

## Spade and Bible.

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“IT is evidently destined to provide convincing confirmation of certain phases of Old Testament history which some modern critics have been in the habit of treating as altogether mythical.” With these words the *Daily Telegraph* of January 13, 1911, announces the discovery of some inscribed potsherds, by Dr. Reissner, at Sebastiyeh, the ancient Samaria, which from the stratum in which they were found are inferred, and reasonably inferred, to belong to the ninth century B.C. The words have been quoted, not because they draw a legitimate inference from the facts, or because the facts have been accurately and clearly stated in the brief account which preceded them, but because they are a very fair sample of the frame of mind to which “the man in the street” has been reduced by the use which has been made of archæological discovery in relation to the literary and historical criticism of the Bible. It has been dinned into him, on the one hand, that no fragment of Old Testament history has escaped the sacrilegious hands of sceptical students, but that practically the whole is regarded as mythical; and, on the other, that archæological discovery has invariably tended to the discomfiture of the critic, and the confirmation of the accuracy of every part of the Biblical narrative which it has touched. Such is clearly the opinion of the writer of the above notice. But it would be hard to find any responsible scholar who has doubted the general historicity of the stories of Ahab in the books of the Kings, which, therefore, scarcely need confirmation, save in certain details; and, on the other hand, it is hard to see what confirmation for those narratives can be drawn from a number of records of deposits of oil and corn, even if they be quite correctly dated from the period in question; for the existence of a cuneiform tablet in the same

find, bearing the name of Ahab and a contemporary Assyrian King, mentioned in the first report, has not been confirmed.

It is, of course, possible, by a judicious selection of facts, to support both the positions on which the popular view of the case is based. Sciences, like individuals, are apt in their youth to sow their wild oats, and the story of that process is usually more interesting and exciting than is the account of the solid work done when they have settled down ; but it would be as unfair to judge a man's whole life by the sins of his youth as it would be to judge of the literary and historical criticism of the Old Testament by the wilder raids of the B'nê-Jerahmeel, or the extreme assertions of the "Astrallehre" school of Pan-Babylonians. In like manner a very considerable number of the historical statements of the Old Testament have received striking confirmation from the results of the spade ; but it requires a judicious manipulation and selection of these facts to produce the impression that the results of archæology are wholly incompatible with those results of literary criticism which may be conveniently summarized under the term of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis. Indeed, it would not be difficult, by the use of similar methods, to produce as strong an argument for that hypothesis from archæology as those which are from time to time triumphantly brought forward by its most stalwart opponents. Yet such means win but a Pyrrhic victory, and one which in the long run is apt to recoil disastrously on the heads of the apparent victors.

The question has sometimes been asked, "Why should we attach such reverence to that which is written with the stylus or chisel upon tablets of clay or stone, and treat with such suspicion documents written, in origin, with ink upon parchment or papyrus ? Why should the results of the spade be given such preference as historical documents over the volumes which have come down to us ?" The question is a very pertinent one, and may be met at once by the reply that the results of the spade are not *necessarily* better material for history than that which has been handed down from generation to generation in written

form. But the documents of stone and clay which the spade has revealed to us have, in a large number of instances, one great advantage over the literary sources in that they may safely be regarded as contemporary with the events which they record, and therefore have escaped one of the great risks to which the latter have been exposed—the risk of alteration, whether from the carelessness of the copyist, or from the deliberate modification of the writers who worked over them for purposes of edification or controversy. The clay cylinders of Sargon or Sennacherib may not, and probably do not, give a perfectly accurate account of the events which they record; but they are contemporary with those events, and were written for men who were eyewitnesses of the events. Such falsification as might be introduced into them would be limited by the fear of incurring incredulity and ridicule; and they have escaped those modifying processes to which the documents of the Old Testament have been demonstrably exposed.

We may say demonstrably, because the careful study of the text of the Septuagint has revealed differences from our existing Hebrew text which cannot in every case be accounted for by the carelessness of copyists alone. To take an extreme example, the Greek text of Jeremiah is shorter by some 2,700 words (or one-eighth) than the Hebrew, and the order of the prophecies is very different. Whatever theory be adopted to account for these differences, the evidence is clear for a period at which the text was in a fluid state, and liable to alteration and modification of a very extensive character. Evidence from another source may be found in the Nash papyrus (second or third century A.D.), now in the University Library at Cambridge. This fragment, some 600 years older than the oldest Hebrew manuscripts known to us, contains in Hebrew the "Shema," or confession of faith, and the Decalogue. Now, the text of this fragment differs, in agreement with the Septuagint, from the Hebrew text of the Decalogue, both in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and differs also, in agreement with the quotations of the Decalogue in the New Testament, in the order of the Command-

ments, transposing Commandments VI. and VII., as do St. Mark, St. Luke, St. Paul, and St. James. Difference on such a crucial point as the text of the Decalogue and the order of the Commandments may surely be taken as fair evidence as to the fluid condition of the text of the Old Testament, and the possibilities of modification, whether by expansion, abbreviation, or alteration, for a considerable period after the material it contains was first committed to writing. The superiority of the evidence of the spade lies in the fact that in so many cases it can be demonstrated to have escaped at least this risk of corruption.

