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Babylon

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Babylon.

Babylon is one of the oldest and most interesting cities of which we have any knowledge. Not only do secular writers of antiquity speak of it in terms of highest admiration and count it among the wonders of the world, but the sacred records themselves have immortalized the name of this great metropolis, which for centuries radiated culture and civilization to the whole then known world and by whose waters ancient Judah's children hung their harps on the willows and wept because their beloved Jerusalem was no more.

Among the Babylonians and the Assyrians, Babylon was known as "bâbili," which they interpreted to mean "the Gate of God." The Sumerians called it "ka.dingir.ra," which can only mean "the Gate of God." In her later days Babylon was quite commonly known as "bâbilâni" or, "bâbilân," "the Gate of the Gods," which the Greeks transliterated as Babylow.

According to Gen. 11, 9, however, the meaning of "Babylon" is not quite as flattering. "Therefore is the name of it called Babel (), because the Lord did there confound () the language of all the earth." It is plain that the sacred writer derives the name from , to mingle, mix, confuse. This presupposes a verb , derived from , to mingle, mix, confuse, confound. In the cognate Semitic languages we find the following equivalents: in Arabic: "bálbaba," to scatter, disperse; mix, confound (the tongues); and "bálbalatun," a state of confusion (used of languages); in Syriac: "balbel," to confuse; and in Babylono-Assyrian: "balâlu," to pour out, sprinkle; mix, confound.

We are thus dealing with two widely diverging interpretations of the name of Babylon. According to the former it means "the Gate of [the] God[s]"; but according to the latter it conveys the idea of confusion. How can we account for these two views? Fritz Hommel (with all due regard for his marvelous learning and his keen insight) seems to believe that he can remove the difficulty by attributing the

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interpretation offered in Gen. 11, 9 to folk etymology, which connected the name of Babylon with the Babylono-Assyrian "babalu," "to bring," a shorter form for "babal libbi." which he renders "Antrieb des Herzens." 1) But why should we attribute such a blunder to the author of Gen. 11, 9? With the same right with which Hommel, Driver,2) and others advance their theory we can assert that the view held by the Babylonians and Assyrians was based on folk etymology. It is evident that the story of Gen. 11, 1-9 refers to very early days.3) Now, we may argue that in hoary antiquity the meaning attached to Babylon actually was "confusion," but that in the course of time this was forgotten. Gradually, however, there arose in the hearts of the Babylonians a desire to know the etymology of their beloved city. Since the name easily lent itself to the flattering interpretation of "the Gate of God" (babu, gate; ilu, god), that meaning was adopted and retained throughout the centuries of Babylon's subsequent history. Finally the Sumerians invaded Babylonia and came in contact with the inhabitants of Babylon. They inquired into the meaning of the name of Babylon and, having received the desired information, called the city "ka.dingir.ra," the Gate of God.

This naturally leads us to the much-debated question whether the Semites were in Babylonia before the Sumerians, or vice versa. H. Frankfort, after having treated this problem at some length, concludes: "We thus see the Sumerians not only as the main authors of the civilization of the valley of the Two Rivers, but also as its earliest occupants, able to maintain their predominance in cultural matters throughout ages of continual invasion, but naturally confined, politically and ethnically, to a more restricted area."4) But Frankfort's evidence is not conclusive. It is our belief that at least the northern part of Babylonia (known as Akkad, in contradistinction to the southern half, called Sumer) was inhabited by the Semites before the Sumerians invaded that region. We are supported in our view by Arno Poebel, the greatest living authority on the Sumerians, who says: "Auch die Sumerier sind zweifellos nur eins der vielen Voelker gewesen, die im Laufe der Geschichte von aussen her in Babylonien eingedrungen sind. Vor ihnen aber wird das Land, nach der Analogie der spacteren Zeiten zu schliessen, aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach im Besitz einer aelteren semitischen Bevoelkerung gewesen sein."5) The same view is held by C. L. Woolley, a well-known authority on Sumerian archeology and history (cp. his book The Sumerians).

In this connection we should also call attention to the commonly

¹⁾ Fritz Hommel, Ethnologie und Geographie des alten Orients, p. 307.

²⁾ S. R. Driver, Commentary on Genesis, p. 136.

³⁾ Cf. R. Koldewey, Das wieder erstehende Babylon, p. 303.

