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ORDINARY MEETING, APRIL 5, 1886.

W. N. WEST, ESQ., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the last Meeting were read and confirmed, and the following Election was announced :—

ASSOCIATE :—Miss M. H. Cust, London.

Also the presentation of the following works for the Library :—

“Transactions of the Royal Society.”	<i>From the same.</i>
“Transactions of the Royal Geographical Society.”	”
“Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society.”	”
“Transactions of the Philosophical Society of America.”	”
“Transactions of the United States Geological Survey.”	”
“Mr. Gladstone and Professor Huxley,” by Rev. B. W. Savile.	”
“Present Day Tracts,” Religious Tract Society.	”
“Origin, Habits, and Diffusion of Cholera,” by Sir J. Fayerer, K.C.S.I.	”
“On the Vertical Range of Certain Fossil Species,” by Pro- fessor Clappole.	”

The following paper was then read by Mr. H. CADMAN JONES, M.A. :—

*IS THE ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION IN
GENESIS ONE OF A PARALLEL SERIES?* By
W. P. JAMES, Esq., M.A., F.L.S.

[Few have taken a more earnest part in the work of the Institute than Mr. W. P. James, F.L.S., and the following paper is the last of his many valued contributions to the Proceedings of this Institute. As he passed away shortly after completing the MS., the proof-sheets did not receive his final revision.]

1. **F**EW things are more remarkable than the spirit of research which is characteristic of our own times. The same stirring nineteenth century, which has witnessed novel and startling triumphs over the forces of Nature, has also witnessed an astonishing revival of interest in the history of antiquity. The sculptured stones and papyrus rolls of Egypt, the inscribed tablets of Babylonia and Assyria, are no longer silent. It would almost seem as if the intellect of a

busy and restless generation sought relief and refreshment in going back to the calmer atmosphere and less feverish life of the remote past. It is true that much of the re-discovered matter is little more than the driest and crudest materials for history. Beauty of style and elevation of thought are rarely present in these archaic records. This drawback is inevitable, and is really a measure of the enormous moral and intellectual debt which the world owes under Providence to the Jew, the Greek, and the Roman. Still, if the facts are often barely stated, they are, nevertheless, facts, and throw a flood of light on the early condition of Western Asia and Egypt. Few branches of study are more affected by this novel and powerful instrument of research than Biblical archæology. The late highly-gifted decipherer, George Smith, went so far as to call his interpretation of some clay tablets the Chaldean account of Genesis. This ardent enthusiasm is pardonable in one of the pioneers of a new study, for without it who would face the terrible difficulties which lie in the way of the beginner? But subsequent reflection will usually estimate the results gained more soberly. At any rate, the Creation-tablets are interesting, although their relation to Genesis may have been entirely or partially misconceived. Above all, they suggest the question which I propose to discuss this evening. Is the account of the Creation in Genesis one of a series? which to many minds would mean, Is it a mere human tradition or legend, or does it stand alone as the sole authentic form of an original revelation?

But our knowledge of the infancy of our race is too imperfect to allow anything more than a probable answer to this question when treated from a purely historical point of view, which I conceive to be the only mode of treatment which suits a Society like the Institute founded for impartial investigation.

2. It would be impossible, within the limits of this paper, to give an exhaustive account of all the traditions of the Creation to be found scattered about among the nations of the whole world. Nor is it necessary for our purpose. They are generally to be reduced to three classes—the philosophical, the mythological, and the historical; and we need only consider the oldest or clearest types of each class. The myths of savages have scarcely any historical value. They are usually recent in date,—or, at any rate, *cannot be proved to be old*. They are often mere ignorant distortions of Christian, Jewish, or Moslem teaching which have filtered through the intervening strata of population from some civilised settle-

ment. At other times they are merely the weathered relics of an almost-forgotten religious system. The New Zealanders may be taken as a fairly-known example. According to their own admission, they have arrived by sea in their present homes, and Mr. Gisborne (in the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*) says that probably not more than five centuries have elapsed since that event took place. It is obvious that they must have brought their traditions with them, and, as a matter of fact, what cosmology they possess seems only a variation of a widespread Eastern form of emanation. To go to savages for the opinions of primeval man is a grotesque paradox, and can only be justified by a thorough misconception of the past. This unhistorical method has led the Rev. T. K. Cheyne into some crude statements in his article on "Cosmology," in *Encyc. Brit.* (ninth edition).*

3. Theories of Creation admit of being roughly classed as—

(I.) Those which bear traces of a primeval tradition, and in form resemble historical documents.

(II.) Those which have a mythological stamp, and probably arose from the hardening of symbolical language.

(III.) Those which appear to have sprung from independent speculation, the philosophical or metaphysical cosmogonies. But it must be distinctly understood that these classes cannot be separated by any sharp line of demarcation. On the contrary, they run into each other, and it is still possible that a cosmology mainly philosophical or mythological may retain traces of old tradition.

4. *Egypt*.—The immense antiquity of civilisation in the Valley of the Nile makes it a matter of course that we should begin with Egypt. But here we meet with great difficulty in getting at any consistent theory of Egyptian religion. According to most authorities there were many local sets of gods, and in consequence of this multiplicity of cults it is not likely that there was any uniform and generally acknowledged account of creation. Canon Rawlinson tells us (*Hist. of Ancient Egypt*, vol. i., p. 313) that Egyptian religion had "two phases or aspects,—one that in which it was presented to the general public, or vast mass of the population; the other, that which it bore in the minds of the intelligent, the learned, the initiated. To the former it was a polytheism of a multitudinous, and in many respects of a gross, character;

* The most obvious defect of this article is the omission of Hindoo and Greek cosmology; but many readers will regret what seems to them its lack of reverence and insight.

to the latter it was a system combining strict monotheism with a metaphysical speculative philosophy."

