

Appendix II

Genesis 11 and the Date of the Flood

GENESIS 11 NEED NOT BE INTERPRETED AS A STRICT CHRONOLOGY

One of the greatest objections to the concept of a geographically universal Deluge in the minds of some scholars today is the fact that there are no historical or archaeological evidences for such a vast catastrophe during the third millennium B.C. (this date being obtained by adding the years of patriarchal maturity given in the Masoretic Text of Genesis 11) or even the fourth millennium B.C. (according to the years given in the Septuagint). Near Eastern cultures apparently have a rather continuous archaeological record (based upon occupation levels and pottery chronology) back to at least the fifth millennium B.C., and it seems impossible to fit a catastrophe of the proportions depicted in Genesis 6-9 into such an archaeological framework. But there are several important reasons for questioning the validity of the strict-chronology interpretation of Genesis 11.

(1) The Number of Years Are Not Totalled

If the list of names and ages in Genesis 11 has been given to us for the purpose of constructing a pre-Abrahamic chronology, it is rather strange that Moses failed to give the *total* number of years from the Flood to Abraham. Of course, it may be objected that he

expected the reader to do his own totalling and, therefore, did not add unnecessary words. But Moses took nothing for granted in the reader's ability to add just *two* numbers in the life of each antediluvian patriarch (Gen. 5) in order to ascertain their total life-spans! If the time-span of the *whole* period was one of the important reasons for giving the genealogy, how simple it would have been to give the total, as he did in Exodus 12:40 for the time of Israel's sojourn in Egypt!

(2) The Name and Years of Cainan Do Not Appear in the Hebrew Text

Another reason for questioning Ussher's chronology for Genesis 11 is the evidence that not all the post-diluvian patriarchs are listed in our present Hebrew text. For in Luke's genealogy of Mary, the name "Cainan" appears between "Shelah" and "Arphaxad" (Luke 3:36). The Septuagint translation of Genesis 11 places the name "Cainan" in the same position that Luke does. It is possible, of course, to hold that the name "Cainan" was a later insertion into the Septuagint text and that it did not appear in the original manuscript of Luke. The problem is admittedly a complex one, but for the sake of brevity, we shall simply state our conclusion: the Septuagint *does* give us the full list of *names* as they appeared in the original Hebrew text; but since the *years* for these patriarchs as given in the Septuagint are obviously false, we have no way of determining how old Cainan was at the birth of his first son.¹ Thus, this one omission, even if there are no others, makes it impossible to fix the date of the Flood.

(3) Genesis 5 and 11 Are Perfectly Symmetrical in Form

The fact that Cainan should be included in Genesis 11 has greater implications than might appear at first glance; for the addition of his name puts the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 into perfectly sym-

¹C. Robert Fetter ("A Critical Investigation of 'The Second Cainan' in Luke 3:36" Winona Lake, Indiana: Grace Theological Seminary, unpublished critical monograph, 1956), lists the following texts and versions which omit the name of Cainan: (1) all the passages in the Hebrew text (Gen. 10:24; 11:12-13; 1 Chron. 1:18, 24); (2) the Samaritan Pentateuch; (3) 1 Chron. 1:24 in the Septuagint; (4) the Targums of Jonathan and Onkelos; (5) the Syriac Version; (6) the Latin Vulgate; and (7) Codex Bezae on Luke 3:36. But those which *do* mention Cainan are: (1) nearly all the Greek manuscripts of Luke 3:36; (2) the Septuagint of Gen. 10:24,

metrical forms. In each case, there are *ten* patriarchs listed, with the *tenth* patriarch having *three* important sons:

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|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Adam | 1. Shem |
| 2. Seth | 2. Arpachshad |
| 3. Enosh | 3. Cainan |
| 4. Kenan | 4. Shelah |
| 5. Mahalalel | 5. Eber |
| 6. Jared | 6. Peleg |
| 7. Enoch | 7. Reu |
| 8. Methuselah | 8. Serug |
| 9. Lamech | 9. Nahor |
| 10. Noah | 10. Terah |
| (Shem, Ham, Japheth) | (Abram, Nahor, Haran) |

Now this symmetrical arrangement is of great importance in enabling us to determine one important purpose of these genealogies; for a study of the closest parallel to this phenomenon in Scripture, namely, that of the three groups of fourteen names in the first chapter of Matthew, reveals the purposely symmetrical character of such an arrangement of names, possibly as an aid to memorization. If it be objected that in our arrangement of the two lists of patriarchs Shem's name appears twice, it is sufficient to answer that Matthew lists David twice in his arrangement of names too. And even if the name of Cainan were not in the original text, the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11 would still be symmetrical: Adam to Noah, ten generations; and Shem to Abram, ten generations. These facts may well indicate that it is not necessary to press the numerical data of these chapters into a strict chronology.

