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# THE EXPOSITORY TIMES.

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## Notes of Recent Exposition.

WHATEVER Professor James Bissett PRATT says is well said, and convincingly said. No one need accept every single statement he makes as the only possible view; no one would be more surprised than Professor PRATT himself if that were suggested. Yet whatever he says, if not always and invariably and equally satisfying, has this great merit at least that it is suggestive and, even when rather provocative, opens up lines and vistas of thought that were perhaps quite unnoticed before.

Such rare qualities characterize a very interesting and, to our mind, important contribution of his to the April *Hibbert Journal* entitled 'The Function of Religion in Modern Life.' We wish it could be put into the hands of every preacher, especially of the younger generation. They need it; we know some who need it badly.

We need not dwell on the opening section, which deals with a working definition of religion and with the Freudian criticism, echoed by writers like Leuba and Martin, and partially adopted by Lippmann, that religion is merely or mainly a case of escape-psychology. It is conceded that in the case of some forms of religion there may be a good deal of relevance in the charge, and so the Freudian accusation is a useful enough warning which we shall always do well to keep in mind. But Professor PRATT is sure that it does not hold of faith that is sincere and open-eyed, placing loyalty to truth before loyalty to venerable beliefs.

The real question is, What is the function of religion—a sincere and open-eyed religion—in the life of our time? \_\_\_\_\_

First, if religion is to fulfil a real function in our world it must continue to give a large place to the 'social' gospel. The teaching of Jesus had both individual and social implications; and while neither has ever been altogether neglected, the place given to the social gospel was inadequate for a considerable time before the early years of the present century. Social preaching has accomplished something, and there is still much to be done. \_\_\_\_\_

But Professor PRATT points out that it is possible to entertain extravagant expectations of what the preaching of the social gospel will accomplish. True, Society may be made aware of its defects, a public conscience may be quickened and enlightened, and so on. But is religion able alone to solve social problems? Scarcely; basally they are economic or political as well as moral. Religion alone, therefore, cannot solve them, and the high optimism of the early exponents of the social gospel has not been justified. \_\_\_\_\_

Besides, suppose social reform were complete, what, then, of the function of religion? This to Professor PRATT is a very puzzling question. It may seem clear that if Christianity be just a social gospel, then in a fully Christianized society there

would be no real need for it, any more than there would be for a Society for the Abolition of Slavery in a world in which no slaves existed.

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A second function of religion is not only to enforce morality with Divine sanctions, but to impart to men the secret of true moral living. Society can conceivably legislate men into negative goodness; but no legislation can compel or even greatly help men to love goodness, nor can it make men to *be* good. Legislation 'can perhaps prevent men from hating or ignoring the good; something more is needed if they are to be led to will and love it.' And experience throughout the ages has proved that religion does that. It is one function of religion in our time, as it has always been, 'to set men's hearts on fire with a new love of goodness.'

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A third, and perhaps the greatest function of religion in our time as in all time, is to keep alive in man 'the cosmic sense.' Man has it in him, and it is one of his highest unique glories, to take a conscious attitude towards 'the Determiner of Destiny.' Enthusiasts for the 'social' gospel need to be on their guard here. It is well to exhort men to love their brother, but in some quarters that is so exclusively preached that there is grave risk of God being forgotten. 'A colleague of mine tells me that nearly all the sermons he has heard during the past twenty-five years are of one general type. The preacher says: "There are two Great Commandments—thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Leaving aside the first of these for the present, let us consider the second."''

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Religion's function—the greatest—is 'to restore to our minds and to keep before our attention our easily vanishing sense of God.' 'Social reform and soup-kitchens are admirable and needed. But man was made not only for these, but for something greater than these.' The minister of to-day ought not to aim at being nothing more than 'everybody's little helper'—assisting with very poor equipment the physician, the psychiatrist, the social worker, or the economist; he ought to claim his own very

special field and fulfil with all his might his function within it. 'That field is not economics nor psychiatry nor abstract morals, but religion; and that function is just what it has always been since the days of the Founder—the saving of souls.'

