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## 853RD ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD IN ROOM 19, LIVINGSTONE HOUSE, BROADWAY, S.W.1, ON  
MONDAY, MAY 24TH, AT 5 P.M.

SIR FREDERICK KENYON. G.B.E., K.C.B., D.LITT., LL.D., IN  
THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed.

The CHAIRMAN then called upon Sir Charles Marston (President) to read his paper entitled "Recent Biblical Archæology."

Questions were asked by Major H. B. Clarke and the Rev. Dr. Hart-Davies.

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### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

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#### *RECENT BIBLICAL ARCHÆOLOGY.*

By SIR CHARLES MARSTON, F.S.A.

WE live to-day in an age absorbed in the details of its immediate existence, or in the details of material Sciences. Few seem to find leisure to survey the course of events as a whole, or to appreciate the movements that underlie them. So the time has hardly arrived when a subject like "Recent Biblical Archæology" attracts audiences such as those who listen to the Beveridge Scheme of Social Insurance.

Of the very few who seek to study the deeper and wider currents of existence, more than one have suggested that the causes of the present World catastrophe are due to the fact that too much attention has been paid to the Science of Matter, and too little to the Science of Man. Or to put it another way, we have been eager to use the evidence that matter supplies of its environment, while we ignore the evidence about Man and his environment, as written down both in the Bible and history.

Until this neglect has been overcome we may have to face more catastrophes. But when men finally accept the principles of experience which they are still striving to side step, then Biblical Archæology is likely to become a more popular Science.

In the meantime, a quotation ascribed to H. G. Wells seems apposite. He says, "Our own lives are all the practical material we have for the scientific study of living; the rest is hearsay."

We, who have exceeded the threescore and ten limit, can remember the day when the scientific study of living had reached

a stage where scientists thought that they knew about all there was to be known. They were neither concerned with Bible, History, or Tradition. They were captivated with *The Plan*—what Plan? A celebrated scientist, a Nobel Prize winner, has described it, as follows :—

“The scientists of the nineteenth century blundered in supposing that they had found a fairly consistent and universally applicable scheme of interpretation of the physical world—a set of laws in conformity with which all phenomena everywhere must take place.”

Needless to say, the discoveries of this present century do not all accord with “the Plan.” Nor has the high estimate of human knowledge withstood the light of further facts of observation. Some years before this war, Sir Arthur Eddington wrote : “We have turned a corner in the path of progress, and our ignorance stands revealed appalling and insistent.” Nevertheless, the nineteenth century idea of “the Plan”—the key to all knowledge—cast a spell upon the learning of the early part of this century, and we are still under its influence. This is partly due to the time-lag between those advanced in knowledge and those who teach it, and partly to the impression that the progress of science is continuous, and that what we believed last century is a sound basis for what we can believe to-day.

But in reality the progress of science is not continuous at all, but catastrophic. Sir James Jeans, in his Presidential Address to the British Association in 1934, pointed out : “The theoretical physicist must admit that his own department looks like nothing so much as a building which has been brought down in ruins by a succession of earthquake shocks. The earthquake shocks were new facts of observation, and the building fell because it was not built on the solid rock of ascertained fact, but on the ever shifting sands of conjecture and speculation.”

We had been accustomed to regard Physics as the most exact of Sciences. And in considering these weighty words, we wonder how many other so-called scientific conclusions taught as true to-day, may be built on conjecture and speculation, and may prove to be false. The time has surely come when an enquiry should be made into the fundamental assumptions on which all current knowledge is based. An edifice of so-called knowledge may look imposing and pretentious in its detail. But it must ever be remembered that these serve to conceal its foundations ;

and that if they are unsound the whole edifice is liable to collapse. The scientists of the nineteenth century who evolved the Plan, of course excluded the possibility of miracles from their laws. The evidence in possession of Science to-day no longer entitles us to do so. We have new facts of observation. Yet the spell of the nineteenth century is still upon us, so much so that few have the courage to affirm their belief in miracles. This war has supplied countless examples of physical courage. Is it not time that we had the moral courage to testify to the realities of our Religion in this important respect ?

