

# THE HOMILETIC REVIEW

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## REVIEW SECTION

### I.—THE FACT OF SIN: PRESENT-DAY ASPECT

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THE subject is opportune. It is re-emerging in religious thinking. It is determinative of our thought on other subjects. We live in a time of theological reconstructions. The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table informed us that the crack of creeds has been heard in the ministers' studies of Christendom; and if this be true, it becomes us to reckon with the facts and note the lines of cleavage. What are the things to go? What are the things to stay? What are the things to come back? are important questions. Certainly our time has not been notable for its deep convictions of sin. There has been a conspicuous subsidence of the sin-consciousness. The sense of sin has been weak even tho the consciousness of misery has been keen. Upon this matter, as upon some others, we have been living of late on some very indefinite opinions, rather than upon profound convictions; and opinions, we ought to know, are not like convictions, constructive. Opinions, Heine told us, build no cathedrals; and, he should have added, write no *Te Deums*, no *Glorias*, no litanies, no great poems, inaugurate no great spiritual movements. These require blood-red convictions. Unquestionably

we have been passing through a zone of colorless concepts, a veritable haze of indefiniteness and incertitude, and we are waiting with some impatience for the constructive thinkers who will build anew the temple of truth. And unless they come speedily, we shall be taunted with theological bankruptcy.

And the place of sin in the old or the reconstructed theology is an important one. Important in itself, its interrelations are important. Maclaren, of Manchester, says ninety per cent. of all the doctrinal errors have grown up around defective views of sin. Jerome told us, in the fourth century, that false views of sin induce false views of God. And certainly no Father, out of the fourth or the twentieth century, needs to tell us that inadequate views of sin go in lock-step with superficial and inadequate views of redemption. If sin is a trifle, then the mission of the world's Redeemer is a superfluity. Any theory or theology that minimizes sin belittles the mission of Jesus Christ, reduces Him to the ranks, and makes a lay figure of Him. If sin is a bagatelle, the mission of the Savior was a blunder; worse, He was Himself mistaken, for He believed He came to save His people

time for a radical reconstruction of traditional teaching on the relative import of preaching and praying. A devout hearing of the divine word is undoubtedly acceptable worship, but in the nature of things something must be given back to God. The sacramental gift calls for a sacrificial response. The proffer of infinite grace normally excites confession, thanksgiving, petition, and intercession, and this return must be in keeping with the divine benefit of which it is an acknowledgment. And it is as important that the sermon lead up to the prayer, as it is that the prayer lead up to the sermon, and it is more logical. The very aim of the sermon is the believing, prayerful appropriation of its contents.

The characteristic idea of worship, as an offering to God, which has held a

foremost place in all religions, must be restored. The general prayer must receive attention commensurate with its true place in the service, not as a subordinate function preparatory to a great feat. As long as its proper dignity and tremendous significance are denied, the proper conduct of public prayer is not to be expected. Fifty years ago a Princeton theologian pointed out "eighteen separate faults into which ministers were accustomed to fall" in this function, and a generation later one of his successors had to lament: "These prayers, as a general thing, do not meet the desires and exigencies of the people."

We plead for the honor of the altar. Let us render unto God what is due to His perfections. "Hallowed be Thy name!"

### III.—IS THE DELUGE STORY IN GENESIS SELF-CONTRADICTORY ?

BY WILLIS J. BEECHER, D.D., PROFESSOR IN AUBURN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, AUBURN, N. Y.

AT the outset the question is not whether this narrative is historical, or true, or original, or inspired, but whether it is consistent. Supposing it to be an account of actual events, is it a congruous account? Or supposing it to be fiction, has it verisimilitude? This is the simplest question and the easiest to answer with exactness. When one has answered it by itself, its bearing on other questions will be obvious.

