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THE HISTORIC ACCURACY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

"That thou mightest know the *certainty* of those things wherein thou wast of a child instructed." (Luke i. 3.)

"To make thee know the *certainty* of the words of truth." (Prov. xxii. 21.)

THE Bible claims to record the words of God. Its writers are consciously His agents in using His invitations to a rebellious world. Even Balaam claims that "only the word which the Lord shall put into my mouth that shall I speak"; while St. Paul directly claims a kind of inspiration for the very terms of his message: "which words we speak not as man's wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1 Cor. ii. 13). Ezekiel, like St. John, assures us that he "saw heaven opened" and that he "saw these things" which he records "and heard them." St. Paul commends the Thessalonians "because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard from us, ye received it not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the word of God which effectually worketh even in you that believe" (1 Thess. ii. 13). All the prophecies and the miracles of the Old Testament were the historical framework of Israel which prepared the way for the mightier works of the New. Our Lord only laid claim to being the Messiah of the Jews and the King of the Gentiles by referring His hearers back to the Old Testament prophecies that foretold the exact manner of His coming and to the "works which none other man did" and which proclaimed that He was no less than the Son of God. If, therefore, the Old Testament is false history professing to be true, then our Lord's claims are either false or rest on no basis worthy of our acceptance. "Moses wrote of Me. Had ye believed Moses ye would have believed Me. But if ye believe not his writings how shall ye believe My words?" (John v. 46, 47). "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them! For if they believe not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Luke xvi. 29, 31). "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul: Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts xxvi. 27, 28). "I testify unto every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this Book, If any man shall add unto these things God shall

add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. He which testifieth of these things saith : Surely I come quickly ! ” (Rev. xxii. 18, 20).

These are no common claims. Neither the Koran nor the Zendavesta utter claims like these that profess to proceed out of the mouth of the Most High ! If, therefore, these claims are not true the Book would have long ago perished that made them. Whereas what do we see today ? The very nation which fulfilled their own prophecies by condemning their own Messiah are kept alive as a monument of the truth of their own prophets. As one result of the Balfour Act of 1917 they are returning (as Moses said in Deut. xxx. 1-5) to their own land again. For they are the original Vine-yard and Olive-tree into which, as the “ natural branches,” St. Paul tells us, “ they shall be grafted in again ” ; for “ God is able to graft them in again ” (Rom. xi. 23, 24). Dr. Delitzsch’s Hebrew version of the New Testament and Montefiore’s Commentary on the Four Gospels are now accepted books in all Jewry. And so too is Professor Klausner’s *Life of Jesus of Nazareth*, for the first time in 2,000 years abjuring the blasphemy of the Talmud and the *Tol’doth Yesbu* as serious authorities. Last year gave the Jews a Hebrew translation of St. Augustine’s *Confessions*.

We are living in the midst of a world-revolution. Excavation and philology have resurrected the books of the Old Testament. The Patriarchs and Noah’s Flood, the old Kings of Babylon and Egypt, are no longer shadows from a long past but the re-discovered figures of flesh and blood which they once were to the writers of the Bible narratives themselves. It is a second spring, a new Renaissance. What St. Paul says of the Jews as a nation is not less true of their prophetic books.

If their fall be the riches of the world and their loss the wealth of the nations how much more shall be their own fulness ? . . . For if the rejection of them were the reconciling of the world what shall the receiving of them back again be but life from the dead ? (Rom. xi. 12, 15).

We have lived to witness a world revolution not only with regard to the Books of the Bible but also with regard to the original traditional histories of all nations. In 1795 Wolf proved to the men of his day that Homer was written by a syndicate of

poets. But from the hour that Schliemann re-discovered the original Troy there has been a gradual and universal return to the unity of Homer. Travelling upon inductions made by Beaufort, and confirmed by the conjectures of Ihne, Niebuhr disproved the history of the Kings of Rome, starting with Romulus. Lanciani now shows the tomb of Romulus. And the Servian wall and the *Cloaca Maxima* of earliest Rome are no longer disputed. In the same way the German mythopoeic fancy discovered reasons whereby Menes, the first King of Egypt, and Minos, an old-time King of Crete, were mythological symbols corresponding to *manu*, the Sanscrit for "man." But the coffin of King Menes, found by de Morgan, and the throne as well as throne room of King Minos, found by Sir Arthur Evans, are with us today. Such is what Gibbon called the perspicacity of criticism which in all these instances has transformed truth into conjecture!