(4) Information Is Given Concerning Each Patriarch Which Is Irrelevant to a Strict Chronology

Genesis 5:6-8 states that "Seth lived a hundred and five years and begat Enosh; and Seth lived after he begat Enosh eight hundred and

11:12-13, and I Chronicles 1:18; (3) the Book of Jubilees; and (4) Demetrius of the 3rd century B.C., according to Polyhistor and Theophilus of Antioch. Apart from the question of Cainan's inclusion in Genesis 11, the Septuagint numbers for the years of the patriarchs at maturity are not trustworthy. The purpose of these translators was apparently not so much to stretch the chronology as it was to make the lives of the patriarchs more symmetrical by having their first born sons after they were 100 years old. "A simple glance at these numbers is sufficient to show that the Hebrew is the original." William Henry Green, "Primeval Chronology," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, XLVII, No. 186 (April, 1890), p. 302.

seven years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died." Now if the purpose of this genealogy was to provide us with a chronology, all we would need to have is this: "Seth lived a hundred and five years and begat Enosh." But the additional facts which are provided concerning each patriarch indicate that the purpose of these genealogies was more than simply chronological. Their major purpose was to show us how faithfully God guarded the Messianic line (Gen. 3:15; 9:26) even in ages of universal apostasy (Gen. 6:1-12; 11:1-9); to impress upon us "the vigor and grandeur of humanity in those old days of the world's prime";¹ to demonstrate the fulfillment of the curse of Genesis 2:17 by the melancholy repetition of the phrase "and he died"; to show by the shorter life spans of postdiluvian patriarchs and by the omission of their total years of life the tightening grip of the Edenic curse upon the human body; and to make "the record end in terms of the command of 9:1, which was so vitally important in view of the Flood," by omitting the words "and he died" in the genealogy of Genesis 11.² Since, therefore, so many pedagogical purposes are evident in these two genealogies that have nothing to do with the actual length of the overall period, it is unnecessary to press them into a rigid chronological system.

(5) The Postdiluvian Patriarchs Could Not Have Been Contemporaries of Abram

If the strict-chronology interpretation of Genesis 11 is correct, *all* the postdiluvian patriarchs, including Noah, would still have been living when Abram was fifty years old; *three* of those who were born before the earth was divided (Shem, Shelah, and Eber) would have actually outlived Abram; and *Eber*, the father of Peleg, not only would have outlived Abram, but would have lived for two years after Jacob arrived in Mesopotamia to work for Laban!

On the face of it, such a situation would seem astonishing, if not almost incredible. And the case is further strengthened by the clear and twice-repeated statement of Joshua that Abram's "fathers," including Terah, were idolaters when they dwelt "of old time beyond

¹ Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, edited by Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., 1952), p. 244.

² Oswald T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1943), p. 263.

the River" (Joshua 24:2, 14, 15). If all the postdiluvian patriarchs, including Noah and Shem, were still living in Abram's day, this statement implies that they had all fallen into idolatry by then. This conclusion is surely wrong, and therefore the premise on which it is based must be wrong. Consequently, it seems that the strict-chronology view must be set aside in order to allow for the death of these patriarchs long before the time of Abram.

(6) *The Bible Implies a Great Antiquity
For the Tower of Babel*

If we accept 2167 B.C. as the year of Abram's birth,¹ the Flood must have occurred in the year 2459 B.C. and the judgment of the Tower of Babel between 2358 and 2119 B.C. (the lifetime of Peleg) according to the strict-chronology interpretation.

When we turn to the Genesis account of Abram's journeys, however, we discover the international scene to have been quite different from that suggested by the above-mentioned dates for the Flood and the judgment of Babel. Abram is certainly not depicted as one of the early pioneers from the land of Shinar who migrated to western territories that were only beginning to be settled 200 years after the judgment of Babel. Quite to the contrary, the Bible implies that the world of Abram's day, with its civilizations and cities, was ancient already; and we are left with the unmistakable impression that its peoples had long since been divided "after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, in their nations" (Gen. 10:5, 20, 31).