There is a preliminary question of no importance in itself, but affecting the interpretation of the narrative. Did the writer (or writers) intend us to understand that Noah had a following of servants or dependents who were with him in the ark? We must naturally think that he had, unless the explicit statements of the narrative forbid. Most people understand the narrative

to say that just four men and four women and no more were saved (Gen. vi. 18; vii. 7, 13; viii. 16, 18; cf. 1 Peter iii. 20). But the same people habitually think of Noah as having a large number of employees to assist him in building and loading the ark. Could he get along afterward without help in caring for the ark and its contents? It is the usual thing in the Biblical narratives to mention the leaders only in any event, with the assumption that everybody knows that leaders have followers. Has that practise been followed in this narrative? Is it taken for granted that the reader will understand that there was a sufficient crew of men and women in the ark, in addition to the eight leading persons who are specifically mentioned? I fancy that most readers will at first promptly answer these questions

in the negative, and will, perhaps, afterward on reflection change the answer.

The narrative may be regarded as consisting of a title (Gen. vi. 9*a*) and ten sections. We shall find it convenient to designate the sections:

1. Preliminary facts (Gen. vi. 9*b*-12).

2*a* and 2*b*. Two accounts of God's revelation to Noah (vi. 13-22; vii. 1-5).

3*a* and 3*b*. Two accounts of Noah's entering the ark (vii. 11-16 and 5-10).

4. The rise of the water (vii. 17-24).

5. The subsidence of the water (viii. 1-13).

6. Coming out from the ark (viii. 14-19).

7*a* and 7*b*. Two accounts of God's blessing man (ix. 1-7; viii. 20-22).

8. The rainbow covenant (ix. 8-17).

9. Noah's sons (ix. 18-27).

10. Summary of Noah's later life (ix. 28-29).

Will the reader kindly take his Bible and refer to the sections here marked 2, 3, and 7? They exhibit phenomena of especial importance. In each of them we find a first and a second account of the same event. In sections 3 and 7 the parts marked *a* and *b* have been placed in reversed order, to facilitate comparison.

It is alleged that these repetitions prove that the author of our present narrative had before him two earlier narratives of the flood, and that he did his work by copying first a section from one and then a section from the other. It is said that he took the larger part of his account, including 2*a*, 3*a*, and 7*a*, from a document which is now commonly designated as P. But other parts, including 2*b*, 3*b*, 7*b*, and 9, with vii. 22-23 and viii. 6-12, it is alleged that he took from a different source, commonly designated J. There are many passages in the Old Testament concerning which it is

affirmed that repetitions thus indicate composite authorship. Probably this narrative of the flood is the most obvious and intelligible of all the instances and, therefore, the one that is best worth studying.

Waiving for the present the question whether this is certainly the correct explanation of the phenomena, we pass to another matter. It is further alleged that these two earlier narratives were in many points contradictory, and that many of the contradictions are retained in the composite account we now have. Is this allegation correct?

It is said that the three sections marked *b* contradict the other parts of the account, in that they affirm that Noah distinguished between clean and unclean animals, and that he worshiped by sacrifice. But no part of the account denies that he made this distinction or that he worshiped by sacrifice.

It is alleged that the J document says that he took the clean animals into the ark by sevens, while the other says by twos. But there is no contradiction in that as long as seven times two are fourteen. It is nowhere denied that he took them by sevens. A large number of the animals suitable for food would be needed, particularly if Noah had with him in the ark many unmentioned dependents. No difficulty is presented even if one understands that in the case of such animals as cattle and sheep the ratio of males to females was different from that in the case of the mating animals. Look at it as you will, there is no contradiction.

Again, it is alleged that according to J the flood lasted forty days (vii. 4), while according to P the waters increased for a hundred and fifty days (vii. 24; viii. 3), and the whole time of living in the ark was a year and ten days (vii. 11; viii. 14). But the forty days is spoken of in P also, for there is no sense in tearing vii. 12 and 17

away from their context merely for the purpose of making out a case of contradiction. The fact is that the account mentions two sources whence came the waters of the deluge, namely, the rain and the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep (vii. 11). It says that after the close of the forty days of rain the water continued to rise in the region where the ark was. Indeed, it is not certain that the account says that the ark was fairly afloat till the close of the forty days (vii. 17). Here, again, there is no contradiction between the differing parts of the narrative.

There is no need of mentioning other allegations in detail; the same result would emerge in every case. There are no two statements in the entire narrative that are not easily so understood as to be in agreement. The only way in which the parts can be claimed to be in contradiction is by putting interpretations upon them. Is there any reason for so interpreting them?