It has been the same with the Old Testament. It was once upon a time untrue to the historic facts. (1) Deuteronomy was a forgery of the times of Hezekiah, probably the work of Jeremiah himself. (2) The second part of Isaiah was written up as a sham prophecy hundreds of years after the first and palmed off on a credulous (was it a credulous?) world as Isaiah's own. (3) Daniel was a very late forgery, some 400 years after the times he wrote of, concocted for political ends, under the name of a seer of the last things, though most of it has already come true! (4) Genesis was compiled rather than composed so long after the events that it took three clumsy forgers, living about the year 750 B.C. and called J, E and P, to weave a tissue of tales so improbable that after 4,000 years their truth can be tested by documents reaching back contemporaneously with these very early narratives to about 3000 B.C.! Yet such was the hypothesis assumed till yesterday (and still assumed by the not very scholarly editors of Dr. Gore's *Commentary on the Bible and Apocrypha*) as "the assured results of the Higher Criticism!"

Today no serious student of Assyriology holds any such view. "The historic accuracy of the Old Testament" is one of the *slogans* of the new school. Before the Oxford Oriental Congress met in August of 1928 many of its most distinguished members sent to the *Daily Telegraph* their opinion of the new discoveries. Sir Charles Marston condemned as so absurd the Higher Critical theory of "folk-lore" in the Bible that he classed

it as "pre-War scholastic *débris*" made in Germany and refuted by "the more reliable evidence of the pick and spade." He specially cited "the mistakes of the Higher Critics which archæological discoveries have laid bare." Among these he placed the supposed late dating of the Book of Daniel. "Let them," he said, "take up the challenge of Professor Sayce and Sir Flinders Petrie!" (*D.T.*, Aug. 8, 9, 16, 1928). Mr. J. W. Crowfoot, excavator at Jerusalem, announced that modern discovery had "disposed for all time" of these critical methods and that the Bible texts had generally re-emerged enriched beyond measure (Aug. 10). Sir Flinders Petrie defended as "real history" the Books of Joshua, Judges and Kings as records "consistent with the known facts" (Aug. 11). The present Professor of Assyrian at Oxford (Dr. S. H. Langdon) derided the weakness of modern criticism in its "reckless tendency to correct the Hebrew text." He specially defended the Book of Genesis as the result of "a mass of tablets" dating as far back as B.C. 2169 (Aug. 13). Professor Sayce repeated the fact that the finds at Tel-el-Amarna alone had "shattered" the fabric of the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament and that "the old assumptions upon which the sceptical criticism of the past was founded have been shown to be baseless" (Aug. 14). Mr. Leonard Woolley held that "the attacks made on the Bible by the Modernist school . . . were primarily directed against its historical value" but that "with the experience of recent years we can safely affirm that the facts are there." "Our knowledge," he proceeded, "of the material world in which lived the Patriarchs of the Old Testament is entirely new and is increased every year by the results of excavation in Bible countries" (Aug. 15).

Hardly had this interesting series of first-rate contributions to the *Daily Telegraph* ceased when the Oriental Congress met at Oxford on August 27th of the same year. On the second day Professor Langdon, as President of his own Assyrian section, stated that recent discoveries at Accad and in Assyria and Hittite lands had literally "revolutionised" the whole study of "ancient history" and "Biblical criticism." He justly claimed for Assyriology the title of "Queen of historical research" and pointed in five cases to developments that recovered whole dynasties of sovereigns from "pre-diluvian times down to the third century" B.C., which "made Assyriology the safest guide in ancient chronology." Professor Yahuda read a paper on

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Egyptian words throwing a contemporary light on the language, so largely mixed with Egyptian, in the Books of Genesis and Exodus. (See *The Times'* full report for August 28th, 1928.) Dr. Jacob ridiculed and satisfactorily explained away the supposed "two" narratives of the Flood. Sayce had already tried his practised hand on this subject, proving that if the difficulties had to be got over by inventing a theory of *three* editors living at about 750 B.C. then how could any one explain the same difficulties (which required that theory) already occurring in a *single* Babylonian document of about the date 3000 B.C. ?

