

terseness, attention to the text, accurate scholarship, the removal of ancient errors of translation, varied learning, independent judgment, the study of the context, the study of books in their entirety, decisive clearness, and attractive interest, then we may say, with thankfulness and a sense of encouragement, that an age which has been so prolific of discoveries in all other branches of science has not been untrue to its opportunities and obligations in the domain of scriptural interpretation.

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THE USE OF MYTHIC PHRASES BY THE OLD
TESTAMENT WRITERS.

I. ON Ps. xxii. 3.

IN the present series of *THE EXPOSITOR* (vol. i., p. 319, cf. p. 400) I have endorsed the once heretical theory that the Old Testament writers love to pick the wayside flowers of popular mythic imagery; and truly Delitzsch,¹ no less than Kuenen, has cordially acknowledged this to be a proved fact. The servants of the highest Truth may have so interwoven these earthly growths with blooms of another clime that for a long time they were unrecognised by the common eye, but now that our sight has been strengthened by the criticism of other literatures, we should be dull indeed to disregard them, and now that our conception of providential guidance has been widened, we should be equally dull to be offended at them. "We are not distressed"—it

¹ See many passages in Delitzsch's *Psalms* and *Genesis* (see e.g. notes on Gen. i. 10 and vi. 2 in new edition); also the article, "Are there Myths in the Holy Scriptures?" by Dr. Franz Delitzsch, in *The Independent*, New York, Aug. 20th, 1885.

is the reassuring remark of Cardinal Newman—"to be told that the doctrine of the angelic host came from Babylon, while we know that they did sing at the Nativity; nor that the vision of the Mediator is in Philo, if in very deed He died for us on Calvary."¹

The Cardinal (if we may antedate his assumption of dignity) is obviously unprepared to examine the evidence for the former statement; possibly beneath his tolerance there lurks a slight suspicion of contempt for criticism. As to the Cherubim, however (not really angels, I admit, but certainly superhuman beings), the Babylonian affinities of the conception are unquestionable. (It is not necessarily on this account—see below—to be relegated to the Captivity.) Whether or not *kirubu* is a name for the colossal divine figure which guarded the entrance to a Babylonian temple,² one side of the conception confessedly finds its analogue in the "throne-bearers" (*guzalâni*) spoken of in the Babylonian Flood-story and elsewhere. Just as the presence of Mul-lil, the supreme god of Nipur, was mediated by his "throne-bearer,"³ so that of the true El Elyôn ("God most high") was mediated by the Cherubim; the old mythic word was retained by the sacred writers as an acceptable symbol. Now let us notice how the familiar divine title "that dwelleth upon the cherubim," is spiritualized by the psalmists. Properly speaking, it describes Jehovah as the absolute master of the forces (especially the more awful forces) of the universe. But the sacred poets know that Jehovah is not only El Shaddai (a God of destructive power, cf. Isa. xiii. 6), but a God of lovingkindness,—read the lovely words of Ps. lxii. 11, 12. He is not fully revealed by awful deeds of judgment; there are two Cherubim, and their names are "righteousness and judgment" (Ps. xcvi. 2).

¹ *Essays*, ii. 233 (*Milman's View of Christianity*).

² *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, Jan., 1886; *EXPOSITOR*, vol. i, p. 400.

³ Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 145, 154.

Now the most important side of God's "righteousness" (*i.e.* fidelity to His revealed principles of action) has a name of its own—"lovingkindness," and the Divine love calls forth the responsive love of His people. Consequently Jehovah's "throne-bearers" ultimately become the loving praises of His people. "But thou," says the Psalmist, "art the Holy One, enthroned upon the praises of Israel" (Ps. xxii. 3). With which we should compare Ps. viii. 2, "With the mouth of children and sucklings (*i.e.* with the thanksgivings of childlike believers) thou hast founded strength (*i.e.* a stronghold), to still the enemy and the revengeful."

II. ON ISA. xxix. 1, 2; Ps. xlvi. 2; ISA. xxxiii. 7.

We have seen that the "cherubim" have Assyrio-Babylonian affinities. If so, must not the "mountain of Elohim" (Ezek. xxviii. 14)—the original of the mountain of Purgatory and of the earthly Paradise in Dante—be related to the same system of mythology? Lenormant and Friedrich Delitzsch have sufficiently proved that it must. At this point two fresh questions arise, to which, however difficult, an answer has to be sought. First, does the Old Testament contain the Babylonian name of the vast "mountain of the countries" (Arâlû) on whose summit the divine beings dwell? and next, how early can such references to this mountain be traced?

