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MODERN DISCOVERIES AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

BY THE REV.

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MODERN DISCOVERIES AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

THE nineteenth century was an age in which great strides were made in practical discoveries and in their adaptation to the needs of daily life. It has, in fact, been suggested that just as we speak of "the Stone Age," when we wish to describe a distant period in the past, so in the far future men will look back on our own day and speak of it as "the age of the steam engine." But while men were making these great discoveries in practical matters, the theory which underlies them was not being neglected, and the past century, regarded from another point of view, might quite well be described as "the age of natural science." The truth of the matter is that we live in one of the great ages of enlightenment, at a time when men's minds are pushing out in all directions in the search after knowledge of almost every kind. Amongst the searchers are some who find their steps drawn to the almost forgotten mines of the past; they desire to learn from the experience of those who have gone before; but in doing so they cannot ignore the lessons which they have learned in

the present, and cannot avoid testing the past by the standard of their own times. Hence there has arisen a new school of historians working with different methods and bringing to the service of their art all that science can teach them.

I. HISTORICAL CRITICISM AND THE BIBLE.

The new methods, both of writing history and of testing such history as had already been written, have been applied on all sides to the records of the past; naturally enough, the writings collected in what we call the Bible have not been exempted from this general review, and, like every other ancient record of any importance, they have been submitted to a criticism which in some cases, at any rate, must be ranked as distinctly hostile.

The application of critical methods to the Biblical narratives caused in many minds, especially in the last half of the nineteenth century, a feeling of alarm which at times became one of sheer panic. There seemed to be something profane in attempting to "treat the Bible like any other book"—just as at the close of the Middle Ages men attacked the great scholar Erasmus because, as they said, by correcting errors which had arisen in the New Testament, he made the Holy Ghost conform to the rules of grammar—and the results which certain scholars claimed to have reached by

such a treatment did not tend towards the reassurance of the faithful.

There was much to excuse this attitude of mind; but it was soon perceived that religion had nothing to fear from a reverent and careful criticism even though it were applied to the sacred narrative itself, and that the new methods and the new knowledge properly understood only added to the wonders of God's revelation.

In all ages Christian people have been faced by the same problem—the combining of new knowledge with the old. The policy of rejecting what is new because at first sight it seems to conflict with the old, is surely a lack of trust in our Lord as the Truth. The Christian must welcome the discoveries of the scientist and the student with sympathy and interest, knowing that God reveals Himself in many ways, both in nature and in history. In fact, it is surely no exaggeration to say that all history is the record of God's dealing with His people, and that it is from these dealings that we learn to know Him; the Bible itself, regarded from one point of view only, is the record of the divine revelation rather than the revelation itself. Though such a way of regarding it by no means exhausts its significance, since it is the unique record of a unique revelation, yet it enables us to receive with gratitude any fresh discoveries which make its message clearer or which explain or supplement its statements.

The purpose of the present essay is to give a

brief account of some of the various discoveries of ancient monuments and inscriptions made in recent years, and to estimate their value as throwing light on that part of the Bible which we call the Old Testament. By many people such discoveries are held to be most valuable when they confirm statements made in the Bible: a more faithful attitude of mind is to find the most value in those which give us additional information, even though they involve at times a very material alteration in our conception of the history of the Hebrew people.

II. THE READING OF THE INSCRIPTIONS.¹

The majority of the inscriptions are in what is known as cuneiform writing, and come from Babylonian or Assyrian sources. The appearance of this kind of writing, sometimes called arrow-head, with its groups of wedge-shaped characters, will be familiar to those who have been to any large public museum. The story of the discovery of the meaning of the signs and of the language which they represent is one of the most fascinating pages in the history of human endeavour; it tells how scholar after scholar laboured, each handing on to his successors a little more knowledge, until in the present day the majority of inscriptions, if they are undamaged, can be read as certainly by experts

¹ A fuller account of the subject will be found in Professor Sayce's interesting book, *The Archaeology of the Cuneiform Inscriptions* (S.P.C.K.).

as the ordinary person can read his newspaper. In the case of the Egyptian inscriptions, also familiar from public museums, some clue can be found to the meaning of the signs from the fact that they are tiny pictures and represent various objects which can easily be recognised; no such help can be gained from the cuneiform characters, which have lost any resemblance which they may once have had to actual objects and have become, like the letters of our own alphabet, merely conventional signs.

