

**ARCHAEOLOGY  
AND  
THE BIBLE**

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# ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE

In recent years a lot has been heard from Christian circles on the subject of archaeology and its testimony to the truth of the Bible. The spade of the archaeologist, we are told, is constantly turning up proofs of the authenticity of "God's Word". The sites of ancient towns and villages in Bible lands have been cleared, and events of Bible days have been brought into sharp focus. The very atmosphere of past times has been made to live again.

What lies behind this new-found interest in, this sudden enthusiasm for, archaeological research? Past generations of Christians evinced little interest in the unearthing of ancient ruins. When, in 1804, it was learned that a body styling itself the Palestine Association had carried out desultory investigations into sites which appeared to have biblical associations, the ordinary Christian merely nodded his head. Doubtless these chaps found it exciting to turn up relics of Bible days, to clear long-buried cities and villages mentioned in the Bible, and to find inscriptions confirming biblical accounts of events. But Christians at large already had all the information they required on such subjects; it was contained in God's Holy Word; and it went without saying that any discoveries made by these fossickers would merely confirm what was already known.

But there were persistent and disquieting rumours that not all the discoveries were confirmatory of Holy Writ, and it was felt that research should not be left in the hands of those who were doctrinally "unsound", and in June, 1865, what was described as "a large and distinguished body of men" assembled in Willis's Rooms, London, under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of York. The object of the gathering was to consider the revival of the defunct Palestine Association. After much discussion it was decided to reconstitute this body but to re-name it *The Palestine Exploration Fund*: "A Society for the accurate and systematic investigation of the archaeology, the topography, the geology, the physical geography, the manners and customs, of the Holy Land, for Biblical illustration".

Note well the last three words. To "Christians at large", to whom the Society looked for financial support, they were an assurance that the newly-constituted body was actuated by the "highest" motives; at the same time there was a plain instruction

to the field-workers that they were to concern themselves only with Bible corroboration. That these words were so construed is revealed by the Director of Excavations, Professor R. A. Macalister. In his book *A Century of Excavating in Palestine* he makes it clear that the primary aim of the excavators was to give Christian subscribers the assurance they sought. Scientific considerations were to be a secondary consideration.

The excavators quickly uncovered sites with biblical associations. These discoveries were, of course, headlined in the papers, the readers of which were expected to believe that such discoveries established the truth of the Bible as a whole, including its miracles and its folk-lore.

Said Prof. Macalister (*Director of Excavations for the Palestine Exploration Fund*), "Excavation is a very expensive pursuit, and depends on the support and goodwill of subscribers. It must be confessed that, to the majority of subscribers, pure science, as such, makes but little appeal. If it were advertised that investigation was contemplated in some Palestinian mound which it was as yet impossible to identify with a Biblical site, the public would take the announcement rather coldly. Closed would be the purse-strings that would open to an appeal to examine some place connected with Abraham or with David, even though this might hold out less promise of important results than the other. It is melancholy to have to add that any less legitimate undertaking would be less widely and generously supported than something crudely spectacular, such as an expedition to find the Lost Tribes, or the Ark of the Covenant, or Joseph's coat of many colours."

"In fact," says Mr. W. Mann (*Palestine Exploration and the Bible*) "the explorer found himself confronted with the ultimatum, 'No Bible corroboration, no money'. No wonder that under this pressure they often professed to find corroboration which everyone with the least acquaintance with the subject now knows to be false."

These much-publicised activities of the Palestine Exploration Fund aroused world-wide interest, and other religious and scientific bodies in Britain, France, Germany and America entered the field of archaeological exploration. The most important of these bodies were those headed respectively by Petrie, Garstang, Woolley, and the American archaeologist and Hebraist Dr. William F. Albright, who has a supplement to *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible* entitled *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*.

Another expedition was organised by that zealous bibliolator Sir Charles Marston. Marston induced the wealthy industrialist Sir Henry Wellcome to provide the needed money and, duly

equipped, the expedition set out for Palestine, its main sphere of operations being the ancient city of Lachish.

Needless to say, these excavators found nothing that conflicted with Bible "history". Where archaeological discoveries were found to be discordant with traditional views that was no disproof of the Bible. "God's Word" had been misinterpreted!