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The last generation of theologians, in their reaction from an age of dogmatics, devoted themselves to criticism. They explored the individuality of each Biblical writer, studied the human side of his character, and assessed the value of his contribution to Christian thought. The result in many cases was to give the impression of great variety and even mutual inconsistency among New Testament writers, and to detract from their authority when taken as a whole.

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The age of criticism is manifestly passing. It has no doubt made a contribution of permanent value in illuminating the background of the New Testament and in exhibiting the rich many-sidedness of its teaching. But now theology has entered upon a fresh task of synthesis, that is, of putting the various writings alongside each other and showing the unity of the faith which underlies them and the Divine message which they are all alike striving to express.

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A notable example of this comes to hand in *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*, by Professor C. H. DODD (Hodder & Stoughton; 5s. net). It consists of four lectures all too brief, but of that rare quality of Christian scholarship which we have learned to associate with the name of Professor DODD.

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The New Testament makes a clear distinction between preaching (*kerygma*) and teaching (*didache*). Teaching had to do with ethical instruction, to some extent also with apologetics and the exposition of theological doctrine. Much of our preaching is of that sort and 'would not have been recognized by the early Christians as *kerygma*.' Preaching or *kerygma* was very definitely the public proclamation of Christianity to the non-Christian world. 'For

the early Church to preach the Gospel was by no means the same thing as to deliver moral instruction or exhortation. While the Church was concerned to hand on the teaching of the Lord, it was not by this that it made converts. It was by *kerygma*, says Paul, not by *didache*, that it pleased God to save men.' 

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What, then, is the substance of this *kerygma*? Briefly, it is that the prophecies are fulfilled and the New Age is inaugurated by the coming of Christ. Born of the seed of David, He died according to the Scriptures to deliver us out of the present evil age. He was buried and rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures. He is exalted at the right hand of God, as Son of God and Lord of quick and dead, and He will come again as Judge and Saviour of men. 'Finally, the *kerygma* always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of salvation, that is, of the life of the Age to come, to those who enter the elect community.' 

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A careful study of the New Testament writings brings to light these essential and invariable elements in the gospel message alike in the Apostolic preaching as recorded in the Acts and in the references to the *kerygma* which are found in St. Paul's Epistles. 'It is very significant that it follows the lines of the summary of the preaching of Jesus as given in Mk 1<sup>14</sup>, 15: "Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has drawn near; repent and believe the Gospel." This summary provides the framework within which the Jerusalem *kerygma* is set.' 

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Now in this *kerygma* the eschatological element is strongly marked, but it is important to realize clearly what its real significance was. There was, doubtless, a lively expectation prevalent in the Early Church that the final hour had struck and the end of all things was at hand. But as years passed it became increasingly manifest that 'eschatology is not itself the substance of the Gospel, but a form under which the absolute value of the Gospel facts is asserted. The second advent is not the

supreme fact, to which all else is preparatory; it is the impending verification of the Church's faith that the finished work of Christ has in itself absolute value.' 

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This led to a concentration of attention upon the historical facts of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, exhibited in an eschatological setting which revealed them as not simple facts of history, but as saving facts. Under this influence the Synoptic Gospels were written. They have been spoken of from early times as 'Memoirs of Jesus,' but that is a completely mistaken classification. They are expressly *kerygma*. 'The theme of Mark's Gospel is not simply the succession of events which ended in the crucifixion of Jesus. It is the theme of the *kerygma* as a whole. This is indeed indicated as the evangelist's intention by the opening phrase which gives the title of the work, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."' What is true of Mark is true also of the other synoptists. An analysis of any of them will show that their narrative is an orderly unfolding of the fundamental elements of the *kerygma* in such a way as to show their saving significance. 

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A further development and interpretation of the *kerygma* is found in the writings of St. Paul. Jewish prophecy had spoken much of the emergence in the last days of a supernatural Messianic community. St. Paul recognized the Christian Church as the fulfilment of these prophecies. The Church here and now is the ideal Israel, not simply waiting for the fulfilment of the promises, but in the actual enjoyment of the blessings of the Kingdom. Christ is the Head, and believers are the members of His body, partaking through their union with Him of His eternal life. 'This was the true solution of the problem presented to the Church by the disappointment of its naïve expectation that the Lord would immediately appear; not the restless and impatient straining after signs of His coming which turned faith into fantasy and enthusiasm into fanaticism; but a fuller realization of all the depths and heights of the supernatural life here and now.' 