⁴⁾ H. Frankfort, Archeology and the Sumerian Problem, p. 46 f.

⁵⁾ Arno Poebel, Grundzuege der sumerischen Grammatik, p. 1.

accepted theory that the Sumerians introduced the temple tower into Babylonia, that the temple towers (ziggurati) were memorials of the days when the Sumerian gods still dwelt on the peaks of the mountains east of the Tigris, and that the Sumerians erected them with the object of giving their gods a home on a mountain top such as they had once occupied before they left their old home to dwell on the plains of Babylonia. Therefore some one might assert that the Sumerians were in Babylonia prior to the building of the tower to which Gen. 11 refers and that consequently our suggested harmonization of the Biblical interpretation of Babylon's name with that of the cuneiform records was untenable. But what proof do we have that the Sumerians were the originators of this architectural feature or that they introduced it in the land of the two rivers? Nobody knows whence the Sumerians came and at what period they invaded Babylonia, and hence we are all the more justified in taking some of those fanciful theories relating to the temple towers magno cum grano salis.

Our suggested harmonization of Gen. 11, 9 with cuneiform inscriptions is merely a theory, and it is to be taken as such. For the present it is impossible to offer a satisfactory solution based on evidence. But let us hope that Babylon's early history will be more and more completely unfolded and that we shall be enabled to solve this problem to satisfaction as the excavations are continued and the inscriptions are forced to reveal their secrets.

The earliest reference to Babylon in the inscriptions is found in the days of Sargon of Agade, who ruled approximately 2850 B.C. He is said to have "removed the soil from the trenches of Babylon."6) About 2750 Sharkalisharri, a successor to Sargon of Agade, erected two temples in Babylon.7) This points to the city's early importance. Under Hammurabi (ca. 2100), the energetic Amorite, Babylon gained such a position of power and influence that from then on we may call the land Babylonia, although that name is not used in the inscriptions until 1600. Around 1250 Tukulti-Ninurta I, king of Assyria, conquered Babylon and incorporated the Babylonian empire with the Assyrian. Henceforth Babylonia was, for the most time, the vassal of Assyria, and only for short intervals was she able to throw off the yoke of Assyria and even impose her will on her oppressor. Because of repeated rebellions in Babylon, Sennacherib in 689 completely destroyed the city with her temple and carried Marduk, her chief god, away to Ashur. He cut channels through the city and flooded it with water to make its destruction so complete that no one might

⁶⁾ L. W. King, Chronicles concerning Early Babylonian Kings, Vol. I, page 47 f.

⁷⁾ Thureau-Dangin, Dic sumerischen und akkadischen Koenigsinschriften, page 225.

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find the site of the former city and the temples of the gods. However, in 681 his son Esarhaddon began to rebuild it owing to the influence of his wife, a Babylonian. But death interfered with his labors, and his work was completed by his sons Ashurbanipal⁸) and Shamash-shum-ukin.

But soon Babylon was to be visited once more. In 672 Esarhaddon, before he set out on his second Egyptian campaign, appointed his son Ashurbanipal to the coregency of Assyria. In 670, soon after his return from his successful expedition, he granted the same title to his son Shamash-shum-ukin, localizing his sphere of activity in Babylon. At Esarhaddon's death, Ashurbanipal was crowned king of Assyria and its various dependencies, while his brother, Shamashshum-ukin, continued to rule over Babylon as the vassal of Ashurbanipal. For seventeen years Shamash-shum-ukin remained loyal to his brother Ashurbanipal. But then he revolted. Babylon was besieged, a siege which extended over years. Famine and pestilence ravaged the city, until the inhabitants were eating the flesh of their sons and daughters and gnawing their leather trappings. In despair Shamash-shum-ukin cast himself into the fire and perished. The city surrendered and was plundered and devastated. Vae victis! They were carried off to Ashur, and the same sculptured bulls which had witnessed the assassination of Sennacherib saw their tongues cut out and the captives deprived of life. "The streets and public squares were choked by the bodies of those who had died of hunger and pestilence during the siege, and to them were added the slain in the sack of the city. There was great feasting for the wolves, vultures, and fish, for the dogs and swine, which roamed the streets." 9)