Now, if we consult the translations that have yet been published of the monuments, we find mixed up with abundance of polytheistic details striking assertions of the fact of creation, without any attempt to descend into particulars. Thus, in a hymn addressed to Ammon-Ra, the Sun, we read (*Records of the Past*, vol. ii., p. 131):—

Hail to thee, Ra, lord of truth !
Whose shrine is hidden, Lord of the gods ;
Creator, sailing in thy boat ;
At whose command the gods were made ;
Turn the maker of men.

Again, in the same hymn (p. 133):—

The spirits thou hast created exalt thee,
Rejoicing before the feet of their begetter.
They cry out welcome to Thee,
Father of the father of all the gods ;
Who raises up the heavens, who fixes the earth.

Maker of beings, Creator of existences,
Sovereign of life and health and strength, chief of the gods ;
We worship thy spirit which alone has made us ;
We, whom thou hast made, thank thee that thou hast given us birth.
We give praises to thee for thy mercy towards us !

In other documents the god Pthah (Hephæstus of the Greeks) is spoken of as "he who moves the egg of the sun and moon" (apparently an allusion to the widespread conception of the nascent world as an egg which a god cleaves asunder), "the weaver of the beginnings," "the father of the father of the gods," "the creator in heaven and on earth, who has made all things, the lord of all that is and is not" (Duncker, *Hist. of Antiq.*, vol. i., pp. 43-4).

Taken by themselves, these lofty utterances seem to be echoes of primeval revelation. At any rate, their great antiquity gives them immense value. As far as written history goes back, this is the voice of early man, and not the coarse guesses of rude barbarians. At the same time it must be remembered that this creation was ascribed promiscuously to many gods, even to the comparatively insignificant Nile. Side by side with these sublime expressions of a purer faith, speculative and mythological cosmologies existed. Diodorus Siculus knew of one in which a self-begotten wind began to breathe over Chaos ; the elements then proceeded to sort them-

selves according to their weight and other physical qualities, until Land and Sea were distinct from each other. From the soft slime of the still moist earth the Sun's rays produced various animals. But it is impossible to say how far Diodorus has altered the legend, which in itself has not a very archaic look. In consequence of the obscurity and uncertainty still brooding over the subject of Egyptian religion, we must leave their cosmogony without any further comment. Probably, in any case its intensely idolatrous outer form would render it thoroughly distasteful to the Hebrew sojourners in Goshen. This consideration seems to suggest a reasonable explanation of the silence of the Pentateuch about a life after death. The Jews in Egypt must have been most familiar with the conception. The trial-scene of the departed soul before Osiris met their eyes on a thousand tombs, and was wrapped up in a thousand papyrus rolls, but accompanied everywhere by grotesque, repulsive, and ever hideous symbols. No wonder that Moses was silent about a doctrine thus saturated, to his mind, with polytheistic errors,—and, indeed, almost bound up with the worship of Osiris. Moreover, the Egyptian religion in general was one of terror and mystery, suited for a nation of slaves. The escape from the colossal temple-courts of the Delta of the Nile to the free air of the desert of Sinai was religiously, as well as politically, an exchange of servitude for liberty.

5. *Chaldea*.—If Egyptian literature, as far as we know it, seems to have exerted little or no influence on the Jews, many are inclined to ascribe a very different rôle to that of the early Chaldeans. The deciphering of the cuneiform inscriptions is so wonderful a feat of patience and sagacity that criticism is almost silent in the face of such unexpected additions to our knowledge. And no one can quarrel with Assyriologists for assigning a high value to their own discoveries. I may assume that the members of this Institute are familiar with the facts of the discoveries made under the rubbish-mounds of Babylonia and Assyria, many of them by our valued fellow-member, Mr. Hormuzd Rassam. Consequently, without any further preface, I may advance to the examination of the famous Creation-tablets.

When we compare them with the account in Genesis, the first thing to bear in mind is that the Chaldean account, as we have it, is admitted to be a comparatively modern recension. Professor Sayce says (*Chaldean Account of Genesis*, by George Smith, new edition, 1880, page 56):—"It is evident that in its present form it was probably composed in

the time of Assur-bani-pal (who reigned from B.C. 668). It breathes throughout the spirit of a later age, its language and style show no trace of an Accadian original, and the colophon at the end implies by its silence that it *was not a copy of an older document*. . . . Excavations in Babylon may yet bring to light the early Chaldean form of the legend. *But this we do not at present possess.*" If this be really the case, why has it been paraded as a parallel to a very much older record ?

In the next place, it is now admitted that it was premature to describe it as a record of a six-days' creation ; as a matter of fact, the first tablet itself alludes to "a long course of days." Of course, we must remember that the tablets are mutilated.

But the immense gulf which separates this cosmogony from that of Genesis will be best seen by actually quoting the so-called First Tablet :—

When above the heavens were not yet named,
And below the earth was without a name,
The limitless abyss was their generator,
And the chaotic sea she who produced the whole.
Their waters flowed together in one,
No flock of animals was yet collected, no plant had sprung up.
When none of the gods had as yet been produced,
When they were not designated by a name, when no fate was as
yet (fixed),
The great gods were then formed,
Lakmu and Lakhamu were produced (first),
And they grew in (solitude).
Asshur and Kishar were produced (next),
(Then) rolled on a long course of days (and)
Anu (Bel and Hea)
(Were born) of Asshur and of Kishar.*

Now, what we have here is, in reality, a cosmology like that of the Hindoos or ancient Greeks, and not an historical statement like that of Genesis. It begins with pre-existent matter which has apparently had no origin out of itself. From this primeval matter the universe is conceived of as arising by a series of self-begettings or developments, among the products of which are "the great gods" themselves. The notion of creation proper is absent. And here, perhaps, it is time to give a definition of creation. I will do so not in the language of theologians, who may be supposed to have taken a side, but in that of philosophers, as given in Franck's

* The translation is taken from Lénormant's *Beginnings of History*, Eng. trans., p. 491, and varies slightly from that given by Prof. Sayce.

