

tells of a great event in the early history of the world, or is it simply repeating in a purified form a myth or legend which arose in Babylonia or in Egypt? Are the religious ideas contained in the Bible the result of a revelation from God, or were they taken over from some contemporary heathen nation?

It is interesting to note how far the ground had been prepared for this attitude by the statements of some of the first students of Biblical archaeology. As evidence on Biblical times began to come from the Near East, it became customary to seize on any similarity to a Biblical story or teaching, no matter how slight, and to adduce it as evidence of the truth of the Biblical narrative. Naturally enough, such an attitude prepared the way for an early reversal. If materials which were supposed to be related to Biblical teachings or stories were shown to come from a far earlier period, and to have a thoroughly heathen background, it would do much more to upset faith in Biblical authority than the original argument could possibly have done to produce it.

It is for this reason that it is very important that those who quote archaeological evidence in support of Biblical teachings be certain of their facts, and do not present material irrelevant to their purpose. Christianity is never advanced by unproved facts or shoddy inferences. Statements that go far beyond the evidence have a way of boomeranging and producing an effect opposite to that which their makers intended.

Probably the extreme of the "derivation" method was reached by Professor Jensen of the University of Marburg, who concluded a lengthy work on the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh with the assertion that the story of Jesus Christ is merely a modification of that of Gilgamesh, and

that Christians actually are not worshipping a historical character but merely a reflection of a Babylonian hero.²³

While the extreme views of Jensen have received comparatively little following among scholars, certain aspects of this position have come to be widely accepted. In almost any book written early in this century which deals with the first part of Genesis one may find the statement that Genesis 1 was derived from a Babylonian original. This was so widely stated that few students took the trouble to examine the facts carefully and to seek for positive evidence as to whether the account in Genesis 1 and the so-called "Babylonian Epic of Creation" were actually related or not. Instead of trying to determine what the facts are, it has been the usual course to assume the facts and then to argue about their interpretation. Thus the effort has been made to show that the Babylonian story, which was doubtless compiled many centuries before the time of Moses, either was later than Genesis 1 and derived from it, or that both stories came from a parent source.

However, if one would simply read the Babylonian epic, which scholars generally call "Enuma Elish" from its first two words, one could not but be struck by the fact that its whole literary structure is very different from that of Genesis 1. Actually it is a story of the gradual coming into being of two groups of antagonistic deities, and of the ensuing bitter conflict. The leading deity of Babylon heads the winning side, and therefore procures the outstanding position in the cosmos. More or less as a by-product of the action, he sets the sky in place, establishes the earth, puts the moon and stars in motion, and creates men to do service for the gods. The whole treatment is entirely different from the methodical and dignified action of Genesis 1, in which an infinite God proceeds to carry out

²³P. Jensen, *Das Gilgamesch-Epos in der Weltliteratur*, (Strassburg: 1907).