Thereupon Ashurbanipal entrusted a certain Kandalanu with the kingship of Babylon, unless Ashurbanipal assumed that name as king of Babylon, a view favored by the majority of Assyriologists. At Kandalanu's death, Nabopolassar, a Chaldeo-Aramean and king of the Sea Lands, was able to secure the throne of Babylon. But in 616 he revolted from his Assyrian overlord and formed an alliance with Cyaxares, king of the Medes. The stupendous plunder obtained at the fall of Ashur in 614 and at Nineveh in 612 was brought to Babylon, and the city became wealthy almost overnight. It was largely due to this great wealth that Babylon became what it was under the active Nebuchadrezzar II, whose reign of forty-three years marks the period of Babylon's greatest splendor, peace, and prosperity and under whom the commerce of this great metropolis extended over the entire Near Eastern world and as far west as Ionia. (9)

At this point of time we shall pause for a moment and study the

⁸⁾ A. T. Clay, Light on the Old Testament from Babel, p. 99 f.

⁹⁾ A. T. Olmstead, History of Assyria, p. 475.

¹⁰⁾ E. Unger, Babylon, die Heilige Stadt, pp. 32-38.

city itself in a rapid panoramic sweep, since most of the information which we are able to derive from the excavations at Babylon and from other sources relate to the Babylon of Nebuchadrezzar (the lower strata of the city are still waiting to be uncovered by the spade of the excavator) and because in his days Babylon reached the pinnacle of her glory.

Babylon is located on the southern banks of the chocolate-colored Euphrates, which divides the city into two main sections, into the old city to the east and the new city to the west of the river, or into East and West Babylon. The entire city complex formed a rectangle of 8,150 meters in circumference, the smaller sides facing northeast and southwest. Babylon was enclosed by two strong walls, of which Unger says: "Die Innenmauer bestand aus Lehmziegeln [let us bear in mind that owing to the intense heat sun-dried bricks in Babylonia become surprisingly hard and gain great durability], war 6.50 m. dick und hatte in regelmaessigen Abstaenden von 18.10 m. abwechselnd quergestellte grosse Tuerme von 9.40 m. Front und 11.40 m. Seite und laengsgestellte kleine Tuerme von 9.70 m. Front und 8.06 m. Seite. Die Ziegel haben 32 m. im Quadrat. Die Aussenmauer lag vor der Innenmauer in 7.30 m. Abstand. Die Mauer war 3.72 m. dick. In gleichmaessigen Abstaenden von je 20.50 m. sitzen quergestellte Tuerme von 5.10 m. Front und 5.80 m. Tiefe aus Lehm."11) The two walls were, in turn, surrounded with a moat. A third wall, similar in character to the first two, was erected by Nebuchadrezzar around East Babylon, not to enlarge the city area, which would thus have gained a total circumference of 18 kilometers (ca. 11 miles), but to protect his summer palace and the temple, both of which were situated north of East Babylon, outside of the city walls, for the New Year's Festival, to afford protection to the country folks and their movable property in times of war, and to supply the city with provisions in case of an extended siege. This third wall enclosed fields sufficient to feed the entire population of Babylon. Also this wall was fortified by a strong, wide moat. The whole region around East Babylon was a huge fortified camp, and the city could not be starved any more.

The walls were pierced through by eight gates, each of which was named after the chief god of the city to which the street led that passed through the gate. Four of the gates led into East Babylon, while the remaining ones gave ready access to the western part of the city. Besides these there were about as many smaller gates (*Pforten* in contradistinction to *Stadttore*). The streets leading through the large city gates were the processional streets of the gods of the various Babylonian cities and towns; for once a year, during the celebration of the Spring Festival (also called the New Year's Festival, lasting

¹¹⁾ E. Unger, op. cit., p. 60.

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from Nisan 1 to 12), the vast army of Babylonian gods and goddesses went in procession to the capital to pay homage to Marduk, the chief god of Babylonia.