Before the middle of the eighteenth century very little was known in Europe about these inscriptions beyond the reports and rough sketches of a few travellers. In 1767 a Dane named Niebuhr (father of the famous historian) came back from the East bringing with him fairly complete and accurate copies of certain inscriptions at Persepolis, the capital of ancient Persia. A careful examination of these copies showed that they included three distinct types of writing; these were presumed to represent three different languages. The first step towards the reading of the inscriptions was made by another Dane, Bishop Münter, who came to the conclusion that an oblique wedge which occurred very frequently was used to divide one word from another. He also made the suggestion that a certain word which occurred near the beginning of each inscription meant "king." The next step was taken by Grotefend, a German schoolmaster, who showed that the words which came

after "king" could be read as Darius and Xerxes, names of ancient Persian monarchs. A much bigger advance followed on this discovery, and the credit of it belongs to a young British officer, Major Rawlinson, who was a member of a British Mission to Persia. He succeeded in making out several proper names and thus provided himself with a working alphabet. Although Rawlinson was cut off from the few European scholars who were engaged in the work of translation, yet his situation gave him a great advantage over them by reason of the much greater amount of material to which he had access; and it was not long before he had made a copy of the inscription on the famous rock of Behistun. This inscription, the longest yet attempted, was copied at the cost of much labour and even risk of life, for Rawlinson had to be lowered over the edge of the cliff in a basket in order to examine doubtful characters. The completed copy with notes and analysis did not appear for some time, but on its publication the task of deciphering the first of the three forms of writing was practically completed through the extra material which it supplied. There still remained two other types of inscription to master, and these proved an even harder task. In the Persian writing each sign roughly speaking represented a letter, and the words, as we have already seen, were divided the one from the other; but these helps to translation were absent from the third species of writing, which,

on account of the resemblance of its characters to those on the bricks and seal-cylinders found at Babylon, was called the Babylonian or Assyrian. The process of decipherment, however, followed along much the same lines as those described above; first a clue was obtained to the proper names, and gradual progress was made from them. But it was not until a very much larger stock of inscriptions for comparison, including grammars and dictionaries of the language itself, had been provided by the excavations at Nineveh that a real advance was made. It was then found that the Assyrian language was closely akin to the Hebrew. This discovery was received with some scepticism by Orientalists, and their doubts as to the value of the labours of Assyriologists were still further strengthened by the announcement that behind the Babylonian civilization lay a much older one, and one which was not even Semitic or Aryan, but belonged to a race closely akin to the Turks and Finns. The amazement and incredulity of scholars is not to be wondered at; for, to quote Professor Sayce, "the learned world was comfortably convinced that none but a Semitic or Aryan people could have been the originators of civilization, and to assert that the Semites had borrowed their culture from a race which seemed to have affinities with Mongols or Tartars was an outrage on established prejudices." But such was the case, and further

materials coming to light, the correctness of the early discoveries was established. This new race is generally known as the Sumerian, and its language survived in Babylonian legal and religious phraseology long after the people themselves had been absorbed by their conquerors.

Such in outline is the history of the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions—inscriptions which form the most considerable part of the material illustrating the background of the Old Testament. Let us now look at some of the most important of the discoveries not only of cuneiform inscriptions, but also of other material which have been of service to the same end.

III. ACCOUNT OF SOME IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES.

These discoveries might be considered according to the order in time of their being found, the lands from which they come, or the sequence of the events which they illustrate as they appear in the Old Testament; the last order is that which I propose to follow.