Dictionnaire des Sciences Philosophiques. The editor of that work himself defines creation proper as "the act by which the Infinite Power, without the assistance of any pre-existing matter, has produced the world and all the beings which it contains" (under word "Creation"). That such an act as this is implied in Genesis has been the opinion of almost* all subsequent Jewish writers, both canonical and Rabbinical. Returning now to the First Tablet, we see that the resemblances between it and Genesis are superficial, the differences profound. As to verbal coincidences, could they be avoided in two kindred languages when treating of the same subject? To identify Lakhmu and Lakhamu with the Ruach or spirit of Genesis seems precarious. As for chaos, is it not an unhistorical anachronism to read it into Genesis? The Revised Version says:—"And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Now, this is certainly not chaos, in the usual sense of the word—that of a confused jumble of heterogeneous elements. But if chaos be taken in the older Hesiodean sense of *empty space*, I will admit that it corresponds with "waste and void." When we proceed to the later tablets, we have details about the sun, moon, and stars, plants and animals. But what cosmology can avoid these particulars, as soon as it descends to details? On the whole, I agree with François Lénormant, that the Chaldean account is a cosmogonic epic (*épopée cosmogonique*). Still, I am willing to admit a basis of primeval tradition preserved in the tablets, much distorted, mixed with mythological and cosmological accretions, and in any case obviously later than the Biblical account.

It is now time to recall to our minds the significant fact that the Chaldeans had other legends about the Creation besides this. Berosus, as reported by Alexander Polyhistor, has quite a different story—one truly mythological. According to this writer,—whose date is about 250 B.C., and who may be accepted as an authority on the opinions of his own countrymen,—Oaunes, the fish-god, who rose up from the Persian Gulf, taught the people as follows:—There was originally a dark, watery chaos, over which a gigantic Seawoman, Markaja, or Homoroka, reigned. These gloomy depths were peopled with hideous monsters,—creatures made

* The one apparent exception in *Wisdom* xi. 17, ἐξ ἄμορφου ἕλης, proves little: the author does not assert that the ἄμορφος ἕλη was uncreated. It is merely an inference made by modern critics.

up of limbs from different animals, prodigious productions with multiplied heads or bodies. The god Bel then cleft this woman in twain. Of one half he made the heaven, and of the other the earth, while at the same time he destroyed the monsters which previously existed. Bel then cut off his own head: the inferior gods mixed the blood which flowed from the wound with clay, and so made men. In this fanciful myth I cannot follow Canon Rawlinson in seeing any resemblance to Genesis. Rather it belongs to a series of similar legends, in which the creation of the visible universe is described as proceeding from the fragments of the body of a gigantic human being. The Scandinavians had their giant Ymir, the Chinese their giant Pankee, produced from the world-egg, and there are other traces of this strange notion in other countries.

As there were thus different Babylonian cosmological myths in existence, it is obviously incorrect to speak as if there were only *one* Chaldean account of the Creation.

6. *Old Persian and other quasi-historical Cosmologies.*—It will be most convenient to group together those of the older cosmologies which seem most faithful to the primeval tradition of the nursery of the race. According to Zöckler (art. "Schöpfung," in Herzog and Plitt's *R. E. für protestantische Theol.*), the Zend-avesta represents Ormuzd, in conjunction with the inferior spirits, the Ameska-speutas,* as creating the world in six periods, each of a thousand years, and through his word (Honover). The order of the creative acts is thus given:—(1) Heaven and light; (2) Water; (3) the Earth, and especially the sacred mountain Albordj, or Elburz; (4) Trees; (5) Animals—all derived from the primeval ox; (6) Men—all descended from the primeval man, Kajomort. According to François Lénormant, the six creative periods are conceived as together lasting for 365 days.

It is a very difficult point to settle whether the old Persian theology assumed creation out of nothing. On the whole, it agrees better with the general spirit of their religion to understand their creation as a form of Emanation. Dogmatic assertion one way or the other is obviously what no student with any self-respect will commit himself to.

Another singular echo of Genesis is found in the Old

* These are emanations from Ormuzd; personified attributes. It is ludicrous to compare them with Angels; what they really resemble are the Sophia, Buthos, &c., of the Gnostics.

Etruscan account, if we can trust so late a writer as Suidas (under *Τυρόρηνα*), who wrote in the tenth century A.D. According to this, the world was created in six periods of a thousand years each, in the following order:—(1) Heaven and Earth; (2) Vault of heaven; (3) Sea and other waters; (4) Sun, moon, and stars; (5) Animals of air, water, and land; (6) Man. Coincidences with Genesis so remarkable throw some suspicion on so late a report: it may be taken for what it is worth.

A similar doubt attaches to the Phœnician cosmology given as Sanchoniathon's by a Greek translator, called Philo of Byblos, who lived in the latter half of the first century A.D. The very existence of the assumed Phœnician original is disputed, but the work may still embody genuine Phœnician myths. The legend runs:—At first there was a dark chaos; a wind blew over it, and so arose Desire or Longing. From their union came the fruitful primeval slime which contained the germs of all things: then the heaven was formed like an egg, out of the broken shell of which came sun, moon, and stars: then the air and sea, clouds and winds, thunder and lightning. Waked by the roll of the thunder, primeval man appeared.