Like the Athenians in the days of St. Paul the Babylonians were "in all things too superstitious," Acts 17, 22. They could boast of 53 temples dedicated to the "great gods" (ilani rabuti) besides a vast array of altars, 180 of which belonged to Ishtar alone. The weather god Adad (the Biblical Hadad), together with Nergal, the god of death and pestilence, likewise owned 180 altars. Then think of the rest of the deities and the altars put up in honor of certain stars or stellar constellations. Such altars were erected in the temples, on the streets, or at the crossings, giving every one an opportunity at all times to offer up a sacrifice and to pray for success in his love affair, for favorable weather, or to ward off death and pestilence, etc., ad libitum. 12)

Chief among the temples was that of Marduk, one of the largest of the entire Tigro-Euphrates Valley. Marduk was the highest among the Babylonian gods. In Is. 46, 1; Jer. 50, 2, and 51, 44 he is called Bel, corresponding to the Hebrew 272 and meaning "lord." That was a very favorite term for Marduk, applied to him especially in later times. But it already occurs around 2000 B.C. The name of Bel designated Marduk as the lord of the Babylonian gods. Since he was the lord, or king, of the gods, his sanctuary could have a temple tower, a separate structure a little north of the temple, with a square base of approximately 90 meters and consisting of seven stages, which rose in diminishing sizes, one superimposed upon the other, to a height of 90 meters (ca. 300 feet). It was a veritable sky-scraper, compared with the three- or four-story buildings of Babylon, and one of the most impressive and magnificent architectural masterpieces of antiquity. This is probably the kind of tower referred to in Gen. 11. Herodotus, in harmony with Babylonian ways of reckoning, includes the foundation (the kigally, which represents the underworld) and therefore speaks of eight stages. He gives the following interesting description: "In the middle of the precinct there was a tower of solid masonry, a furlong in length and breath, upon which was raised a second tower and on that a third and so on up to eight. The ascent to the top is on the outside, by a path which winds round all the towers. When one is about half-way up, one finds a resting-place and seats, where persons are wont to sit some time on their way to the summit. On the topmost tower there is a spacious temple, and inside the temple stands a couch of unusual size, richly adorned, with a golden table by its side. There is no statue of any kind set up in the place, nor is the chamber occupied of nights by any one but a single

¹²⁾ E. Unger, op. cit., p. 48 f.

native woman, who, as the Chaldeans, the priests of this god, affirm, is chosen for himself by the deity out of all the women of the land."13)

The tower was completely destroyed by Sennacherib in 689, together with the city of Babylon, but was soon rebuilt by Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal. In the days of Nabopolassar and Nebuchadrezzar it had become dilapidated, but was again completely rebuilt. Finally Alexander the Great took Babylon and determined to give the sorely neglected structure a new lease on life by tearing down the remnants of the old and erecting a new one on the site of the former. But before he could even level off the tower, death interfered, and the sanctuary never arose again. Remnants of it were still found by the German excavators. 14)

North of the temple and its tower was the business section of Babylon. Then followed the castle with the royal palace and the museum, in which monuments from every country of the ancient Orient had been collected, testifying of bygone days and the power of the Babylonian kings and bearing eloquent testimony to the submission of their enemies. 15)

Of West Babylon little is known, as it still remains to be excavated. It was of comparatively late date and of less importance than East Babylon and was connected with the latter by means of a mighty stone bridge, which spanned the Euphrates about at the middle of the city and rested on eight solid pillars. This bridge, which antedates Nebuchadrezzar, was counted among the wonders of the ancient world. Mention should also be made of the royal mausoleum, which was located in the southwest corner of West Babylon and which still waits to be unearthed. 16)

In 539 Babylon fell into the hands of Cyrus, who thus became the "ruler of the political, commercial, cultural, and religious center of the world. Cyrus assumed the responsibility of administering its government, of satisfying its diverse population, and of keeping peace with all the rest of the territory that he had conquered. The inauguration of his new liberal policy was an epoch in the history of Southwestern Asia and one which for the future would, and did, distribute rather than centralize the interests which had formerly focalized in Babylon . . . and thus marked the beginning of her decline as a world-power." 17)

Under the successors of Cyrus, Babylon rebelled repeatedly, until Xerxes finally destroyed the statue and the temple of Bel Marduk and

¹³⁾ Book I, 182; G. Rawlinson, The History of Herodotus, p. 67 f.

¹⁴⁾ E. Unger, op. cit., p. 207, 191 f. R. Koldewey, op. cit., p. 189 f.

¹⁵⁾ E. Unger, op. cit., p. 227.

