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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.

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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

flood of light upon the dark places of Israelite history that Old Testament criticism could hardly remain unaffected. In view of the vast amount of external evidence, the complete assurance with which some advanced critics wrote has turned out unjustified. Criticism has passed through a period of transition into a new and more trustworthy sphere. It is modifying its views in some matters, becoming more constructive instead of merely negative, and readily revising any conclusions to which it came on the narrower field of its own researches. The result is that the old mechanical view of the Bible is being replaced by a better conception of its great historical and religious movements. There are undoubtedly many conflicting opinions still, but there is more certainty in the field of operation. Critics are tending to retreat from the extravagances represented by Duhm, Marti, Hölscher, and others, and are inclined to take a more conservative and central position. The historicity of the Old Testament, it may be said, stands now in higher estimation than ever.

At what points has archæology thus come into touch with criticism? How has the immense and rapidly increasing mass of evidence affected the problems involved? It may be stated at once that, so far, it has established nothing as to the original text of the Old Testament (as a whole at least), the sources of the component parts of the Hexateuch, the truth or otherwise of the documentary analysis (J, E, H, D, P) and the Grafian reconstruction, the possible existence of a *Laien-schrift* (L) writing in the Pentateuch (as advocated by Eissfeldt), the relation of the prophets to the Law, the identity of the Servant of Yahweh in Deutero-Isaiah, the origin of the Book of the Covenant (Ex 20<sup>22-23</sup>), the date of the Decalogue, and similar Old Testament questions. Archæology may have modified some of the critical positions hitherto taken up on these points, but this is about all. It cannot be said, moreover, that it has settled the fundamental differences between Sellin and Cornill, except that it is disposed to uphold the historicity of Gn 14, as Sellin does, and postulates, like him, a far larger intellectual horizon in early Israel than hitherto imagined. Nor has it given any definite decision regarding the respective views of Hölscher and Welch as to the aim, composition, and date of Deuteronomy, except that the results of excavation prove the relatively early origin of much of the Israelite law and ritual, as Welch has insisted on. After all, it is mainly literary remains that can help such criticism, and these are scarce in Palestine, where writers appear to have used

papyrus, skins, and other materials liable to perish in the damp climate. Excavators have not unearthed any royal inscriptions of the Hebrew monarchy, though many such were probably in existence at one time. This lack of written records is an undoubted hindrance to Biblical criticism. Everywhere on the matters just mentioned uncertainties abound, owing to critics being dependent for a solution of their problems on internal evidence alone. It can be truly said, however, that the foundations of reconstruction laid by Wellhausen still stand, so far at least as their main features are concerned. The priority of P is not likely to be defended by any serious scholar. In what way, then, it may be asked, has archæology affected Biblical criticism?

First, it has enabled Biblical criticism to place the Hebrew nation in its proper setting, as having close affinities and connexions with surrounding nations. A generation ago scholars were inclined to regard the Hebrew people as occupying an isolated position in Canaan, disconnected largely from others. One outstanding result, however, of archæological research has been to establish their essential unity with surrounding peoples in custom, language, social usage, civil and criminal law, and even religious institutions, myths, and ritual. Discoveries have shown how greatly they were influenced by the ancient and imposing civilization of Babylonia, of which country Palestine was for many centuries a province (up to about 1500 B.C.), as well as by the remarkable culture and peculiar institutions of Egypt (as shown by the scarabs and other objects of Egyptian manufacture found in Palestinian ruins). We know now that, so far from differing from these and adjacent nations, and being witnesses in every way of a direct Divine revelation, they were more or less closely akin to them and exhibited numerous correspondences with them. This, of course, does not detract from their distinctive religious character, nor from the Divine and imperishable truth of which they became the exponents to the world. In this respect, at least, their civilization and culture had numerous elements not borrowed from the regions of the Euphrates and the Nile, and an immense gulf lay between them and their neighbours—a fact which the newer criticism must not forget. But at the same time it does take them out of the detached situation which they were previously supposed to hold. The proof of the matter is seen not only in the fact that the movements of political parties in Israel and Judah were frequently connected in a very intimate way with events outside, but in the