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The same development is manifest in St. John's

Gospel. In Jewish prophecy the promise of the Messianic Age was associated with the knowledge or vision of God. 'The Fourth Evangelist takes up the idea, and declares that now, as never before, authentic knowledge of God is available for men in union with Christ, the Son who knows the Father as He is known by Him; and such knowledge is eternal life.' This eternal life is the present heritage of Christian people who are born again by water and the Spirit. For them, here and now, life is fully real, while they are nurtured on the *real* Bread and abide in the *real* Vine. With this in view St. John writes his Gospel. In its outline it follows very closely the fixed order of the Apostolic *kerygma* from the heralding of Jesus by prophecy to His triumphant manifestation as the Son of God with power by His resurrection from the dead. Like the other Gospels, it is 'written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.'

It becomes clear, therefore, that the Apostolic gospel is a very definite message concerned with the person, life, and work of Jesus Christ. Any preaching which does not base itself on these facts and interpret them as the Apostles interpreted them is not properly to be called Christian preaching. This raises a vital problem in connexion with modern preaching. It has been said that 'the modern man does not believe in any form of salvation known to ancient Christianity,' and it must frankly be confessed that the formulation of the gospel in eschatological terms is as strange as it could well be to the modern mind. This has led to many attempts to get rid of it. 'We have tried to believe that criticism could prune away from the New Testament those elements in it which seemed to us fantastic, and leave us with an original "essence of Christianity," to which the modern man could say, "That is what I have always thought." But the attempt has failed. At the centre of all lies this alien, eschatological Gospel, completely out of touch, as it seems, with our ways of thought.'

We shall do well to remember that the gospel was alien to much of the thought of the Apostolic

Age. It was to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness. None the less it proved itself the power of God unto salvation. We must beware of preaching 'another Jesus and another Gospel.' 'To select from the New Testament certain passages which seem to have a modern ring, and to declare that these represent the permanent element in it, is not necessarily to preach the Gospel.' The one question of vital moment is, are the fundamental affirmations of the Apostolic *kerygma* true and relevant? If they are, then they must be proclaimed whether men hear or forbear, and in the full assurance that in them will still be found the power of God unto salvation.

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One of the most searching questions which from various quarters is being pressed upon the Church of to-day is whether Christianity is of essential importance in view of the social and religious needs of the world. The question is not new, but its urgency arises from the fact that it is being raised from so many angles at one and the same time. For this reason we cordially welcome a living and well-informed study of this issue in Dr. NICOL MACNICOL'S book, *Is Christianity Unique?* (S.C.M.; 6s. net).

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Dr. MACNICOL is already well known as a distinguished student of Oriental religions. His 'Living Religions of the Indian People' is described by no less an authority than Mr. Edward Thompson as a 'wise and tolerant and widely learned book.' Long residence in India has permitted him to see Christianity from points of view peculiarly suited to the difficulties of the present world situation. As he shows so clearly, there are many points of contact between Hindu-Buddhist types of religion and influential tendencies of thought in the West in respect of the reality of the world, the freedom of personality, the nature of God, and the problem of evil. The question continually emerges whether Christianity has a unique and vital message.

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Dr. MACNICOL sees the renewal of an Oriental invasion of thought in the West in modern times

in the philosophy of Schopenhauer, in Richard Wagner, in Leo Tolstoy, and in Friedrich Nietzsche. He also traces its effects in such varied quarters as the 'German Faith Movement,' in the poetry of W. B. Yeats and G. W. Russell, and in the writings of Thoreau, Emerson, and Walt Whitman. He finds the common characteristic of a continuous and significant movement of thought in the close association of two processes, 'the one an uprush through the often shallow crust of Christian civilization of primitive instincts and fears and dreams, and the other a resort to Oriental ideas and Oriental interpretations of life, a resort that may be said to be due to such a "failure of nerve" as, at the beginning of the Christian Era, caused a similar Oriental invasion.'