In addition to carrying on his own explorations, Marston gave considerable aid to Garstang, whose work on the site of ancient Jericho is prominently featured in all the doughty knight's wearisomely repetitive books. All of Garstang's findings (since shown to be erroneous in almost every particular by Miss Kathleen Kenyon) were accepted without question, an uncritical attitude which led Marston to make statements which have been proved to be without factual basis. Albright refers to him as one "whose untrained enthusiasm led him to misinterpret certain discoveries of Garstang and Starkey". This criticism is perhaps a bit unfair, for in regard to the early chapters of Joshua, Garstang allowed his Christian zeal to outrun scientific caution. In his book, *Joshua, Judges*, he ignored the fact that the Book of Judges makes complete nonsense of the first twelve chapters of Joshua.

In the Frontispiece of his book Garstang presents the picture of a hornet, "a reminder that the hornet was the badge of Thotmes III and his successors." This is linked with the mention of the hornet in *Exod. 23 : 27-30*, *Deut. 1 : 20*, and *Josh. 24 : 12*, and "proves" that Thotmes III was the Pharoah of the Oppression and that the exodus took place in 1447 B.C. On this "proof" Dr. G. H. Richardson comments acidly: "Would it not have been a fairer sign of honesty to tell the readers that this 'hornet' is part of the symbol for 'Kings of the North and South' used by practically all Egyptian kings? If the hornet is the proof of the Pharoah of the Oppression and Exodus, then we have a very wide choice from the First Dynasty on to the Roman occupation of Egypt." He remarks that Garstang ought to have known all this, "for all libraries are open to the public and books on Egypt are common."

It should be added that Garstang's dating of the Exodus and capture of Jericho is disputed by Albright and other archaeologists.

As we should expect, the occurrence of "The Flood" (i.e., the flood as recorded in Genesis) is said by Marston to be proved; and he cites Woolley's discovery that Ur had been inundated. Woolley himself uses misleading language, in that he speaks of "confirmation" of the Noachian deluge. However, he immediately goes on to show that there were at least three inundations, the most extensive of which covered an area of not

more than 400 miles one way and 100 miles the other, whereas the Genesaic story makes the flood universal ("All the high hills, which were under the whole heaven, were covered"), the entire animal and human population of the earth being destroyed except that which entered the ark. What Woolley's discovery did was confirm the view that the Genesaic narrative was derived from Babylonian and Assyrian sources. It is in fact known that originally there were two independent stories which became fused into a single narrative.

On several occasions it has been stated that the relic of "Noah's Ark" had been located on Mt. Ararat. This story was finally "debunked" by a six-man American scientific team which reported that a boat-shaped object found near Mt. Ararat was "not Noah's Ark but a lava-shaped mound" (**Sydney Daily Telegraph**, 11-6-60).

Some apologists for Christianity have fabricated "proofs" of the Bible which were manifestly false, and swiftly exposed. In his book *The Historic Exodus*, C. A. Tofteen "proved" that the biblical Joseph and his prominent status at the Egyptian Court are featured in an inscription of the 19th century B.C. According to Tofteen not only Joseph but his wife Asenath are attested by the inscriptions. This particular falsification was exposed by Stephen L. Caiger (*Bible and Spade*).

Dr. Richardson (*Biblical Archaeology*) tells of one lecturer on biblical archaeology who, during the course of an illustrated lecture, screened what he declared to be a specimen of Moses' handwriting. The specimen, affirmed the lecturer, was taken from a tablet found near Sinai, and gave Moses' own account of his rescue from the Nile!

One very manifest "fake" was that produced by Professor Grimme, of Munich University. Some years previously Sir Flinders Petrie had discovered some rough inscriptions which, as it was impracticable to remove them, had been buried in a secret place after being photographed. Prof. Grimme had procured copies of these photographs, and he came to light with a "translation" of what purported to be the original script. But, as Petrie pointed out, the professor "has been transcribing the flaking and weathering of the stones, seen in the photographs, as being additional signs. Thus he has produced inscriptions which he has interpreted in a most sensational way"! The learned professor discovered that these inscriptions were a graven record of the gratitude of Moses to Pharaoh's daughter for having rescued him from the Nile! Sir Flinders went on to analyse the characters and symbols claimed to have been "deciphered" by the professor

and showed conclusively that only three of the seven so-claimed were really to be credited at all, and the values of even these were dubious.

One comment on the "translation" adduced by Grimme was that of a writer in the *London Punch* who remarked that he had been disappointed in that he had hoped that the problem, which had exercised many minds, would at last be solved, and that we would be told where Moses really was when the light went out!

