

**THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE BIBLE
CONNECTED WITH CONTEMPORANEOUS
EVENTS IN THE
HISTORY OF BABYLONIANS,
ASSYRIANS, AND EGYPTIANS. WITH A
PREFACE A. H. SAYCE**

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ERNST DE BUNSEN

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WITH A PREFACE

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PREFACE.

AMONG the many services rendered by the decipherment of the ancient monuments of Egypt and Assyria, none perhaps is more important than the certain basis it has afforded for the restoration of the chronology of the past. A true chronology is the necessary skeleton and framework of history, the events of which cannot be rightly understood and made instructive until we know their exact order and succession. The Old Testament was for a long time the sole source from which a chronological system of early history could be extracted; and we now know how imperfect that source was. The last few years, however, have opened up unexpected stores of information. Much light has come from Egypt, and still more from Assyria. The civilisations of the Tigris and Euphrates were in closer connection with the traditions and annals of the Hebrews than was that of the Nile; and while the lists of eponymes enable us to fix the dates of the most important part of Assyrian history with absolute precision, the key-periods of Jewish and Israelitish history are just those which have been determined and settled by the evidence of the cuneiform inscriptions.

It is this fact which has made me presumptuous enough, at the request of the Author, to trespass upon the domains of professed chronologists, and to draw attention as well

as I can to the new and striking views set forth in the present volume. The Assyrian student is sometimes obliged to handle matters of chronology; and it thus happened that I found myself forced to investigate the difficult chronological questions connected with the campaign of Sennacherib against Hezekiah. The result of a comparison of the native monuments with the phenomena presented by the Hebrew text seemed to me to leave no room for doubt that whereas the campaign of Sennacherib took place in B.C. 701, there was an earlier conquest of Judæa by Sargon ten years before (B.C. 711), in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah. My satisfaction was great at finding that M. de Bunsen had arrived at the same conclusion on wholly independent grounds and in accordance with his general scheme of chronology.

This scheme, it will be seen, is a complete whole, the several parts of which hang together like the stones of an arch. A correct interpretation of the facts of Jewish, Egyptian, and Babylonian history is shown to result in a perfect harmony and a series of remarkable synchronisms. The author begins with an original theory of his, subsequently confirmed by Professor Müller, of Basel, that Shemites were a compound of Japhethites and Hamites, or Aryans and non-Aryans; and submits a new confirmation of it in the thesis that what in Genesis is called the birth of Shem refers to, or at all events is directly connected with, the capture of Babylon by the Medes of Berosus, in 2458 B.C. Other reasons are assigned for regarding this year as the starting-point of Hebrew chronology and explaining ethnically the birth of Shem. This suggests another probable or possible synchronism, the correspondence of the exodus from Haran with the

establishment of a fresh (Elamite) dynasty in Babylonia, whose first king may have been the Chedorlaomer of Genesis.

Now, the unhistorical character of the 1656 years between the Creation and the Deluge seems placed beyond all dispute; and if the period of 592 years from the Exodus to the building of the Temple can really be proved, St. Paul and Josephus must have derived their information upon this point from some unpublished source. Here, then, we are referred to the hidden wisdom, the verbal tradition of the initiated, which has already formed the subject of a special investigation by M. de Bunsen, and is the real centre of his present researches. These researches, however, find what may be called their concrete expression in a scheme of Hebrew chronology which can be verified by a comparison with the annals of Assyria and Babylonia. In this way the author works back to the chronology of Egypt, and, by fixing the year 928 B.C. as the fifth of Rehoboam and 948 B.C. as that of Shishak's accession, is able to date the Manethonian Dynasties both backwards and forwards. A series of noteworthy synchronisms is the result, among which may be mentioned the threefold synchronism for the Pharaoh of the Exodus and the sevenfold synchronism for the year 711. No liberties, it may be said, have been taken in bringing about this harmony; the author claims to have made the Biblical and Assyrian records tell their own tale, though the system of co-regencies may not altogether exclude criticism. Since, however, Shalmaneser mentions the name of Ahab among the confederacy defeated by him in 854 B.C., it would appear that the battles of Karkar and Ramoth-Gilead were fought in the same

year, and that the fourth year of Ahab corresponded with the first of Jehoshaphat's sole regency, not of his reign.

Other points suggested in the course of the work will excite much interest and discussion. Entirely new theories are put forward in regard to the age of Ezra and the Feast of Purim, and to the possible presence of St. Peter in Rome in the ninth year after the Crucifixion. But the conclusions most calculated to provoke attention and controversy are those connected with the life of Christ. Reasons are given for accepting the statement of Irenæus and regarding Jesus as in his forty-ninth year when he died. His birth is placed fourteen years before the Christian Era, and the wisdom which astonished the doctors at Jerusalem in a boy of twelve years of age is traced back to the schools of Alexandria.

I feel fully how very inadequate the preceding sketch of the contents of the present volume must be. But I have already stated my excuse for having undertaken to describe them; and I can only add my wish that they could have found a better hierophant. Much of the book trenches upon the province of the Assyriologue; and here at least I may be permitted to speak. The rest must be left to the judgment of others.

A. H. SAYCE.

INTRODUCTION.

THE science of language, and the discovered proofs of early civilisation, have established the fact that the Biblical Chronology, in the form transmitted to us, is too short, in its early periods, to allow us to regard it as strictly historical. Hence we must either assume that those who recorded the Chronology of Hebrew tradition were not sufficiently instructed in this branch of human knowledge, or that, for some reason or other, a designed alteration of traditional Chronology took place.

Hitherto, designed alterations have been proved in but two out of three records of the ancestors of Abraham, as contained in the Hebrew, the Greek, and the Samaritan texts. The spuriously inserted generation of the second 'Cainan' in the Septuagint is likewise found in the Gospel according to St. Luke. It has remained doubtful whether or not the genealogies in the Hebrew text have been preserved in accordance with historical tradition.¹

Several and more important alterations of this kind can be detected in the Hebrew text with mathematical precision. As might be expected, we find them, not in any statement of detail, but in the record of two periods — of the period from Adam to the Flood, and in that

¹ See Mr. R. Stuart Poole's article on 'Chronology' in Dr. Smith's Dictionary of the Bible; also 'The Genesis of the Earth and Man,' p. 92.