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1900.

ANNUAL MEETING.

SIR G. G. STOKES, LL.D., F.R.S., PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

THE UNITY OF TRUTH.

Being the Annual Address of the Victoria Institute for 1899.

By the RIGHT HON. SIR RICHARD TEMPLE, Bart., G.C.S.I., etc.

Read June 19th, 1899.

§ 1. MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—I shall at once take up the words of the last speaker, Mr. Howard. He said that truth must prevail, and the more we study it, the more we shall find it will prevail. That will be the burden of my discourse to you this afternoon.

I admit, when I was first asked to do myself the honour of addressing you, I was in doubt, after consulting your learned and accomplished Secretary, Captain Petrie, as to what sort of subject I should choose, but then I referred to the letter that I had received from my old Parliamentary friend your very distinguished President, Sir George Stokes, and I observed that he said in his letter that the object of this Society, or Association, is to show how one set of truths must be consistent with another set—that both truths, if they are such, must coincide, and that therefore the Scripture being, as we firmly believe it to be, absolutely true on divine authority, the results of all this science and learning, if true, as I believe they are, must agree with Scripture.

Now that is the text upon which I shall address you, with your permission, this afternoon. I wish to say that the more we pursue research steadily, and learned investigation by scientific methods, the more shall we have confidence in the literal value of the truth of every word of Scripture. Now if we have not done so already it is simply because those sciences have not advanced far enough, or what is still more probable, we have not studied the Scripture sufficiently well—we do not know enough of the Bible and all that relates to it. I well remember the day, and many of you in this room must remember it, when we were timidly apprehensive as to whether our sacred Scriptures would stand at least verbally, word for word, the test of learned science and inquiry. We were prepared to take refuge in generalities—that some

things must be taken on trust and that others we must admit to be unintelligible, which we might understand on the other side of the grave, but should never do so in this life, and the like. Now I do not want to take refuge in any of those convenient subterfuges. I wish to show this afternoon to a certain point, at least, that the more we study and understand the words of Scripture the more we shall perceive its absolute truth. Of course it is an enormous subject, and I can only touch on an important fringe of it, and you will be able to judge how far what I say is sufficient to prove my proposition.

Now in the first place, let me point out to you that there is a Society called the Palestine Exploration Society, of which I myself was, for a long time, one of the Vice-Presidents. I say that Society, by its surveys and examinations on the spot and the like, has done more to spread and to confirm the faith of Christians in their own Bible than anything that has been done since the translation of that Bible into the vulgar tongue. Among other things it has had to identify names. When we were young I suppose there were very many names of places in the Old Testament and many in the New Testament which were quite unknown, and which had never been identified. I have been in one of the caves near Bethlehem right under the site of the Nativity, where St. Jerome laboured for half his life. His object was to identify a great number of Scripture names of places. Apparently in the first, second or third centuries of Christianity no Christians knew more than a few names in the Scriptures, which were to be found on the spot, in the Holy Land, and St. Jerome set himself to work and ascertained some hundreds, and a few more were ascertained by the Crusaders. Then for a long time research seemed to go to sleep, and it was reserved for us to continue the exploration. Now I suppose they have identified several hundred names within my time and several hundred names still remain to be identified, but no doubt we shall ascertain all before we have done with it.

Now do you understand how this is done? Let me show you the process. I recollect riding along a road in Palestine and I stopped a man and asked him in the rough Syriac Arabic dialect, which I knew enough of to ask him, what was the name of that mountain just in front of me. He looked suspiciously at me for a moment. I said, "I am going to ride further on—you just tell me the name." I knew the

name, but I wanted to see what he would say, and he at once gave me the original name of the mountain. We have the name in the Bible, but it has been altered. You have accomplished engineers going about that meet the shepherd of a goat-herd, or a cow-herd, and they ask him, "What is the name of this valley?" Then they hear something and they take it down as giving a clue to the sacred site.