In *The Idol of Horeb*, Dr. Beke sheds light on the facility with which fake identifications are made. He relates that when he was at Harran he found a well; and he and his wife gave it as their opinion that this was the well "at which the daughter of Bethuel was met by Abraham's steward (Gen. 24 : 10-20)". They made the most minute inquiries for any history, or tradition, attaching to the well, without success. However, the suggestion caught on; the inhabitants of Harran, says Dr. Beke, "appear to have gladly availed themselves of my suggestion; the 'tradition' was immediately set on foot, and we learn from Captain Burton that it has spread to the city of Damascus — and this all within nine years."

Some time ago the archaeologist Father Mader came across stones near which was an altar of ancient times and which still bore traces of charring. He also found a relic of a large tree "which must at one time have stood there". We are given to understand that these relics were associated with the patriarchs.

We are reminded of Mark Twain's trip to the Holy Land, where he was shown the handful of earth out of which God created Adam. It was absolutely certain that it was the identical spot, said the inimitable Mark, "for no one has been able to prove that it wasn't"!

## THE BIBLE AS HISTORY

A popular writer on archaeology is one Vernon Keller, whose contribution to Christian apologetic literature was published some years ago under the title *The Bible as History* and headlined throughout the world. Whatever may be said about ordinary, secular history, Dr. Keller is *quite* sure that history as recorded in the Bible is inviolable. True, we find an anachronism here and a legendary intrusion there; and maybe the Book of Daniel is inaccurate in one or two details; but these are minor blemishes and should not be allowed to dim our appreciation of the Bible as an historical record. The Bible records events, declares Dr.

Keller, "with an accuracy that is nothing less than startling". The traditionalist view has been triumphantly vindicated.

"Critics and sceptics", declare the publishers (Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton), "who have repeatedly asked whether the Bible has an historical basis at all", have effectively been answered by *The Bible as History*. Dr. Keller has demonstrated that as a history book the Bible is "incomparable".

First we have to challenge the statement that "critics and sceptics" have questioned whether the Bible has any real historical basis. The view taken is that there is much in the Bible that is mythical and legendary; but beyond doubt it features much authentic history.

But no assurance of the supernatural character of the Bible can be given, **and it is this assurance that is sought by the ordinary Christian;** and it is sought in vain.

Proof of the reality of the miracles recorded in the Bible Keller does not give. He cites examples of what the "true believer" regards as miracles, but he hastens to assure us that there is no necessity to invoke the supernatural to explain them: all can be accounted for by the operation of natural forces.

Dr. Keller has much to say about the patriarchs, the historicity of whom he regards as proved. He traces the movements of Abraham as recorded in Genesis, and stresses the fact that place-names similar to those mentioned in the Genesiac narrative have been found in ancient inscriptions. By a parity of reasoning it can be argued that Mr. Pickwick actually lived because the places he is said to have visited were real places.

Dr. Keller cites the account of the war of the four kings against the five (Gen. 14). He is quite unaware of the inconsistencies in the narrative, e.g., the mention of Amalekites when no Amalekites existed — if we accept the genealogical detail in Gen. 36 : 12. He refers to the pursuit "unto Dan", oblivious of the fact that the city was not so-named until the time of Joshua.

We are given lengthy details of the excavations at Tel Hariri, which brought to light the statue of Lamgi-Mari, King of Mari; also the monarch's palace and some 25,600 tablets giving details of Lamgi-Mari's reign. Among these tablets are several which make mention of the Benjamites, whom Keller identifies with the Benjamite tribe "known to us from the Bible".

Now this Lamgi-Mari was, it is claimed, a contemporary of Abraham. If, then, these references to Benjamin are authentic, it makes utter nonsense of the patriarchal genealogies. According to these, Benjamin, the eponymous ancestor of the Benjamites,



was the youngest son of Jacob and Rachael. And Jacob was Abraham's **grandson!** That defenders of Christian "truth" should, in support of the Bible, cite inscriptions which completely discredit these Genesaic genealogies, indicates the pass to which Christian apologists have been brought.

### Creation — Out of Nothing!

Keller tries to show that modern science has proved a creation out of nothing. One is reminded of Ingersoll's ironical comment: "regarded as raw material, *nothing* is a failure"!

Keller's object is to render plausible the Genesaic concept of a beginning to the universe, but he never stops to consider what is involved in the idea. If there was a time when there was nothing at all there could have been no creator; there would have been no place for him (or it) to be!

Quoting Professor Delitzsch, Keller declares that all attempts to harmonise the biblical story of Creation with the results of natural science have been useless "and must always be so". But there can be little doubt that modern science holds that the universe is eternal. And the concept of eternity rules out creation.