In such a situation the problem of the relation of Christianity to other faiths sounds a note of increased urgency. Is there any door of hope in the endeavour fostered, for example, by Dr. Rabindranath Tagore and Sir S. Radhakrishnan, to create a new Hinduism which inherits ancient Hindu tradition, but shares with Christianity some of the spiritual fruits it is more naturally fitted to bring forth? What is our reply to the summons of Radhakrishnan: 'Let us become soldiers on the march, soldiers of truth, soldiers fighting with love as our weapons, overturning the universe until the reign of God is established on earth'?

It is obvious that the questions of tolerance and of the limits of syncretism call for the most serious attention from Christian thinkers of to-day. It is impossible not to be deeply stirred by feelings of sympathy and appreciation by the words just quoted, but it is no less necessary to think very carefully about the vital interests that are involved. Dr. MACNICOL'S study of the inter-racial problems of religion is all the more welcome just because it combines a true and deep sympathy for all that is best in non-Christian faiths with a calm and discriminating analysis of their underlying ideas and a just and penetrating estimate of the contribution of the Christian message to the various aspects of human need. He strikes a note which ought to be sounded when he says: 'There is a core of

adamant in our Christian faith that is not any one's private property to barter or to buy or sell.'

What is the authority of Christianity among the religions? Dr. MACNICOL helps us to face this question when he distinguishes three alternative answers which are possible.

'First, then, are we to say that we are just one company among many human companies that are seeking to help each other in a common darkness, all of us coming up together out of the night, with Christ leading us, while Buddha and Muhammad lead other companies? . . . Or, to take the second alternative, are we to claim that the only light in the whole dim world has shone on us and on none besides us, so that we have a right and duty to go to these benighted ones with a gift that is wholly strange to them, a gift of One who is wholly Other than all the best that they have ever thought and hoped? . . . Or, again, is there a third answer possible, this, namely, that Christ is indeed the true Light, Light of Light eternal, while all of us, children of men, have had kindled within us—just because we are children of men—flickering candles, smoking flax, lit all alike at the first by the divine Hand, but now poor, dim, guttering lamps that can only shine again if they are kindled anew, if they can have their oil replenished from the Source?'

Dr. MACNICOL'S answer is the third. He finds the second answer in the attitude of Karl Barth to non-Christian religions: 'In preaching this good news one must not parley, but simply announce. One must not count upon the development of elements already present, but upon creation out of nothing. One does not proclaim healing to the sick, but resurrection to those who are dead.' He is well alive to the 'cathartic power' of Barth's message and its value in bringing us back to a viewpoint which is central and which we have been in danger of neglecting for points of view that are lower and less commanding in their range. But he is no less convinced that in this realm the great German prophet does not indicate the right path.

'The danger of this great and greatly needed message of Karl Barth is not only that in others than himself it might induce apathy and accidie, but that it tends to represent the world and its concerns as illusions, as being the veil that conceals God instead of being a medium by which He reveals Himself.'

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Dr. MACNICOL sees a decided leaning in the direction of the first of the alternatives indicated above in the Report published by a commission of American laymen entitled 'Re-thinking Missions,' in the demand for 'co-operative religious inquiry through give and take,' and in the opinion: 'Hence all fences and private properties in truth are futile; the final truth, whatever it may be, is the New Testament of every existing faith.' As against this point of view he justly maintains that 'Christianity is not, and surely never has been, a view to which men have climbed, even under the leadership of Christ. It is a Revelation of which He is the centre.'

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Among many quotations we are tempted to give from this wise and informing discussion we must limit ourselves to two. 'There is no intellectual error that we are so prone to, and there is none that so obscures the light that we are called to walk in, as that pantheism that so subtly invades our thoughts, deceiving us by its gracious tolerance, but at the same time blinding our eyes to evil and paralysing our spiritual growth.' 'Here, indeed, is to be found, it would appear, the final cleavage among the religions. . . . On the one side stand those religions and philosophies which view all things as holding within themselves a purpose and significance that may be discovered and realised, and that, therefore, we conclude, are maintained by the will, and enshrine the thought, of a living God; on the other are those for which, sooner or later, life is accepted as being no more than a chaos of unreality, a region of night and death.' We can only say that he is a wise man who submits himself in his search for a conclusion on this vital issue to the patient and skilled guidance of Dr. NICOL MACNICOL.

