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839TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING.

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM 19, LIVINGSTONE HOUSE,
BROADWAY, S.W.1, ON MONDAY, MARCH 3RD, 1941,
AT 4.30 P.M.

WILSON E. LESLIE, ESQ., IN THE CHAIR.

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

The CHAIRMAN then called on Sir Frederic Kenyon, K.C.B., D.Litt., LL.D., to read his Paper entitled "Ras Shamra, Mari and Atehana."

The Meeting was then thrown open to discussion in which the following took part: Dr. N. S. Denham, Major H. B. Clarke, Colonel F. A. Molony, Mr. F. S. Short and Mr. W. E. Leslie.

A written communication was received from Rev. Principal H. S. Curr.

RAS SHAMRA AND MARI: RECENT ARCHÆOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES AFFECTING THE BIBLE

By SIR FREDERIC G. KENYON, G.B.E., K.C.B., D.LITT., LL.D.

THE contact between archæology and the Bible may be said to have begun over a century ago with the discoveries of Layard at Nineveh, which constituted the first revelation of the monuments and records of the kings of Assyria; but it is only within our own generation that such discoveries have become plentiful. The spade of the archæologist has been busy in Palestine, in Syria, in Asia Minor, in Crete, in Mesopotamia, and in Egypt; and some of his results have important bearings on the Biblical narratives. It is not possible for anyone who is not something of a specialist to keep track of them all; still less is it possible for the ordinary Bible student to estimate their character and importance accurately. Moreover, the guidance which he gets from those who write about these discoveries is apt to be confusing. Some, with a prejudice against the Bible, are quick to point out discrepancies and to argue that these impair the trustworthiness of the Bible record,

and even discredit the Christian religion. Others, whose prepossessions are in favour of the Bible, are equally eager to seize upon any point which appears to confirm the Bible record, and to claim that "archæology proves the Bible."

The point of view which I wish to present in this paper is rather different. No convinced Christian needs to have the Bible—that is, the essential truth of the Bible—"proved." He knows it already. It is interesting to know that the wrecked walls of Jericho have been found, and that documents have come to light at Lachish belonging to the last years of the kingdom of Judah; but his faith does not need buttressing by such discoveries, and they will not by themselves convince the unbeliever. It is necessary to distinguish between essentials and inessentials. It does not matter whether "Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi." If it should prove that the author of the first book of Kings, writing after the fall of the monarchy, had copied incorrectly some figures in the records from which he was compiling his history, there is no need for us to be disturbed. What does matter is that Jehoshaphat "walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord; nevertheless the high places were not taken away, for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places." This is of importance, for it shows that Jehoshaphat was one of the slender chain of rulers who kept alive the true monotheistic worship of Jehovah in the midst of the idolatry and polytheism, which affected his own people as well as the surrounding nations.

To my mind, the true and valuable thing to say about archæology is not that it proves the Bible, but that it illustrates the Bible; and Bible students, who do not need to be told that the Bible is true, may legitimately rejoice in the fact that archæological discoveries give them fuller information as to the circumstances amid which the books of the Bible were written, and as to the conditions under which God's chosen people were trained for their special mission in the world. From them we learn something of God's methods in educating His people—something which we could not know so long as the only records which we had were those of the Old Testament itself. While those stood alone, it was natural to accept them indiscriminately.

The lesson of archæology, as I see it, is to teach us to discriminate ; to realise that God used human agents to convey His lessons ; that just as our Lord accepted the normal conditions of contemporary humanity during His life on earth, so the historians, prophets and poets, whose works are preserved in the Old Testament, lived and thought and wrote under the normal conditions of their times. It is of these conditions that archæology has something, perhaps much, to tell us ; with the essentials of the lessons conveyed, with all that makes the Bible uniquely precious, it has nothing to do.

Against those critics, therefore, who use the results of archæological discovery to discredit the Bible, we have every right to fight. We know they must be wrong ; the only thing to do is to find out where they are wrong—whether in their statements of facts or in their interpretation of them. They must be met on their own ground. But it is important to be sure whether what they discredit is really the Bible itself, or only a preconceived view of the way in which the Bible came into being. Do they touch the essential truth of the Bible, or only some unessential fringes of its record ?