(a) *The Creation and Deluge Tablets.*—In the great library of Assurbanipal, discovered on the site of ancient Nineveh, there were found a number of tablets containing an account of the origin of the world and of the destruction by a flood of the greater part of mankind, in a form which is evidently closely related to the similar

stories contained in the early chapters of the Book of Genesis. In regard to the resemblance between the two series of creation narratives, Driver in his Commentary on *Genesis* ("Westminster Commentaries," pp. 30 ff.), writes as follows: "The outline, or general course of events, is the same. . . . There are in both the same abyss of waters at the beginning, denoted by almost the same word, the separation of this abyss afterwards into an upper and lower ocean, the formation of heavenly bodies and their appointment as measures of time, and the creation of man." So too in the Deluge story the resemblances between the Babylonian story and the Hebrew are very marked; the building of a great ship, the pitching of its sides, the grounding on a mountain, the sending forth of the dove and the raven (in the Babylonian narrative a swallow also), the sacrifice on the safe landing; these and other similar points of agreement can hardly be mere coincidences. The simplest explanation would seem to be the conclusion that in some way or other these stories came to the Hebrew writer from a Babylonian source. "Nor," to continue the quotation from Dr. Driver, "ought such a conclusion to surprise us. The Biblical historians make no claim to have derived their information from a supernatural source; their materials, it is plain (*cf.* Luke i. 1-4), were obtained by them from the best human sources available; the function of inspiration was to

guide them in the disposal and arrangement of these materials, and in the use to which they applied them. And so . . . the author has utilized elements derived ultimately from a heathen source, and made them the vehicle of profound religious teaching." Such is the explanation which has found acceptance with practically all scholars of recent times. But we must not forget to realize that though the resemblance between the two series of narratives is very striking in regard to the outward events and incidents, the religious ideas underlying them are markedly different. In the Babylonian account we have the description of a number of gods disagreeing amongst themselves, in the Hebrew account one supreme and only God; in the one case the gods themselves are created, in the other God exists before all things. Before leaving the account of the Creation and the Deluge, it is perhaps only right to state the possible view that the Hebrew version of the story represents the original and primitive account and that the Babylonian is a degraded version of it; this is a view which is held by a few scholars as an alternative to that more widely accepted one which sees in the Babylonian the original account, in the Hebrew a later and purified form.

(b) *The Code of Hammurabi*.—In the middle chapters of Genesis we read of the relations which Abraham had with the various peoples around him, and our curiosity is aroused as to

the conditions under which the lives of the early fathers of the Hebrew race were passed. The discovery at the Acropolis of Susa, late in 1901, by M. de Morgan of the collection of laws known as the Code of Hammurabi has provided some interesting material for satisfying this curiosity; for Hammurabi himself was quite probably a contemporary of Abraham, and some scholars would go so far as to identify him with the Amraphel of Gen. xiv. The title of the Code is as follows: "Laws of righteousness which Hammurabi, the mighty and just king, has established for the benefit of the weak and oppressed, the widows and orphans." The Code was given to Hammurabi by Shemesh, the sun-god, who was also the god of law, and a representation of him with the king standing before him formed the upper part of the inscription which contained the laws (see Dr. Stanley Cook's *The Laws of Moses and the Code of Hammurabi*, pp. 4 ff. for a full description). This code of laws is concerned entirely with what we should now call civil and criminal law; unlike the Pentateuch, it does not contain regulations for the ritual or ceremonial of religion.¹ The variety of cases provided for is much greater than in the Mosaic Code, but where they deal with the same matters there is an extraordinary similarity in their ordinances, especially in

¹ Adopting the symbolism of modern critics, it has parallels with JE, but not with the later priestly code known as P.

phraseology, and also an extraordinary difference, especially in detail. An example of this agreement and difference may be found by comparing section 117 of the Code with Exod. xxi. 2. The Babylonian law provides that the wife, son, or daughter sold by a man in satisfaction for a debt "for three years they shall work . . . in the fourth year they shall be free"; the Hebrew law provides in the case of a native slave "for six years he shall serve; in the seventh he shall go out free." In the one case the slave is a man, in the other his relations; in the one case the term of service is three, in the other six years. In spite of the many agreements between them, it does not seem probable that the Hebrew is directly borrowed from the older Code. Much of the resemblance can be explained by supposing that both sets of laws include a large mass of ancient Semitic custom; further common matter may have got into the Mosaic system through the natives of Canaan, who, like so many other people of the ancient world, were deeply affected by Babylonian influences.