7. *Hindoo Philosophy*.—We now advance to those theories of creation which seem to have arisen from speculation pure and simple. The clearest type of these is the Hindoo, which is a system of Emanation. It was not developed in its fulness at once, but was preceded by a simpler Nature-worship, in which honour was chiefly paid to the sky, sun, clouds, and winds.

The earliest form of the nascent philosophical system appears in the later parts of the Vedas as follows:—"Let us set forth the births of the gods in songs of praise and thanksgiving. Brahman-aspati blew forth these births like a smith. In the first age of the gods, Being sprang out of Not-Being. There was neither Being nor Not-Being, neither air nor heaven overhead, neither death nor immortality, no division of day or night; darkness existed, and this universe was indistinguishable waters. But the "that" (from which was nothing different, and nothing was above it) breathed without respiration, but self-supported. Then rose desire (*kama*) in it; this was the germ which by their wisdom the wise discovered in their hearts as the link uniting Not-Being and Being; this was the original creative seed. Who knows, who can declare, whence has sprung this creation? The gods are subsequent to this; who, then, knows whence it arose?"

Here we see a few traces of tradition, but the scheme is fast becoming a cosmology,—a self-begetting process.

But the reflective Hindoo intellect afterwards advanced to a profound and thorough-going form of Pantheistic Emanation, which I shall give in Professor Duncker's words, occasionally abridged (*Hist. of Antiq.*, vol. iv., p. 300, and elsewhere).

Brahman—such is the line of argument in the Vedanta—“is the one eternal, self-existent essence, unutterable and unchangeable. It developes into the world, and is thus creative and created. As milk curdles, as water becomes snow and ice, Brahman congeals into matter.”

It becomes first ether, then air, then fire, then water, and then from water it becomes earth. From these elements arise the finer and coarser bodies, with which the souls of the gods, spirits, men, and animals are clothed. These souls go forth from Brahman like sparks from a crackling fire,—a metaphor common in the book of the law; they are of one essence with Brahman, and parts of the great world-soul. (Elsewhere, the order of their emanation from the impersonal one is given thus:—(1) Personal Brahman; (2) old Vedic gods, such as Indra, &c.; (3) air-spirits; (4) holy and pure men; (5) animals, plants, and finally stones and inorganic matter.) This soul is the world, but also outside and above it; to it must everything return, for all that is not Brahman is impure, without foundation and perishable. In this view there lies a contradiction which did not escape the keen penetration of a reflective spirit. Brahman is intended to be not only the intellectual, but also the material basis of the world. It is regarded as absolutely non-material, eternal, and unchangeable; and yet the material, changeable world is to rise out of it, the sensible out of the non-sensible, and the material out of the immaterial. In order to remove this dualism and contradiction which the orthodox doctrine introduced into Brahman, the speculative Hindoos seized upon a means which, if simple, was certainly bold: they denied the existence of the whole sensible world, they allowed matter to be lost in Brahman. There is only One Being; this is the highest soul (param-âtman), and besides this there is nothing. What seems to exist beyond this is mere illusion. The world, *i.e.*, matter, does not exist, but only seems to exist, and the cause of this illusion is Maya, or deception. Of this the sensible world is a product, like the reflection of the moon in water, and the mirage in the desert. . . . This universal deity is conceived of as a being at rest; its activity and development

into a sensible world is only apparent. It is a Pantheism, which annihilates the world; matter and nature are completely absorbed by the world-soul—are plunged and buried in it.

Such is the mature system of the Pedanta, but many others coexisted with it. Thus, the Sankeja system starts not from unity, but from two principles, mind and matter. These two alone have existed from the beginning, uncreated and eternal.

Then, again, we find mythological legends of the Creation, as, for instance, in the Law-book of Manu, in which the world's egg, which is cleft in twain, and other familiar elements, reappear.

8. *Greek Cosmology*.—The Greek views about the origin of all things are interesting from the genius and originality of the writers and the incomparable beauty of the language in which they clothe their thoughts. From first to last they were of the Aryan type, excluding creation proper, and dwelling chiefly upon the notion of self-development and growth. The oldest cosmogony now in existence is Hesiod's *Theogony*, whose approximate date is the middle of the eighth century B.C. His work, however, has the appearance of having been partly borrowed from earlier sources. The following is a version more or less condensed :—

Verily first of all there came into being Chaos, but afterwards
The broad-bosomed Earth, (to be) the safe foundation for ever
Of all the immortals who hold the summit of snowy Olympus,
And misty Tartarus in the recess of the wide-traversed land,
And Love, fairest among the immortal gods ;
And from Chaos were born Erebus and dark Night,
And from Night again sprang Æther and Day.
And the Earth brought forth the starry Heaven and the Mountains
and the Sea,
Afterwards the Earth was wedded to Heaven, and their
Offspring were six Titan brothers and six Titan sisters.

In all essential points this system agrees with the Hindoo, especially in the early appearance of love (Eros in Greek, Kama in Sanscrit). Hesiod's chaos is usually interpreted as meaning "empty space," and must be carefully distinguished from the latter conception, which, however, dates back to Anaxagoras.

Greek philosophy attempted by sheer thinking to carry on the problem thus started by the Cosmogonists. The earliest Ionic school chiefly asked itself what was the primeval matter out of which the universe evolved itself, gods and all.