I do not propose to survey the whole record of archæological discovery since the days of Layard, but only to refer to the most outstanding additions to our knowledge, and especially those of the last few years, with which some of you may be less familiar, though some, no doubt, know more about them than I can claim to do. Of the discoveries of the nineteenth century the most important, for our present purpose, after the initial discoveries of Layard, Rassam and Smith, was that, made in 1887, of the Tell el-Amarna tablets. These had a two-fold importance. They furnished overwhelming proof of the common use of writing in Palestine and Syria at a time approximately contemporary with Moses ; and they provided a picture of the conditions prevailing in those lands at about the time of the invasion of the Hebrews under Joshua.

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 on 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 as established and uncontested fact.

It is to actual texts, brought to light by archæological research, rather than to sculptures, metal-work and pottery, important though these are from other points of view, that we have to look mainly for the illustration of the Bible. These are in a few instances inscriptions carved on stone, such as the Moabite Stone and the Laws of Hammurabi ; but by far the greater number are documents inscribed on clay tablets, mostly in some form of cuneiform script. Clay was the material of record from the Tigris valley to the Halys, from the Caucasus to the Arabian desert, as papyrus was in Egypt ; and it is the discovery of collections of such tablets that is the most valuable, though perhaps not the most spectacular, triumph of the explorer. For historical purposes, the libraries of Nineveh, which Layard discovered without knowing it, are more valuable than the colossal bulls and lions. Such discoveries have become more plentiful in recent years. The discoveries of Layard, Rassam and George Smith in Assyria were followed by those of de Sarzec at Telloh in 1877-81, and an American expedition at Nippur from 1889 to 1900, which brought to light great archives of Babylonian kingdoms and relics of Sumerian literature. After the turn of the century came the discovery of the Hammurabi stelé at Susa in 1902, and a German excavation at Ashur between 1903 and 1914, which produced some tablets, and the highly important excavation of Boghaz-keui in 1906, which revealed the records of the Hittite empire ; but it was only after the war of 1914-18 had released Mesopotamia and Syria from Turkish control that trained excavators had full scope for their researches. It is with the results of these that we mostly have to do. They include notably the excavations at Ras Shamra, in northern Syria ; at Mari, on the middle Euphrates ; and at Kirkuk and Nuzi, east of the Tigris. Of these much the most important up to date for our present purpose are those of Ras Shamra.

Ras Shamra lies on a little bay on the north Syrian coast, opposite Cyprus. A chance discovery directed attention to the site, where excavations have been conducted since 1929 by M. Claude Schaeffer. He had the good fortune to light almost

at once on a great hoard of clay tablets. These proved to be the library of the kingdom of Ugarit, constituted in the reign of a king named Nigmed, who reigned soon after the middle of the second millennium B.C. A recently discovered letter shows him to have been contemporary with the Hittite king Shubbiluliuma, about 1400 B.C. The writing is cuneiform; not however the cuneiform of Babylonia, but in an alphabet of cuneiform letters, 28 or 29 in number. The language of these is Semitic, and is alternatively described as proto-Phœnician or Canaanite. This adaptation of the cuneiform script to alphabetic writing is unique. Other tablets are in the Sumerian, Babylonian and Hurrian languages, several of them being dictionaries of some of these tongues. They include public and private documents of all sorts, but what gives them their special interest is the fact that they include a large number of religious texts. It is in fact a real library that M. Schaeffer has discovered, comparable to that of Ashur-bani-pal at Nineveh, but of much earlier date and even more full for us of Biblical interest. An archive of diplomatic and economic documents, mostly written in the same alphabetic cuneiform, was discovered in the excavations of 1938-39.

In these texts we have a full picture of the religion of Ugarit, that is, of the Canaanites inhabiting northern Syria at the time when the Israelites were entering it in the south. There is a pantheon of deities, among whom El is supreme, like Zeus among the gods of Greece. He lives in a region of the west known as "the fields of El." Canaan is described as "the whole land of El," and he claims supremacy over both Crete and Egypt. He has a consort, Asherat, whose name in a plural form, Asherim or Asherah, occurs repeatedly in the Old Testament, though disguised from us in the A.V. by being translated "groves." The plural is a plural of dignity, just as El frequently appears as Elohim, and their son, Baal, as Baalim. Other gods mentioned are Mot, the opponent of Baal, Anat, who appears later as Astarte, Aleyan, the son of Baal, Dagon and his son, Ben-dagon, who accompanies Baal on a hunting expedition, in which both are slain by "the Devouring Gods"; also Nikal, Koser, and a goddess Kosarot, Latpon, the messenger of the gods, and many more. Their adventures and conversations are the subjects of a series of poems. One of these describes the building of a temple for Baal, who had previously been houseless, on the representa-