One of our most successful exploration surveyors when walking about a jungle of weeds that grew near the shore of the Lake of Tiberias said to a man who was digging about for roots, "Is there any name to this place where we are?" He said, "There is no particular name—we say Keraza." The surveyor said, "Is there nothing to mark the place?" "Well," the man said, "I do not know, but under these weeds and things and this mass of herbage you will find some stones of all sorts." The surveyor did not say much more, but he looked at the stones and a clue was given which has led to the interesting discovery of the city of Chorazin of which our Lord spoke when He said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah which have been done in you, they had repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes, but it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment than for you."

Now it is remarkable the extent to which these ancient places keep their names. Let me run over a few of the particular ones—Hebron, Jericho, Bethel, Jerusalem and Bethlehem and Jacob's Well, the well from which the woman came to draw water. So also Dothan where Joseph was sold into slavery, and so with Jezreel and Nain and Magdala of Mary Magdalene. Now I need not, in speaking to a highly intellectual audience, more or less expert, say what a mighty confirmation this gives to Holy Writ. I ask antiquaries, "Can you point to any other writings that will stand such a test as that?"

Next let me take a few localities to show you how this accuracy is confirmed, and I am referring to a period of not less than 3,500 years ago at least—possibly more. First, let me refer to the ridge. You are aware that there runs through the Holy Land, what geologists call a dorsal ridge, a regular backbone to the country. Some 3,500 years ago or more Abraham, the patriarch, with Lot his relative, were walking along this ridge and Abraham said, "Let us divide the land between us; if you like to take the left hand you

can and I will take the right, or I will take the left and you the right." Now Lot thought, when he looked round, that he would like to take the left side, that was no doubt facing south-eastwards and looking towards the valley of the Jordan. Abraham said, "Well, in that case I will take the right." I have been there and seen exactly how the thing happened. You understand that the dorsal ridge of limestone is so situated that standing there you can see pretty well into the valley of Jordan and the gardens of Jericho. Of course Lot could have done that and he saw that it was very good. He looked on the other side, on the right, and saw nothing but rocky kinds of hill like the waves of the sea, and just at the end there was the blue Mediterranean. Of course there is a fruitful tract between these hills and the Mediterranean, but all that Lot saw was the expanse of hills and the strip of the blue Mediterranean, and he naturally said, "I will go to the left—I will go to all the rich gardens of the Jordan."

Now you see how the transaction happened. That has been verified word for word. What other book in the world would stand such a test as that? Take the case of Hebron. We are told that going out from the camp near Hebron on the fatal morning when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed—that from those hills of Palestine looking across the Dead Sea, Abraham saw the doomed cities burning. You may go to that place exactly where Abraham was and judge for yourselves whether he could see the cities burning or not. There may be a doubt as to the exact situation of those cities; but you can see the general position from that place. If you ride over the site you will find signs of conflagration and bituminous formations and actual combustion which are visible to-day, and there the doomed cities were, and I comprehend that before this convulsion of nature occurred they were surrounded with fertility, and were steeped in luxury and wickedness of all kinds.

Then again take the case of Shiloh. Shiloh apparently was at about the, or up to, the tenth or twelfth century quite well-known. The Crusaders knew it and they thought the place so important that they built a little chapel there, but it was off the road and on a secluded bridle-path, and no one noticed it. Centuries passed away and the general impression was that the city of Shiloh was unknown; but now it is as well known as any place in the world. Pales-