As we follow Abram in his wanderings, from Ur of the Chaldees to the land of Canaan, filled to overflowing with "the Kenite, and the Kenizzite, the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Gergashite, and the Jebusite" (Gen. 15:19-21); and then follow him down into the land of Egypt with its Pharaoh and its princes (12:15); and then see him going to Lot's rescue in the vicinity of Damascus after Lot and other captives from the five Cities of the Plain had been deported by the kings of Shinar, Ellaser, Elam, and Goiim (14:1-

¹ According to Edwin R. Thiele (*The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951]), 931 B.C. was the date of the division of the kingdom at the death of Solomon. Following 1 Kings 6:1 and Exodus 12:40, we arrive at 1877 B.C. for the entrance of Jacob into Egypt. Since Jacob was 130 years old at this time (Gen. 47:9), he was born in 2007 B.C. Isaac was 60 when Jacob was born (Gen. 25:26), and Abraham was 100 when Isaac was born (Gen. 21:5). Therefore, Abraham was born in 2167 B.C.

16); and then see him being met by a priest-king of Salem (14:18); and later see him coming into contact with a Philistine king (20:2) and Hittite landowners (23:2-20), we cannot help but feel that the judgment of God upon the Tower of Babel must have occurred many centuries before the time of Abram.¹

This impression is confirmed by Jeremiah (47:4) and Amos (9:7), who inform us that the Philistines came into Canaan, not from Shinar but rather from the west from Caphtor, which is the island of Crete. And Moses tells us that before the Philistines ever came to Canaan from Caphtor, the southwestern section of Canaan had been occupied by the Avvim (Deut. 2:23). Thus, the Bible implies that Babel was judged long before 2358 B.C.

(7) *The Messianic Links Were Seldom Firstborn Sons*

Within the genealogy of Genesis 11 there are additional indications that we are dealing with something other than a chronology. One of these is found in the statement of Genesis 11:26—"And Terah lived seventy years, and begat Abram, Nahor, and Haran." Taking this statement at face value, one might well conclude that Terah became the father of triplets in his seventieth year (even as his grandson Isaac became the father of twins in his sixtieth year), Abram being the firstborn of the triplets. We are somewhat astonished, however, to discover upon further investigation that Abram was *not* the firstborn of the three and that Terah was *not* seventy, but rather one hundred and thirty years old when Abram was born!

In Genesis 11:32 we read that "the days of Terah were two hundred and five years: and Terah died in Haran"; while in 12:4 we find that "Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran." Thus, if Abram left Haran to go to Canaan after Terah's death, Abram must have been born when his father was 130 years old. The possibility of Abram's leaving Terah in Haran sixty years before Terah finally died is excluded by Stephen's statement that "from thence, when his father was dead, God removed him into

¹ Byron C. Nelson, *Before Abraham* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1948), p. 100, points out that Genesis mentions 26 cities in Canaan alone during the days of Abraham. Seven of these are said to have had kings. Presumably the five cities of the Plain, at least, had been in existence there so long that their cup of iniquity was already full to overflowing (cf. Gen. 15:16).

this land, wherein ye now dwell" (Acts 7:4).¹ In the light of these considerations, we may paraphrase Genesis 11:26 as follows: "And Terah lived seventy years and begat the first of his three sons, the most important of whom (not because of age but because of the Messianic line) was Abram."

It is quite possible that only a small number of the patriarchs listed in Genesis 11 were firstborn sons. A comparison of 11:10 with 5:32 and 8:13 suggests that Shem was not. A comparison of 11:10 with 10:22 suggests that Arpachshad was not. And we have already seen that Abram was not. Actually, *not one* of the Messianic ancestors in Genesis, whose family background is known in any detail, such as Abel, Seth, Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and Perez, was a firstborn son. The year of begetting a first son, known in the Old Testament as "the beginning of strength," was an important year in the life of the Israelite (Gen. 49:3, Deut. 21:17, Psa. 78:51, and Psa. 105:36). It is this year, then, and not necessarily the year of the birth of the Messianic link, that is given in each case in Genesis 11. Thus we have clear evidence for the possible addition of a limited number of years from the lives of some of these patriarchs to the total of years from the Flood to Abraham.²