tions of Asherat. Hin, the god of metal-working, makes the ornaments for the temple, which is presumably the temple actually found at Ras Shamra. In another, the same in which the encounter with the "Devourers" is described, Baal records his victory over Lotan (a name which recalls the Hebrew Leviathan), who is described as a serpent with seven heads. In another Koser rebels against Baal, and is apparently aided by Aleyan; but Baal is victorious, and Anat blames Aleyan.

Some of the narratives are plainly agricultural myths. This is especially clear in the case of the poem which describes the war between Baal (this time aided by Aleyan) and Mot. Every spring Baal and Aleyan, the gods of vegetation, fight against Mot, the god of the heat of summer. Baal roars and thunders, as in the spring rains of Syria, but eventually Mot triumphs, and Baal and Aleyan are slain. But then Anat, Aleyan's sister, intervenes, and when Mot refuses to restore her brother to life, she seizes him, cuts him open with a sickle, winnows him, scorches him, grinds him, and scatters the fragments over the fields—the seed for next year's harvest. Then Baal and Aleyan are restored to life, and the cycle begins again.

Yet another poem describes how Anat massacres the people on the Mediterranean coast; and another, entitled "The Birth of the Beautiful and Gracious Gods," prescribes agricultural rites, including the seething of a kid in milk—a practice forbidden in the book of Exodus.

In some of the texts the narrative takes on a quasi-historical form. The most intriguing of these is the legend of Keret, which describes how El placed Keret in command of the "Army of the Negeb," three million strong, and tells him to march against the Terachites, who had captured five Canaanite towns. Keret very reluctantly and tearfully accepts the mission, drives back the Terachites, and proceeding southwards enters into negotiations with the king of Edom, who sends gifts to avert the expedition from his country. Keret agrees, and asks for the king's daughter in marriage. The conclusion of the narrative is mutilated, but it appears that the Terachites succeeded in settling in the Negeb. Are the Terachites the descendants of Terah, Abraham's father, and is Pebel-Melek, the king of Edom, the same as he who refused the Israelites passage through his land?

When the Ras Shamra texts were first published, there were

some who were quick to claim that the beliefs represented in them were those actually held by the early Israelites, which appear in the Pentateuch in a later and sophisticated form. A dispassionate consideration gives, I think, a very different view. The Ras Shamra texts represent the religion of northern Syria, which may well have extended over Palestine as a whole, about the fourteenth century, that is about the time when, according to the chronology now generally in favour, the Israelites under Joshua entered Palestine. It is a religion by no means wholly evil. It has been described as manifesting "a high moral tone, tempered with order and justice." It is a literature also of poetry and imagination. But it has nothing of the elevation of the Hebrew religion, even in the earliest forms in which we have knowledge of it. It is more on a level with the religion of the Sumerians, which we know from the Mesopotamian tablets. It is polytheistic, with stories of the gods on a crude and anthropomorphic plane, with violence and bloodshed and undignified details. It is the type of religion from which Abraham made his escape when he left Ur, and into which his descendants came when they entered Palestine; but these texts tell us nothing of what the Hebrews themselves believed. They had been for many generations absent from Syria, and in Egypt and in the wilderness they had had time to develop in their own way.

But what these texts do give us—and this, I think, is their prime value—is a picture of the beliefs amid which the Israelites lived throughout the period of the judges and kings, and by which they were so profoundly affected. The narrative of the books of Samuel and Kings is full of the struggle between the higher religion and the lower, in which often the lower predominates and the higher hardly keeps its head above water. The kings who did that which is right in the sight of the Lord are few; the kings who did evil are many. Again and again comes the refrain: "Howbeit the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places." Baal is throughout the rival of Jehovah. Even in Josiah's time we hear that the temple at Jerusalem had to be purged of the vessels that were made for Baal and for the Asherah and for all the host of heaven. These are the Baal and the Asherah of whom we hear in the Ras Shamra texts, and from them we can obtain an unbiassed, or indeed a favourable, view of the Canaanite religion, and can see how far, even on its own

representation, it fell short of the religion of Jehovah. We know now what was the religion to which the children of Israel, until they were purged by the Captivity, were continually drawn, and can compare it with the religion preached by Elijah, Amos, Isaiah and their successors.