My memory goes back to the days when the Bible was the basis of our Religion. It was also the basis of our Civilization. Both the British Empire and the United States treated this Book as their Supreme Authority. The Bible was also the Authority on Ancient History, Literature, Poetry, Anthropology, Psychology and other arts and Sciences. It was described by Mr. Gladstone as "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture." But the nineteenth century marked a time when, instead of accepting the Bible as their Judge, Men began to judge the Bible. And some of us have thought they did not do so fairly, nor in accordance with the Laws of Evidence. This would have been of small account had the Book been Homer's *Iliad*, or another like Classic. But the Bible was an authority of enormous importance. It might well have been said: "If the Bible fell, so would our Civilization !"

As we look back on the past four years we perceive moments when our Civilization nearly did fall, and was sustained only through the superhuman help with which the Bible had made us familiar. When we turn from our Civilization to our Religion we find it in the same evil plight. Four-fifths of our people attend no place of Worship, and there is a widespread ignorance of the Bible even among leading men. No wonder it had become the essential and urgent work of the Science of Biblical Archæology to find outside evidence in Bible Lands, so that people could judge whether the Bible was what it represented itself to be, or whether it was, after all, a collection of myths and legends. The evidence supplied by Biblical Archæology has proved to be all in favour of the authenticity of Holy Scripture.

The conclusions of the Higher Criticism of the Bible have been many and varied. Let us consider three or four examples of how they are affected by Biblical Archæology. My own first contact with them was about half a century ago.

It was then represented that the Pentateuch was composed during the captivity in Babylon, and that its contents were derived from current knowledge gained there. When it was pointed out that the Pentateuch purported to have been written by Moses many centuries before the Captivity, the reply was made that it was customary in ancient times to ascribe writings to individuals who had lived long before, in much the same way as historical novels in our time often purported to be written by individuals who lived centuries ago. The answer to this was that people knew when they read such novels that they were all based on imagination. But to affirm that the first five Books of the Bible stood in a similar position, was to make them out to be nothing more nor less than forgeries. This remark was deprecated as being too strong. Moses might have said something of the sort. The answer was: So might the historical characters in the novels. But nevertheless we did not treat novels as historical records. Moreover, to put such an important part of the Bible into the category of fiction was to discredit the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only did He affirm that Moses wrote of Him, but in His contest with the Devil He replied to each of the three Temptations by quotations from Deuteronomy.

The critical conclusion that the Pentateuch was written in Babylon, because it was thought to reflect the knowledge of the period of captivity, has received its death blow from the recent discoveries of Biblical Archæology. These furnish conclusive evidence that the backgrounds of the actual time of Moses, and of his writings, are correct. The Ras Shamra discoveries in Syria, for example, positively refer to the very sacrifices that Moses instituted in the Wilderness.

Another of the recent results of Biblical Archæology has been the excavations of Jericho by Professor Garstang. Only a short time before them, an Authoritative Work had published the remarkable statement: "Readers may be able to examine the Pentateuch critically for themselves, or, in other words, to practise the Higher Criticism." Thus lightly could the Bible now be treated!

This critic went on to examine the Book of Joshua. He wrote concerning the walls of Jericho: "There is no reason to suppose that anything supernatural occurred. The wall *fell down flat* is merely literary hyperbole intended to convey the completeness of the victory; and nobody probably would have

been more amazed than the actual writer to learn that his words were ever required as a point of faith to be understood literally."

With this rash assertion we may compare the text in the Epistle of the Hebrews, which says: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down" (Hb. xi, 30). We know now what actually did happen. The walls of Jericho fell down in consequence of an earthquake, which we legally describe as "an Act of God." They fell down flat instead of collapsing in heaps, because they were tied together by houses. Their foundations were defective, and the breadth and weight of the inner wall pushed the outer wall over and fell on top of it.

Again this critic said that: "It is perhaps hardly necessary to point out that had the walls collapsed entirely, Rahab and her household could scarcely have escaped." It is surely hardly necessary to point out in answer to this criticism that the narrative does not state that the walls collapsed *entirely*. We know now that the part of the walls where Rahab's house stood was held up by the adjacent Citadel which was built between the walls.