tine surveyors naturally looked to the exact words of Scripture and they knew from the Bible, as if they had been under marching orders, how they were to march north and then turn eastward and then take the line towards the village Labona, and stop short of that and look for Shiloh. Those directions were just as simple as any directions you would get in asking your way about the streets of London. But people did not go to Scripture for their knowledge, and they searched about in their own indiscriminate way. At last somebody did it, and sure enough they found it. No other side of Palestine fulfils the description required of the city of Shiloh. It required a lower plateau where the whole nation might encamp—people who would attend the Annual Festival of the Jews, where many thousands of persons might encamp and in the middle of that is a low hill—a plateau on which would be placed the Ark of the Tabernacle where the priests would be. This site of Shiloh exactly answers it. There are the plateaux. Can you find stronger confirmation of your belief in Scripture than that? You are told again in the book of Joshua that when the Jews began to be organised, Joshua determined to have the Divine Commandments read to all the people. They were to be read on the side of the valley (between Gerizim and Ebal) and on the other side the people were to give their responses, and the law was read. The question arose could you do that in that particular locality—could you place the priests on one side and the people on the other side and be able to hear the word and be able to answer? You can! I have tried it myself. On one side the very words were read out in the English translation and you could hear the response. Now I ask cultured persons, is not this an astonishing proof of the narrative?

Take another case, the case of the river Kishon. Everyone remembers the story of Barak and Deborah. Many may have an indistinct impression how the catastrophe occurred. But how did the battle begin, and how does the narrative fit in with the locality, I should say average people hardly know. But would you be surprised to hear that if you go to the spot you can follow out the whole details of it? There the Jewish infantry were placed on the top of Tabor in front of you, thence charged down upon the loosely-organised host of Sisera, just as Scripture says. Then there followed the catastrophe, for there came a tremendous hailstorm at the time of the battle, which made Kishon

almost impassable. You say how did that happen? It happened very easily. The rainfall is often extremely fierce and by the precipitation of drainage the river fills in a very short time. I have myself seen a great rainfall over Kishon. I think I could have ridden through almost anything on my bay horse of Damascus breed, but that day the crossing was so difficult that I quite realised what the fate of Sisera must have been. There is that military battle that occurred 3,500 years ago! The situation can be identified better than that of any one of the battlefields of ancient Greece.

One more example—I do not want to fatigue you, but I might go on for ever. There is the case of Jacob's Well. Everybody remembers the parable of our Lord at the well when the woman came up to draw water. She came from the village Sychar, the name of which still survives. There is a well which has been built over, and long dried up and a chapel placed over it by the Crusaders, but the Palestine Exploration people have thoroughly cleared it out and ascertained that below the débris a well exists, and have found the marks on the stone of the rope and the vessel by which the water used to be drawn. Read carefully in St. John's Gospel the conversation between our Lord and the woman, and you will find that after a certain amount of conversation of a very spiritual character, which is the foundation really of a great deal of the spiritual nature of our religion (the woman had led a dissolute life and our Lord evidently knew it and gently reproached her), she said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet." and she asked Him if God is to be worshipped in that mountain. Now there had been no previous allusion to a mountain. She wanted, of course, to gain a sectarian advantage, as a Samaritan, against a Jew; but the point is this that she suddenly said to our Lord, "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet," and asks Him whether God is to be worshipped in that mountain or in Jerusalem. Was there a mountain immediately within sight? Of course there was, immediately overhanging, a magnificent limestone formation with the outline standing out against the eastern sky. Why did she say "this mountain"? Because on the top of it was the Samaritan Temple the ruins of which you may see to-day. So you perceive the woman, looking at the mountain, saw the tower at the top, and that reminded her of her sect, so she said to Christ, "Sir, is God to be worshipped in this mountain or in Jerusalem?" Imagine how the thing comes before you. I have stood there on that spot where our

Lord's attention was drawn by her to the outline of the mountain. How can you have a better testimony than that of the verbal accuracy of the Gospel narrative? I contend that if you pursue this mode of inquiry with proper learning and diligence, not only by reading books, but by going to the spot and understanding for yourself, as a surveyor or scientific man would do, you would find ample confirmation of every word of Holy Writ. (Applause.)

Now I will give you three examples of the same kind in regard to the parables. I beg to make the general assertion that every detail of the parables was taken from objects immediately before the eyes of our Lord and His disciples and those who heard the parables. I cannot stop now to go through every parable; but I roundly assert that I can show that in every one of them; and I will give you three striking instances.