It may not be unprofitable to examine shortly one or two instances of misuses of archæology in this sphere. At times the connection between the archæological facts and the Biblical narrative is too slender to bear the weight of the conclusions. A notable example of this will be found in a most valuable article in a recent number of this periodical, from the pen of that brilliant veteran of archæology, Professor Sayce. He opens by proposing "to give some account of what the latest results of discovery and research have told us about the Hebrew patriarch Abraham." Now, the article shows that the excavations have supplied a background to the patriarchal period, with clear evidence of frequent and easy communication between Babylonia and Palestine. By the adoption of recent theories as to the Semitic origin of the Amorites, it supplies a further connecting link between the two lands. It has shown that on the tablets names occur which may with varying degrees of probability be identified with Abram, Eber, Jacob, and Israel, and also a Divine name which is probably the equivalent of Jahweh, the national God of the Hebrews. Emphasis is laid on the importance of naphtha in Babylonian domestic economy as giving verisimilitude to the objective of Chedorlaomer's expedition in Genesis xiv., since it occurs in the bituminous deposits of the Dead Sea (though it must not be forgotten that like bituminous deposits occur at Hit in the Euphrates Valley itself). It is pointed out that the *ἄπαξ λεγόμενον*, אֲבִינִי, "his trained

*men*” (Gen. xiv. 14), finds a parallel in the “hanakuka” (thy men) of a letter to Ishtar-wassur of Taanach (*circa* 1350 B.C.), and that possibly the title given to Abraham by the Hittites of Hebron, (שׂא אֱלֹהִים), “Prince of God” (Gen. xxiii. 6), which bears a perfectly intelligible meaning as a purely Hebrew expression (“great prince”) *may* be the equivalent of a Babylonian expression, “Issak ilu” (= Viceroy of the deified King), which was borne by Babylonian Governors. But it is humbly submitted that, with the doubtful exception of the last point, not one of these facts tell us anything “about the Hebrew patriarch Abraham,” and the last point, if it be established, only shows how completely the Hebrew tradition had forgotten the not unimportant fact that the man from whom the race traced its descent entered the promised land as a provincial Governor under a foreign power; nor is it easy to see in this case what comfort archæology is administering to distressed conservatives.

Sometimes, again, the conjectures of a single archæologist are assumed as accepted facts (for such assumptions are not confined to the followers of Wellhausen), and are used to upset the generally accepted conclusions of literary and historical criticism. An example of this may be found in the extremely interesting little book, “The Discovery of the Book of the Law,” by Professor Naville. In it the learned author connects certain rubrics of chapters in the “Book of the Dead” with the discovery that chapters from that book have been used as foundation deposits in certain Egyptian temples, and claims that the rubrical account of these chapters, that they were inserted in the book because they were discovered “under the feet of the god,” is a correct account of their origin; and from this he goes on to argue that the account of the discovery of the Book of the Law under Josiah, which, according to the prevailing critical theory, was the discovery of a recently composed code, was really due to the prevalence of a similar practice of foundation deposits among the Hebrews, the book in question being a redaction of the Mosaic Law, made under Solomon, written in the cuneiform script, and deposited under the founda-

tions of the Temple by its builder. M. Naville is inclined to agree that the discovery was the Book of Deuteronomy only. But, without waiting to inquire how a redaction made in the reign of Solomon is really more in accord with the traditional view than the critical view of a redaction made early in the seventh century, it must be pointed out that Professor Naville himself admits (in a footnote on p. 21) that none of his fellow Egyptologists "have explained the Egyptian texts by reference to the custom of placing writings under the feet of statues or in foundation deposits," and allows that Sir Gaston Maspero quotes the same rubrics in the "Book of the Dead" in support of the ordinarily accepted critical theory of the origin of Deuteronomy. A theory which has not won acceptance in its own sphere can scarcely be used with confidence to overthrow theories which have gained wide acceptance in another sphere.

Yet one other faulty line of reasoning may be noted. In a recent paper the well-known lion seal from Megiddo was described as having the *ankh*, the Egyptian symbol of life, "lightly etched or painted" upon it, and this example of religious syncretism was claimed as a valuable piece of evidence in favour of the Biblical account of the declension of the Israelite religion from that pristine purity, shown in the undoubtedly early Song of Moses. But what critic has ever denied the existence of religious syncretism in the Northern (or, for the matter of that, in the Southern) Kingdom, that archæology should be called in to prove the fact? Critical theories may be inconsistent, but the seal of "Shama', servant of Jerobo'am," only proves that which they have never denied.

Before passing from this negative criticism, there is one point which ought, even at the risk of wandering from the subject, to be noted. Many will have seen the commendations by conservative scholars of Professor Kittel's "Scientific Study of the Old Testament," and possibly on the strength of that recommendation have read the book; not so many will have compared the English translation with the original German, or have seen the review in the *Hibbert Journal* for April, 1911, in

which the work of the translator is seriously criticized; it is shown that in the crucial passage of Professor Kittel's estimate of Wellhausen and his theories (pp. 74, 75) the commendation which the author gives is weakened in the translation alike by the inadequate rendering of the German, and by the complete omission in more than one case of not unimportant words and phrases. *Non tali auxilio!*

(*To be continued.*)



## Oxford and Evangelicalism in Relation to the Crisis in the Church.

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### I.—THE CRISIS IN THE CHURCH.

OF the crisis in the Church of England, readers of THE CHURCHMAN need not to be made aware. Its existence has long been felt; and now its nature is fairly evident. One hopeful feature of the age is the wide public interest taken in religious questions, even by "those that are without," with the result that secular papers deal with our difficulties, and the man in the street has his own opinions on them.

The most striking element in the situation is the growing impatience, in all Christian communities, of sectarian difference, and the kindling passion for Christian Unity. The feeling is, perhaps, largely sentimental and uninstructed as yet; but of its intensity there can be no question, for we see practical steps being taken towards Reunion which would hardly have been dreamed of twenty years ago.

But here at once the central problem rises before us. It is, of course, the old problem of the necessity or otherwise of Episcopacy, called up from more academic surroundings to become a burning question of the hour. The prominence of