While these remarkable avowals of the trustworthiness and integrity of the Old Testament were being made by the first scholars of the day, it was a singular misfortune that the slenderly equipped editors of Dr. Gore's unfortunate *Commentary on the Bible and Apocrypha* (S.P.C.K., 16s.) opened their campaign against the truth of the Bible the same year, almost the same month, and regaled the press with sensational head-lines of the following order :

THEOLOGAINS DECLARE BIBLE STORIES TO BE IMPOSSIBLE.

THE DELUGE A LEGEND. ANGLICAN SCHOLARS' VERDICT.

MYTHS OF JONAH, THE WHALE AND THE ARK.

(*Daily Mail*, Dec. 30, 1928.)

Yet ere this singular performance appeared Professor Langdon had announced to Europe and America his remarkable find of the original traces of Noah's Flood ; while Professor Pinches had written :

As in the case of the Book of Jonah, the critics attack the Book of Daniel, aiming through them their shafts at the Churches. (Pinches, pref. to Boutflower's *In and Around the Book of Daniel*, S.P.C.K., 1923.)

Alas that, in this case, the Church was but attacking from within the precious treasure of which she is "witness and keeper," namely, "Holy Writ" (ART. XX). Thus is the battle once more set in array between the two schools, that of believers in a faith that rests on written evidence and that of a school of sceptics whose conclusions repose on a series of high-sounding shibboleths. To the Eusebiuses and Jeromes and Origenes of an earlier day have now succeeded the students of archæology and decipherers of ancient scripts. "They search the Scriptures

daily whether these things be so ; therefore many of them believe " (Acts xvii. 11). For the Celsuses and Marcions and Porphyrys, who bent their utmost energies to extirpating the truth of the written record, have now been substituted the leaders of the Churches who draw men off the records of truth in order that they may the more firmly bind them to their own theological shibboleths. Cardinal Manning frankly stated this to be the object of the Church of Rome :

[At first] I erroneously maintained that the old and true Rule of Faith is Scripture and Antiquity and I rejected as new and untenable two other rules of faith—first, private judgment, . . . and, secondly, the interpretations of the living Church. . . . I then saw that *all appeals to Scripture* alone or to Scripture and Antiquity . . . are no more than appeals from the Divine Voice of the living Church and, therefore, *essentially rationalistic*. . . . The Blessed Sacrament of the Altar . . . this it is which renders the text of Holy Scripture . . . less necessary to the disciples of the Church of Jesus Christ. . . . *The master-error of the Reformation was the fallacy . . . that Christianity was to be derived from the Bible*. . . . It was the charge of the Reformers that the Catholic doctrines were not primitive and their pretension was to revert to Antiquity. But *the appeal to Antiquity is a treason and a heresy*. It is a treason because it rejects the Divine Voice of the Church at this hour and a heresy because it denies that Voice to be divine (Manning, *Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost*, Introd. and chs. iv, v).

Dr. Gore's Commentary, though issued by the S.P.C.K., was largely financed by the English Church Union, a Society that exists for the hope of re-uniting the Church of England with Rome. Here, then, are the same methods being employed—to make men distrust the written record of God's original revelation to man in the hope that man may be seduced into believing that it was no revelation at all ! But what are the facts of the case ? To accept the Higher Critical decisions in the light of modern discovery would be to ask a miracle. What ? Are books, *ex hypothesi* written up by other than their supposed authors and at supposedly later dates than at those which they

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profess, capable of being proved (as they have proved) to be authentic witnesses of events so long anterior to the records? That is to ask mankind to believe an impossibility. But that is the kind of whimsical folly to which the unbelieving school of modern Christians so-called is treating the reasoning world of today. In proof of this let us take two formidable instances.

I. GENESIS, ch. xiv.

This document is notoriously so old that it is one of the oldest Hittite or Canaanite portions of the Book of Genesis. It names five kings who contended in battle against the other four. It names a certain Melchizedek, a tenth king, whom an early and accurate tradition (repeated in the Epistle to the Hebrews) claims to have been set on his throne "without a father or mother" of royal birth—that is, solely by the good will of the King of Egypt. It describes accurately the locality as "abounding in wells of bitumen" (A.V. "full of slime pits") and rightly names the God of the Hebrews by the Patriarchal title of *El Shaddai* or "God Most High." (Cp. the use of *shedim*, which recurs in connection with the same epoch of the Pentateuchal writings at Deut. xxxii. 17 and quoted at Psa. cvi. 37.) The chronology, too, suits all the circumstances attaching to the royal names. And the date we are able thus to fix at about 2000 B.C.—precisely the date which synchronises with Abraham's visit to Palestine from Ur of the Chaldees. The names, says Sir Gaston Maspéro, all synchronise also. Amraphel is Ham-murabi. Arioch is Eriaku, the equivalent of Rim Sin. Tidal, King of Nations, is Tida'lo of Gutium, or else the form Tidcal may be (with Sayce, Pinches and Hommel) identified with Tudk-hula, an ally of Kudurlagamar, who is, of course, Chedorlaomer.