Dr. Driver, Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, wrote eloquent books on the Old Testament in the earlier years of this century. They are distinguished by a fine literary style and immense assurance on the correctness of his criticism. But the following passage contains a statement that has a fundamental bearing upon his whole work. Dr. Driver wrote: "It is a primary canon of historical criticism that a first-class historical authority must be *contemporary* (or nearly so) with the events which it purports to relate: if therefore the narratives of the Exodus were not committed to writing till several centuries after the Exodus took place, what value is to be attached to them? The two earliest narratives are undoubtedly those of J and E: these are based upon the oral traditions current in the ninth and eighth centuries B.C. upon customs and institutions in force at the time, and upon collections of—in all probability—written Laws," *vide* Driver's Exodus.

I have not discovered how Dr. Driver, after admitting the existence of writing, postulates oral tradition in this statement.

We have just seen how the excavation of Jericho has exactly confirmed the part of the Book of Joshua which describes its fall, and a statement in Joshua vi, 25, implies that the narrative was written in Rahab's lifetime.

In his excellent address on the Ras Shamra Tablets on

March 3rd, 1941, I think our distinguished and most learned Chairman, Sir Frederick Kenyon, contradicts these fundamental statements of Dr. Driver about oral tradition being the vehicle of the transmission of most of the Pentateuch, when he writes : " The proof of the early use of writing in the Near East is of vital interest to Bible students, because it shows that the earliest Old Testament records, whether of historical facts or of legislation, whatever the literary evidence may be as to their date and manner of composition, can perfectly well have been based upon contemporary written documents, and not merely an oral tradition. The fact now admits of no dispute. From Mesopotamia, from Asia Minor, from Syria, from Egypt, we have ample evidence of the habitual use of writing from at least the third millennium B.C. ; and our treatment of the early Hebrew literature must take account of this established and uncontestable fact."

There remains the theory that critics can distinguish the various sources of the Pentateuch, and assign them to unknown writers, whom they designate as J., E., P., D., etc. It is likely that sources did exist ; but that they can be distinguished with the certainty assumed is quite another matter. *For this system cannot be applied to modern writings.* The attempt to do so in the case of Deeks *versus* Wells in 1931, led to such strong language in the Canadian Law Courts that I hesitated to reproduce it in one of my books. But the case was brought to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, where Lord Atkin in his Judgment said that the details of the evidence were " quite properly described by one of the Judges as fantastic."

We know that ancient documents of remote times abound in duplications and reiterations. Therefore to assign one sentence in the Bible to one source, and the next to another, is purely a matter of conjecture and speculation, on which no conclusions can be made.

These examples of the so-called Higher Criticism, taken more or less at random, are fairly representative of the whole. It is hard to believe that they, and the methods employed, would ever have been seriously accepted by Church of England scholars, had it not been for the great delusion of the last century, that there had been discovered a scheme of interpretation of the physical world with laws, in conformity with which all phenomena everywhere must take place.



That made it easier to treat portions of the Bible as folklore, myth, and legend, because they did not conform to the Plan of the nineteenth century.

But instead of the Bible containing mythical elements the course of events has revealed them in the Plan. Nevertheless, here we have at the present time prominent Divines writing books for Religious Teachers in schools, in which warnings are given about myth and legend in the Old Testament.

These authorities do not seem to realize that there are far more dangerous myths less than a century old which are believed by multitudes to-day, and which, in my view, are responsible for the decline in both our Civilization and Religion.

The late Dr. Langdon, Professor of Assyriology at Oxford, wrote: "Darwinian evolution applied to the origin and progress of religion can have only one result: it must destroy the faith of mankind that there is any reality in religion at all."

The last address I had the honour to give this Institute was on May 8th, 1939. It was devoted to the Lachish Letters. It will be remembered that these consisted of eighteen pieces of pottery with ink writing upon them. They were found in the remains of a room in the Gate Tower of the City destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; and they contained ninety lines of readable matter. They were handed to Professor Torczyner of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, for decipherment and translation. They proved to be written in the Phœnician Hebrew script, of which the then existing knowledge was imperfect. They were contemporary personal letters between orthodox Jews in the days of Jeremiah the Prophet. As such the find was unique. Previous outside evidence concerning Israel and Judah had come through their enemies, such as Sennacherib's account of his treatment of Hezekiah, King of Judah. And even the Elephantine papyri (fifth century B.C.) were written by men who were only partly of Jewish birth and polytheistic in their beliefs.