Take the case of the parable of the silver. Now the accuracy of that parable depends on whether or not women were in the habit of constantly wearing their silver round their necks, or on their wrists or their arms or about their breasts. Was it so? Yes, undoubtedly it was. And how do we know it? Because there are hundreds of women there now who do the very thing, and when you see them you can realize the force of that parable. I will give you another single case—take the parable of the sower and the seed. You know that was the subject which the last great English painter whom I may call the immortal Edwin Long ever painted—the great imaginative painter of our generation. The point of the parable is this. The seed is sown on four or five different kinds of land, each kind being specifically described and very different from the other. There is the thorny ground, the stony ground or inferior ground, and the good ground that yields seed a hundred-fold. There is no doubt, from the words of Scripture, where that parable was delivered. It was certainly delivered on a certain part of the shore of the lake of Galilee. Was there any ground of that kind just about there? What made our Lord choose a parable from this particular phenomenon of nature? Was there any such ground there? Yes, there was, and there are very few other places where you see that particular ground in that part of Palestine, and it is there to-day. You may see it yourself. That parable was undoubtedly delivered at that very place. That gives a wonderful notion of the verbal accuracy of the Holy Narrative.

Then there is the parable of the Good Samaritan. Recollect it all depends on violent robbery with wounding. Is there any road of that kind? It is almost certain that the parable was delivered during our Lord's last march up to Jerusalem within about a week of His Passion and Crucifixion. He was marching from Jericho towards Jerusalem—the most solemn of all the marches that He took on earth, and it is almost certain that in that part of the road this parable was delivered. Up what road would our Lord have to march? Why, by this very road. It was then called “the Bloody way,” and it has been a bloody way up to recent times, until we had British Consuls and officials of that kind at Jerusalem. Robberies used to be frequent, and it had a bad name, but I believe now those robberies have ceased. Of course the robberies supplied material for the parable. Then look at that which gives the point to the parable. This man was robbed and wounded and left in a miserable condition on his back in the road. We know the road in such a place was very rough. The point of the parable is this:—the man was left on the pathway in a miserable plight, and two persons came along. The first one does not quite like the look of this wounded, half-dead body, so he passes by on the other side. Then the priest comes and he likes the look still less, and passes by on the other side also, and then comes the good Samaritan. What do you mean by the “other side”? If it is a narrow pathway, just enough for one person to walk at a time, then the words of Scripture would not apply. He could not walk on the other side. He must pass close to the body. But the real locality is not so. There is a trickling stream running down in the middle of a deep ravine, and it has a pathway on one side and a pathway on the other side, and if any one is so minded he may easily step across the stream if he wants to go to the other side, and this is exactly what they did, and I never realised how accurate the Scriptural words are until I understood these features. I appeal again to educated people—are not these wonderful instances of the verbal accuracy of the words of Scripture?

Now some object that a great many things bearing on the deliverance of the Jews from captivity are couched in highly romantic and poetic language, even in the record in the Psalms of the wonders vouchsafed by God to the Jews. Patriotic hymns of that kind might be and have been sung by people in England for mercies vouchsafed to them on

many historic occasions, and that was done by the Jews. But are not these intelligible? It has been assumed, from the want of local and scientific knowledge, that these narratives are unintelligible, and no narrative has astonished people more than the passage of the Red Sea.

Need we say that that is miraculous? We have found that in certain states of the wind at the north end of the Red Sea, near which the Egyptians must have crossed from that part of Egypt, the waters of the sea are driven back for several miles. When you hear that, it amounts to a scientific fact—it is very intelligible and you see how the thing happened.