Of the Genesaic accounts of creation the **Encyclopaedia Britannica** has this to say: "That the records of the prehistoric ages in Gen. 1-9 are at complete variance with modern science and archaeological research is unquestionable". "A perusal of modern attempts to recover historical fact or historical outline from the book will show how very inadequate the material proves to be, and the reconstruction will be found to depend upon an interpretation of the narrative which is often liberal and not rarely precarious, and to imply such reshaping and rewriting of the presumed facts that the cautious reader can place little reliance on them." (10 : 108.)

### Joseph in Egypt

This story seems to have an irresistible attraction for amateur archaeologists. Keller admits that there is no direct evidence to show that Joseph lived in Egypt; but there is "indirect proof". "The biblical description of the historical background is authentic." So is the "historical background" of most fictitious characters. There is, we are told, an ancient waterway in Egypt

known as Joseph's Canal. "People say" that this canal was planned for Joseph." *People say!*

Potiphar, to whom, according to Genesis, Joseph was sold, "is a thoroughly Egyptian name". This, of course, proves that Joseph was sold to Potiphar by the Ishmaelites, as stated in Gen. 39 : 1. But Gen. 37 : 36 states that the lad was sold to the Egyptian vizier by the **Midianites**. There has been a fusion of two accounts; in one account Joseph was cast into a pit, whence he was rescued by passing Midianites, who sold him into Egypt; in the other version he is sold to the Ishmaelites, who sold him to the Egyptians. The amalgamation of the two accounts has been clumsily effected in 37 : 28. Keller's acceptance of one version involves the rejection of the other.

### **The Forty Years' Wandering.**

We have here two entirely different accounts. Keller has made not the slightest attempt to harmonise them; they are in fact utterly irreconcilable. According to one narrative the Israelites, except for a period of one month, ate manna for forty years. This manna is described as **bread**, and was dropped **from heaven!** (Exod. 16 : 4.)

According to the other account the Israelites, on the east side of the Jordan, had ample supplies of food. There was "fine flour", unleavened bread, "lambs without blemish", pigeons, turtle doves, oil, wine and so on (Lev. 6 : 15; 14 : 10ff, 22, etc.).

In Num. 21 : 24 and Deut. 2 : 32 we read that the Israelites captured the cities of Sihon "and possessed his land from Arnon unto Jabbok". The cities of Bashan (60 of them, Deut. 3 : 4) were taken and "utterly destroyed", the cattle — all the spoil, of these cities being taken, (the men, women and children, as usual, being butchered). Encounters with the Amalekites would have brought supplies of food. And the story of the capture of the Midianite livestock, amounting to many thousands of head of cattle and sheep, and implying lush pastures, indicates a glut of foodstuffs (Num. 31). And we are told that the Israelites ate manna (which they loathed — Num. 21 : 5) until the day after they crossed the Jordan (Josh. 5 : 12)!

### **The Conquest of Canaan**

In Chapter 15 of his book Keller takes for granted the historical accuracy of the Conquest as related in the Book of Joshua. In Joshua 10 : 40 and 11 : 23 every inhabitant of the land was exterminated (in the space of 7 years, cp. Deut. 2 : 14

and Josh. 14 : 7-10). An entirely different story is told in the Book of Judges, where we find the two races co-existing for centuries and in fact merging (Jud. 3 : 6).

### **The Story of David.**

In dealing with David, Keller fails to grasp the fact that in the books of Samuel there is a fusion of two traditions. He suggests, however, that "David was not called David at all". It seems that the name was given to him in later days and was derived from the name "davidum", which means "commander", or "general". This seems to be an oblique way of telling us that the early accounts of David's life are legendary, since these bear the name of David.

### **Solomon.**

Next comes the story of Solomon, which Keller admits "sounds like a fairy tale". He nevertheless accepts it as true. He tells of the uncovering by Laud and Gay of a structure containing "single stalls for at least 450 horses" (Solomon is said to have had 1200 horses, by the way) "and sheds for 150 chariots". No hint is given that never yet has there been found any inscription bearing the name of Solomon (or of that of David), and that in fact all the information we have comes from the Bible. The "reasoning" is as follows: **according to the Bible** Solomon had numerous horses; horses need stables to house them; the structures uncovered by Laud and Gay must, therefore, be King Solomon's stables.

This reasoning is typical of Keller's reasoning throughout. He assumes the truth of the biblical narratives, and then looks to archaeology to confirm them. This assuredly is not the method of science. In science one does not start with an assumption and then cast round for facts to fit it; the facts are the primary consideration.