Lenormant thought (*Les origines de l'histoire*, ii. 1, p. 136) that "the land of Havilah where there is gold" (Gen. ii. 11) might, in the mind of the original narrator, be "the land of Harâlâh," *i.e.* of that very mountain Arâlû of which we are in quest, and which the Babylonians believed to be rich in gold (cf. Sayce, *Academy*, Jan. 28th, 1882, p. 64; *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 360). But granting the possibility of the corruption of הוֹלָה into חַרְלָה, why the feminine termination? A purely Hebrew explanation of Havilah (a

name of no uncommon occurrence) as "sand-land,"¹ is certainly more plausible. Jeremias however has lately found traces, he thinks, of the name Arâlû elsewhere (*Die babylonisch-assyrischen Vorstellungen vom Leben nach dem Tode*, 1887, p. 121, etc.). One of his instances is from the prophet of the Exile referred to above. In Ezek. xliii. 15, 16, we find אַרְיָאֵל, אַרְיָאֵל, or אַרְיָאֵל (all these readings occur—the Septuagint has ἀριήλ) as a designation of the altar-hearth in Ezekiel's ideal sketch of the restored temple of Jerusalem. Now, just as Mount Zion is (since Jehovah's removal from Sinai, Ps. lxviii. 17) a kind of earthly symbol of the invisible "mountain of Elohim" ("heav'n's high steep," in Milton's phrase), so, according to Jeremias, the altar was a symbol in miniature of the terrestrial Arâlû—mount Zion; or why not say at once, a lesser symbol of the true Arâlû? That the name was given to the altar-hearths of other "high places" (cf. Mesha's inscription, lines 12, 17)² did not hinder Ezekiel from using it of the one altar which he could regard as legitimate. Jeremias naturally goes a step further, and regards the puzzling "Ariel" in Isa. xxix. 1, 2, which the Targum translates "altar" (Sept. has Ἀριήλ), as miswritten for Arâl (אַרְיָאֵל for אַרְיָאֵל; cf. דִּיֵּיג for דִּיאַג, 1 Sam. xxii. 18 k'thib). Zion is, ideally, "the mount in which God has desired to dwell" (Ps. lxviii. 16); in short, a "mountain of Elohim" more truly, though *at present* (cf. Isa. ii. 2) less visibly, than mountains like those of Bashan (*ib.* 15); Zion is a true symbol of Arâlû—is Arâlû. Yet Jehovah, says the prophet, will afflict this Arâlû or (dropping the case-ending) Arâl, so that it shall be like that melancholy world of the shades (see *v.* 4) which the Babylonians placed in the inmost recesses of the great Mountain, and which equally bore the

¹ So Delitzsch, in the new edition of his *Genesis*; and so Spurrell in his useful volume of *Notes* (Oxford, 1887).

² Jeremias does not refer to this; probably he doubts the reading.

name Arâlû.¹ I can see no insuperable objection to this attractive view, and think that none of the rival theories are as satisfactory.

Again a question suggests itself. Just as the false Arâlû (false, from a prophetic point of view) is referred to once (Isa. xiv. 13; see below²) without being named, is there any passage in which the true Arâlû is described in phrases of mythic origin? May we appeal to Ps. xlviii. 2? It certainly looks as if the phrase "the recesses of the north" were a synonym for "mount Zion" (the symbolic earthly Arâlû), just as "in the mount of assembly" (A.V. and R.V. "of congregation") is parallel to "in the recesses (R.V. "uttermost parts") of the north," in Isa. xiv. 13. This is not satisfactory however; what appropriateness has such a phrase in an eulogy either of Jerusalem as a whole or of mount Zion? The former was popularly regarded as "umbilicus terræ" (Ezek. xxxviii. 12, Vulg. and R.V. marg.; cf. v. 5); the latter was more probably on the east than on the north side of the city. Besides, do we not require "in the recesses of the north"?—an accusative of place is hardly natural between two nominatives. What then are we to say of the phrase? Can it be genuine? The verse is complete enough without it. May not a scribe have noted down in the margin of his manuscript two catchwords from a passage in Isaiah (xiv. 13), which seemed to him to be parallel to Ps. xlviii. 2,—catchwords which afterwards, as in other instances, found their way into the text?

The last passage I have to quote is Isa. xxxiii. 7, "Behold, אראלם (v. l. אראלים) cry without; the messengers

¹ On Arâlû (or Arallû), cf. (besides Jeremias' book) Friedr. Delitzsch, *Wo lag das Paradies?* p. 120, etc.; Sayce, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 358, etc., etc.