There occurred at that moment and at that juncture some tremendous wind that drove back the sea, and the Israelites saw there was a dry passage and a short cut for them. They were terribly pressed for time, with their pursuers behind them, and they rushed across and made good their passage. The wind abated and the sea began to flow back on the return of the tide and caught the Egyptians in their pursuit. I see it in my own mind as clearly as though I had seen it with my eyes.

Take the case of the Dead Sea. People assume that fire and brimstone and hail tempestuously rolled down from Heaven. That is a very good description; but of course it was by some extensive combustion of the fiery bituminous elements in the earth, of which the traces are seen there to-day.

Take the other case of the Jordan. The only passage for the Ark of the Covenant was over the river Jordan. I dare say that many have assumed that to be miraculous, because no one could understand how they could have got across dry-shod particularly at that time of the year. It is a narrow river no doubt comparatively, but deep, and they could not understand how, by any natural process, the Jews could have crossed dry, and yet they did so cross. I take that with a sure and certain belief in the accuracy of every word of Scripture. It was said there must have been a miracle; but in our days we quite see how it happened. The Jordan at that time and at subsequent times had been liable to convulsions in its bed. Every physical geographer knows it is the most extraordinary river on the face of the globe, and is liable to those convulsions, and many have happened since. Mark you the Scriptures never said that the river was banked up at the place where the Israelites crossed, but the water was banked up like a wall at a place called Zaretan, which is

about twenty-five miles to the north. Do we require a miracle for that? There are those places in the Jordan, and the Jews very probably took that opportunity of crossing when the river happened to be dry, and they had not a moment to lose. They had to cross quickly and such things have happened in modern times. There was not necessarily a miracle in the case; but it was a most providential occurrence or the Jews otherwise would never have crossed. In modern times troops have succeeded in crossing rivers near the sea at a certain state of the tide when the river bed would be dry for a brief while. The way it happened on this wonderful occasion on the Jordan is usually understood by those who take the trouble to consider; but when we were very young, these things were understood as miracles, and they are now more exactly understood through scientific investigations, and wonderful confirmation is thus given to the verbal accuracy of the Scriptures.

Of course there are supremely important miracles in Scripture which must be accepted as such. But there is no need to make lesser events miraculous which can be scientifically explained.

Thus I make good this part of my proposition this afternoon by describing places I saw only the other day.

Now all false religions—every religion except our own—will ignore the scientific spirit. I lay down that proposition. I know what Hindooism and Mohammedanism are, and what Buddhism and other religions are. That applies not only to them, but also to mediæval Christianity. I assume it is only in modern times that the scientific character of the Scripture has been recognised. It is only of late that the scientific spirit has been acknowledged in Scripture. Indeed, Scripture has been presented to us by Almighty divine power as an open book which we have to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. We are to apply our intellects, to search, to understand, and then we shall see how true the Scripture is in regard to everything we learn by science and research. Now that is what we may call the scientific spirit in Scripture. Let me give you some instances of what I mean. I suppose if you asked our Astronomer Royal at Greenwich he would say of the luminous bodies—stars or nebulæ, whatever you like to call them, I am not sure that I know the latest scientific terms for them—that no one could give a fair idea of the number. The more they improve each optical instrument the more they discover fresh stars and it seems

to be simply an illimitable universe. I do not suppose it was so well understood when I was young, but it is beginning to be understood more and more now. We were told that 3,500 years ago in Scripture. If you look in Genesis you will see an expression used to set forth a great nation. It says they shall be as numerous as what? As the grains of the sand on the sea shore and as the stars in the heavens. That is the shadow of scientific fact which science is showing us day by day to be true. Then take certain passages in the book of Job; look at the 26th chapter, in which it says that "God hangeth the earth upon nothing." I think if that could be referred to Sir Isaac Newton he would say that it was a distinct foreshadowing of the theory of gravitation 3,500 years before it was demonstrated scientifically in modern Europe. Now take the verse following that, which states, "He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds." There are several professors here who know the meteorological system of nature, and I ask them whether that does not perfectly describe what happens in the case of a monsoon in India when there is a mighty evaporation from the Indian Ocean which is caught up into the mighty clouds, and these vapours are wafted hundreds and hundreds of miles from the ocean for the service of man?

