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## Recent Biblical Archaeology.

BY REVEREND J. W. JACK, M.A., GLENFARG, PERTHSHIRE.

APART from the Biblical narrative, we are mainly dependent on the excavation of *tells* and other remains for information concerning the religious practices, customs, and civilization of ancient Palestine, and the outside influences to which the country was peculiarly exposed. Hence the value of the numerous archæological expeditions which are at present working in the Near East. By unearthing buried cities, as well as by field-work, air photography, and other means, they are reconstructing the past of Israel, determining the age and character of sites, filling up gaps in the chronological scheme, and revealing the movements that came at various periods from Egypt, Syria, Babylonia, Cyprus, and the Ægean.

Professor Garstang, for example, by his recent careful and thorough examination of buried Jericho, has succeeded in determining the precise date of its destruction. For twenty years the prevalent idea among many scholars, based on the conclusions of Drs. Watzinger and Sellin, has been that the city was destroyed soon after 1600 B.C. (the beginning of the Late Bronze Age), and that consequently the site in Joshua's time was desolate, 'a heap of ruins on which stood perhaps a few isolated huts.' But Professor Garstang, with the independent assistance in certain matters of Père Vincent and Dr. Clarence Fisher, has produced clear evidences that the solid inner brick wall, about twelve feet thick, was not constructed till the Late Bronze Age, and was destroyed about 1400 B.C., the destruction being shown by reddened masses of burnt bricks, grey ash, and other traces of intense fire. The date has been partly reached from the important fact that not a single fragment of Mycenaean ware has been found among the ten thousand potsherds associated with the destruction of the walls or among the remaining fifty thousand found in the ruins of the city. As it is known that this type of pottery entered Palestine about 1350 B.C., and a specimen of it has been found just outside the walls, it is clear that the destruction of Jericho took place about 1400 B.C., the precise date of the invasion of Palestine by the H̄abiru, who are usually identified with the Hebrews, an invasion described in the famous *Tell el-Amarna* Letters. This unanimous conclusion of the excavators is of great interest and importance, as the date assigned corresponds with that of the Biblical Joshua.

Equally important are the excavations which have just been made, under the British School of Egyptian Archæology, by Sir Flinders Petrie at the great Hyksos fortress of Beth-pelet (*Tell Fara*), eighteen miles south of Gaza, on the borders of Egypt. Here the civilization of the Shepherd Kings, a knowledge of which is so essential to Biblical study, has been laid bare. The period of their rule, one of the most obscure in Egyptian history, is now much clearer owing to the discovery of twenty-five Hyksos graves and over a hundred scarabs. The succeeding age, that of the Philistine lords or *seren* (apparently the plural of *ser* or *sar*, the ruler of the nome in Egypt), who seem to have acted under the suzerainty of the Pharaohs, has also had considerable light thrown on it, and we now have a full and clear view of the burial customs of these rulers. The excavations reveal the military importance of the city, even in the time of David and Solomon. Doubtless it was its strength that made the Pelethites under Benaiah so powerful as David's bodyguard and the main factor in the politics of his reign. It is evident, moreover, that the position of Shishak has been greatly underrated. Not only did he conquer Jerusalem, but he was the greatest builder in South Palestine, and a much more important ruler than has been described in the Book of Kings. Apart from the massive buildings which he erected, tens of thousands of men must have been occupied in rearing the great wall, twenty-two feet thick, built of hard bricks nearly double the usual size, and laid in clean sand foundations five or six courses deep. One other fact about Beth-pelet deserves mention. In the lowest part of the *tell* (the neolithic), a settlement nine feet in depth was found, going back to over 4000 B.C., and giving evidence that the people of this remote age made many little clay figures of dogs. Strange to say, it is just in this region, some three thousand years later, that the Kenizzites or dog-tribe, with the name Caleb ('a dog'), appear in history as allies of Judah.

