

hypothesis. If the Arkite theory, upon which Bryant spent so much labour, be found untenable, because based upon a forced interpretation of every rite and myth of the ancients as a reminiscence of the Noachian deluge, as untenable must the theory be which makes a Babel of mythology by seeking to harmonize it with a reminiscence of what might have occurred in that ancient seat. Even more unintelligible is the latter theory, inasmuch as Nimrod, the great hero of whom all nations are supposed to have had a grateful remembrance, was, in all probability, posterior to the dispersion, or at least contemporary with it. Moreover, we have found that the ancient traditions regard Babylonia, not as the primitive seat of empire, but as occupying a very secondary position, receiving its religion by way of the Erythrean sea, and its royal line from Egypt.⁹⁴ The arts and mythology of Chaldæa are generally allowed to be derived from some other source.⁹⁵

The great centre to which all the tribes of men gradually converged was Egypt. Whether Noah himself moved westward and planted vines in Hebron, which was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt, as the Rabbins inform us,⁹⁶ will be a difficult question to answer; but there can be little doubt that the great majority of his descendants, or at least those of them whose life history, in its mythical or accepted forms, cares to record, did pass through Palestine and Arabia on their way to the banks of the Nile. One of the earliest seats of civilization I believe to have been what M. de Lanoye calls "the opulent pentapolis of the Jordan;"⁹⁷ and the earliest of all legends, which many have confused with the story of the Noachian flood, I am convinced arose from the overthrow of the Cities of the Plain. Here, or in the region between the Nile and the Dead Sea, I unhesitatingly place the deluges of Deucalion and Ogyges, with the accompanying events that form an

⁹⁴ Oannes, mentioned by Berosus, who came by way of the Red Sea, brought letters and religion with him to Babylonia. Belus, brother of Agenor, and father of Ægyptus, connects Babylonia, as its first monarch, with Phœnicia and Egypt.

⁹⁵ Baldwin, *Prehistoric Nations*, 186. Rawlinson's *Herodot.*, App. Bk. i., Essay vi., sec. 16, &c.

⁹⁶ Ritter, *Comparative Geography of Palestine*, iii., 297.

⁹⁷ "Since the opulent Pentapolis of the Jordan had sunk in the bituminous gulf of the Dead Sea, the most compact centres of permanent population, existing between Egypt and Upper Asia, were the maritime establishments which the Cushites of Canaan, driven from the shores of the Erythrean Gulf by convulsions of the soil, had founded upon the Syrian coast; the fortified cities which the Chetas (Hittites) had built between the Orontes and the Euphrates; and lastly, Babel, in the land of Sengar, where a celebrated temple of the Sun and great navigable river, attracted caravans and flotillas of pilgrims and traders from all directions." *Rameses the Great*, 117.