similarity of laws, customs, and institutions with those of adjoining peoples. In addition to the Code of Hammurabi, published in 1902, which contains nearly three hundred Babylonian laws dating from about 2100 B.C. (or earlier), we have now the Assyrian Code, published in 1920 and belonging to about the twelfth century B.C., as well as the Hittite Code, published in 1921 and going back to about the thirteenth century. A comparison of these legislative documents with the Mosaic laws shows that the identity of the two in many particulars is very singular, and the comparison upsets some of the epoch-making theories of early Biblical criticism. It is not that the framers of the Israelite laws 'copied' the Babylonian Code or any other. They may have been dependent upon it to some extent, but there were principles of legislation which were common to all the regions of the Near East. These had probably emanated from Arabia, the home of the Semites, and were current indeed for many ages before Hammurabi. It was this common law that Israel codified, in affinity with her neighbours, at the same time giving it several golden threads not found, so far as we know, elsewhere—especially those of the love of God and the love of one's neighbour. Similarly, the religious rites of Israel, though distinctive in their own way, bear a remarkable resemblance to those of Phœnicia, Egypt, Babylonia, Moab, South Arabia, and other neighbouring lands. It cannot be replied, of course, as some people do, that Israel imparted her rites to these countries, any more than it can be said that Moses framed the laws of Hammurabi. The fact is that the rites go back to the twilight of Semitic religion, and the resemblances referred to can only be due to affinity of worship. The Ras Shamra Tablets (*c.* 1400–1200 B.C.), *e.g.*, show that several of the Jewish Feasts and Sacrifices were to a large extent similar to the Phœnician. They prove that the three principal agricultural festivals (mentioned in the 'Book of the Covenant'), which the Israelites connected with great epochs in their national history, were not unlike the pre-Israelite ones in Canaan. Even a number of the sacrificial practices in the Old Testament seem identical with those referred to in the tablets, and in nearly all cases the technical expressions used are the same. It is true, the Israelites cleansed and purified the ritual as far as possible for their own use, but this does not affect its resemblance, in the main essentials, to that of the surrounding nations.

It follows from all this that Biblical criticism finds it necessary to be less 'provincial,' and not to explain the literature and religion of Israel so

much as the result of forces within Israel itself. Indeed, excavation has shown that many Biblical references, supposed to apply mainly or only to the Israelites, are better explained by the customs of neighbouring lands—such as the overshadowing wings of God, the enemy as one's footstool, the idea of a Divine kingship, the Divine helping hand, the introduction of worshippers into God's presence, and much else. It must be understood even that some of the characteristics attributed to Yahweh in the Old Testament contain foreign or exotic elements, and on the other hand that pictures of deities on some of the Palestinian seals may really be meant to represent the God of Israel. Owing to such widened horizons, critics have been able to rescue many of their problems from insularity and set them in a larger framework.

Second, recent archæology has assisted Biblical criticism by revealing the immense antiquity of civilization and culture in the Near East—in Palestine as elsewhere—which was unsuspected by the early critics, and it has thus enabled Old Testament scholars to put a more intelligible interpretation upon the earlier records. Discoveries show that a civilization of a remarkably advanced nature existed in these regions at a period considerably anterior to what scholars used to think. As far back as the fourth millennium B.C. there were three very striking civilizations between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. One had its centre in Northern Mesopotamia and Iran, another which came from Persia or India (Gn 11<sup>2</sup>) was located in Sumer, and the third belonged to the Semitic race. All three were in contact with each other and influenced each other. Excavators have unearthed written tablets, beautifully finished and painted pottery, as well as innumerable delicate objects of art, dating even earlier still, in the fifth or sixth millennium B.C., and making it evident that the beginnings of civilization must be put far back into the prehistoric ages. Such cities as Ur, Kish, Lagash, and others were centres of culture long before the Flood. At Tepe Gawra excavations have revealed evidences of a high civilization earlier than the confines of history. Even Jericho during chalcolithic ages was a place of considerable agricultural activity (as evidenced by the numerous grain wells of that date), and its inhabitants could make beautiful basket-work pottery and other objects of refinement. This does not exclude the fact, of course, that side by side with such centres of civilization there were aboriginal elements of a lower type, with their weapons of flint, wood, or bone, who had not entirely emerged from neolithic