¹ F. F. Bruce, in his *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1955), pp. 146-147, attempts to sidestep the problem by adopting the view that Stephen was using a Greek text of Genesis 11:32 that gave Terah's age at death at 145 (like the Samaritan Pentateuch). The serious implications of such a view may be seen in the more recent statement of Everett F. Harrison, "The Phenomena of Scripture," in *Revelation and the Bible*, edited by Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 249: "Does inspiration require that a Biblical writer should be preserved from error in the use of sources? Presumably when Stephen asserted that Abraham left Haran for Canaan after his father's death (Acts 7:4), he was following a type of Septuagintal text such as Philo used, for the latter has the same statement (*Migration of Abraham*, 177). The Hebrew text of Genesis will not permit this, since the figures given in Genesis 11:26, 32 and 12:4 demand that Terah continued to live for 60 years after Abraham left Haran." The principal objection to the interpretation we have advocated is that Abraham would not have staggered at the thought of a 100-year-old man begetting a son if his own father was 130 when he was born (Gen. 17:17, Rom. 4:19). But it should also be remembered that Abraham did not think it impossible to beget a child by Hagar when he was 86 (Gen. 16:16) or to beget children by Keturah when he was over 140 (Gen. 25:1, cf. 23:1, 25:20). Even as Isaac experienced a serious failing in health 43 years before he died (27:1), so also Abraham may have failed in health by the time he was 99. In response to his renewed faith in God and in God's promise (Rom. 4:19), his body, which was "now as good as dead," must have been renewed by God to live out the remaining 75 years and to beget many more children (Gen. 25:1-7). Thus, the emphasis of Genesis 17:17 may well be the physical condition of Abraham and Sarah at this particular period in their lives, and not so much their actual age. R. C. H. Lenski, in *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Columbus:

(8) *The Term "Begat" Sometimes Refers to Ancestral Relationships*

Such terms as "begat" and "the son of," which in English imply a father-son relationship, sometimes have a much wider connotation in the Bible. In Matthew 1:8, we read that "Joram begat Uzziah," but three generations are omitted. In I Chronicles 26:24, we are told that "Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was ruler over the treasures" in the days of David. Here we have 400 years of generations skipped over between Shebuel and Gershom. But the most interesting case of all, in our opinion, is to be found in Exodus 6:20. Here we read that "Amram took him Jochebed his father's sister to wife; and she bare him Aaron and Moses: and the years of the life of Amram were a hundred and thirty and seven years." Now anyone reading this statement as it stands by itself would be forced to conclude that Aaron and Moses were the actual sons of Amram and Jochebed; for the text clearly states that "she bare him Aaron and Moses," and immediately following this we are given the number of the years that Amram lived, in a manner strikingly similar to that of the genealogy of Genesis 5. So it is with profound amazement that we turn to Numbers 3:17-19, 27-28, and discover that in the days of Moses, "the family of the *Amramites*," together with the families of Amram's three brothers (Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel), numbered 8,600! Unless we are willing to grant that the first cousins of Moses and Aaron had over 8,500 living male offspring, we must admit that Amram was an *ancestor* of Moses and Aaron, separated from them by a span of 300 years! In the light of this, it is significant that the

Lutheran Book Concern, 1934), p. 259, concludes his discussion of the problem as follows: "Aside from the inspiration by which Stephen spoke and Luke wrote, it does seem that in the simple matter of adding a few figures, Stephen (Philo too) would not have made such palpable errors. The real motive lying behind these claims that discrepancies exist in the account is the denial of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures."

² John Urquhart, *How Old Is Man?* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1904), pp. 101ff., suggested that since Abram was born near the half-way mark of the period between the birth of Terah's first son and the time of Terah's death, the same situation might have been true, on the average, for the other postdiluvian patriarchs as well. By averaging the two extreme possibilities, he arrived at 1668 years as the probable interval between the Flood and the birth of Abram. If, as we pointed out above (note 1, page 478), Abram was born in 2167 B.C., this would date the Flood at 3835 B.C. But Urquhart did not take into consideration the possible ancestral usage of the term "begat."

names of the actual parents of Moses and Aaron are not recorded in the narrative of Exodus 2:1-10.¹

Keeping in mind this remarkable and enlightening example of how the Jews compiled their genealogies, we turn our attention once again to Genesis 11. Taking as a case for special study the central section of that genealogy, we read in verses 16-19:

And Eber lived four and thirty years, and begat Peleg; and Eber lived after he begat Peleg four hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters. And Peleg lived thirty years, and begat Reu: and Peleg lived after he begat Reu two hundred and nine years, and begat sons and daughters.