From the outset Assyriologists have never doubted the *historical accuracy* of this chapter. And they have connected the *facts* which it contains with those which seem to be revealed by the Assyrian monuments (Maspéro's *The Struggle of the Nations*, pp. 47, 49; ed. Sayce; S.P.C.K. 1910).

Professor Pinches accepts these facts, adding what is of real importance in this issue—that the very name of God among the Babylonians of this date, namely, *Yaum-ilu*, corresponds precisely to the Hebrew *Jah Elohim* of the Book of Genesis, but

(as Exod. vi. 3 reminds us) used only "in special cases" (*O. T. in Light of Hist. Records of Ass. and Bab.*, 2nd ed., p. 199n.). He also tells us that, such was the ignorance of the Jews of the Exile as to the identification of these old localities in their Hebrew history, they actually confounded Ur of the Chaldees with the earlier Uru (an impossible feat in philology) instead of recognising the more certain identification of Ur with Mugheir (pronounced Umqueer)!

Now how does this all square with Higher Critical pretensions? Here is an admittedly early passage, correct in all details, yet one that managed to survive and to fall into the hands of Jews at the Exile. And they knew so little of the real facts so long passed away that they confounded one place name with another because of a similarity of sound! In maintaining a late date for this chapter Driver here leaned upon Wellhausen, whose theory was shaken by these discoveries. Wellhausen admitted that he never looked into the matter for himself but depended on Nöldeke. And Nöldeke left the matter to settle itself rather than disturb the hypothesis. Such are the arts by which history is transmuted into legend! A more striking defeat for the shibboleths of the schools occurs in the case of

II. DANIEL, ch. v.

This book has long been the cock-pit of theological strife, till today the Higher Critical theory of its lateness, postponed even to Maccabean days—that is, four hundred years beyond its proper date—must at last be abandoned. Yet the critics still fight for this last straw of their theory with a persistency worthy of a better cause. Let us put their theory to an acid test—the new-found documents contemporaneous with the events!

Three recent works have in turn contributed to the true dating of the Book of Daniel. The first is Mr. C. Boutflower's *In and Around the Book of Daniel* (S.P.C.K., 1923; 1s. net). The importance of this work lies less in its argument than in its illustrations of GREEK influence on the times in which the Book of Daniel was composed. For example, Nebuchadnezzar drew from Ionia (in Hebrew *Javan*, A.V. "Greece") Greek mercenaries to fill his armies and to cut his medallions and gems. Of these last, one of Nebuchadnezzar is the most remarkable. Thus were introduced into Babylon the Greek names of musical instruments from Ionia; three of which appear in Daniel iii with

their Greek names transliterated first into Assyrian and thence into Hebrew, thus retaining their original phonetic values. It is here that the critics have fallen into their own trap. Ignorant that Greek was known to Nebuchadnezzar's day they rushed to the conclusion that Greek words in a book of Nebuchadnezzar's time spelt the influence of later Maccabean times!

Mr. Boutflower's work suggested the necessity of an earlier date for Daniel than hitherto admitted. Dr. J. A. Montgomery, in the *International Critical Commentary* on the Book of Daniel, followed. He approached the subject from the Higher Critical side. But in the course of publishing a full-length defence of the Higher Critical point of view he received from Dr. Dougherty, Professor of Assyrian at Yale, an advance copy in MS. of his forthcoming work on *Nabonidus and Belshazzar* (Yale and Oxford, 1929). Unable to re-write the whole of his work, Dr. Montgomery paused. He definitely "broke" for ever with the Maccabean date as regards the whole Book of Daniel (pref.) and admitted that

Archæology has inspired a considerable *revival* of the defence of the AUTHENTICITY of the book . . . and . . . exhibits the REACTION toward recognition of a far greater amount of HISTORICAL TRADITION in the book than the elder criticism had allowed (p. 109).