But Ras Shamra, though the most important by reason of its wealth of religious texts, does not stand alone. At a site on the middle Euphrates, named Tell-Hariri, the ancient name of which has been found to be Mari, excavations have been carried on since December, 1933, by a French expedition under M. André Parrot. The main buildings hitherto found are a temple of Ishtar, or rather a succession of temples, dating back to at least 3000 B.C., and a palace building comprising more than 200 rooms. Mari was evidently a flourishing place at the beginning of the third millennium, but was crushed by Eannadu or Sargon about 2700 B.C. It revived again, and was flourishing in the early part of the second millennium under its last king, Zimrilim, who was eventually overthrown by Hammurabi of Babylon. Its history has emerged from a hoard of tablets, more than 20,000 in number, found in three or four rooms of the great palace. These are the archives of Zimrilim, and comprise accounts, contracts, texts of divination, and letters, including some from Hammurabi. They are written in the usual Babylonian cuneiform, and in the Accadian language, which appears to have been the language of diplomacy and commerce throughout Mesopotamia. Many place-names occur, which will assist the geography of the area between Mesopotamia, Syria and Asia Minor, which until recently has been almost a blank; also many names of local rulers, to whom gifts were sent. Among other names mentioned are the Habiru and Ben-iamina, which, in view of the fact that the date of these texts is about 2000 B.C., shows that great caution must be exercised in recognising identifications with Bible names. Of the Habiru, in particular, it is clear that the name was of very wide application; and although the Hebrews eventually came to appropriate it, there must have been many people called Habiru who were not Hebrews.

The country of Mari was Amorite, but the population was mixed, and included a large Hurrian element, of which there will be more to say in a moment. Ugarit also is mentioned, together with Cyprus and the country of the Keftiu, generally identified with Crete. Connections with Mesopotamia appear

in texts written in Sumerian and Accadian, and in temples bearing the names of Ningal and Ninharsag, well known as Babylonian deities; while connections westward are equally established by the Hurrian texts and a temple dedicated to Dagon. The Hurrian texts are the earliest hitherto known. So far, religious and historical texts are scanty, but it may be hoped that further excavations will disclose a library as well as a record office.

The discovery of the importance of the Hurrians, whom in the Bible we know as Horites, is one of the most recent successes of archæological research. Horites are mentioned in Gen. 36 and Deut. 2 as a people dwelling in the land of Edom; but it appears that Horites is the true form of the name which appears as Hivites in the familiar list of the peoples whom the Children of Israel were told that they would find in the Promised Land: "the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites." It is extraordinary how these names, once a mere list with almost no connotation, are assuming life and substance as the result of archæological research. The Hittites have been known since 1884 as a great empire with its seat in eastern Asia Minor, which once dealt with Egypt and Assyria as an equal. The Amurru or Amorites are frequently mentioned as located in northern Syria; and now the Hurrians emerge from obscurity as a people that once covered a vast stretch of country westwards from northern Mesopotamia. Their name occurs frequently in the archives of Ras Shamra, Boghaz-keui and Mari, but the main information comes from excavations conducted by American expeditions at Kirkuk and Nuzi, east of the Tigris, the results of which have been published by E. A. Speiser.

Dr. Speiser assigns a very extensive role to the Hurrians. He believes them to have entered northern Mesopotamia from the north, not later than 3000 B.C., and to have brought with them what is known as the Second Æneolithic culture, which includes the decorative pottery known by the name of Jemdet Nasr. They used a semi-pictographic script, differing from that found at Ur and Lagash. Their country was first known by the name of Subir, in Akkadian Subartu, and is said to lie between the lands of Elam and the Amurru, corresponding roughly with northern Mesopotamia. While the Sumerians occupied southern Mesopotamia, the Hurrians combined with the Semites in Akkad,

and form the main non-Semitic element in the composition of the Assyrians. They also spread south-westwards as far as Palestine before the coming of the Hebrews, and may have formed the medium whereby elements of Babylonian mythology reached the Hebrews. Included in their area was the kingdom of Mitanni, between the Khabur and the Euphrates, known from Egyptian and Hittite records. Mitanni itself is a political name, brought in by a ruling class of Indo-European origin, which established itself in this area until it was overwhelmed by the Hittites. It has even been suggested that the hitherto undeciphered Hittite hieroglyphs may in fact be Hurrian.