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A highly suggestive book has come out of the Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching, given at Yale University in 1935, and now rewritten for publication: *The Renewing Gospel*, by Dr. Walter Russell BOWIE (Scribner's; 6s. net). The writer has not attempted to show the preacher how to make sermons, or even how to preach. He is concerned with a much more important matter, *what* to preach. 'If there is confusion here, no imaginable brilliancy can make his form of words convincing.' And there *is* confusion here, he thinks. 'Neither those who preach nor those who listen are always quite sure of what the Christian Gospel ought to be in relation to the world and time in which we live; but our urgent business is to discover that.'

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But do men and women in this present time want a gospel? Is this a day of opportunity for a preacher who has an eternal conviction to proclaim? Or will even the fire of a great faith be only like flares plunged into the sea? Is this generation susceptible to a religious awakening, or is this one of the drear periods of disbelief when no spiritual fires will burn? On the whole the writer takes a favourable view. He judges differently of an earlier period, about 1919, or just after the War. At that time people's minds were filled with other matters. They were not crying out for religion. But that brief space was followed by one 'more honest and more acid.' Many writers were engaged in deflating men's opinion of themselves. They assailed the human spirit with furious winds of depreciation and contempt. And, though this might have been carried too far, and pessimism lead to a despair of truth, yet it has brought us into contact with reality. And Dr. BOWIE has come to the conclusion that, though our contemporaries may not be in possession of a gospel, they are ready to receive one.

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And it is the special business of this book to try to frame a gospel adapted to the needs of a generation which is beginning to believe that 'we build in vain unless the Lord build with us.' In his chapter, 'Some Blazes on the Theological Trail,' therefore, Dr. BOWIE lays down some fundamental

conditions which such a gospel must fulfil. The first is that *it must face facts*. The preacher ought to learn from science its one great lesson. 'Sit down before fact as a little child,' wrote Huxley to Charles Kingsley, 'be prepared to give up every preconceived notion . . . or you shall learn nothing.' And that is what many preachers will not do. There are facts deduced by modern study of the Bible crying out to be at least recognized. There are facts gathered in the field of comparative religion that show what is important and what is unimportant in Christianity. There are real facts discovered by the new science of psychology. There is the impatience of the younger generation with orthodox irrelevances.

It is urgent that religion rethink its formularies in the light of discovered truth. There is intellectual confusion everywhere which is making people lose sight of the old religious landmarks. There is bewilderment at the assertions of a materialistic psychology which makes people wonder whether there is a soul. The social and economic chaos has made many doubtful of the existence of spiritual values. The academic training which ministers receive tends to make them oblivious of much of this. They are trained to move in a world that is limited, and to that extent unreal. They often fail to come to grips with the real concerns with which most people are wrestling. One thing, therefore, that must be pressed upon the pulpit to-day is, that, when it declares the fact of God, this should be done in full view of stark and pressing reality.

A second point made here is that for the Christian preacher authority must be the authority, not of dogmatism, but of *discovery*. It is generally asserted that men revolt against dogmatism. But the strange thing is that our generation is witnessing a strong tendency towards dogmatism. Many people, sceptical or despairing of the ability of the individual to arrive at any decisive truth, have sought assurance or peace, not in experience or demonstration by the individual, but in an authority that is outside and comes with a claim to infallibility. Hence the drift to Fundamentalism on the one hand, and

Romanism on the other. This tendency is observable in our Divinity Colleges where there has been a curious revival of fundamentalism.

Such an attitude cannot meet the 'cry for religion' in our time. What is needed is the rediscovery of the truth that lay at the heart of the great dogmas. Saul of Tarsus saw something great in Jesus, and stated it in burning words that by and by hardened into a dogma. Luther rediscovered the same truth, and stated it differently. Wesley did the same. And in our day Schweitzer has made the same discovery. None of these men repeated the dogma that was made out of Paul. But all saw the same blessed truth. This is the real urgency of the modern pulpit. We need to *see* the great reality that is in Christ, not simply repeat the dogmas of Incarnation, Virgin Birth, Atonement, that have grown out of Christ's life and work. It is vision we need to meet the world's craving—vision, experience, *discovery*.