¹⁶⁾ E. Unger, op. cit., p. 51. 117 f. Herodotus, I, 186. R. Koldewey, op. cit., p. 193 ff.

¹⁷⁾ Ira M. Price, The Monuments and the Old Testament, p. 377 f.

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thus put an end to insurrection in that quarter of his empire (ca. 478). This statement will bear elucidation. According to Babylonian conceptions the king of Babylon was Marduk's representative, his vicegerent, and as such received his royal office from Marduk. To obtain and to retain this position, it was essential that the king, at every New Year's Festival, shook hands with Bel Marduk. Failure to do so deprived him of his kinship. 18) Furthermore, according to Babylonian religion the statue of a god is not merely a reminder of the deity, but the respective god himself dwells in that statue and is so intimately connected with it that destruction of the statue means the destruction of the god, his very death! Thus by smashing the statue of Marduk, Xerxes annihilated the great Bel Marduk himself, and henceforth it was impossible for any one to become king of Babylon, and Babylon's independence was hopelessly lost forevermore! Unger says: "Der alte Orient haftet durchaus an der realen Welt und ihren Erscheinungen. Der Gott ist nicht ein Geist, sondern er ist wirklich und wahrhaftig in seiner Statue vorhanden; mit dieser Statue geht auch er und sein Einfluss vollstaendig zugrunde, wie die Geschichte der Statue des Marduk deutlich erkennen laesst."19) Xerxes was the last king of Babylon, and no king after him, whether Greek or Parthian, ever bore the title "king of Babylon." The reason why none of the Assyrian kings ever took such drastic measures may perhaps be found in the fact that the Assyrian religion was virtually the same as that of the Babylonians, whereas Xerxes was a follower of Zoroaster and worshiped Ahuramazda (Ormuzd).

It was indeed a very hard blow, and Babylon's ruin was fast approaching. However, a new era of better and happier days seemed to be dawning when Alexander the Great defeated Darius III and entered Babylon in 331. Like Cyrus, Alexander paid homage to the Babylonian gods and without delay began to rebuild Esagila, once the temple of Marduk. His object was to make Babylon the center of his vast empire, to unite the Orient with the Occident. Many Babylonians assumed a Greek name in addition to their former name; and many of them studied Greek, and many Greeks, in turn, studied Babylonian. What developments the old metropolis would have made if Alexander's plans had materialized we have no means of knowing. The young conqueror soon died (323) and with him his plans pertaining to the rehabilitation of Babylon. Thus died Babylon's last hope. It was a glorious beginning, but, alas I it was a dream. 20)

Of Alexander's line there remained in Macedonia a demented

¹⁸⁾ Th. Dombart, Esagilla und das grosse Mardukfest zu Babylon; published in the Journal of the Society of Oriental Research, Vol. VIII (1924), pp. 103—122.

¹⁹⁾ E. Unger, op. cit., p. 134.

²⁰⁾ Bruno Meissner, Koenige Assyriens und Babyloniens, p. 284 f.

half-brother, and soon after his demise a son was born to the great conqueror, of his wife Roxana. Conflicts among the leaders at home put out of the way all these members of Alexander's family, even his mother. "His generals in Babylonia," says H. J. Breasted, "found the plans for his great Western campaign lying among his papers, but no man possessed the genius to carry them out. These able Macedonian commanders were soon involved among themselves in a long and tremendous struggle, which slumbered only to break out anew. The ablest of them was Alexander's great general Antigonus, who determined to gain control of all the great Macedonian's vast empire. Then followed a generation of exhausting wars by land and sea, involving the greatest battles thus far fought by European armies. Antigonus was killed, and Alexander's empire fell into three main parts, in Europe, Asia, and Africa, with one of his generals or one of their successors at the head of each. In Europe, Macedonia was in the hands of Antigonus, grandson of Alexander's great commander of the same name. He endeavored to maintain control of Greece; in Asia most of the territory of the former Persian Empire was under the rule of Alexander's general Seleucus, while in Africa, Egypt was held by Ptolemy, one of the cleverest of Alexander's Macedonian leaders."21)

The reign of the Seleucids, as Seleucus and his successors are called, lasted barely two hundred years. Already in 124 Babylon was lost to the Parthians, who, in turn, surrendered to Trajan, the Roman, in 117 A. D.