The Kirkuk-Nuzi records are of about the middle of the second millennium, and one special feature of interest lies in the resemblance of some of the Hurrian laws to some of those of the Pentateuch. Thus one law provides that if a woman has children, her husband will not have the right to take a second wife; but if the woman has no children, then she will give her own handmaid to her husband, and she will have children through her; in which event, the wife will not be entitled to cast out the child of the handmaid. The parallel with the story of Abraham and Jacob is obvious; it will be remembered that Abraham at first demurred to Sarah's demand for the expulsion of Hagar's child, but was overruled by a divine command. Again, it appears that by Hurrian law possession of the family's gods entitled the holder to a son's share in the father's inheritance. This explains the theft of Laban's teraphim by Jacob and Rachel, and the importance attached to the matter by Laban. Yet again, Hurrian law prescribed the duty of a man to marry his brother's childless widow, which was a feature of Israelite law, and also the right of daughters to inherit when there were no male heirs—a principle laid down by Moses in the case of the daughters of Zelophehad (Num. 36). It also appears (though the precise meaning of the terms used is not firmly established) that the institutions of the sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee (which some have regarded as late) were known to the Hurrians of Nuzi. These laws, which come much nearer to the Mosaic legislation than anything in the Code of Hammurabi, are an impressive warning against easy assumptions that the legal provisions of the Pentateuch are later than the time of Moses. As against the earlier contentions of destructive criticism, we now know (1) that writing was in

common use all over the Near East long before the arrival of the Hebrews in Palestine ; (2) that elaborate codes of law were in existence long before the age of Moses ; (3) that provisions in the Mosaic law can be paralleled from the codes in force among other nations at the same time. This does not prove that the Pentateuch was written in the form in which we have it in the fifteenth century B.C. Other conditions would have to be taken into account to establish such a proposition ; but it does prove that the Pentateuch may rest on contemporary records and may be in substance a contemporary record of facts, and that provisions in it which have been confidently claimed as late are in fact early. This obviously imposes caution in assuming the lateness of other provisions.

Another direction in which archæological research may enrich our knowledge of the Bible is that of chronology ; but here it must be recognised that most of the results are far from certain. The date of the fall of Nineveh has been definitely fixed as 612 B.C. by a tablet in the British Museum ; but evidence as to the dates of Abraham and of the Exodus, at one time thought conclusive, have been brought into doubt. Archæologists, not very long ago, held confidently that the Amraphel mentioned in Gen. 14 among the four kings who fought with Abraham could be identified with Hammurabi, the great king of Babylon, whose date was generally placed about 2100 B.C. More recent scholars have strongly questioned the possibility of this identification ; and on the other hand, there is a tendency to lower the date of Hammurabi. Professor Sidney Smith, who has always been in favour of a more contracted time-table, has shown strong reasons for placing his reign in the first half of the eighteenth century (1792-1750 B.C., *Alalakh and Chronology*, 1940, p. 29). Similarly, at one time it was argued that since the Israelites in Egypt built the store-city of Raamses, the Pharaoh of the oppression must have been one of the kings bearing the name of Rameses. The Exodus was accordingly placed in the reign of Menephtah (1233-1223 B.C.). The subsequent discovery of an inscription of that king recording a victory over the Hebrews, seemed to show that they were by that time established outside Egypt ; and Professor Garstang's excavations at Jericho appeared to show that the destruction of that city took place somewhere about 1400 B.C., which would bring the invasion of Joshua into the period covered by the

Tell el-Amarna letters. These instances serve to show that archæological evidence is not always decisively clear, and that one must accept the affirmations of archæologists with caution, and always keep one's mind open for new evidence.

In general, and to sum up, one may say that the contribution of archæology to Biblical study has been to widen and deepen our knowledge of the background of the Bible narrative, and especially of the Old Testament. We are gaining a far fuller picture of the conditions under which the training of the Hebrew people to be the leaders of religious thought to the world was, under God's providence, conducted. The trend of all this increased knowledge has been to confirm the authority of the books of the Old Testament, while it illuminates their interpretation. Destructive criticism is thrown on the defensive; and the plain man may read his Bible, confident that, for anything that modern research has to say, the Word of our God shall stand for ever.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. W. E. LESLIE said: Sir Frederic has greatly added to the interest of his paper by connecting the purely archæological matter with the general principles of Divine Revelation. On page 1 he speaks of the essentials and inessentials of inspiration. But how are we to know what is essential and what is not? There is too great a tendency to lay down, *a priori*, how God must have inspired the Scriptures. Doubtless this method is an inheritance from the Schoolmen. Instead, we should ask how, in fact, God has seen fit to reveal His will.