The oldest existing manuscript of the Hebrew Bible is believed to be the one in the Synagogue of Cairo, and it dates back to about 895 A.D. It is written in the Assyrian Hebrew script adopted by the Jews after the Captivity. These Lachish Letters are therefore nearly fifteen hundred years earlier. And though in a different script—the Phœnician Hebrew—yet their phraseology, spelling, style and composition are the same as that of Jeremiah or II Kings. The Letters were written by an Officer named Hoshaiah to Jaush, the Governor of Lachish; and they

concerned the fate of the Prophet Uriah, the son of Shemaiah, mentioned in Jeremiah xxvi. It is not surprising that they aroused great interest amongst scholars, and a deluge of criticism of both decipherments and interpretations followed, in Jerusalem, in this country, and in the United States. Professor Torczyner took it all with remarkable open-mindedness and good temper. He has now published a Book in Hebrew in reply, and has sent me an English translation. I am endeavouring to arrange to have a summary published in this country. It contains many details to which it is needless to refer in this address. The one point of importance to us is, that the Professor still maintains the identity of the Prophet with Uriah the Son of Shemaiah, on which he has been assailed by others. The broad facts of the contents of these Letters are otherwise not in dispute. They contain frequent appeals to Jahveh, and no other Deity is mentioned. There is also reference to Jeremiah, Mattaniah, Gemariah, Jaazaniah, Neriah, Hagab and others, but no decision seems to have been reached as to which of them are to be identified with the individuals mentioned in the Book of Jeremiah, and elsewhere.

The Letters were written approximately in B.C. 600. It is interesting to refer to what is known of this Phœnician Hebrew script. The earliest known use of it appeared on the Moabite stone of about B.C. 890. It was also used on the Siloam inscription of B.C. 700, which was carved on the wall of the tunnel connecting the Virgin's Fountain with the Pool of Siloam in Jerusalem. It is also used in the manuscript of the Samaritan Pentateuch; and it would appear to greatly enhance its importance as compared with what scholars had previously assigned to it. There would seem to be sufficient evidence to justify the assumption that the Old Testament was originally written in this Phœnician Hebrew script. And Professor Torczyner has declared that it may well date back to Moses.

It will be remembered that, after Mr. Starkey's murder, the remainder of the Lachish Expedition with great bravery and fortitude continued their work until the end of the season. And their efforts were rewarded by the discovery of some additional specimens of the Phœnician Hebrew Script in the City itself, besides those already found in the gatehouse. One piece linked up with the Lachish Letters.

It will be recalled how the excavations revealed the fact that Nebuchadnezzar had twice destroyed Lachish, apparently once

in the reign of Jehoiakim, and again at the end of that of Zedekiah. As the Lachish Letters were found above the Jehoiakim level, it was supposed that they belonged to the reign of Zedekiah. This took no account of the possibility that they had been written in the days of Jehoiakim, and only brought to the gatehouse in the time of Zedekiah. The discovery of this additional Letter below the floor of a house erected in Zedekiah's time rather gives colour to this assumption.

Another fragment on the floor of a house had been taken from a jar which actually stood beside it. The writing on the broken off piece read: "In the ninth year." It was in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign that Jerusalem was destroyed.

A third specimen contained a list of names followed by numerals, and was found on the roadway. It appears to be an Account, and Professor Torczyner devotes an interesting essay on the Hebrew system of numerology to it.

And last, but not least in point of popular interest, the discovery was made that on the perpendicular side of one of the steps of the Palace some schoolboy had scribbled the first five letters of the Phœnician Hebrew alphabet. So we can judge that schoolboys of 2,500 years ago possessed some of the characteristics of schoolboys of to-day. And this particular one made a valuable contribution to modern knowledge, since he supplied evidence for the sequence of lettering of the Phœnician Hebrew script, previously unknown.