Assuming that we have here the narratives of two authors put together by a third, it is evident that this third author saw no contradiction in those parts of his sources which he used. His judgment in the matter is worthy of respect. That he was a man of ability is vouched for by the fact that his work still survives and commands attention.

We have only those parts of his sources which he copied out for us, while he had the sources in more complete form. Doubtless he had other sources not now accessible. These are reasons against forcing upon the narrative an interpretation contrary to his, and contrary to the natural meanings of the words. But without such forced interpretation there are no contradictions to be found in it. If it is history, it is congruous history. If it is fiction, it is perfect in verisimilitude.

Having thus disentangled this question from the others, we can see the

more clearly some of its bearings on other questions.

Have we here really two independent narratives put together by a later writer? There is nothing in any current doctrine of inspiration to forbid our holding this theory. The Spirit of God is as competent to produce a writing by inspiring for the purpose two or more men in different centuries as by inspiring one man. Orthodox theologians have commonly accepted the idea that the inspired writers of Scripture may have drawn from literary sources. If we regard the differences above mentioned simply as differences, not as contradictions, they may very naturally be accounted for as coming from two accounts of the flood, written by men of different mental habits, with differing specific objects in view. There are several other points of difference that would go to confirm this explanation. The strongest objection to it is that there may supposably be other hypotheses equally plausible. For example, one might suppose the repetitions to be matters of mental habit with the author; he being a man who, having made a statement, was in the habit of repeating it in order to insert additional particulars. Unless one is convinced that some other hypothesis is more tenable, there is no reason why he should quarrel with the hypothesis of composite authorship.

In the case of the particular theory of composite authorship now mainly in vogue, there are additional difficulties. For example, it makes the assumption that the writer of P thought that the name of Jehovah and the worship of Him by sacrifices were unknown till the time of Moses. This is absurdly in conflict with the phenomena. Further, it finds itself in conflict with a dozen matters of detail in the narrative as it stands; and these have to be disposed of by text emendation or by harmoni-

zing hypotheses, before the narrative can be made to fit the theory. The final verdict will doubtless be for the modification of the theory, and not of the phenomena.

What is the bearing of all this on the question whether the Biblical account of the deluge is historical? In view of the well-nigh universal prevalence of traditions concerning the flood, perhaps no one would dispute the probability of an original nucleus of fact lying back of the traditions. But are the facts correctly given in this particular detailed statement? In answering this question, we must recognize three alternative views, and not two only.

Our account may be either true statement of fact, or false statement of fact, or fiction. Fiction is a different thing from false statement.

The recognition of the consistency of the account removes the strongest argument in proof that it is false. Other alleged proofs of its falsity vanish when we deal with them fairly. Fair dealing requires that we take into the account the extreme brevity of the narrative, not holding its writer responsible for facts that he has omitted, nor for ideas that we supply by inference.

The difficulty now most insisted upon lies in the statement that Noah was six hundred years old when the flood began, and lived afterward three hundred and fifty years (vii. 11; ix. 28).

These numerals, with those in Gen. v. and xi. 10-25, have been commonly regarded as a chronological scheme for the world's history before Abraham. On this scheme Ussher dates the flood 2349 B.C. But it is now commonly held that we know enough of the history of the region to be sure that no such catastrophe occurred within some thousands of years of that date. But if we accept this opinion, we are not thereby driven to say that the numerical schemes in Genesis are false. There-

are strong reasons for thinking that they were not intended to be understood biographically and chronologically, but rather as tabulations of ethnical movements. Other difficulties are disposed of when we notice that the writer in Genesis does not say that the flood was caused by rain only, but speaks also of a cosmical catastrophe (vi. 11); and that he does not say that the deluge was universal, tho he says that it reached to the utmost horizon (vii. 19), and that it involved the whole human population of which he is speaking, and he also gives it the technical name *mabbul*, implying that it is the one event of its class in human history, and not a mere local inundation.