At *Tell Beit Mirsim*, the Biblical Debir or Kiriath-sepher, thirteen miles south-west of Hebron, where the joint expedition of the Pittsburgh Xenia Seminary and the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem have been at work, the excavators have provided us with a complete purview of the history of culture in Palestine from

before 2000 B.C. to the time of the final destruction of the town by Nebuchadrezzar in 586 B.C. The expedition has included President Kyle, Professor W. F. Albright, Dr. Saarisalo of Helsinki, and other scholars, along with a number of trained surveyors and draughtsmen from the Near East. The remains of ten successive cities have been found, each level being distinctly marked by a layer of ashes. The many cult objects and scarabs afford evidence of a wonderful parallelism between Biblical and secular history, and the excavators believe that the finds when properly studied may provide us with valuable chronological information for the dates of Abraham, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Exodus, and the Conquest of Canaan. It has been conjectured from the name Kiriath-sepher ('city of writing' or 'city of scribe') that the place was one of those centres of Canaanitish learning, where, as in the libraries of Babylonia and Assyria, a number of scribes resided and worked, and where old archives were kept.

A vast amount of exploration, in the interests of archæology, has recently been made in Babylonia. Much of it throws a welcome light on Hebrew tradition and history. At Ur, the home of Abraham, the work has brought to light material evidence of the Flood. After digging down thirty feet or more (over an area thirty yards by twenty yards), through no less than eight old civilizations, one above the other, the excavators suddenly came upon a seam of perfectly clean sand, water-laid and about eleven feet in thickness. This sand could only have been due to an immense Flood. The excavators dug down below the sand into the pre-diluvian stratum, and found there mud floors, household rubbish, sherds of pottery, and other signs of human occupation, as well as graves with coloured pottery and with clay figurines which seem to have a religious connexion. At one point was a great tumbled mass of red and black material, evidently the remains of a reed hut plastered with clay which had been burned down before the Flood. Close to the hut were found some real clay bricks, showing that the people of that distant age also lived in brick buildings—a proof of a much higher state of civilization than would have been expected. Here, six thousand or more years ago, the inhabitants dwelt till the Flood came, depositing a deep layer of sand over the top of everything. All this is supported by the remarkable excavations recently carried out at Kish near Babylon, over one hundred miles north of Ur, by Mr. L. Ch. Watelin and others, with the collaboration of Professor Langdon of Oxford. Below the deep,

upper stratum they came on a similar thick layer of sand, and beneath this they struck the pre-diluvian civilization. At a depth of twenty-one feet beneath the sand they found the early tombs of the mighty men of Kish, who lived long before the days of Noah. By sinking some shafts nine feet lower still, to virgin soil, they discovered painted ware, neolithic implements, and other signs of the earliest population that existed in Mesopotamia, certainly before 5000 B.C. It is clear that Babylonia contains secrets of the utmost importance, which may yet throw a marvellous light on the early chapters of Genesis.

Several Semitic inscriptions and a large number of Phœnician tablets have been discovered lately in Syria, Mesopotamia, and elsewhere. Some of the inscriptions, especially those from Byblos, Ras Shamra, and Sinai, dating as far back as the second millennium B.C., are of great importance for the study of the earliest Phœnician alphabet. Palestine proper, particularly in the middle and southern regions, is acknowledged to be poor in epigraphic material of early date, but at Beth-shemesh (modern *Tell Rumeileh*, half-way between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean), an inscription in ancient Phœnician characters has been unearthed by the Haverford Archæological Expedition, Pennsylvania, under Professor E. Grant. The fragment, which measures  $31\frac{1}{2}$  by  $27\frac{1}{2}$  inches, was found in the top stratum of the Middle Bronze Age, and may therefore be dated about 1600 B.C. There are two lines of text on the concave side, and five on the other. It is impossible, unfortunately, to discover the meaning, as only ten of the letters remain fairly clear. But the writing, which has been done with ink (the same dark colouring matter found on Canaanite pottery) and is not unlike that on the Agricultural Tablet from Gezer (*c.* 900 B.C.), though far more archaic, seems to be Canaanitish or perhaps early Hebrew. Its importance lies in the fact that here we have proof that the inhabitants were in possession of alphabetical writing, as distinct from the cuneiform, for many ages before Joshua. We cannot be guided in this matter by the scarcity of such evidence, for most inscriptions in ink have probably been obliterated by the humidity of the winter climate. It is clear that, while the cuneiform was used for official inter-communication and similar purposes, the ordinary literary activities of the land were carried on in the Semitic alphabet, which was well known to the Canaanites and Hebrews as far back as the Bronze Age. The mention in the Pentateuch of writing on stone, or in a book with ink as early as the Hebrew