(c) *Tel-el-Amarna Tablets*.—The widespread influence of Babylonian culture to which reference has just been made finds further illustration in the *Tel-el-Amarna tablets*. The discovery of these tablets brought us into touch with one of the most interesting personalities of ancient times; their contents give us a picture unique in value of the conditions of Palestine shortly before the Israelites made their entry

into it. *Tel-el-Amarna*, as it is now called, is the site of a ruined palace and city situated in Upper Egypt, and the tablets there discovered, some three hundred in number, are the remains of the state archives of an Egyptian king; they are written, however, not in Egyptian characters but in cuneiform, and their language is Babylonian. This city and palace rose, to use the words of Professor Sayce, "like the palace of Aladdin out of the desert sands into gorgeous magnificence for a short thirty years and then perished utterly." The builder whose efforts were followed by such speedy decay was the Pharaoh known as Amen-ophis IV. His father, breaking the rule of the royal house, had married a foreigner, and it was probably from his Asiatic mother that the young prince obtained those unorthodox ideas which were to work a deep though transitory reformation in Egyptian religious and national life, and which earned for their propagator the title of the "Heretic King." Six years after succeeding to the throne Amen-ophis began to spread the worship of a new deity, Aten, or the Solar Disc, who corresponded to the Semitic Baal, to whom hymns of great beauty were composed and have come down to us. This god he intended to take the place of the pantheon of his native land, and to carry out more effectually his reformation the king determined to transfer the seat of power and the headquarters of religion to a new capital, which should have no connection with

the superstitions of the older gods. The influence of the dominant priesthood of Amen was thus undermined—perhaps they had opposed the succession of the son of a foreigner to the throne of Egypt—and the small village of Tel-el-Amarna became a flourishing and magnificent capital. It was, however, but a transient greatness, as we have already seen, for no sooner was Amen-ophis dead than the city was deserted, the new religion abandoned, and a return made to Thebes and the worship of the older gods. This speedy and complete desertion of Tel-el-Amarna has proved of great advantage to the excavator. Instead of having to sink shafts through the ruins of several layers of towns, as in the case of many sites—the ancient people, be it remembered, built one city on the levelled ruins of its predecessor—he has only to remove the surface rubbish in order to find at once the buildings for which he is in search.

The tablets themselves consist of letters received by Amen-ophis and his father from a numerous and very varied series of correspondents. Included amongst them are kings of Babylon and of the Hittites, the governors of dependencies, Arab sheiks, and even a lady, who shows a very modern kind of interest in high politics. Our respect for the culture and civilization of the ancient world cannot but be vastly increased by even a slight perusal of these most interesting epistles; for the mention in them of quite trivial affairs makes it evident

that communication was as easy and as regular amongst them as it was in the modern world in the middle of the last century before the invention of the telegraph and the increased use of the steam-engine. For the messengers, however, the matter was not quite so simple as for the correspondents, and it would not take any great amount of imagination to picture to ourselves the bearers of some of these weighty missives in danger of sinking under the burden of the affairs of Babylon in a literal and not a metaphorical sense; the return journey must have been an agreeable relief, for the Pharaoh might make his reply on papyrus instead of on clay.

The histories of the kings of Judah and Israel have made us acquainted with the importance of matrimonial as a seal for political alliances. Many of the letters in this collection are concerned with this delicate but necessary subject, for however full the harem of Pharaoh might be, room could always be found for the daughter or sister of some semi-independent ruler, whose allegiance to his overlord would thus be more securely guaranteed. The letters, naturally enough, are full of the usual exaggerated expressions of respect, the use of which is still one of the dominant notes of Oriental courtesy; the governors address Pharaoh as “their Lord, their god, their sun”—and meanwhile, as likely as not, they were entering into an understanding with some band of Hittite invaders. The Pharaoh himself was, we may be sure, not behindhand

with his compliments, and in his case also they did not mean very much; for instance, he writes to his *brother*, the King of Babylon, who had asked for a bride from the Egyptian royal house, that "no Egyptian lady has ever been given to a foreign vassal."