influences. But as a rule we find the dwellers all over Palestine, Mesopotamia, and neighbouring countries, in these early ages, constructing palaces and temples, producing exquisite works of art, cultivating the soil, faithful to religious and moral laws, and living not very differently from those of later date. This ancient civilization was accompanied by a widespread organized system of commerce, with intercourse over enormous areas. Caravan or wagon routes ran for a thousand miles and more from east to west. Mesopotamia had commercial relations with India on the one hand, and Egypt on the other. Everywhere the world, as then known, was linked together by commercial ties and correspondence.

This larger aspect of the ancient civilization of the Near East has compelled Biblical critics to revise their views on the chronology of human development, and to put back many of the dates suggested a generation or two ago. We now know that the prophets, Moses, and even the patriarchs were comparatively late-comers on the scene, and that when the Israelites entered Canaan, there was a cultured civilization there which was already ancient, and included commercial and other connexions with distant countries. It follows that we must assume, as some critics have done, a far wider range of thought and intellectual progress for the pre-prophetic period than is apparent in the literature of the Old Testament. We can no longer suppose, as used to be done, that crude ideas were early and more refined ones were late, for archæological facts contradict this philosophical conception. We must be guided, too, not so much by analogies from pre-Islamic Arabia (as Wellhausen, Robertson Smith, and others were) as by evidence from the new and entrancing world revealed to us by excavation.

Third, by the discovery of ancient tablets and other written records, archæology has given Biblical criticism an assured knowledge of the existence of writing and literary activity in and about Palestine as far back as the earliest Israelite times. It is not so long since it was maintained—popularly at least—that writing was little used or even unknown in these early ages, and consequently that the authors of the historical books of the Old Testament could not have had written materials on which to base their statements. But this belief has been repeatedly disproved within recent years. Not only have whole libraries been uncovered, including the chronicles of Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and other rulers contemporary with the kings of Israel and Judah, but abundant proof has come to

light that writing was habitually used long before Moses and even before Abraham. We have now thousands of tablets from Babylonia and Assyria, going back to the third and fourth millennia B.C., the Serabit el-Khadim inscriptions (*c.* 1900 B.C.), the Amarna correspondence (*c.* 1400 B.C.), official writings and important treaties from the Hittite empire dated in the second millennium B.C., the Ras Shamra epics (*c.* 1400–1200 B.C.), the inscription on the sarcophagus of Ahiiram (*c.* 1250 B.C.), and many other written memorials belonging to these early times. The result is that the views of Biblical critics in regard to early Israelite history have had to be profoundly modified. There is no difficulty now in concluding that there were ethical codes before Moses, scribes and recorders in Israel when Joshua entered Canaan, numerous written psalms long before David, and an abundance of written proverbs, aphorisms, and meditations ages before Solomon. Such is the culture of these early ages that there must have been a rich literature, both prose and poetry, in Palestine in the time of the Judges.

All this goes to show that the Israelite historians and prophets could have had, and probably did have, written sources at their disposal dating from many generations before the monarchy. There is no longer any need to doubt the existence of such early documents, though they were undoubtedly revised at various times in Israelite history; and the task of the 'Higher Critics' is to disentangle them from the editorial additions and modifications of later ages. It is unnecessary now to cling to writers of a later date, as the older critics have done in their views on J and E. Even the Biblical story of the Conquest, in its original form at least, may be derived from early records almost contemporaneous with the events described. Indeed, all the component parts of the Hexateuch undoubtedly contain much very ancient material. Some of it, of course, may have been originally in the form of poetical saga or stories told round the fires at night and in the sanctuaries, and in the course of time these may have been collected into written narratives. But when we consider the revelations of archæology, there is no strain on our credulity if we consider much of it (especially in J and E) to have consisted of older written material contemporary or almost so with the events themselves, and liable to little or no change. The present writer sees no difficulty in assuming such earlier literature, even of a highly developed kind—not merely national and other songs or dry court chronicles, but actual historical narratives. In an

age when great libraries existed (witness Ras Shamra and others), when schools abounded and the art of reading and writing was widely spread, can we suppose that nothing was done to produce some records of Israelite history, which had so deeply moved the race?