Conquest, is far from being an anachronism. Even though the narrative dates as late as the ninth century, the historical setting is true.

Though many of the expeditions at work in Palestine are not concerned directly with questions of Old Testament accuracy, it deserves to be said

that their results tend to corroborate the Biblical narratives, even in matters of local colour and circumstantial detail. They are certainly dispelling the clouds of apparent unreality which have long enveloped the events of those distant ages.

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## National Contributions to Biblical Science.

### VI. The Contribution of France to New Testament Science.

BY VINCENT TAYLOR, PH.D., D.D., FERENS PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE AND CLASSICS AT HEADINGLEY WESLEYAN COLLEGE, LEEDS.

#### I.

IN studying the contribution of France to New Testament scholarship it is necessary to go back at least as far as the close of the seventeenth century to Richard Simon, the French Oratorian priest, who is described by A. Loisy as *le père de la critique biblique et la victime du grand Bossuet*.<sup>1</sup> Simon's distinction is that he separated the New Testament from the Old as a sphere of special study, and applied to its problems principles both of literary and textual criticism. His immediate influence was in Germany<sup>2</sup> rather than in France, where the views of the powerful Bishop of Meaux, and his estimate of the Biblical writings, remained dominant until comparatively recent times.<sup>3</sup> It is useful to recall the influence of Bossuet since he furnishes an example of the ecclesiastical reactions which are characteristic of the story of French criticism down to its most recent phases.

In an atmosphere unsuited to constructive research, progress could be made only by means of violent opposition, and in part this explains the satiric shafts launched by Voltaire against the Church and its clergy in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique*. Rousseau's views are mainly of social and political importance; but his rejection of revelation and theology in the brilliant pages of *Émile* (1762) awoke a bitter hatred which drove him from Paris and compelled him to become a wanderer in Switzerland, England, and Prussia.

<sup>1</sup> *Autour d'un petit livre*, 1903, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. Moffatt, *Introduction*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> He describes them as books *toujours saintes, toujours sacrées, toujours inviolables*. Cf. his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*, II. xxvii.

With Ernest Renan, French rationalism at length became constructive. The extent to which this is the case has not always been fully recognized, for his supreme achievement, the *Vie de Jésus* (1863), has overshadowed his more enduring, but less dazzling, contributions to New Testament criticism. The fact remains that his critical views regarding the Fourth Gospel are, with notable exceptions, those of modern liberal scholars.<sup>4</sup> This is evident in his favourable estimate of the chronological and topographical data; his rejection of allegorical interpretations; his recognition of the use of special traditions belonging to the school of John, notably with reference to the visits of Jesus to Jerusalem; his defence of the Johannine dates for the Cleansing and the Last Supper; above all, in his contention that the author is one of John's disciples, and that to some extent the gospel is connected with the Apostle himself. It is, however, as the author of the *Vie de Jésus* that Renan has left his mark on the story of historical criticism; in comparison with this work his other writings, including even *Les Apôtres* (1866), *Saint Paul* (1867), and *L'Antéchrist* (1873), are now almost forgotten. No small part of the importance of his work lies in the clarity with which he defined the task of criticism. He wittily compared the orthodox theologian to a caged bird, and the liberal theologian to a bird with some of its feathers clipped whose flight is not discerned until it begins to fly. 'We proclaim it boldly,' he writes, 'critical inquiries relative to the origin of Christianity will not have said their last word

<sup>4</sup> Cf. my article, 'Renan and the Fourth Gospel,' in *The Contemporary Review*, Dec. 1927.