These interesting and amusing sidelights on the life of the ancient world, much as they may be of value to the archæologist and the general student, are not to be compared with the immense service which these letters have rendered to Biblical scholarship by the fresh light which they throw upon the conditions of Canaan immediately before the Hebrew invasion.

Anyone who is in any way familiar with the history of the Middle Ages can hardly fail to be struck, on looking through these letters, by the remarkable similarity which exists between the state of Canaan in the fourteenth century B.C. and that of Italy in the fourteenth century A.D. In each case the country was under the nominal rule of an absent suzerain, whilst the actual power was in the hands of a number of petty despots or municipalities who were ready to seize every opportunity of benefiting themselves at the expense of their neighbours; in further resemblance the whole land was overrun by bands of foreign mercenaries who were as willing to serve a city whilst its money lasted as to turn and join its enemies in sacking it when it was no longer able to hire them. The Pharaoh, like some of the Emperors, cared little for these

things; so long as his tribute was duly collected and no great outrage against Egyptian rule was committed, the slaughter of a few Canaanites was a matter of little consequence. Some authorities accuse Amen-ophis of keeping back troops which were sorely needed in Palestine in order to advance his religious reforms at home; but the accounts of his reign which have come down to us were written by his enemies, the priests, and so are prejudiced; Professor Maspero states quite definitely that under his rule "the prestige of Egypt suffered neither in Ethiopia nor in Syria."

The Canaanite cities, like those of Italy, were very wealthy, and the life of their citizens must have been exceedingly luxurious; we read in inscriptions of their chariots of silver and gold; and many gold and silver articles, inlaid tables, and other valuables are stated to have been taken by the Egyptians as spoil. It is quite possible that the Italian despots of the Middle Ages, who were famous as patrons of the fine arts, had their prototypes amongst the petty kings and governors of Canaan.

One of the most interesting of these semi-independent local governors was Abdi-Khiba of Jerusalem. This personage had quarrelled with his mercenaries, and they had transferred their services to his rivals; the result was that Abdi-Khiba found himself in difficulty. His numerous letters to the Pharaoh do not seem to have met with much response, for the Egyptians were

probably just as willing to have a mercenary chief as ruler of Jerusalem as a Canaanite prince. In addition, there seems to have been some considerable doubt about Abdi-Khiba's own loyalty. In the following letter he is defending himself against some charge of trying to become entirely independent :

“To the king, my lord, my sun: thus *speaks* Abdi-Khiba thy servant. At the feet of the king, my lord, seven times and seven times, have I fallen. Behold, the king, my lord, has put his name upon the East and upon the West. It is slander, which they have heaped up against me. Behold I am not a prince, I am an officer of the king, behold I am a shepherd of the king, I am one who brings tribute to the king. Neither my father nor my mother, but the strong arm of the king established me in the house of my father.”

Another of his letters contains a very touching postscript:

“To the scribe of the king says Abdi-Khiba thy servant. At your feet I fall. Bring these words clearly before the king, my lord; I am thy servant and thy son.”

This postscript was doubtless accompanied by some more substantial expression of the writer's regard. Of the ultimate fate of Abdi-Khiba we have no information; one of his last letters is sufficiently gloomy:

“The king no longer has any territory, the Khabiri have wasted all the lands of the king. If the royal troops come this year the country will remain my lord the king's, but if no troops come the territory of the king, my lord, is lost.”

Thus he passes from the stage of history.

(d) *The Moabite Stone*.—One very remarkable fact which should not be forgotten in connection with the Old Testament and the discovery of ancient remains is that hitherto no inscription in the language of the Hebrews themselves has been discovered beyond one of a few lines at Siloam. The nearest approach to a Hebrew inscription is the Moabite Stone, which was written in Phœnician characters. This stone, or rather a squeeze from it, is now in the Louvre at Paris, where it was taken after being found in the ruins of Dibon in 1868.¹ It contains an account by Mesha, King of Moab, of his relations with Israel, and the language used reminds us very strongly of certain passages in the historical books of the Old Testament. Dr. Driver considers that this inscription “comes nearer to the Old Testament and illustrates it more directly than any other inscription hitherto found.” One or two passages from Driver's translation may be of interest:

¹ See the account of the discovery and destruction of the original in Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments* (S.P.C.K.), pp. 364 ff.