### **Saul's Death.**

On page 181 of his book Keller speaks of "Saul's suicide". But 2 Sam. 1 : 5-10 has it that the king was killed by an Amalekite; while in 21 : 12 he is slain by the Philistines! There are in fact, three conflicting accounts of the death of Saul.

### **Sargon and the Capture of Samaria.**

On page 242 we are told of Sargon's boast of the capture of Samaria. But according to the "incomparable history book" the capture of the city was effected by Shalmanezzer!

## The Babylonian Captivity.

Chapter 28 relates the story of the Babylonian Captivity. Dr. Keller alludes to the denial of scholars like S. A. Cook and C. C. Torrey that any mass deportation from Judah took place; and we are told that "excavations indicate the exact opposite". "The Babylonians permanently (sic) destroyed and depopulated Judah; in brief, so far as archaeology is concerned, they made a clean sweep." Maybe, but that is not "according to Jeremiah", although that prophet was not able to discover more than 4,600 deportees. The "incomparable history book" has it that Nebuchadnezzar carried off more than 10,700 Judeans (2 Kings, 24 : 14-16).

## The Gospels.

That Dr. Keller is heavily biassed in favour of the Bible and his arguments coloured accordingly has been abundantly shown. How strongly this bias operates is indicated in his acceptance of Gospel stories for which there is not a scrap of archaeological or historical evidence. He cites the story of the Flight into Egypt, which comes to us on the authority of Matthew alone. Not only is there no mention of this incident by other N.T. writers; it is excluded by Luke 2 : 22, which states that when Mary's days of purification were over she took her infant to Jerusalem. The story of the flight was invented by Matthew in pretended fulfilment of a prophecy in Hosea 11 : 1, which "prophecy" was not a prophecy at all but an allusion to a past event.

Also accepted "on trust" is the story of the "Massacre of the Innocents", which was another Matthean invention. The other evangelists assuredly would not have omitted to record this atrocity had it occurred; nor would Josephus have done so. The Jewish historian devoted many pages to Herod, whom he hated. He refers to the tyrant's many murders — Keller mentions the fact; but of the massacre of the innocents Josephus has not a word to say.

The story of the "Star of Bethlehem", another Matthean concoction, is solemnly related by Keller as actual fact. This "star", we are informed by Dr. Keller, was "really the conjunction of the planets Mercury, Jupiter and Saturn", which took place in 6 B.C.! Just how the Magi knew that this particular conjunction heralded the birth of Jesus is not explained. Presumably some occult agency operated in lieu of natural forces to arrange that the conjunction should take place at the exact time of the birth of Jesus; or maybe the birth was supernaturally ordained to coincide with that conjunction!

According to the veracious Matthew this "star" guided the Wise Men to Jerusalem, thence to Bethlehem which meant that it had to veer off at an angle! Why it could not have led the Magi direct to Bethlehem we are at a loss to understand. When this erratic star reached Bethlehem, lo, "it came and stood over where the young child was"! Try, reader, to determine the precise house over which a particular star or planet is "standing". It seems that nothing in the Bible is too absurd for Dr. Keller to swallow.

Dr. Keller states that "the description of the trial, sentence and crucifixion in the four gospels has been checked with scientific thoroughness by many scholars" (the scholars are unnamed) "and have been found to be historically reliable accounts even to the last detail". One can imagine Christian readers of Dr. Keller's book citing that pronouncement as authoritative. Yet it is utterly baseless. In the first place the Gospel accounts are contradictory. The Synoptics, e.g., know nothing of the appearance before Annas as mentioned by John; Annas was not the high priest and could have had no authority. Next, the day of crucifixion is differently given in the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel: according to the former the execution took place on Passover Day, whereas the latter has it take place on the day before the Passover. The hour of crucifixion as stated by Mark (and cited by Dr. Keller) differs from that given in John.

In the British Museum is preserved a series of clay tablets dating back to about 1000 B.C. They were unearthed by Dr. Zimmern, and they tell the story of the last days of the Babylonian god Bel in terms which almost exactly parallel the gospel stories of the last days of Jesus. Why is it that no mention of these tablets is made by the man who states that he has "collected all the hitherto scientifically established results of investigations which were to be found in the learned works of Biblical archaeologists"?

There are numerous Bible sites, shown to credulous pilgrims to the "Holy Land", of which Keller makes no mention; e.g., the "actual cave" in which Jesus was born; the Via Dolorosa along which the so-called "Stations of the Cross" are marked by inscribed stones let into the walls. We are shown the "exact spot" where the cross was laid upon Jesus; here the place where he sank under the weight of his burden; here the point where he met his mother. Also shown is a fragment of the "column of scourging". The site of Calvary; "the actual place of crucifixion" is shown. There is the Stone of Unction upon which the body of Jesus was laid when it was anointed by Nicodemus, and so on.