Again, Sir Frederic dwells on the importance of the historic background of Scripture. Sometimes this is so important that it might almost be said to form part of the sacred text, since the text is unintelligible without it. The ancient method of making (Hebrew "cutting") a covenant by the parties to the covenant passing together between the pieces of the covenant victim is an example. God makes use of the custom in Gen. xv, and a right understanding of it determines the translation of *diatheke* in Hebrews ix.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Rev. Principal H. S. CURR wrote: In common with all who may happen to read Sir Frederic Kenyon's paper, I have greatly enjoyed

it, as well as finding it to be very useful as providing valuable information which only a specialist in the subject can give. It is not possible for me to make any useful observations on the discoveries which are described in the paper. I wish rather to associate myself with the contention of the paper in regard to the assistance which the study of the Bible may obtain from archæology. Sir Frederic Kenyon makes it very clear that excavations and discoveries in the Near East are chiefly valuable, not because they confirm the statements in the Scriptures, but because they explain them, and clarify them in a way which makes the light thus thrown of the greatest importance. The saying of John Robinson, the Puritan preacher, to the effect that God has always more light and truth to break forth from His Word is emphasised by the wealth of information for which the Christian Church is indebted to archæological investigations.

To my thinking, too much stress is laid on the corroboration of the Old Testament narratives by such discoveries as those described in the paper—not because these are unconvincing, but because the testimony of excavation is not always so favourable to the Bible as we might suppose. In that respect it is like the evidence furnished by physical science. It does not invariably support the teaching of Scripture. In these circumstances it is unwise and unsafe to rest the credibility of the Bible on such foundations. Its truth depends on the claims which it makes for itself. These are so tremendous that they must be accepted or we must face the alternative of regarding the inspired writers who made them as being hopelessly mistaken. That is not the only basis, but it is one which is far from negligible.

On the other hand, the detailed information which archæology has brought to the notice of Bible students removes many obscurities, and reveals a new significance in many familiar passages, as instances quoted in the paper will show. Many readers of the Pentateuch must have been puzzled by the ordinance that a kid must not be seethed in milk. The paper makes it clear that the practice had such close associations with contemporary paganism that it had to be forbidden as far as the Israelites were concerned. Another interesting instance is the light thrown on the theft of Laban's idols by Jacob and Rachel. The paper shows that possession of these entitled one to a son's share in the father's inheritance. The more

we can understand the Bible, the easier will it be for us to believe that it is all that it claims to be, and much more.

Group Captain P. J. WISEMAN, R.A.F., wrote: I regret my inability to be present when Sir Frederic Kenyon read his valuable paper. Our thanks are due to him for his clear statement that the truth of the Bible is not dependent upon archæological discoveries. In it he wisely insists that we should use the results of archæological research in a scientific, and not in a partisan way. His reminder that we should differentiate between a discovery that *proves* the accuracy of the Bible and one that *illustrates* it is timely.

I submit that we must read both the Old Testament and the Ras Shamra and Mari tablets in a realistic way. I say this because obscure details in these tablets have been used (both by "destructive critics" and those who seek to defend the Scriptures) by the one to impugn and the other to verify the Old Testament narrative in an unfair way. Both have snatched at a resemblance between words which are common to the tablets and the Bible, in order to show that the Bible must be right or wrong on some particular matter. For instance, on one of the tablets (Virolleaud, Un Poème Phénicien De Ras Shamra, I, line 8) the words "*ab šnm*," "the father of years," appear. Notwithstanding the polytheism which saturates these tablets, where none of the gods stand alone, this "*ab šnm*" is compared with the passage in Isaiah ix, 6, "the everlasting Father." Another instance may be cited. One of the goddesses mentioned in these tablets is named "*adm*": attempts have been made to make this goddess and Adam one and the same!

