, and ought to realize its catholicity in a visible unity; and it is most in accordance with the principles involved in the institutions prescribed by the Scriptures that its unity should be given visible expression through representative courts constituted of the equal presbyters of the several congregations, through which the universal Church exercises its governing powers and each part is subordinated to the whole. This conception of the constitution of the Church comes into contact with the prelatial theory at very many points. There is much that the two have in common; and there is much, and much that is fundamental, in which they are at variance. Among these differences the question of the "historic episcopate" takes by no means the chief place. The insertion of it, however, among the unchangeable marks of the true Church in the somewhat remarkable proposals for "home reunion" issued by the American bishops in 1886 and repeated by the Lambeth Conference of 1888, gives it temporary importance, and forces us to take into careful renewed consideration the relation of the Presbyterian principle to this item of the prelatial theory.

So approaching the subject, we may outline the Presbyterian position toward the "historic episcopate" in the following propositions.

1. The "Presbyterian principle" is irreconcilably out of harmony with the theory that the "historic episcopate" is essential to the being of the Church. With the whole conception of what is commonly known as the High Church theory, the theory according to which episcopacy is not only a lawful method but the only lawful method of Church organization, and without a distinct order of "bishops" a Church ceases to be a Church—is without ordination, without a valid ministry, without valid administration of the Lord's supper, without the covenanted promise of blessing—the Presbyterian conception of the Church stands in fundamental opposition. It denies that the continuity and life of the Church and the fulfillment of God's covenanted promises have been conditioned upon the perpetuation of any external form of organization, and much more that God has suspended the continuance of saving ordinances in the world upon the unbroken preservation of what has been justly called "the mere ligature of succession," that is, the scrupulous performance of the rite of ordination. According to the Presbyterian principle, as according to the whole body of the Protestant confessions (including the Articles of the Church of England) and the earliest fathers, the criterion of the true Church is "the word and the sacraments," or, more simply still, "the word," that is, the profession of the true religion. It heartily adopts the definition of Irenæus, that "where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace;" and it asserts, with all the emphasis of a profound conviction, that it is this Church—the "congregation of faithful men"—which the Scriptures call "the pillar and ground of the truth," to which all the promises are given, in which all powers inhere, and upon which all graces creating offices are poured out from on high. If the invitation of the American bishops to the Church at large to accept the "historic episcopate" means to imply that episcopacy as a form of government is of the essence of the Church, Presbyterians are bound to look upon it as a schismatic proposition with which they can have no dealings. It is with great pleasure, therefore, that we observe a tendency among High

Churchmen of adequate learning and historical sense to abate somewhat the extremity of this position. "No one," says Mr. Charles Gore in his in many respects admirable treatise on *The Church and the Ministry* (p. 344):

No one, of whatever part of the Church, can maintain that the existence of what may be called, for lack of a distinctive term, *monepiscopacy*, is essential to the continuity of the Church. Such monepiscopacy may be the best mode; it may most aptly symbolize the divine monarchy; it may have all spiritual expediency, and historical precedent on its side; nay, more, it may be of apostolic institution: but nobody could maintain that the continuity of the Church would be broken if in any given diocese all the presbyters were consecrated to the episcopal office, and governed as a co-ordinate college of bishops.

We submit that it is then an inconsistency for Mr. Gore to invalidate Presbyterian orders, as he does, and that solely on an unscriptural and unprimitive over-estimation of the "mere ligature of succession."

2. The truth of history prevents Presbyterians from allowing that the "historic episcopate" is an apostolic or primitive institution. Here, no doubt, it is necessary to define somewhat closely what we mean by the "historic episcopate." Presbyterians also believe in and possess an "historic episcopate," the apostolicity and primitiveness of which they are ready to defend, and the members of the same communion with Bishop Lightfoot ought to be the last to deny. But the primitive parochial episcopate already possessed by Presbyterianism, the apostolic authorization of which has been so admirably re-argued by Dr. Lightfoot, is certainly not what is intended by the "historic episcopate" which the American bishops ask the Presbyterians to adopt. But to ask us to-day to allow that the episcopate, in any other sense than is illustrated by the Presbyterian pastor ruling over the local church as *primus* among his equal presbyters, is "a part of the sacred deposit of Christian faith and order committed by Christ and his apostles to the Church," is to ask us to affirm what the well-nigh universal *consensus* of competent scholarship pronounces to be against historical verity. No result of biblical exegesis is more certain than that the New Testament knows nothing of an episcopate separate from the presbytery which governed every organized Church. No result of the critical study of primitive Christianity is more sure, or more

universally recognized among competent scholars of all schools, than that the episcopate rose out of the presbyterate, and only gradually acquired powers and extension until it became, in the third century, the superior and diocesan "historical episcopate" that we are now asked to adopt as part of "the deposit committed by Christ and his apostles to the Church." What is confessed scarcely needs arguing; let us observe, then, that the best scholarship among the prelatists abandons the New Testament field, and appeals to the right of long prescription. Thus Dr. Sanday genially writes:

Our confessional differences represent not conflicting and irreconcilable conceptions of the original constitution of the Church, but only successive stages in the growth of that constitution. The Church passed through a Congregational stage, and (if we exclude the activity of the apostles as exceptional) it also passed through a Presbyterian stage. If any one wishes to single out these stages, and to model the society to which he belongs upon them, he is zealous for a pure and primitive polity; he clings to the Bible, and what he finds in the Bible; he will not allow himself to wander far from that ideal which he thinks that Christ and his apostles have left him. Can we condemn him for this? Shall we not rather say, *εὐδοκίμειτω καὶ ἐπὶ τούτῳ*? Nor yet need that prevent us from thinking that we have a "more excellent way" of our own. We do not think it right to limit the promises and their working to a single generation. The whole Christian world was in a state of movement which did not cease with the death of the last apostle. The impulse once given to it was too strong to spend its strength so soon. I cannot myself think that fifty years, or even a hundred years more or less, in the date in which an institution became fixed, makes so vital a difference in its character. The cold eye of science may look at these things and point out the causes that were in operation. Those causes were the fruit of human experience, groping its way toward the means best adapted to its end—the preservation and due transmission of the word. Even science will probably decide that there has been a "survival of the fittest;" that under the circumstances of those times a better constitution could not easily have been devised.*

3. Presbyterians cannot allow that the "historic episcopate" is essential to the well-being of the Church, or even that it is the best or the natural form of church government. They hold that the proof that our Lord and his apostles did not insti-

* *The Expositor*, November, 1888, pp. 335, 336. Compare, also, Plummer's *The Pastoral Epistles*, p. 107; Stanton's *Lectures on Church Doctrines*, series iii, pp. 16, 17, and Gore's *The Church and the Ministry*, pp. 269, 270.

tute the Church on hierarchical lines is tantamount to the proof that a hierarchical form is not essential to its well-being. They take it for granted that the form given the Church by the apostles is, so far as it goes, the best form for it to take; and that it is meant to teach us how it should be conducted in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth, so that if extensions are to be made they may be most fitly made on the same lines and by the further application of the same principles. They observe that the Church of the first ages, in seeking due expression of her unity, sought it naturally through representative councils wherein the numerous pastors of the flocks met to consider their interests; while it was only under the pressure of Roman imperialism and barbarian feudalism that it was forced into the unnatural prelatic molds of the later ages.* They believe that the principle of representative and collegiate government—of “diffused episcopacy,” if you choose the phrase †—is embodied in the prescribed polity of the local Church, and is the true scriptural principle for its general organization. And they believe this to be not only the scriptural form, but, as it has been excellently phrased, “the natural form, and therefore the natural law of the Church,”—“the mold and type into which it runs when all external pressure and all artificial influence are removed.” They believe it to be God’s will that his Church should be so constituted; they believe that the Church is destined to be so constituted; they believe that her efficiency in the fulfillment of her high mission will be indefinitely increased when she is so constituted. And they therefore cannot accept the “historic episcopate” as either desirable or natural.

4. Nevertheless, Presbyterians are not inclined to erect their own conception of the divinely appointed constitution of the Church into the criterion of the true Church. It is their fundamental principle that where the saving truth of God is, there is the Church; and they conceive themselves to be bound to maintain holy fellowship and communion, “which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, at every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” They cannot but deprecate, therefore, the apparent erection by their Episcopal brethren of a mere denominational

* Compare Gore, *op. cit.*, pp. 104, 106, 112.

† Gore, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

peculiarity into a condition of intercommunion.* As such, they cannot accept it. For themselves, they ask nothing as a condition of intercommunion but faith in our common Lord. They seek first the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace; and are ready, not, indeed, to yield their witness to what they believe the truth of God in doctrine, practice, or government, but to subordinate all else to the presence of the Spirit himself. They have no faith in efforts to seek unity by organization or enforced uniformity—they do not believe it can be attained by “building a great house around a divided family.” In the words of a typical High Churchman, they believe that “the instrument of unity is the Spirit; the basis of unity is Christ the Mediator; the center of unity is in the heavens, where the Church’s exalted Head lives in eternal majesty—human yet glorified.” And they believe that the path to visible unity lies in the cordial recognition that all those—under whatever diversity of creed, worship, organization—are one body who cling by a living faith to the one Head.

If one Presbyterian may be permitted frankly to speak his mind, the present writer thinks that the first practical step toward realizing the grand dream of giving visible unity to the Protestant world must come through a federation, rather than an assimilation, of denominations. If all denominations that are willing to subscribe the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds together with the doctrinal basis of the Evangelical Alliance—and this last he holds essential, since there are some of us who will not easily consent to yield what has been bought in the throes and blood of the Reformation—would appoint delegates according to some equitable basis mutually agreed upon, who should constitute a court to which should be committed the care of all strictly interdenominational matters—visible unity would be accomplished and no denominational peculiarity would be interfered with. Is it not, after all, such a true unity as this, rather than mere uniformity, that we long for?

* *Encyclical Letter* of the last Lambeth Conference, p. 15.

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