² A.V. renders "the mount of the congregation," assuming, on the analogy of אֶתֶל מוֹיָר (misrendered "the tabernacle of the congregation") that the phrase referred to the "sanctuary of Jehovah." So even Bishop Lowth. This confounds the mythic Babylonian and the symbolic Israelitish Arâlû.

of peace weep bitterly." Two things seem at a glance reasonably probable: (1) that אֲרָאֵל (separating the noun from the termination) should be explained in accordance with Isa. xxix. 1, 2; and (2) that the termination is that which marks the plural. Rashi noticed the first point; he connects this verse with verse 10, and explains, "Behold, for the altar which belonged to them long have they cried and lamented." Among the moderns, I take a pleasure in mentioning Henderson (in general, a perfectly useless guide), who renders, ingeniously enough, "Behold, their Ariel [*i.e.* their boasted holy city]! they raise a cry without," etc. The second point was overlooked by the Targum and the other ancient versions (except the Vulgate, which guesses "videntes"), but noticed with his usual acuteness by Bishop Lowth, who gives, "Behold, the mighty men raise a grievous cry." It would make a better parallelism, if we might render, "Behold, the envoys cry without"; both Kimchi and Ibn Ezra favour this view, but there is no other authority for this sense of אֲרָאֵל, and it has been generally held that the Jewish expositors who follow these rabbis have been biassed by the Talmudic use of אֲרָאֵלִים for a class of angels (see *e.g.* the striking passage on the death of Jehudah the Holy, cited by Buxtorf from *Kethuboth*, 104 a, where, followed by Wünsche, he renders the word "prævalidi").¹ But current Jewish names of the classes of angels are obviously derived from the Scriptures (see the Jewish liturgies). In spite of this, Kohut and Kalisch both interpret אֲרָאֵלִים "of the angels,"² and the view appears to be correct. The Arêlim are in fact the "messengers of peace," who, as Kalisch says, "feel pity and compassion, and weep bitterly at the sight of desolation and human misery," and

¹ Levy and Jastrow simply render "angels." The etymology in Jastrow's Lexicon needs no serious refutation.

Kohut, *Jüdische Angelologie*, p. 8 (cf. note 14, p. 286); Kalisch, *Leviticus*, ii. 285.

who are opposed to the "angels of death" (Prov. xvi. 14). The philological basis may till now have been deficient, but Jeremiah seems to have supplied it. The Arêlim, or rather Arâlim are the inhabitants of Arâlû, sent forth on friendly messages to Jehovah's land. They are not indeed the angels of the Christian imagination; but neither are they the titan-like Seraphim spoken of in Isa. vi.; they are perhaps a link between the two. Nowhere else, it is true, in the Old Testament at least (contrast Luke xv. 7, 10), are the Divine messengers said to have human emotions; and an Israelite would not understand the question, "Pourquoi n'y aurait-il pas dans le paradis des pleurs, tels que les saints peuvent en répandre?"¹ But if Isaiah referred to these friendly beings (the predecessors of Gabriel and Raphael) at all, why should he not have frankly humanized them? If Jehovah was "pitiful at the sound of Israel's cry" (Isa. xxx. 19), why should not His messenger have translated this pity into tears? Observe that the Seraphim, like the Aralim (on the present hypothesis), are only once referred to, and that in Isaiah. There is therefore absolutely no inducement to suppose the verse to be an interpolation, even if (see *Prophecies of Isaiah*, i. 189) we conjecture that chap. xxxiii. was worked up for publication by a disciple of the prophet. It is true that, according to the Talmud, "the names of the angels came up with the Jews from Babylon" (Kalisch, *Leviticus*, ii. 288); but obviously the superhuman beings must have had some class-names before. Assyrio-Babylonian in their affinities, Arâl and Arâlim, not less than Cherubim, may be; but, as Prof. Sayce has lately remarked (*Hibbert Lectures*, pp. 41-43), the Israelites must have had intercourse with Assyria and Babylonia long before the Babylonian Exile.

¹ *Génie du christianisme*, ii. 295 (Paris, 1802).