A third point Dr. BOWIE makes is that our message must be conceived in terms not of finality, but of *fertility*. Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin are given as examples of a finality which will sooner or later bring a harvest of disaster. But the same must be said of religion. It is true that in great ways Jesus was final, because love is ultimate, and God's love cannot be transcended. But the finality Dr. BOWIE deprecates is that which builds a fence round human understanding, which tries to define what has been rather than to proclaim what might be. Religious experience is never mere rediscovery. Paul did not mechanically reflect his Master. He had to express his experience in his own words. The gift of creative souls is not to fasten others within the limits of their creation, but to awaken creativeness in them.

You may find illustrations of this deadly tendency to check the impulses of creative faith in the claim of some churches that their 'order' is final since it comes from Christ or Scripture, in the finality arrogated to the classic creeds, and perhaps most fatally in the resistance offered to the application of the Christian gospel to practical affairs, on the

ground that there is no warrant for this in the New Testament. The truth is, there is a gospel that paralyses the human mind, and there is a gospel that liberates and inspires it. God has still some light to break forth for this generation. And

one of the sheer necessities of the preacher to-day is the courage and insight to perceive the new lines along which the grace of God may travel and the new opportunities He is offering to His servants for initiative and spiritual adventure.

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## Some Outstanding Old Testament Problems.

### VIII. The Bearing of Archæology on Old Testament Criticism.

BY THE REVEREND J. W. JACK, D.D., GLENFARG, PERTSHIRE.

THE purpose of this article is not to refer to archæological facts illustrating the Bible, but rather to consider the bearing of these facts on Old Testament criticism. By such criticism we mean, of course, not captiousness or fault-finding, but that department of scholarship, in its wider sense, which exercises common judgment, not only upon the text of the Bible, but also upon its contents and the problems involved—in other words, which applies the mind inquiringly and intelligently to all these matters. Criticism of this nature is inevitable and welcome, establishing our knowledge upon a firmer basis, and is no more presumptuous than the examination of any other literature. Without it, Old Testament history would be largely wanting in order and proper development. The bearing of archæology upon such criticism lies in the fact that archæological results show the framework within which Israel, with her unique revelation, must be set, if we are to understand her history and disentangle the revelation. They place the historical movements and the other main events in their correct chronological order and position, and thus they contribute the necessary additional data for the problems which criticism has to solve. As the evidence they afford is external and of a valuable contemporary nature, they help to confirm or correct the views of critics. A few generations ago, Biblical archæology was practically non-existent. Old Testament critics had to depend almost entirely upon internal evidence for the solution of their problems. But now it has developed so extensively and scientifically that it has become a necessary adjunct to criticism. Its results, when based on assured evidence, are gladly accepted by critics, as all reverent criticism is by qualified archæologists.

We must take care, of course, what we put forward as archæological results, for these are not so easy to interpret as some people suppose. In particular, we must be on our guard against confusing them, as some writers do, with ingenious suppositions or hypotheses, which often turn out on examination to be incorrect or unjustifiable. Sometimes, under the foolish prejudice that archæology and Biblical criticism (especially what is known as the 'Higher Criticism') are opposed to each other, discoveries in Palestine are misused to the disparagement of the latter. Some writers are so anxious to shatter criticism of any kind that they are inclined to overpress their arguments, or unwittingly rest them on erroneous evidence. Archæology and Biblical criticism, it should be understood, are not in the least antagonistic, any more than science and religion can be in a universe under the control of one God. Both are needed as helps to each other, and to the intelligent understanding of the Bible.

Within recent years enormous discoveries of the greatest value have been made relating to the ancient civilizations of the Near East. The light has come not only from Palestine, but from all the neighbouring countries—Egypt, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Assyria, Asia Minor, and other lands. Excavations have revealed arts, customs, rites, languages, literatures, political institutions, chronologies, and other matters, the nature and extent of which were quite unknown even a generation ago. It is not too much to say that the entire civilization of the Near East, Palestine as much as other lands, extending over four or five millennia B.C., has been largely disinterred and made intelligible to Biblical students of the present day. All these discoveries have naturally poured such a