Heraclitus, a daring thinker, who sought the first substance in fire, shows a striking resemblance to Zoroastrianism. Anaxagoras was the first who substituted the idea of a mind apart from matter for the original hylogöism, which considered matter as itself animated. In the language of philosophy, he became a Dualist as opposed to the earlier Monists. His own words were, "All things were together, and mind came and separated them." But matter was to him eternal, and so it continued to be through all the schools of Greek philosophy.

The Greeks were never tired of saying, "Nothing comes from nothing": a law true of the usual course of nature, but one which can easily be conceived as infringed at the beginning of nature. As a matter of argument, moreover, the eternity of matter presents as many speculative difficulties as its original creation. The object of my paper being historical, I need not pursue this part of the subject any further.

It will be enough to bear in mind that when Xenophanes, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle reached the great truth of the Unity of the Godhead, they did not advance to the further truth of His Supreme Creative Power. Plato's *Timæus*, in parts, is a remarkable work, and amidst its crudenesses and Oriental elements bears here and there a singular resemblance to Genesis. But the god of the *Timæus* is the artificer, the moulder, the demiurge of matter, which existed from all eternity, and is not quite obedient to him. Great confusion of thought would follow if the convenient word "demiurge" be used as a loose synonym for "creator": it should only be employed in its proper platonic sense.

9. The general conclusions to which I have been led are as follow:—

(1) In a few cosmologies the coincidences with Genesis are astonishing. This is especially the case with reference to those which present an historical form, but it occurs, though to a less degree, in the mythological legends. In the metaphysical systems all connexion with the traditional past is cut off.

(2) The cosmologies which resemble Genesis may be considered as representing, more or less, distorted forms of the original primeval tradition handed down from the first patriarch. No certain fact of history is opposed to this hypothesis, while many favour it.

(3) No existing account can be fairly described as parallel to Genesis, chapter i.

(4) The unique character of the account in Genesis arises from many elements. Its pure Monotheism, the total absence

of grotesque and mythological details, its sublime brevity are obvious to all, and have extorted the admiration of the heathen Longinus. A more subtle distinction from all other cosmologies, with the doubtful exception of the Zoroastrian, is that it implies the original creation of matter by God. Such a notion as creation *ex nihilo* could never have risen spontaneously among early men. And yet it is embodied in possibly the oldest document in existence. In this fact is found a strong presumption in favour of its having been a special revelation.

The importance of creation *ex nihilo* belongs to the province of theology, from which I am properly excluded by the historical method to which I have adhered. I will conclude with expressing my own personal conviction that in this venerable document we probably have a record handed down from father to son as far as Abraham, by Abraham brought into Palestine, and ultimately committed to writing by Moses.

The CHAIRMAN (W. N. WEST, Esq.).—In offering the thanks of the meeting to Mr. Cadman Jones for the admirable manner in which he has read this paper, we must all feel a deep regret at the loss the Institute has sustained in the death of its talented author. We shall now be glad to hear any remarks that may be offered by those present.

Mr. W. ST. C. BOSCAWEN, F.R. Hist. Soc.—The paper read this evening is one of great interest, especially at a time like the present, when the first chapter of Genesis has called into play two of the greatest minds in England; for, when we find men like Professor Huxley and Mr. Gladstone fighting over that particular portion of the Old Testament, we may feel assured that it is undergoing very severe criticism. The subject embraced by Mr. James's paper is one to which he has given a wide scope, and, if I may be permitted to say so, I am afraid the author has taken almost too extensive a range, inasmuch as, in my humble opinion, the Indian and Greek traditions, to which he has referred, can hardly be brought within the limits of this discussion, because we scarcely know the sources from which they come, and, moreover, they differ so essentially from the older Hebrew and Chaldean traditions that they ought not to be admitted into a consideration of the relationship borne by the first chapter of Genesis to the really old traditions of the world's cosmogony. If we look into the traditions that have come down to us, we find that there are three which stand out distinctly as what are known as *the* ancient traditions, and they are also remarkable from the fact of their close relationship to each other. These three traditions are, first, the Phœnician, secondly, the Hebrew, and thirdly, the Chaldean, and it is evident that they have a common origin, as far as locality is concerned. It is now very generally admitted that the Phœnicians came from the shores of the Persian Gulf, and few will deny that the same land was the birthplace of the

Jewish people, nor that the Chaldeans are inhabitants of the same part of the globe. I differ very much from the author of the paper, for I think there was a great deal more in common between these peoples than he has been able to see, partly, I suppose, because he has been dealing with M. Lenormant's translations, which do not bring the fullest light of history to bear upon the subject, while there are a few works that have been written since that of M. Lenormant which would have thrown more light on the question. There is one, indeed, which I think every clergyman who wishes to understand the first chapter of Genesis would do well to consult; I refer to Professor Schröder's Commentary on the "Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament," in which the points of contact between the Hebrew and the Chaldean traditions are brought out very clearly, without any attempt at enforced agreement; indeed, if anything, I think there is too conservative a spirit exercised, although that, in my opinion, is much better than rushing into hasty conclusions; and here I should like, for a moment, to allude to these points of contact, as they may be put forward. I should say that I have treated this subject very fully in one of my Museum lectures on the Creation, delivered some time since, but subsequently published in a work which was issued last year, and most of the arguments on the matter may there be found; there are also one or two points upon which I should like to add a few words. The revised translation of the first chapter of Genesis brings out these points a little more clearly than before. The first point is this—that both the Hebrew and Chaldean accounts start with the idea of a pre-existent earth; both presenting the same conception, that the earth was unnamed—that is, without order or arrangement, without form, and void—and that the whole was shrouded in darkness. Here I can hardly conceive on what ground the author of the paper has proceeded. He says, on page 240: "To identify Lakhmu and Lakhamu with the Ruach, or Spirit of Genesis, seems precarious." I do not know whether he refers to an identification by M. Lenormant; but, if so, I agree with him that that is very hazardous. There is, however, a reasonable identification to be made; for in the third line of the first of the Chaldean Tablets we have the limitless abyss as the mother, or rather, not exactly the mother, but the source of the offspring, of Lakhma; and the word *absu*, "the abyss," is explained in bi-lingual Tablets as "house of wisdom," *absu* itself having the abstract idea of wisdom. Thus we have the same idea as that which we get in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, as to wisdom being the beginning of all things—"I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." We have also another point of contact, even more striking, in that, both in the Hebrew and Chaldean accounts, the greatest prominence is given to light as the first product of Creation. There is one line on this Tablet which was a puzzle to Assyriologists for many years. The first word on that line was never found in any other inscription, so that it was isolated, and difficult of explanation; but Dr. Haupt and Dr. Schröder have at last succeeded in getting at the full translation. M. Lenormant had guessed at