That statement is hardly fair to his great fellow-workers in this field. For Lenormant held at the last a view approaching this reversion to the orthodox position. And the German Jeremias had written so far back as in 1904 the following adequate summary of the whole question :

DANIEL. This prophetic book has been repeatedly revised. The elements in their original form belong to the period of the Exile. The Hebrew canon, therefore, correctly places the Book after Ezekiel and Septuagint before Ezra (Jeremias' *O. T. in Light of the Anc. East*, vol. ii, 299 ; ed. C. H. W. Johns, Eng. Tr., 1911).

However, here was a concession in favour of a return "towards" the traditional date. How far further would Dr. Montgomery go? He accepts the "third century" B.C. for certain (p. 96). He would even go with Driver to the "fourth century" B.C. (p. 15). This date is, of course, fatal to their position as critics demanding the Maccabean date or something

like it. On pp. 14, 20 he will go as far back as the "fifth century" B.C. That brings us to the age of Ezra and Nehemiah. But what about the fifth chapter of the Book of Daniel with its "historic accuracy" and correct local "Babylonian scenery"? Well, such "definite historical tradition" allows of "excellent modern scholars defending the TRADITIONAL POSITION" (pp. 67, 72, 93, 58)!! He even thinks that the Persian words in the Book point back to "Babylonia," and not to Palestine, for the original compilation of the Book (p. 22).

So far, so good. But more is yet to come. Dr. Dougherty issued his *Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar* (Yale and Oxford University Press, 1929) at the end of last year. In this work he places side by side all the material available for arriving at the original date. First comes the Nabonidus Chronicle, next the Cyrus Cylinder, thirdly, the *Persian Verse Account of Nabonidus* in cuneiform and all three written at the time or soon after the siege of Babylon by Cyrus in 538 B.C. Then comes Herodotus writing about 400 B.C., followed by Xenophon about the year 360 B.C., followed by the Graeco-Babylonian Berossus, a priest of the temple of Bel, who wrote about 250 B.C. Now if Daniel were written at a later date still, how is it that his narrative is correct in details which the other authors living so much nearer the times ignore? For example, not one of them names Belshazzar. Nor is the historical setting so accurate as that given by the author of Daniel. Whereas, on the other hand, the Book of Daniel by its genuine local accuracy corrects or explains the others. Thus Belshazzar seems to have been the King of Babylonia *de facto*, while his father Nabonidus was King of Babylon *de jure*—his father having entrusted to him the "kingship" (*sarrutam*) at an early stage in his public career. It was Sidney Smith (*Bab. Hist. Texts*, pp. 84 seq., 1924) who first discovered this fact. Moreover, through his father's marriage into the house of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar seems to have been able to claim Nebuchadnezzar as his "grandfather"—a word for which there is no nearer title in Hebrew or Aramaic than "father." This concession to the accuracy of the account even Dr. Driver was willing to make. But note what is Professor Dougherty's final conclusion after a most interesting and peculiarly meticulous survey of the whole field before him:

Belshazzar was acting as co-regent when Babylon was captured. On this assumption there were two sovereigns

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in the kingdom at the time. Nabonidus was the titular ruler of the nation, but Belshazzar . . . was the second ruler, . . . Daniel . . . being made the "third ruler in the kingdom." . . . Of all non-Babylonian records . . . *the fifth chapter of Daniel ranks next to cuneiform literature in ACCURACY* (author's italics). . . . The Scriptural account may be interpreted as excelling. . . . The total information found in all available . . . *documents* LATER than the *cuneiform texts* of the sixth century B.C. . . . *could not have provided the necessary material* for the historical framework of the fifth chapter of Daniel (Dougherty, *Nabonidus and Belshazzar*, pp. 186-200).

When the present writer asked Sayce how he proposed to get round evidence like this, Sayce wrote at once accepting Dougherty's book as finally "authoritative" and adding the following significant words, which he allows to be quoted from his private letter to the present writer :

The bankruptcy of the Higher Criticism when tested by the discoveries and facts of scientific archæology . . . has been complete in Western Asia as well as in Greece (Sayce, letter, Sep. 14, 1929).

And that is precisely what this article set out to establish.
Q.E.D.

A. H. T. CLARKE.

The Rectory, Devizes.