“Omri king of Israel afflicted Moab for many days, because Chemosh was angry with his land. And his son succeeded him ; and he also said, I will afflict Moab. In my days said he this ; but I saw my pleasure on him, and on his house, and Israel perished with an everlasting destruction. . . . And Chemosh said to me, Go, take Nebo against Israel. And I went by night, and fought against it from the break of dawn until noon. And I took it, and slew the whole of it, 7,000 men and male sojourners, and women and female slaves : for I had devoted it to Ashtor-Chemosh. And the king of Israel had built Yahaz, and abode in it while he fought with me. But Chemosh drave him out from before me.”

(e) *The Black Obelisk of Shalmanesar II.*—One of the first cuneiform inscriptions to be read was that on what is known as the Black Obelisk of Shalmanesar II., the original of which is now in the British Museum, and copies of it are to be found in many local collections. On it are represented various subject races bringing their tribute to the Assyrian king, and amongst the tribute-bearers are the servants of Jehu, King of Israel. The superscription over them runs as follows :

“Tribute of Jehu, of the house of Omri : silver, gold, a golden bowl, a golden ladle, golden goblets, golden pitchers, lead, a staff for the hand of the king, bdellium I received.”

It should be noticed that though Jehu was not a member of the dynasty of Omri—indeed he brought that dynasty to an end by slaying Joram (2 Kings ix.)—yet he is described as such in the inscription. The reason for this is that from the Assyrian point of view Omri had been a monarch of great importance ; since his importance, however, was secular and political and not religious or ecclesiastical, the Old Testament writers pass him by with but a brief mention. It should never be forgotten that the authors of Kings and other similar books were *prophets* and not *historians* ; they were concerned primarily, if not exclusively, with God’s dealings with His people.

(f) *Sennacherib’s Invasion of Palestine.*—Another interesting inscription contains Sennacherib’s own account of his invasion of Palestine in the reign of Hezekiah, King of Judah. He describes how he shut up that monarch in Jerusalem “like a bird in a cage,” but he says nothing of the final disaster which befell the Assyrian army a little later, a disaster which compelled them to retreat without seriously threatening Jerusalem. Modern nations are by no means original in passing over the reverses which they may sustain.

IV. THE EFFECT OF MODERN DISCOVERIES.

Before considering the great services which have been rendered by the inscriptions to the understanding of the Old Testament, it will be

well to say something in regard to their value as evidence. Many people imagine that because these records are graven in stone, or moulded in clay, presumably by the hands of contemporaries, we have in them authorities which cannot be disputed. In the case of the books of the Old Testament, written as they were by many writers and on perishable materials, collected and arranged by many editors, and copied by many different scribes, there is room for a good deal of error to have arisen, and indeed, as is well known, not a few passages in the Old Testament are so corrupt that it is impossible to regain their meaning. It might be thought that we should be free from similar difficulties in connection with the monuments, yet such is by no means the case. In the first place, it must be remembered that many of them are in an imperfect condition through the ravages of time and the destructive spirit of man, though fortunately inscriptions exist sometimes in several copies which supplement each other's defects; but even here fresh difficulties arise, for copies of the same inscription do not always agree, and mistakes and differences of reading exist between them just as in the case of the manuscripts of the Bible. Again, it is not always possible to trust the good faith of those who made the inscriptions; in erecting monuments to their own glory they not seldom distorted facts by way both of exaggerating their performances and also of forgetting their failures. Later monarchs would

sometimes substitute their own names in a monument from which they had erased that of a predecessor; Rameses II. of Egypt is often accused of this practice. Scribes also made it their business to glorify their patrons and those from whom they were supposed to be descended; sometimes they would flatter the reigning monarch by connecting him with some great national hero of the past, just as the Roman poet Virgil derived the descent of Augustus and his house from the Trojan Æneas. But when allowance has been made for these defects, there still remains much for which the student of the Old Testament can be very grateful.