Religious works continued to be composed in Babylon almost up to the time of Christ, and scientific life was still in evidence, but her political and commercial significance was lost. The greater part of the city lay in ruins as early as the first century of our era; and for hundreds of years her ruins furnished building-material for towns that have been built up in her vicinity, such as Seleucia, Bagdad, and Hilleh. "Burnt bricks, bearing the titles of the builders of ancient Babylon, are found everywhere in the buildings of these cities." 22)

Like Nineveh, Babylon became the dwelling-place of the beasts of the desert, forsaken by man (cp. Is. 13, 20 f.; Jer. 50, 39; 51, 37) and buried by the dust-storms of the plain, until she was "cast out of her grave" (Is. 14, 19) by the Germans, under Robert Koldewey, who began excavation in 1899 and continued that work for thirteen years.

Babylon is still uninhabited, except a little section in the southwest corner, where the tiny village Sindshar is located. Two further villages are situated to the north and the south, but outside of the old city area.²³) Recently the Iraq government decreed to rebuild

²¹⁾ H. J. Breasted, Ancient Times, p. 446.

²²⁾ A. T. Clay, op. cit., p. 102.

²³⁾ E. Unger, op. cit., p. 1. R. Koldewey, op. cit., sketch facing p. 1.

Rleine Stubien aus bem Galaterbrief.

Babylon as part of an industrial project.²⁴) But amid the plans and preparations to rehabilitate the long-buried city of former power and excellency we hear the voice of the prophet Isaiah: "Babylon shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation," 13, 19 f.

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Rleine Studien aus bem Galaterbrief.

III.

In den letzten zwei Nummern dieser Zeitschrift sind zwei Hauptsteile des Galaterbrieß kurz behandelt worden, der erste Teil, Kap. 1 und 2, in dem Paulus nachweist, daß er ein rechter, wahrer, voller Apostel ist, gegenüber den Berdäcktigungen seiner Gegner, die sein Apostolat unterminieren wollten, um dann um so ersolgreicher seine lautere apostolische Lehre angreisen zu können, und der zweite Teil, Kap. 3 und 4, wo er seine Lehre von der Rechtsetigung nicht aus den Berken, sondern durch den Glauben an Christum darlegt, das geschessseie Svangelium, das einzig wahre Svangelium. Dies tut er dogs matisch und polemisch, thetisch und antithetisch. Aber aus dieser Lehre don der Freiheit dem Geseh, von der Gerechtigkeit des Glaubens ohne Berdienst der Werke, solgt nicht Fleischesfreiheit — liberty is not license —, sondern rechter Christenwandel in der Liebe, wie nun der dritte Teil, Kap. 5 und 6, zeigt.

Diefen britten Teil wollen wir nun gunachft fummarifc uns bors führen und bann einige Sauptfachen und Sauptbegriffe gu befonberer Erörterung herausgreifen, wie wir dies ichon im ersten Artifel getan haben. Der britte Teil bes Briefes, ber mit Rap. 5, 1 beginnt und mit Rap. 6, 10 fcbließt, ift nach ber befannten fcbriftftellerifchen Beije Bauli ber ermahnende ober paranetifche Teil. Der Inhalt ift, furz gefagt, die Dahnung: "Baltet fest an ber Freiheit in Chrifto!" Er gerfällt beutlich in brei Unterabteilungen. Bir lefen erftens eine Barnung bor ber Rückehr unter bes Gesehes Joch der Beschneibung, Kap. 5, 1—12. Bir vernehmen zweitens eine Warnung bor einem Bandel nicht im Geifte, sondern nach dem Fleische, Rap. 5, 13-25. Und wir horen brittens eine Ermunterung zu einem Bandel in bolliger bruderlicher Eintracht und Gemeinschaft, Rap. 5, 26 bis 6, 10. Die hierauf folgens ben Berfe, Rap. 6, 11-18, bilben ben Schluf bes gangen Briefes mit einer nochmaligen fräftigen Barnung bor ben Irrlehrern und mit abfoliegenden Segenswünschen. Bir geben nun ben Inhalt auch diefer beiden Rapitel, der ja allgemein bekannt ist und zwei bekannte Epistels tegte umfaßt, wiederum in einer Baraphrafe in der Sprache bes

²⁴⁾ Chicago Tribune, May 16, 1934.