A knowledge of the fact that all these sites and relics have been "debunked" by Dr. Sanday, Dean Stanley and Sir Frederick Treves may account for the silence of Dr. Keller in regard to them. Of the Via Dolorosa, Treves says: "It is a mere fiction of the Christian Church, a land of lies, a path of fraud . . . It is a great commercial asset, however . . . ."

Commenting on such "sacred" places Dr. Macalister says: "The tourist, if he takes the trouble to think at all, finds himself repelled from faith by the nauseating list of contradictory and often impossible identifications of Holy sites that have been pumped into him . . . ."

There is no suggestion that Dr. Keller has been a party to fraud and deception in the compilation of his book. No one who has read *The Bible as History* can fail to be impressed by the author's honesty and sincerity. He really believes what he says. What we find is a readiness to accept, on insufficient evidence, the assurances of excavators who, as Macalister has frankly admitted, commenced work with the express intention of providing "proofs" demanded by those who financed their work.

### CHRISTADELPHIANS ON THE WAR PATH!

The author of a recent Christadelphian pamphlet *The Bible and the Spade*, issues a "challenge." This writer also represents critics as contending that the historical portions of the Bible are "based only on folklore". It cannot be too often emphasised that this statement is completely false.

We are told of the "great mass of evidence that has accumulated over the years" and which "completely" confirms the Scriptures; and we are assured that it is due to lack of space that prevents adequate production of this evidence.

It is reasonable to assume that the writer has put forward the strongest and most convincing evidence he could find in support of his case. One can only comment on the paucity of this evidence.

Special emphasis, as one could expect, is placed upon "the flood", **the** flood, not **a** flood; and we are assured that this flood took place without a "doubt". That there have been many floods has been demonstrated by Sir James Frazer (*Folklore in the Old Testament*), and they relate to many different periods, whereas according to the Bible there was but one flood which overwhelmed the world and destroyed every living thing except the occupants of the ark.

Woolley has already been cited as indicating that there was more than one flood. In his book *Ur of the Chaldees*, Woolley had stated that he found evidence of "the Flood", but, as Prof. G. Ernest Wright (**Biblical Archaeology**) remarks, "Unfortunately, the facts of the situation do not enable the student to become as confident. Woolley seems to have dug some five pits through the early strata of occupation at Ur, but in only two of them did he find deposits of water-borne debris. The logical inference from this is that the flood in question did not cover the whole of Ur, but only part of it. *Furthermore, the site showed no break in occupation as the result of the flood, which we should expect if there had been a major catastrophe.*" (Italics mine, J.B.).

Not a word is said by the author of *The Bible and the Spade* of the fact that the Genesiac narrative embodies two distinct and discrepant accounts.

Next the author, literally and metaphorically, raises a smoke-screen. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is served up to us. We need not doubt that there is an historical basis for the story of a holocaust which destroyed large tracts of territory as the result of an accumulation of gases; but that the story embodies a myth can scarcely be doubted. Says Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible*, the story of the daughters of Lot (Gen. 19:30-38) "is now usually considered to be not history, but a traditional account of the origin of the two nations, Moab and Ammon."

A sub-title of the Christadelphian pamphlet is "Moses Vindicated". Moses, we are told, was at one time a favourite target for critics of the Bible, they having claimed that he could not have written the first five books of the Bible because the art of writing was then unknown.

It happens that the antiquity of writing has been recognised for more than a century. It is known that three languages were spoken — Sumerian, Babylonian and Egyptian — **before the date given for the Babel story**, a fact which is unmentioned by the author of *The Bible and the Spade!*

The author has in fact raised another smoke-screen, for the point at issue is whether Moses did in fact write the entire Pentateuch. And that he could not possibly have done so is proved by the anachronisms with which the Pentateuch abounds. We can cite the Book of Deuteronomy as an outstanding example.

It is clearly indicated that it was written by someone on the Canaanite side of Jordan, which Moses never crossed.\*

\*In the interests of Traditionalism the AV translators altered the phrase "beyond the Jordan" to "this side Jordan". They also changed the tenses in chapter 33 : 19 and 28.

The author of Deuteronomy is the anonymous writer who constantly refers to Moses in the third person. These "third person" passages commence at verses 1-5, and continue at intervals throughout the book — introducing Moses as speaking for himself — to the last chapter, which is all "third person" and which records the death and burial of Moses and states that "no one knows of his sepulchre unto this day".