For at least two reasons, this section of the postdiluvian patriarchal genealogy is unusual and calls for careful consideration. First, we find here a sudden drop in the life-span of the patriarchs that is unparalleled in the entire genealogy. Until the time of Eber, no postdiluvian patriarch is said to have lived less than 433 years. But now, without any explanation, the life-span drops to 239 years and never exceeds that number again! This represents a permanent drop in life-span of 45%, as opposed to the 23% drop from Shem to Eber.

The second peculiarity about this section is that it contains the name of Peleg, of whom it is said (in 10:25) that "in his days was the earth divided." It has been generally conceded by Old Testament scholars that this explanation has reference to the judgment of Babel, at which time "Jehovah scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth" (11:8, cf. 10:25). But it is difficult to understand why it should be said only of *Peleg*, that "in his days was the earth divided," if, on the assumption that Genesis 11 is a strict chronology, Noah, Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah, and Eber (and probably Cainan) were still living throughout the entire lifetime of Peleg.

All of this leads us to submit the following proposition: at least in *this* section of Genesis 11, if not in other sections, we have warrant for assuming that the term "begat" is to be understood in the ancestral sense. From the fact that there is a sudden and permanent drop in the life-span between Eber and Peleg and also from the fact

¹ See John D. Davis, *A Dictionary of the Bible* (4th ed., rev.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1929), p. 195.

that Peleg is the only patriarch who is recorded as having lived at the time of the judgment upon Babel, we feel justified in assuming that Peleg was a distant descendant of Eber.

Now the objection might be raised at this point that Genesis 10:25 cannot allow for such a view; for in that passage we read that "unto Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided; and his brother's name was Joktan." How, then, could Peleg be a distant descendant of Eber, if we are told in this passage that Eber had two sons of whom one was Peleg? Would not such a statement preclude the possibility of a merely ancestral relationship?

Indeed, this would be a serious objection, were it not for our parallel case in Exodus 6:20. There we found that two sons were born unto Amram. But from the third chapter of Numbers we also discovered that Moses and Aaron were only two of 8,600 living descendants of Amram's father. Now the very same thing could be true of Genesis 10:25, where we read that two sons were born unto Eber. By analogy with Exodus 6:20, then, it seems quite possible that Peleg and Joktan were only two of the many living descendants of Eber at the time of God's judgment upon Babel.

In summarizing the arguments of this entire discussion, we may say that the lack of an overall total of years for the period from the Flood to Abraham, the absence of Cainan's name and years in the Hebrew text, the symmetrical form of the genealogies of Genesis 5 and 11, the inclusion of data that are irrelevant to a strict chronology, the impossibility of all the postdiluvian patriarchs being contemporaries of Abraham, the Biblical indications of a great antiquity for the judgment of Babel, the fact that the Messianic links were seldom firstborn sons, and the analogy of "begat" being used in the ancestral sense allow the existence of gaps of an undetermined length in the patriarchal genealogy of Genesis 11.

GENESIS 11 CANNOT BE STRETCHED BEYOND CERTAIN LIMITS

The strict-chronology interpretation of Genesis 11 has been shown to be unnecessary for various reasons. Thus, it seems Biblically possible, or even probable, that the Flood occurred several millennia before Abraham. But what is to be said for the view that is gain-

ing new popularity in evangelical circles, that Genesis 11 (as well as Genesis 5) allows for gaps totalling scores or hundreds of thousands of years and that the Flood (as well as the creation of Adam) must be dated in harmony with the time-table of uniformitarian anthropology?¹

According to A. L. Kroeber, Upper Paleolithic cultures in Europe and the Near East, such as the Aurignacian, Solutrean, and Magdalenian, are to be dated between about 25,000 and 8,000 B.C., while Lower Paleolithic cultures such as the Chellean, Acheulian, and Mousterian, are to be dated from several hundred thousand years B.C. to about 25,000 B.C. Even if the most conservative estimates of modern anthropologists are accepted, we are still asked to think in terms of a hundred thousand years of human history at the very least. Kroeber comments on this shorter chronology:

If we allot 25,000 of this to the Mousterian, we have left 75,000 for the continuous Chellean-Acheulian bifacial-core tradition. This is a long time . . . a dozen times longer than the whole of documented, authentically datable human history. And what do we know to have happened in this time? Essentially just one thing: the improvements from roughed Chellean core flints to evener, symmetrical Acheulian ones. That is, the technological tradition remained basically unchanged: it stood still except for some degree of refinement of finish. That is surely a tremendous lot of cultural stationariness to have lasted so long, in comparison with the changeability that characterized later prehistory and all history. No doubt development was indeed exceeding slow at the beginning; all the evidence points that way. Yet if we accept the most recently alleged chronology, with the Pre-

¹Christians who have been calling for an acceptance of the vast antiquity of the human race as postulated by modern anthropologists include Russell L. Mixter, "Man in Creation," *Christian Life* (October, 1961), p. 26; Marie Fetzter in "A Christian View of Anthropology," *Modern Science and Christian Faith* (Wheaton, Ill., 1950), p. 183; Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, 1954), pp. 314-315, 327-328; James O. Buswell, III, "The Creation of Man," *Christian Life*, XVIII, No. 1 (May, 1956), p. 17; Jan Lever, *Creation and Evolution* (Grand Rapids, 1958), pp. 171-177; Henry W. Seaford, Jr., "Near-Man of South Africa," *Gordon Review*, IV, No. 4 (Winter, 1958), pp. 165-192; and Edward John Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (Philadelphia, 1959), pp. 96-97. There are three schools of thought concerning the date of the Flood among Christians who accept the anthropological time-table. Those who believe the Flood was geographically universal tend to date the Flood several hundred thousands years ago. Those who believe it destroyed all men but was geographically local (e.g., James O. Buswell III) would date it from about 15,000 to perhaps 100,000 years ago. Those who believe it only destroyed part of the race (e.g., Bernard Ramm) would tend to date it less than 10,000 years ago. In other words, the more catastrophic the Flood is conceived to have been, the more remote it must have been if the human race is as old as modern anthropologists claim.

Crag tools as preglacial, then our 75,000 years of Chellean-Acheulian nondevelopment are stretched into 400,000, which certainly is an added strain on the credibility we have to extort from our imagination. Even 4000 years without basic change in methods of human living is really wholly beyond our experience to conceive. *Perhaps once we get beyond comparable historical experience, we are lost anyhow, as critical minds, and we might as well trust to faith in an authority that claims a lot as in one that claims less.*¹

Those who have no ultimate authority or standard of revealed truth to appeal to may well rest content with such speculations. But how can Genesis 11 be made to harmonize with such a scheme of things? Are we to grant that the assumptions which underlie modern anthropological dating schemes are basically valid and put Adam, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel hundreds of thousands of years before Christ? For several reasons, we believe that Christians cannot with consistency allow for such datings.

The Analogy of Biblical Chronology

To stretch the genealogy of Genesis 11 to cover a period of over 100,000 years is to do violence to the chronological framework of all subsequent Bible history and prophecy. Approximately 2,000 years covers the history of the Church up to the present. Before Christ's first coming, the history of Israel covered a period of 2,000 years; and after Christ's second coming, according to Revelation 20, there will be another 1,000 years of earth-history before the commencement of the eternal state (amillennialists do not even allow for these final 1,000 years). The incongruity of insisting upon 100,000 years between Noah and Abraham, while granting that the entire history of redemption from Abraham to the eternal state may be only four or five thousand years, becomes obvious.

To be sure, it was by means of Biblical analogies that we were able to find possible gaps in the genealogy of Genesis 11. But the

¹A. L. Kroeber, *Anthropology*, p. 654. Italics are ours. More recently, Harry I. Shapiro (ed.), *Man, Culture, and Society* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1956), p. 49, calls attention to "the immense space of time between the first appearance of man and the beginnings of written records . . . a period of perhaps some 1,000,000 years duration at a conservative estimate." On July 17, 1959, L. S. B. Leakey discovered what he claims to be "the oldest known stone tool-making man yet found." He has named him *Zinjanthropus boisei*, and dates him about 500,000 years ago. *Antiquity*, XXXIII, No. 132 (December, 1959), pp. 283-287.

point we now wish to emphasize is that *those very analogies serve also to limit our time-scale for Genesis 11*. The gap between Amram and Moses was 300 years, not 30,000. And the gap between Joram and Uzziah in Matthew 1:8 was 50 years, not 5,000. On the basis of the analogy of Biblical chronology, therefore, we maintain that it is very hazardous to assume a period of 100,000 years between the Flood and Abraham.