it, as most of us had,—“No flock of animals was yet collected; no plant had sprung up.” The last part of the line was right, and the meaning of the line is: “The darkness had not withdrawn.” Now, “gipara” is explained to mean the great darkness—“the great darkness had not been gathered up,” or “the veil of darkness had not been drawn back.” Then follows the sequence, and “plants had not sprung up.” There being no light there could not be any vegetable product; so that the necessity for light in the production of plants, and of life generally, on the face of the earth, is here recognised. As I have suggested in my lectures, the two words Lakhmu and Lakhamu came from the root Lakham, which means to struggle and fight, and, also, to divide; and thus these names may be taken to signify the division between the upper and lower halves of nature—between the earth and the heavens—corresponding to the firmament in Genesis. Professor Sayce intimated—at the very time I had made the same suggestion, not having seen that of Professor Sayce,—that Assar and Kisar really mean the Host of Heaven and the Host of Earth. Thus we have a parallel to what we see in the second of Genesis, where allusion is made to “all the host of them.” Now, Assar corresponds exactly to *tseba hashshamaim*, the Host of Heaven. It means really, that all the essences of earth and heaven were separated from each other, so that the agreement between this and the Tablets on that point is more close than would at first appear. I now come to speak of a more important question, which I think we must consider, inasmuch as the author of the paper altogether takes the historical line of argument to be a question of age. The author says, quoting Professor Sayce,—“It breathes throughout the spirit of a later age; its language and style show no trace of an Accadian original, and the colophon at the end implies, by its silence, that it was not a copy of an older document.” I believe, however, that it does show traces of Accadian origin, and that it is evidently of ancient date. But we cannot place the formulation of that document—though it was probably not the same form as that in which we have it, but slightly different, and possibly more crude in style—later than 2000 B.C. The reasons on which I found this conclusion are very clear, and I will state them as briefly as I can. In the first place, I would point to the resemblance of this document and the other Creation Tablets, and especially of the 5th Tablet, of which we have the largest portion, to other religious texts. There are phrases which occur in Hymns and in Litanies which are as old as 2000 B.C.; and there is also to be noticed the same arrangement of the Pantheon of the Gods that occurs in the inscription of Khammurabi 120 B.C. There is every indication that the Pantheon of that time was arranged on the same lines as that of the time of Assur-bani-pal; but the strongest evidence as to date is that obtained from the 5th Tablet of the series. That Tablet does not come into the scope of the author's paper; but if it had, it would have assisted him materially in proving his point. It relates to the creation of the sun, the moon, and the stars; and

in many details agrees in a remarkable manner with the first chapter of Genesis; and, although there are differences in some, it is those very differences which enable us to judge of its antiquity. In the Hebrew account of the creation of the great lights, it will be remembered that they came in the order of the sun, the moon, and the stars; but this order is reversed in the Chaldean Tablet, where we get the stars, the moon, and then the sun last of all. As I have pointed out in my book, this argues an antiquity which is very great in one way, because we know that the moon, in the old system, always had priority of the sun. Again, it indicates that the tradition must have been drawn up by a pastoral people, to whom the moon was always more favourable, and by whom it was held in greater respect than the sun. In fact, the general grouping of this Tablet shows that it was written at a time when the Babylonians had not shaken off the earliest traditions of their old moon-worship, and become attached to the worship of the sun, as they did at a later period. I now come to the still more difficult and dangerous question of the earlier form of these legends, and here I would refer those who wish to study the subject to two remarkable articles that have recently appeared. One is a paper by Professor Dillmann on the origin of the Hebrew traditions, which was read before one of the Berlin Societies; the other is an article written by Canon Driver, in the January number of the *Expositor*. In both of these, the first chapter of Genesis is discussed by these well-known scholars, who throw great light upon the question. If you take the traditions of Chaldea and those of Phœnicia, and place them side by side, you will find certain common features. As I stated at the commencement of my remarks, you will find that the three nations, having the three oldest cosmogonic traditions, all came from the same locality; and I was glad to see that Dr. Schröder had come to the same conclusion as myself, namely, that these traditions are in reality much older than we at first supposed, and that there might have been a time when there was a common tradition of the beginning of all things current among the Semitic people, which, perhaps, in Chaldea, became slightly tainted with Accadianism, and in Phœnicia, probably, slightly influenced by Egyptian teaching, so that it has come down to us in forms different from the primal tradition. Still, I say that underlying all this there is a common tradition which, if you strip it, as an expert might strip it, from its Accadianism and Egyptian influences, and lay it side by side with the account in Genesis, will show a remarkable agreement pointing to an old primal stock from which all came. It is these traditions, then, which have really to be considered. Of the Zoroastrian and Indian traditions it is difficult to say anything, because we cannot discuss them on the same basis as the other traditions, of which we really know the antiquity. Again, they are full of decidedly mythological and philosophical matter, whereas the strong point in the Chaldean and Hebraic traditions is that they are essentially the work of men who were students of nature. To say the least of it, the more one studies the account of Genesis and the Chaldean account, the