First of all, we have an assured basis for calculating the dates of events. The Biblical chronology was not very exact or careful, and in the opinion of so conservative a critic as Professor Sayce it must give way to the more accurate and careful lists of the Assyrians (see *The Higher Criticism and the Monuments*, pp. 318 and 406; and for lists of dates Rogers's *Cuneiform Parallels to O. T.*, pp. 199 ff.).

Then, again, a comparison between the Biblical records and the monuments tells us that the former are in the main historic, but that we must not expect accuracy of detail "nor apply to them a different standard from that which we apply to the earlier records of Greece or Rome" (Sayce).¹

¹ The compiler of the Books of Chronicles ought, perhaps, to be excluded from this generalization, for "archæ-

Again, places and people mentioned in the Bible and not elsewhere have been discovered in the inscriptions. A well-known instance is that of Sargon, who appears in Isa. xx. 1 as King of Assyria, but who was unknown in ancient writings until the unearthing of his actual palace. The insight of critics such as Eichhorn, Gesenius, and Ewald had already anticipated the discovery and had assigned to him a place between Shalmanesar and Sennacherib; he was, as a matter of fact, the father of the latter.

In the department of philology or the study of languages the student is greatly indebted to the archæologist. The Hebrew language is nearly related to Assyrian and still more to that of the Moabite Stone referred to above. From this likeness much information has been gained as to the meaning of Hebrew words and the usages of Hebrew grammar. If we could imagine in the far distant future all European languages to have perished except say French, the discovery of Latin would throw a great deal of light on the meaning of French; such was the service rendered to the study of Hebrew

ology makes it clear that his statements are not always exact. We cannot follow him with the same confidence as that with which we should follow the author of the Books of Kings. His use of the documents which lay before him was uncritical, the inferences he drew from his materials were not always sound, and he makes them subserve the theory on which his work is based" (Sayce, *op. cit.*, p. 462).

(though the details of the parallel must not be pressed) by the reading of the inscriptions.

The effect as a whole of the discoveries of the archæologist has been to end the isolation of the people of Israel, and to place them in the stream of world-history; in race, in language, and in religion they were not so distinct from their neighbours as a partial survey of their records had led men to suppose.

In the introduction to this essay I suggested that the most valuable discoveries were not those which confirmed statements in the Bible but those which supplemented them; and, further, that in some points we are compelled to alter very materially our conception of the history of the Jewish people. I now propose to sum up very briefly the alterations which seem to be required as a consequence of the discoveries, some of which I have described.

Before the adoption of more scientific methods the prevailing idea of Hebrew history was somewhat as follows: Abraham was called by God to leave his home and kinsfolk, that he might become the founder of a new race—a race whose members were to be the special objects of the divine favour. As Abraham's descendants grew from a family and became a tribe, and from a tribe a nation, they were kept secure from any contamination which might have arisen from mixing with other nations. After a period of captivity in Egypt the people wandered in the wilderness, and at the beginning of their wander-

ings received from their leader Moses a complete system of laws and ritual dictated to him by God Himself and delivered to the accompaniment of various awe-inspiring phenomena. After receiving their law and being detained in the wilderness for some forty years, the Hebrews crossed the Jordan and fell upon the terror-stricken inhabitants of Canaan, quickly making themselves masters of the country. During the brief progress of the conquest they succeeded in maintaining their own exclusive national spirit, never mixing with the small remnant of Canaanites who had escaped the general slaughter; neither did they owe anything to them in the way of civilization or religion. In fact, the Jews were looked upon as being equal if not superior to a modern nation in ethics, religion, and civilization, though few people probably went to the length of the German painter who armed them with repeating rifles. One great means of maintaining this separation from their neighbours was supposed to be their language, the original tongue revealed by God to man, which they alone had preserved. Their religion and customs, being entirely different to those of their neighbours, were also a means of separation.