The Dating of the Tower of Babel

But the matter becomes even more serious when we discover that not all of the postdiluvian patriarchs can be used to cover this supposed 100,000 years which elapsed between the Flood and Abraham. As we have pointed out previously, the judgment of Babel occurred in the days of Peleg, the sixth patriarch listed after Noah. The centrality of the human race and its linguistic unity (Gen. 11:1-2), coupled with the magnitude of the building project at Babel (Gen. 11:4), presuppose a fairly high degree of civilization. That God's judgment upon Babel took place not more than a millennium after the Flood is suggested by the fact that the world's population was still confined to one comparatively small area of the earth at that time.¹ Of course, those who are seeking a harmonization between Genesis and the time-table of uniformitarian anthropologists would be perfectly willing to grant a comparatively short period between the Flood and God's judgment of Babel anyway, for they are looking for ample time *since* the confusion of tongues at Babel to explain the distribution of mankind to the ends of the earth in terms of the uniformitarian time scheme.

¹ That the antediluvians scattered abroad much more quickly than the postdiluvians is suggested by at least two considerations. First, such passages as Gen. 4:14-16, 6:1, and 6:11 indicate that the earth was filled with people long before the Flood (see above, pp. 28-33). Secondly, the early postdiluvians are said to have built their city and tower "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (Gen. 11:4), presumably with the experience of antediluvian humanity in mind. The Biblical emphasis upon their refusal to be scattered strongly implies a contrary situation in the antediluvian world, as well as a direct disobedience of God's command to "replenish the earth" (9:1). That the judgment of Babel could have occurred as much as 1,000 years after the Flood is suggested by two further considerations. First, the analogy between Genesis 10:25 and Exodus 6:20 (as discussed above, pp. 481-483) shows that Peleg could have been a distant descendant of Eber. Secondly, the fact that Peleg *alone* is singled out as the patriarch in whose days the earth was "divided" (a reference to the judgment of Babel) permits us to assume that Noah, Shem (who lived for half a millennium after the Flood), Arpachshad, Shelah, and Eber had died long before the birth of Peleg and therefore before the judgment of Babel.

But this would mean that we have eliminated half of the postdiluvian patriarchs before the "stretching process" really begins in earnest! Since Terah is obviously the actual father of Abram, we are left with only Reu, Serug, and Nahor, as the patriarchal links during the 100,000 years that supposedly elapsed between the Flood (and the Tower of Babel) and Abram. And the very place where we found the clearest possibility for a gap in the genealogy of Genesis 11, namely, between Eber and Peleg, was *before* the Tower of Babel! Thus, the obvious proximity of the first five postdiluvian patriarchs to the time of the Flood makes it all the more difficult to imagine a vast period of time elapsing between the judgment of Babel and the birth of Abraham.

The Patriarchs and the "Old Stone Age"

Even if we dismiss the incongruity of allowing only a few centuries between the Flood and the Tower of Babel and then pressing 100,000 years or so into the period from Babel to Abraham, we are still faced with the staggering problem of explaining how our three "link" patriarchs—Reu, Serug, and Nahor—are to be related to the various stone-age cultures that anthropologists assign to the vast ages of time that supposedly preceded the rise of civilization. May we think of Reu and Serug as savage, illiterate cave-dwellers of the Chellean period and Nahor perhaps as a primitive hunter of the Acheulian period whose flints were more even and symmetrical than those of his ancestors? Or are we to suppose that in some tiny pocket of civilization, nearly swamped by an ocean of savagery, an unbroken chain of saintly men¹ perpetuated the Messianic line of Shem and handed down the knowledge of the one true God for scores of thousands of years? If Babel was judged 100,000 years before Abraham, how can we explain the close connection between the sons of Noah and the various national and language groups of Genesis 10? And if