Clearly the charge of untruthfulness as against the flood story will not stand. But is it fiction? It is supposable that the story, call it myth or legend or what you will, might be simply a story for religious teaching, on the same footing with the parables of Jesus. It is not absurd to say that the Holy Spirit may have inspired the writing of such a story, or may have inspired a writer of Scripture, having found a suitable story, to incorporate it as a part of the Scriptures. But against this are the facts that the story is sober and circumstantial, and apparently from the point of view of one taking observations from the deck of the ark. The difficulty of thinking that so ancient a writer would write fiction of just this type is greater than the difficulties of regarding the story as fact. If from archeology and physical geography we should some time obtain additional information concerning the great catastrophe, it will probably not contradict the information given in Genesis.

Did the Scriptural writer or writers draw this account from the Babylonian accounts? It is certain that the Babylonian and Israelitish accounts have too much in common to be wholly inde-

pendent. The Babylonian accounts are known to have been in writing nearly or quite as early as the time of Abraham. If an inspired man took the grotesque polytheistic Babylonian stories and reduced them to the sober monotheistic simplicity of the Biblical story, he accomplished a feat worthy of inspiration. But the natural order in the reworking of religious stories is from the simple to the grotesque, and not from the grotesque to the simple. A

person of this generation who believes that the flood story is historical will probably believe that it has been handed down from the time of Noah himself, and that the Biblical form of it is more original than the Babylonian.

It is really superfluous to add that all these considerations bear in favor of the doctrine that the Scriptures are divinely inspired, and that they are truthful, as one would expect inspired writings to be.

#### IV.—PROTESTANT INDIFFERENCE TO PROTESTANT PRINCIPLES

BY PROF. GEORGE H. SCHODDE, PH.D., CAPITAL UNIVERSITY, COLUMBUS, OHIO.

THE most noteworthy and significant feature in connection with the death of Pope Leo XIII. is the lavish praise showered upon the departed pontiff by the Protestant press and pulpit. These seemed to vie with the Roman Catholics in the bestowal of laudations upon the head of that religious communion which has, since the days of the Reformation, been the embodiment of opposition to the essential principles of evangelical Christianity, to those truths and teachings that were the historic occasion for the existence of Protestantism as a distinct organization, and that justified and justify its continued maintenance in the face of the charge of apostasy, heresy, and schism. As a phenomenon in religious and ecclesiastical thought and life, this extreme friendliness for that official whom the Protestant fathers did not hesitate to call the Antichrist, which conviction found its expression in several of the Protestant confessional writings, notably the Westminster Confession of the Reformed Church and the Smalcald articles of the Lutheran, is new and unique, and as such demands an explanation. What does it indicate as to the status of the religious world? Are the two great religious communions, that for four hundred years have not only been rivals but enemies, come to a better understanding, and have they reached *modus vivendi* without a sacrifice of principle? Or does it signify that the one or the other of the contending parties has come to the conclusion that the principles it has maintained all along as its *raison d'être* no longer deserve to be regarded as such, and can be sacrificed for the purpose of "living and letting live" in the religious

world? That a good deal of this promiscuous praise in Protestant circles, too, is nothing but cant and ignorance, as thoughtless as, and meaningly expressive of, the old dictum "De mortuis nil nisi bonum," admits of neither doubt nor debate. But enough remains after deducting this factor to make the matter a serious problem, certainly important enough to vex and perplex the thoughtful student of modern religious thought and life.

If there has been a concession of principle and a sacrifice of principle, it certainly has not been on the part of the Catholic Church. It has often been maintained that the development of Protestantism has been of great service to the Catholic Church in compelling that Church to stop the growth of certain evil tendencies; and it is true that where the two great churches stand and labor side by side, as is the case in America, England, and Germany, we find the Catholic Church at her best, and certainly vastly better spiritually than in such purely Catholic countries as Spain and Italy, where the enjoyment of the monopoly permits her to develop her immoral nature without fear or restraint. But the German Church historian Uhlhorn is also correct when he declares, that the origin of the Protestant Church has harmed the Catholic Church seriously, in so far as the Catholic Church was compelled to formulate and fix for all times officially, in opposition to the teachings of Protestants, the false principles which the latter antagonized. In this way historic causes have barred and prevented the Catholic Church from the way to a better knowledge of the Biblical truths, and for this reason