more clearly does one see how the men who wrote them must have studied nature.* The confusion of darkness is the beginning of all things ; there is the necessity for light for the existence of all nature. These things stand out distinctly from the Indian, Greek, and Persian traditions on the very point which the author of the paper has so well emphasised, namely, their simplicity. The paper is one which I am glad to have had the opportunity of seeing, because it has opened up a rich ground. The subject it treats with, is one of great importance, and it is one on which a great deal of light is at the present moment flowing in. It has been dealt with by two of our greatest minds, and from almost all points of view the first chapters of Genesis are now being discussed in every part of the world. There are articles on the subject in the American theological reviews, and, generally, it is under discussion at the present moment in such a way, and aided by such an armoury of facts and critical material, as it was impossible to bring to bear upon it some years ago when the *Vestiges of Creation* and books of that character were written. This paper is one which shows a large amount of reading ; but I cannot help saying that the matter might be much more largely developed, and the coincidences between the Hebrew and Chaldean accounts, and even the Phœnician, much more fully brought out than has yet been done. There is one other point which I ought here to mention. It is very remarkable that in the Egyptian accounts, of which there are a few extracts here, we get no trace of the old traditions of the Creation or the Deluge. It is curious that the African races, almost without exception, are void of these traditions ; and it is still more remarkable that where these traditions are strongest and clearest and most simple, it is the Semitic family in whose hands was placed the duty of handing down the REVELATION that finds its purest utterance in the earliest chapters of Genesis. There is one point in the paper to which I should like to refer, and that is where the author alludes to its being premature to speak of these Tablets as a record of the six days' Creation. I think it is, for we have only pieces of the 1st, 5th, and 6th Tablets ; but there is an indication on those Tablets that there was a division into periods, and as the last fragment seems to point to the creation of man, it is just possible that the same division of time as that given in Genesis may have existed. There are one or two matters on which, although they are not mentioned in the paper, I may, perhaps, be allowed to speak. I allude to what is found on the 5th Tablet, for it is on this that the whole question of the value of Tablets and their dates turns. The 5th Tablet is remarkable as showing the careful study of nature the writers of that Tablet must have made, and how they had watched even the phases of the moon, the divisions of time, and the seasons. Just as

* For the purposes of argument Mr. Boscawen has dealt with the subject on the lowest ground, viz., that even if one regards the account in Genesis as a tradition, one must see its great superiority over what are acknowledged by all to be simply traditions.—[ED.]

we are told in Genesis the lights were fixed for the measurement of time and the seasons, so, in the Tablets, we are told that the moon and stars were fixed for the same purpose. The first chapter of Genesis embodies a careful *résumé* of the laws of nature; but it does not attempt to do what some people have tried,—it does not try to make it a sort of scientific treatise. There is no need for anything of the sort. Genesis does not profess to teach geology or natural history. It shows how, step by step, the various phenomena of nature were created by the hand of the Almighty; but it does not attempt to arrange them according to geological strata; and any endeavour to prove that it does is simply a stretch of language, and an ill-judged effort to infuse into the simple and accurate account there given a meaning it is not intended to convey. That, at any rate, is the position I have always taken with regard to the first chapter of Genesis. Another remarkable point in regard to these Creation Tablets which may be brought out by one who has studied them, is found in the 1st Tablet:—"The Great Gods were then made." This does not convey the full sense of the word used there, *ibbanū*, "were made." The expression thus used is the reflexive form of the verb, and gives the idea of self-creation,—the Great Gods made themselves. There is another line,—“When none of the Gods had come forth.” The expression used is, “Had caused them(selves) to come forth,”—again in the reflexive sense, as if there were the idea of God in creation conveyed by the language of the Tablets. Those who have studied the Tablets as presented in Schröder's book, which, I think, gives the best translations, will see, especially if he has a fair knowledge of Hebrew, the great care with which those Tablets were drawn up, evidently as though they were intended to be canonical documents. Every word seems to have been carefully weighed, almost as if the documents had been drawn up like a *credo*, their whole style showing the same care as would have been exercised had it been meant that they should be used as standard documents of religion. The documents—certainly in the form in which we have them—were written in the time of Assur-bani-pal, but there is a little fact, as coming from a little Tablet, which goes strikingly to prove that they were much older than that period. Among the Tablets that were brought over, I think with the last collection sent by Mr. Rassam, was a small fragment, which is a duplicate of one of the Creation Tablets, bearing upon it the date of the reign of Nabonidus. That Tablet is the same, word for word, as the Assyrian Tablet, though it is not copied from the Assyrian account, but is taken from one in the library of the Temple of Nebo. We know that the majority of the Tablets in the Assyrian libraries were copied from the Babylonian Tablets. We know that those libraries were not destroyed, as was imagined at one time, by the Assyrians; but that the Tablets were preserved, and that duplicates of the Tablets in the Assyrian library at Nineveh are also to be found in the library at Babylon. Another Tablet, which was discovered about two years ago, is one belonging to the Creation series. It contains an account of the war between Marduk and the Demon of Darkness. As I