¹ To be sure, the case of Terah (Joshua 24:2) proves that not all links in the Messianic chain had to be saints, any more than in the case of some of the links which are named in Matthew 1. But we must insist that the Messianic line remained in fairly close contact with men who were saints and that these links, without exception, were civilized men. It would be unbiblical to allow for any period of human history with *no* human witnesses to the truth of God; and the very existence of a Messianic *line* (even though only a few of the names are mentioned in Scripture) would seem to presuppose some sort of a written record, which in turn presupposes at least a tiny pocket of civilization in the Near East from Babel onward.

tens of thousands of years separated Abraham from his post-Babel ancestors, how can we explain the fact that there are evidences in Assyrian records of the existence of towns in Mesopotamia whose names correspond to those of Peleg (Paliga), Reu, Serug (Sarugi), and Nahor (Nakhiri or Nakhur)?¹ The absurdity of attempting to harmonize Genesis 11 with the time-table of uniformitarian paleo-anthropologists should be apparent to those who ponder these and similar questions.

The Babylonian Flood Tradition

The most serious limitation on the stretching of Genesis 11, in the opinion of some scholars, is that which is imposed by the Flood traditions of many nations, especially that of Babylon. So remarkable are the similarities between the Genesis account of the Flood and that which is recorded in the Gilgamesh Epic that most archaeologists insist on deriving the former from the latter. Christian scholarship, on the other hand, unanimously asserts that Genesis gives us God's inspired record of that great catastrophe, while the Babylonian epic was handed down by oral and written tradition for many centuries, showing by its gross polytheism the serious corruption of the original facts with the passing of time.

Now the problem, simply stated, is this: How could certain details of the story of the great Flood have been more or less accurately handed down from one primitive stone-age culture to another, purely by oral tradition, for nearly 100,000 years, to be finally incorporated into the Gilgamesh Epic? That such could have happened for four or five thousand years is conceivable. That it could have happened over a period of nearly 100,000 years is quite inconceivable. The Gilgamesh Epic alone, rightly considered, administers a fatal blow to the concept of a 100,000 B.C. Flood.²

¹ Cf. Merrill F. Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, pp. 112-113.

² James O. Buswell, III, in a review of Bernard Ramm's volume, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, challenged his statement (quoted above, p. 37) that Genesis and Babylonian parallels demand a comparatively recent date for the Flood (*Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, VII, No. 4, December, 1955, p. 5). To this, Ramm replied, "Believe that common oral tradition was handed down for 5,000 years so that the Babylonians received it, or what you will. The parallels between Genesis and Babylonian materials is too close to be sheer accident or verbal coincidence." (*Loc. cit.*, p. 6). For further discussions of the Babylonian Flood account, see above, pp. 37ff., and pp. 49ff.

CONCLUSION

A careful study of the Biblical evidence leads us to the conclusion that the Flood may have occurred as much as three to five thousand years before Abraham. Some evangelical scholars, seeing the possibility of gaps in the genealogy of Genesis 11, have urged an acceptance of uniformitarian and evolutionary dating schemes for early man, with the Flood occurring more than 100,000 years ago. But the analogy of Biblical chronology, the obvious proximity of the judgment of Babel to the Flood, and the problem of Reu, Serug, and Nahor make it highly improbable that such an extended postdiluvian chronology can be allowed. This improbability approaches impossibility when we consider the oral traditions of the Flood which have been incorporated into such documents as the Gilgamesh Epic of Babylonia.

Evangelical scholars who feel the necessity of bringing Genesis 11 into conformity with current paleoanthropological timetables should realize the full implications of such harmonization efforts. It would seem to us that even the allowance of 5,000 years between the Flood and Abraham stretches Genesis 11 almost to the breaking point. The time has come when those who take the testimony of God's infallible Word with seriousness should begin to look with favor upon the efforts of those who are examining and exposing the unwarranted assumptions and false presuppositions of uniformitarianism as it applies to the dating of early man.¹

¹ The assumptions which underlie Carbon 14 dating methods are discussed above, pp. 43-44; 370-379. Also, see pp. 296-303 on the theory of multiple glaciations; and pp. 417-418 for the dating of cave deposits. Among those who are advocating a relatively recent date for the universal Flood are R. Laird Harris, "The Date of the Flood and the Age of Man," *The Bible Today*, XXXVII, No. 9 (June, 1943), p. 579; Joseph P. Free, *Archaeology and Bible History* (Wheaton, Ill.: Van Kampen Press, 1950), pp. 18, 21; J. Barton Payne, *An Outline of Hebrew History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), p. 20; and Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), p. 202.