### **The Hammurabi Code.**

Our Christadelphian author has the temerity to refer his readers to the laws of the Babylonian king Hammurabi. What he omits to tell his readers is that many of these laws are virtually identical with those said to have been promulgated from Sinai by the God of Israel, who was a mere plagiarist. Christadelphians, one would think, would be only too glad to forget Hammurabi and his laws. Incidentally the Hammurabi Code itself was derived from the older code of LIBIT-ISTAR, and this was derived from a still more ancient Sumerian Code.

### **The Cave of Machpelah.**

The story is related of the purchase by Abraham of the cave of Machpelah, in which the patriarch is said to have buried Sarah, his wife. What has not been told is that there are discrepant versions of the purchase of this cave. See Gen. 50 : 13 and Acts 7 : 13-16.

### **Side Issues**

The reader is referred to the Moabite Stone, the Ivory Palace of Ahab, and the Black Obelisk of Assyria — all so many red herrings drawn across the trail. What is wanted is proof that the Bible is an inspired work, and that is not forthcoming.

Incidentally, the monolith of Shalmanezar III mentions a battle about which the Bible is silent, and which was fought at Karkar, near Hamath, on the Euphrates, in the year 853 B.C., and this serves to discredit Ussher's chronology. Among the kings who opposed Shalmanezar were Hadid-idri (the Ben Hadad of the Bible), king of Damascus, and Akhabbu sir-ilai (Ahab king of Israel). On the Black Obelisk of the same Assyrian monarch (mentioned by our Christadelphian author) the submission of "Jehu (Yahua) son of Omri" is engraved. But not a word is said about it by the Book of Kings. We can understand why:



the bloodthirsty Jehu was a chosen agent of God, and the author of Kings preferred to remain discreetly silent about the humiliation of the man who butchered the 70 sons of Ahab.

Sargon is mentioned in Isa. 20 : 1, and according to our Christadelphian author, he is alluded to in 2 Kings, 17 : 5, 6, 24. For some undisclosed reason, as has already been indicated in *The Bible as History* (Keller) no mention is made of the fact that it was Shalmanezar, **not** Sargon, who carried off the Israelites.\*

Much is made of the preservation of Jerusalem's water supply. The story of the tunnel which ran under Jerusalem has oft been told. There is nothing to indicate who put in hand the cutting of the watercourse, but there is not the smallest doubt that it was king Hezekiah, as stated in 2 Chron. 32 : 2-4 and 2 Kings 20 : 20. **But in what way does that fact prove that the shadow of the sundial went back ten-degrees as a guarantee that a fig poultice would cure Hezekiah's boil?** No, our pamphleteer does not **say** that; but there is not the smallest doubt that he wishes us to believe it.

**The Amazing Destruction of Sennacherib's Army** is described for our edification. This, beyond all doubt, was a "miracle". Our author is quite sure of that; for "the angel of the Lord" smote the Assyrian army. But this angel seems to have been more than a little remiss, for Sennacherib had in the meantime demolished 46 walled cities. He also carried off more than 200,000 Jews, a detail which our author omitted to mention. Let us note that the account of the destruction of the Assyrian army as given in 2 Kings 19 : 35 (undoubtedly the result of a plague) states that when the smitten soldiery arose early in the morning, "behold, they were all dead corpses". That, surely, **was** miraculous!

### The Captivity.

Regarding the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, circa 587 B.C. (already alluded to in *The Bible as History*) we are to understand that there is "complete agreement" between the Bible and an inscription by Nebuchadnezzar. But our author has left out two verses (indicated by dots) which state that the Babylonian king carried off some 17,000 Jews, and we would like to know the why and the wherefore of this omission. Can it be that our pamphleteer was aware that Jeremiah had stated that but 4,600 persons were deported? On the face of it it looks as if the verses indicated were intentionally omitted for purposes of harmonisation.

\*It actually was Sargon who carried out the deportation. It is the Bible that is wrong.

## The Book of Daniel.

*Did Belshazzar Exist?* we are asked: and here the author of the pamphlet is more than a little disingenuous. There is no dispute about the existence of Belshazzar, but our pamphleteer has introduced an inscription of the Babylonian king Nabonidus which speaks of his eldest son; and our Christadelphian author knows perfectly well that **according to the Book of Daniel** Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar. Having gained a knowledge of the Nabonidus inscription our pamphleteer would know that Belshazzar was unrelated to Nebuchadnezzar, his father Nabonidus being a usurper and not of royal descent. The writer of the Book of Daniel (circa 165 B.C.) had no knowledge of the events he purported to describe at first hand. He was misled by the prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah, both of whom anticipated that Babylon would be destroyed by the Medes. When these prophets wrote, Media was a mighty empire and it appeared certain that the Medes would be the destroyers of the great Babylon. The rise of Persia was unforeseen.