In the religious realm the Ras Shamra tablets have provided us with much material for comparison. It has shown how polytheistic and mythological were the beliefs of people near Canaan in the period 1500 B.C. They tell us of more than 50 gods and goddesses. We read how in some instances they hate and maliciously scheme to destroy each other. In this they are similar to the Mesopotamian pantheon.

One other contrast should be mentioned. The Ras Shamra tablets give their version regarding the *birth* of these gods and goddesses—a sharp contrast to the lofty monotheism of the earliest narratives of the Bible.

The discovery of these tablets has been of considerable linguistic value, in that many of them, though in cuneiform, use an alphabet. In many respects the language closely resembles Biblical Hebrew.

For this reason I welcome Sir Frederic Kenyon's wise restraint and warnings. We should be reluctant to make hasty identifications. It may result in dragging down the Old Testament narratives to the level of these mythological and polytheistic poems.

NORMAN S. DENHAM, D.Litt., said: We have to thank Sir Frederic Kenyon for a thoughtful Paper, one of several recent contributions to our Society which should give hesitance to those who go out of their way to adversely pre-judge the "ancient things" of the Bible.

It would be of interest to know the standard of comparison by which the Kirkuk-Nuzi records may be dated at about the middle of the second millenium B.C. Professor Garstang's date for the Exodus, 1447 B.C., does not appear to be based on any appraisal of subsequent chronological problems which affect precision (*cf.* his *Joshua-Judges*, p. 344).

The determination of the period specified in 1 Kings vi, 1 (*i.e.*, whether the 480th year "Anno Dei" reckoning must be increased by 114 years, as Anstey claims, to agree with Acts xiii) and the true epoch and scale of the 70 *Weeks* of Daniel ix (*i.e.*, whether the sevens are 70 *Sabbatic* sevens of calendar years dating from the Decree of Cyrus) would affect considerably the schemes adopted by such authorities as Sir Flinders Petrie and Sir Charles Marston. Unfortunately, few students give adequate attention to these basic data.

I am therefore interested in enquiring if the sequence of *Jubilee* years known to the Hurrians was every 49 or every 50 years. The authoritative epoch for this sequence, as far as the Jews were concerned, is in Lev. xxv, 2—at *The Entry* into Canaan. The instructions show that the Jubilee fell in the 50th year ordinal, but 49th year cardinal—the Jews, by their system of inclusive reckoning, counting the period from Jubilee to Jubilee. The Hebrew Jubilee, therefore, fell every 49 years. Taking the Entry as B.C. 1493, in close but not absolute agreement with Martin Anstey's scheme, the first Sabbatic year fell in B.C. 1487 and the first Jubilee in B.C. 1445.

Remembering that every seventh Sabbatic year coincided with the Jubilee year, the year of the Baptism, A.D. 26, was the 31st Jubilee.

A late member of this Society, Lieut.-Colonel G. Mackinlay, has clearly demonstrated that A.D. 26 was Sabbatic, while another member, Mr. William Edwards, stated at a meeting on January 7th, 1929, that whenever the Jew hears the words "acceptable year" read in the Synagogue, he understands by them a Jubilee year. When our Lord, therefore, read from the Lectionary in the Synagogue at Nazareth in A.D. 26, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears," he was reading from that solitary prophecy in Isaiah lxi, which foretells the coming of a unique and special Jubilee—of the One Who was anointed to fulfil at that time that very prophecy.

If Anstey's scheme were amended in one or two essential items, we should have a standard scheme of chronology as the necessary bench mark, or background, against which could be placed the sundry archæological, literary and earthenware remains which are so frequently brought to light, and compared with vague and varying schemes now current.

We should find that more probably the Hurrians borrowed their Jubilee observance from the Hebrews, than that the opposite took place. I would suggest that the series of Sabbatic and Jubilee years, of which precise and numerous historic records exist, coupled with the frequent references to the three-year tithing sequence (Gen. iv, 3; Deut. xxvi, 12; Amos iv, 4), would constitute a scientific basis for forming a standard scheme of chronology, which is the prime essential for all true history.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I have nothing to add, since those who have commented on my paper have expressed general agreement with it.

I am sorry that I cannot answer Dr. Denham's question with regard to the Hurrian year of Jubilee. Owing to the closing or dispersal of the libraries I have been accustomed to use, I cannot now lay hands on the article on which my statement was based. If I should be able to find it, I will communicate with him direct.