After settling in their new possessions, the Israelites, in spite of the divine disapproval, made for themselves a king; but after a short time their unity was broken by the successful revolt of the ten northern tribes, who elected Jeroboam to be their first ruler. Fearing that

the religious feeling of his subjects would still look towards the temple at Jerusalem and thus tend to draw them back to their old allegiance, the new king committed the unpardonable crime of building altars to Jehovah in his own northern territory. The two kingdoms went on side by side, sometimes in friendly relationship but often in open hostility, until the sins of the ten tribes demanded their destruction. The southern kingdom was left for another century and a half, when it too went into captivity.

The above summary is based on a partial and one-sided study of the Old Testament, a study which ignores much that is actually stated in it. When we allow for the prejudices of the Old Testament writers, we can see quite clearly that alliances were made with Canaanites and others—the story of Gideon is but one instance of this—and whole tribes of non-Israelites, such as the Calebites and the Kenezites, were incorporated into Judah. From recent research we know that most of the nations who came in contact with the chosen people were nearly related to them, in race, in language, and even in some of their religious ideas. It seems probable, also, that the conquest of Canaan was carried out in part by intermarriage and alliance with the Canaanite possessors of the land.

As regards the language of the Israelites, our old ideas as to its being unique and the original tongue of Eden can no longer be held; as was stated above, the inscriptions have shown its

likeness to Assyrian, and still more to the language of the Moabite Stone.

Though the language of the Israelites was similar to that of Canaan, their civilization was almost certainly much inferior; and the invasion of the desert tribes must have spread terror amongst the decadent inhabitants of the Amorite cities. It is generally held that the Hebrews owed but little to the civilization of Egypt, and the wiping out of the whole generation which had dwelt there, together with the adoption of the nomadic life during the Exodus, must have swept away much of the little which they had borrowed.

On turning to what we call the Law of Moses the question naturally presents itself: How far do the inscriptions confirm the traditional authorship? At first sight they would seem to render probable the production of a complete Code by a leader such as Moses, a similar and much earlier Code having been found, that of Hammurabi, described above. But we must remember that the latter Code was the production of an old-established civilization with the decisions of the past to go upon, whilst the Code of Moses was given to a collection of desert tribes whose entire legal system would consist of a few ancient customs, supplemented as need arose by the decisions of the ruling sheik. It is here, perhaps, that we get the origin of the traditional title. The decisions given by Moses when acting as leader of the Israelite host would

become part of their tradition, and as the work of a man of striking personality, acting amidst critical circumstances, would leave a permanent mark on the national consciousness; when later decisions were added to the Mosaic nucleus it would still retain its original title.

There yet remains to be considered the most important side of Jewish history, and the one for which alone it was written, the religious side. It is now widely held that the religious conceptions of the Jews were aroused and developed in much the same way as those of their neighbours and relations, and indeed of primitive peoples in general. The feature of the Jewish people which distinguished them from the rest, however, was that greater genius or instinct for religious things with which God had endowed some of the higher minds amongst them, in order that they might be the vehicle of His revelation to the whole of mankind. The Jews and their neighbours had many rites and ceremonies in common, but it is a grave mistake to assume that the religious ideas behind them were of necessity the same. In spite of this outward resemblance in forms and ceremonies the ideas of God possessed by the prophets and teachers of Israel became ever purer and higher than those of the surrounding nations. The apparatus, so to speak, of Hebrew religion was largely carried over from ancient Semitic use; some of it, such as the holding of agricultural festivals, was probably borrowed from their Canaanite neighbours; and in addition

other influences, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian, must be allowed for in the developing system of Jewish religious ideas. These influences, according to the high authority of Dr. Driver, although they were real were not extensive, and were for the most part confined to externals.

This essay cannot better be brought to a conclusion than by quoting the same distinguished scholar's brief summing up of the additional information placed at our disposal by the labours of the archæologist.

"Archæology," he says, "demonstrates and shows us more clearly than we could see before that though the religion of Israel was built upon the same material foundation as those of other Semitic peoples, it rose immeasurably above them; it assumed, as it developed, a unique character, and in the hands of its inspired teachers became the expression of great spiritual realities such as has been without parallel in any other nation of the earth" (*Schweich Lectures*, p. 90).

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