

of thirty-three centuries; and it is only necessary to read it, to perceive that it has in part been composed of fragments of previously existing works. We cannot, therefore, hesitate to admit, that this is the most ancient writing which has been transmitted to modern times in the West*.

Now, this work, and all those which have been composed since, whatever strangers their authors might be to Moses and his people, speak of the nations on the shores of the Mediterranean as of recent origin; they represent them as still in a half savage state some ages before. And, further, they all speak of a general catastrophe, an irruption of the waters, which occasioned an almost total regeneration of the human race; and to this epoch they do not assign a very remote antiquity. Those texts of the Pentateuch, which extend this epoch the longest, do not place it farther back than twenty centuries before Moses, and hence not more than 5400 years before the present day †.

In the poetical traditions of the Greeks, from which is derived the whole of our profane history with reference to those remote ages, there is nothing which contradicts the Jewish annals. On the

* Note N.

† The Septuagint, 5845 years; the Samaritan text, 4869; the Hebrew text, 4174.