In my 1939 Address reference was made to the promise Lachish afforded of further important discoveries. With it was coupled the interrogation—If we ever do get down to them in our time? Since those lines were written, the powers of Evil, to which reference was then made, have loosed this World War upon us. the further excavation of Lachish has had to be abandoned, and the Expedition's affairs out there are being wound up. The Staff of the Expedition have been scattered, and most of them are taking an active part in the war. Two Volumes of Proceedings, one on the Lachish Letters, and another on the Temple outside the Walls, written by the Staff of the Expedition, and magnificently illustrated, and printed and published by the Wellcome Trustees, have been circulated. It is hoped that in time more may follow, for the discoveries and work of Mr. Starkey, and his efficient staff, have so far only been partially illustrated and officially described.

An Organization that has long been active in the Holy Land

is the American School of Oriental Research. Despite war obstacles their energetic representative in Palestine, Dr. Nelson Glueck, continues to circulate delightful accounts of his travels in Transjordan and of the social life to-day in Jerusalem. Some years ago Dr. Glueck discovered and excavated the site of Solomon's Copper Works at Ezion Geber, Eloth, at the Northern end of the Gulf of Akaba. Bible students will remember that Ezion Geber was the last stage of the wanderings of the Israelites before they reached the wilderness of Zin which is Kadesh (Numbers xxxiii, 36). It was at Ezion Geber that Solomon built a navy of ships (1 Kings ix, 26), and it was from there that the ships sailed and fetched gold from Ophir (2 Chron. viii, 17 and 18).

The site of the copper factory is in the immediate neighbourhood. The spot was apparently chosen because it was exposed to the strong wind needed for the furnaces. The factory was built on virgin soil, and its ruins indicated how carefully it had been planned for its purpose. It was constructed of sun-dried bricks of a superior quality, and contained an elaborate system of flues and air channels for conveying a natural blast to its furnaces. From the architecture, and other evidences, there seems no doubt that it was the work of Solomon.

Unlike our modern factories, however, it was fortified and surrounded by a brick wall 27 feet high and from 8 to 12 feet thick. The great walls of Jericho enclosed only a small area. This factory site has the same characteristics—the total area was only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres. Dr. Glueck remarks on the lack of reference to this working of copper at Ezion Geber in the Book of Kings, although the building of ships is mentioned.

The smallness of the place seems almost to preclude the idea that copper was smelted there in any quantity. One would be inclined to suppose that the factory was used for refining copper and casting finished articles, such as copper and iron nails for the ships, fish hooks, lances, spear heads, daggers, dishes and fibulæ—such as were found on the site. To us who are accustomed to factories covering many acres of land, the area of this place seems too cramped for smelting. That might well have been carried on at the numerous sites on the shores of the Gulf, and the raw copper conveyed in boats to Ezion Geber at its head.

However that may be, there seems no doubt that we have here, as Dr. Glueck suggests, the clue to Solomon's wealth. The products of his factory were carried South in his ships, and

bartered for the gold of Ophir. This was brought back on the return voyage and landed at Ezion Geber. Thence it was conveyed North to Jerusalem, some three weeks' journey on camel back.

It is fitting to end this Address with a reference to the death of Sir Flinders Petrie, in Jerusalem, last July. He would have been 90 years of age had he lived till next June. I had known and admired him, and Lady Petrie, for more than 40 years. As one looks back over that time, one wonders where Biblical Archæology would have been to-day without them. Their industry and research work were immense. He wrote something like 100 books, many of them minutely recording the discoveries he had made. We owe to him the system of pottery dating which has revolutionized Archæology, and made possible its verification of the Old Testament Records. In preparing an Address it so often happens that a quotation in the Press, or in current literature on another subject, arrests one's attention as apposite to what one is writing. Thus the sentence: "How easy it is to be an intellectual in opposition to the man of action!" came while these lines were being written. If ever there was a man of action it was Sir Flinders Petrie. Evidence was to him the basis of true knowledge, and he sought for evidence in Bible Lands when intellectuals were criticising Holy Scripture on a basis of conjecture and speculation. They had the easier task, but Petrie's work will survive when theirs has been forgotten. Of the many interesting things Sir Flinders said about Egypt, one remark in particular remains in my memory. It was that he felt convinced Egypt owed its greatness to a race of Supermen, and not just to the Egyptians themselves. This statement may one day change our conception of the future, and lead to further discoveries in the history of the past.

As matters stand at the present time publicity is not laying proper emphasis on the importance of leadership.