Now take the 28th chapter, and amongst others it is a wonderful chapter containing astounding statements—most of them of a geological or mineralogical character, and no doubt every one of them will be more and more verified as science increases; but it says: "As for the earth out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire." I believe that is one of the theories of geology, that inside the earth there is fire. We were told that 3,500 years ago in the Bible. I ask you to look at your Bibles and refer to the 38th chapter of Job, where God spoke out of the whirlwind, and see whether there is not there a marvellous description of the physical phenomena of nature, but which have been described with a sublimity more than human and an eloquence more than mortal. That is what I call an inculcation of the scientific spirit in mankind by divine authority. Now I ask you to compare this scientific spirit inculcated by Holy Writ with the defective knowledge in Christian times, at the time of Galileo and Christopher Columbus. It is that scientific spirit which false religions ignore while modern science ascertains truth, and if science is true it must agree

with Scripture, and we find it is so. The more we study the more we learn on this subject.

There is one more point I should like to refer to in regard to sanitation. At the time of the Social Science Congress at Huddersfield in Yorkshire where I was the President, a sermon was preached to them by a reverend gentleman who told them they could not do better, if they wished to study the principles of sanitation, than refer to many passages in the book of Numbers, and more particularly in the book of Leviticus, where they would find many principles of sanitation propounded 3,500 years ago, and they have been more or less carried into modern practice and impressed upon our fellow countrymen. I should like to ask any medical man who has been engaged in, I will not say the elimination, but in the isolation and limitation of the Bubonic Plague at Bombay, whether he could, on the whole, devise a better system of sanitation than that propounded by Moses for the limitation of leprosy in those days? This is the scientific spirit derived from Scripture and applied in a most practical manner to the most humane of purposes.

I should like to say one word in conclusion on the scientific part of the subject. One interesting portion of science surely is natural history. I should wish anyone to observe not only the number of plants and flowers mentioned in Scripture, but animals, especially in Leviticus, and the description and classification of various kinds of beasts. I consider it a wonderful instance of classification, and I doubt whether it would be better done in these days.

So much then for all the points of science, learning and research which verify Scripture. I feel that time is passing and that I have trespassed too much on your patience; but I had intended to show you how, while on the one hand the Holy Scripture answers all these tests, no other Scriptures do. Apply these tests by which Holy Scripture is confirmed and verified, to any other religion in the world, and the religion in question is scattered to the four winds of Heaven—not a word can stand—its geography cannot, nor its philosophy nor its science—nothing will bear the light of modern science, not even Mohammedanism. Sir William Muir, who is the greatest living authority on the subject, will tell you that of all books the most unintelligible is the Koran of Mohammed. I believe I have secured your careful attention to this momentous matter, but you may take it from me, as one who knows what these religions are, that no book on earth will stand

the test that our Bible will. I do not pose as a man of science or of learning, but as a man of some knowledge from his own investigations, from his own eyesight and observation of the subject of which he is talking, and I hope what I have said may strengthen your faith. (Applause.) I recollect when, by invitation, I was standing by the open grave of Darwin in Westminster Abbey and the solemn anthem was being sung, "Blessed is he who getteth knowledge." That is the sum total of my address to you this afternoon. Let us get that knowledge as Darwin got it, and the more we learn, the more we study, the more we inquire, the more we know, the better shall we understand the words of Scripture as the one thing upon which we are to base all our happiness on earth, and all our hopes in the life beyond the grave. (Loud applause.)

A vote of thanks to Sir Richard Temple, moved by Sir Joseph Fayrer, F.R.S., and seconded by Professor Edward Hull, F.R.S., was unanimously carried.

Afterwards the following address, signed by the Lord Chancellor, was presented to the President.