III. ON ISA. xiv. 12, 13.

It is not unnatural to turn back a few pages in the prophetic volume, and pause at another passage which alludes, though not by name, to Arâlu,—I mean that splendid Ode on the fall of the king of Babylon, which has not only coloured several passages in the New Testament (in Matt. xi. 23, Luke x. 18, Rev. viii. 10, ix. 1), but impressed both Milton and our own truly Biblical poet, the Bishop of Derry. Not that Milton and Alexander are the only ones of whom this can be said. There are also poets without the gift of song; at least, there are moments which make poets of us all. Thus, when in 1807, the year of Germany's humiliation, the University of Halle was closed, the great Hebraist Gesenius had to suspend his lectures at Isa. xiv. 11. Soon however the tide of fortune turned, and the university was reopened, and Gesenius began his lectures by reading aloud, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"¹ The author of the Ode was himself a great poet; he was also as true to Babylonian sentiment as was the writer of Nebuchadnezzar's speech in Dan. iv. 30. Only we are accustomed to exaggerate the offence of the king in the Ode. He was not consciously overstepping the bounds of possibility; we must not compare his boast with the stories of Titans scaling the heavens. We have long known that the Egyptians, and, with less exaggeration, the Assyrians, regarded their kings as representatives of the Divine. I have ventured to remark, in commenting on this Ode, that "it was but rational to take the next step and admit these semi-divine beings to a share in the family life of their celestial parents." I added however that the evidence for this as a fact was still imperfect. Theocritus, no doubt, says (xvii. 15, 16,

¹ I retain A.V.'s exquisite hexameter, referring to THE EXPOSITOR, Dec., 1887, pp. 451, 452.

Lang), "Him (Philadelphus) hath the Father stablished in the same honour as the blessed immortals, and for him a golden mansion in the house of Zeus is builded"—an old Egyptian idea, one cannot doubt. An Assyrian royal psalm, translated by Schrader and Sayce, points to a similar conception in Assyria, and now Jeremiah has enabled me to give fresh evidences. Tiglath-Pileser is the witness who, in the Prism-inscription, expressly speaks of his "family" (?) as called to "a mansion on the mount of the gods for ever." (This too explains the sense of what some have called the hyperbole of the wish, "O king, live for ever.") Remember too that the king has just been spoken of as the "shining one, son of the dawn" (Isa. xiv. 12). He identifies himself with the star-spirit (cf. Isa. xxiv. 21) who has jurisdiction over the empire of Babylon, and who is in a mystic manner connected with himself. What more natural than that he should look forward to entering the "land of the silver sky,"¹ where his predecessors shone for ever with a reflected divine lustre? One thing indeed was more natural (in the sense in which what is most divine is in the highest sense natural)—that Jehovah of hosts should interpose, and hurl down to Sheól (to the Arâlû of the shades) him whose utterly selfish ambition imperilled the execution of God's all-wise purposes for Israel his "servant." Babylon had done its part—had unconsciously ministered to the purification of Israel—had even facilitated the emergence of some great ideas on the spiritual horizon of its captives, and then—was to be cast down as a hindrance to the future work of Providence.

Let us not despise these primitive conceptions, which in fact have all been used by holy men of God in early stages of the true religion. Each one of these myths has coloured

¹ The phrase in the royal psalm mentioned above. "Silver" is an epithet descriptive of the intense brilliance of the sunlight in the upper regions. Comp. Goldziber, *Der Mythos bei den Hebräern*, p. 179.

the symbolic language of Christendom. We need no literal "mountain of Elohim," but the Christian heart has still its Arâlu; and since the Church is a "royal priesthood," each member thereof may in a true sense adopt the language even of the king of Babylon. Our angelic visitants have indeed no material heights to descend, and when we dream, it is of no ladder like Jacob's; and yet whenever the Christian poet speaks of heaven and of angels, he involuntarily uses the imaginative material inherited from the days when the world was young. We do not think of our God as "riding upon a cherub" (Ps. xviii. 10), but we do know that He delights to honour the prayers and praises of His servants, and that, like the Cherubim, these Spirit-taught utterances of the heart can at any moment bring Him nigh. He is "enthroned upon" those "cherubim" which are "the praises of Israel" (Ps. xxii. 3).

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THE last quarter of a century has witnessed the rise and growth of an intensely ardent intellectual activity in the theological halls of Scotland. It is, of course, but part of that larger movement of spiritual revival which is manifesting itself everywhere over Christendom, and in nothing more characteristically than in the novel and widespread interest that is shown in questions of a theological and apologetical character. But in the North this mental awakening takes on a peculiar complexion and significance from the past history and natural character of the people. It appears in a race, whose whole thought has for generations been saturated through and through with metaphysical speculation, and whose daily life has to an