said at the time I first examined that Tablet, when Mr. Budge, who discovered it, allowed me to look at his copy, it is simply a myth founded on the first fight between light and darkness. It is, in reality, a most poetic elaboration of the phrase "Let there be light." The first work of Creation is the destruction of darkness, which brooded and coiled round the earth, as the serpent is said to have coiled round the cosmic egg, so that the darkness which for centuries had shrouded the earth was destroyed by the first bright ray of light. This idea had grown up and expanded so poetically in the minds of the Babylonian priests, that it resulted in the very beautiful legend of the destruction of the Demon of Darkness, or of Evil, by the powers of light. This, as I have said, was nothing but an elaboration or expansion of the simple idea we have in the words of Genesis,— "Let there be light." The conception of the destruction of darkness had grown out of that beautiful poetic statement, and it is this that has come down to us as one of the Creation fragments. There are many other questions which might be gone into in discussing these points; but I should occupy too much time were I to go into them now. The paper read this evening is one which opens up another very important question. I have been rather astounded at finding such a paper here, because about ten years ago I read a paper of my own, at a meeting of this Society, dealing with these Creation legends. On that occasion I put forward many of the theories that appear in the production before us, and I remember that they were not so well received as they appear to be at the present time. I am glad to find that ten years of study on the subject of Assyriology, and matters appertaining to Babylonian research, have enabled the ideas, of which I am speaking so freely this evening, to be accepted as well as they have been. You may depend upon it that there is nothing to fear from these Assyrian inscriptions, and that so long as you study them carefully, and are content to say "I do not know," instead of jumping to conclusions, as I consider M. Lenormant has, putting forward hasty deductions which have done harm,— so long, I say, as you are able to examine these things honestly and fairly, placing them side by side with the Biblical narrative, you will find there is very little contradiction; and that often where you think contradiction exists, in a few years, by means of other inscriptions, the apparent contradiction is gradually smoothed away. There is one point which I think ought to be remembered. We must try and get over an idea that is prevalent in many minds. I allude to the idea that the first chapter of Genesis, and the traditions attaching to that account, were written only at the time, some say of Moses, and others that of David. They have been preserved for centuries, and handed down from one generation to another. The traditions which I believe Abraham brought out of Chaldea, and which were then handed down from father to son, have, probably owing to the peculiar life the Hebrew people led, at one time in the desert, and at others in places where they were least subject to Egyptian influence, been preserved in a condition of purity far exceeding that of the

other versions found in Phœnicia and Chaldea, which have come from the some primeval stock.

REV. F. B. PROCTOR, M.A.—I wish to ask a question of Mr. Boscawen. He has identified “Ruach” with the word Wisdom.

MR. W. ST. C. BOSCAWEN.—Yes.

REV. F. B. PROCTOR, M.A.—You are, I presume, aware that that is not the usual acceptation ?

MR. W. ST. C. BOSCAWEN.—I know that the word is rendered differently.

REV. F. B. PROCTOR, M.A.—Wisdom is identified rather with the expression “God spake,” than with the Spirit ; and that I think accords with the idea of the cosmic egg, which is only another way of reading that first chapter of Genesis, in which we are told that the Spirit of God brooded over chaos and hatched, as it were, the life which followed. Is it not the case that the Wisdom spoken of in Proverbs, and all through the Bible, is identified with the Word, and with the incarnate God Himself ? There is another question which occurs to me in reference to what appears on page 238. We clergymen, I suppose, look at these things a little differently from others ; but we are open to conviction. On the same page of the paper, I think the author has fallen into a great mistake. Speaking of immortality, he says, —“The Jews in Egypt must have been familiar with the conception. The trial scene of the departed soul before Osiris met their eyes on a thousand tombs, and was wrapped up in a thousand papyrus rolls, but accompanied everywhere by grotesque, repulsive, and ever hideous symbols. No wonder that Moses was silent about a doctrine thus saturated, to his mind, with polytheistic errors.” Now, we have always understood from the Pentateuch, and from Genesis in particular, that the idea of immortality, or a future life, was kept in the background. It was not the plan of Moses to develop the idea of immortality. The doctrine existed but as a germ, which went on increasing until we come to our Lord’s time. I merely call attention to this as a slip, and do not wish to be too critical. There is another point I would refer to. On page 243, speaking of Brahman, the author says,—“As milk curdles, as water becomes snow and ice, Brahman congeals into matter.” When some one asked, “What is matter ?” the answer, given in French, was, “L’esprit congelé.” It is singular to see the same thing thus stated with reference to Brahman.

MR. W. ST. C. BOSCAWEN.—It is curious to find, in one of the books, the idea of future life in the under world, or the grave, or sheol, most fully developed—that book being generally admitted to be the oldest of all, the book of Job.

REV. F. B. PROCTOR, M.A.—But that is disputed.

MR. W. ST. C. BOSCAWEN.—I have shown, in a book I have published, that the words are, in many cases, word for word with those we find in the Assyrian inscriptions.

REV. F. B. PROCTOR, M.A.—I only spoke of the idea as an undeveloped one.

Mr. W. St. C. BOSCAWEN.—As to the reference made to wisdom, I have said that I am no theologian ; but what I meant when speaking of the subject was to call attention to the peculiar form which “*absu*” takes in the Assyrian inscriptions. It is remarkable that we find “*absu*,” or wisdom, filling people with knowledge, just as we have the spirit of the Lord filling Balaam and the messengers of Saul. Perhaps the comparison I have made does not hold good on theological grounds, but it seems to me to express the nearest approach we can get. The word occurs in the third line of the Tablet, and is translated “limitless abyss” by M. Lenormant. I do not argue the matter from a theological point of view.

The meeting was then adjourned.