All this has affected the Biblical picture of the early ages, as far back as Abraham's time. According to Wellhausen (*Proleg.*,<sup>3</sup> 331), Kuenen, and many others, the picture presented in Genesis of the environment of the patriarchs could only be the one in existence at the later period (ninth and eighth centuries) when the record was thought to have been composed. In other words, the Biblical account simply depicted the circumstances of the prophetic or early monarchical period which had been unintentionally projected back into the Abrahamic age. There have, no doubt, been critics of a more positive tendency, such as König, Strack, Kittel, and Oettli on the Continent, and Dr. Driver and others in this country, who have contested these deductions and have taken firmer ground on the historicity of the patriarchal and Mosaic periods, but on the whole the Wellhausen school has held differently. Excavation, however, has proved the incorrectness of such theories. The patriarchal circumstances, as depicted in the narratives of Genesis, are now known not to be an artificial construction of priestly historians at a much later date, but a remarkably accurate representation of nomadic life in pre-Mosaic times. The primitive nature of the setting, its simplicity of religious ideas and worship, its conception of God, its ethical colouring, and its other characteristics reflect the established practices of the Semitic, Hurrian, and other civilizations of the period. The parallels, indeed, are enough to fill a lengthy brochure; and it is known now that the Biblical records relating to this time contain a greater measure of real historical material than some scholars had supposed, and must have been based not only upon oral tradition, but in some important matters upon authentic documents, whatever the nature of the latter may have been.

The antiquity of literary work suggests, too, that Moses was able to inscribe his laws on tables of stone after the manner of Hammurabi, and make legal and historical records in other forms. It does not prove, of course, as some people seem to imagine, that he wrote the Pentateuch—indeed, it cannot establish conclusions of this nature. The only evidence of such would be the unearthing of a complete copy of the Pentateuch dating from his time or not

long after, and this seems a fanciful dream. Nor does it answer the question how much of the Pentateuchal legislation and teaching is really his work, and how much is a later development. According to some critical theories, little, if any, of the Pentateuch goes back to his time. Whether this be so or not, archæology can do little to determine, for such a question is almost entirely literary and can only be solved satisfactorily by other evidence. So far, archæology has not discovered any mention of Moses or the Decalogue, though it can depict the background of Israel's legal and religious development. What it asserts, however, is that, if we judge from the prevalence of writing in the first period of Israel's history, there is no reason to deny that many of the Pentateuchal laws, including the Decalogue, may have been written down at that early age. The existence of early writing, moreover, goes to show the possibility of many of the psalms having been written during the period of the monarchy or even earlier, for it is difficult to imagine otherwise when archæology confronts us with so much literary work in existence at that epoch, and so many contemporary psalms in Babylonia and elsewhere. Duhm's extravagant late dating, and the more widely spread opinion (held by the Wellhausen school) that no pre-exilic psalms have been preserved, seems therefore to be improbable. We may assume, too, on the same grounds, that the royal psalms date from the epoch of the monarchy rather than from post-exilic times, and may be primarily concerned, like the Babylonian ones of the same type, with the reigning kings, instead of with some future Messianic ruler. At the same time, all this affords no proof that any of the psalms may be traced back to David. No doubt there must have been some foundation for associating his name traditionally with some of them, and it is not unlikely that a few Davidic psalms may be included in the early sections of the book, but archæology so far has nothing to say on this subject.

Fourth, another way in which archæology has aided criticism has been by throwing light on the Old Testament text. It has brought a welcome interpretation to certain obscure words, phrases, and even verses, which have hitherto given difficulty to scholars or even baffled them. The Ras Shamra Tablets, especially, have illuminated many a dark passage, confirmed many conclusions already reached by scholars, and fixed the original form and meaning of innumerable Hebrew expressions. But this question is a large one, and the limits of this article forbid a discussion of it.