The Christadelphian writer slipped in a reference to the Medes: they did not come into the picture at all. Let it be made quite clear: it was the Persians under Cyrus' general Gobryas who humbled Babylon.

"Daniel" got his facts very much mixed. He first turned "Darius the Persian" into a Mede, then made him precede Cyrus; whereas he was second in succession to Cyrus (third if we include the usurper Bardiš). And there is not the slightest doubt that Darius was very much a Persian. He proclaimed, proudly, "I am Darius, the Great King, King of Kings, King of Persia . . . ."

The events following the death of Nebuchadnezzar are these: Nebuchadnezzar (really Nebuchadrezzar) was succeeded by his son Evil-merodach (or Avil-Marduk), who reigned two years and was succeeded by his brother Neriglissar, who reigned four years. Neriglissar was followed by Labashi-Marduk, who was toppled from his throne as the result of a palace revolution instigated by Nabonidus, who then held the throne for 17 years. During Nabonidus' absence from Babylon his son, Belshazzar, carried out administrative duties, and in fact was referred to as the king; but at the time of the attack by Gobryas, Nabonidus had resumed his kingly duties, Belshazzar being commander-in-chief of the Babylonian army.

Tablets have been unearthed which are dated and which cover every month between Nebuchadnezzar and Darius Hystaspes, who, let it be emphasised, was not the Darius mentioned in the *Book of Daniel*. "Darius the Mede" was invented by Daniel.

That the writer of the *Book of Daniel* had no knowledge whatever of Nabonidus is very clear. He could not possibly have been ignorant of that monarch who, let it be emphasised, **reigned seventeen years**... A man who was so ignorant of events of the past assuredly could have had no prevision of events of the future.

The author of the *Book of Daniel* had a first-hand knowledge of events of the mid-second century (the Maccabean Period) which he represented as having been predicted by a seer who lived in the time of Nebuchadnezzar. It was this prediction which inspired the revolt against Antiochus IV (the "little horn" of Daniel 7 : 8).

The *Book of Daniel* in 1:21 states that the writer "continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus"; in 10 : 1 we are told that he had a revelation in the **third year** of Cyrus! In 9 : 1 he speaks of "Darius the son of Ahasuerus". The relationship was the other way about!

(Some years ago a body styling itself *The Australian Institute of Archaeology* was brought into existence by a Mr. W. J. Beasley for the express purpose of "proving" that archaeological research has established a reliability of "God's Word". Among the exhibits was a photograph of the Cylinder of Nabonidus. Accompanying this photograph were what purported to be explanatory notes which, correctly, stated that Nabonidus was the last native king of Babylon and that he had a son named Belshazzar; but then went on to intimate that Nabonidus, his son Belshazzar and **Daniel** were jointly rulers of Babylon. Here we have "harmonisation" at its best — or worst; for both the Bible and the inscription were falsified. *No Daniel is mentioned in any Babylonian inscription*. It should be stated that Mr. Beasley's attention was drawn to this misrepresentation, but no reply was vouchsafed.)

At the end of the *Second Book of Kings* and also at the end of the *Book of Jeremiah* we find a brief but unmistakable reference to Evil-merodach, Nebuchadnezzar's successor. One should think that Bible folk would be eager to rise up and confront "unbelievers" with this item of information, corroborative both of the Bible and a Babylonian inscription. But no; they haven't a word to say about it! The reason is, of course, that it discredits "Daniel".

### The Dead Sea Scrolls.

On page 45 of the Christadelphian pamphlet is an allusion to the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls we are told (correctly) prove to be documents of great antiquity and include portions of

the Old Testament in Hebrew, a thousand or more years older than the oldest extant Hebrew manuscript — apart from a fragment dated between 100 B.C. and 100 A.D. Among the discoveries is that of a complete scroll of the Book of Isaiah dated between B.C. 175 and B.C. 150.

It has long been recognised that originally the *Book of Isaiah* consisted of three parts combined as a single roll (the name "Isaiah" does not once occur in chapters 40 to 66). What is of interest — and our Christadelphian writer does not mention it — is that the R.S.V. has made 15 alterations in the Authorised Version of Isaiah, all based on readings of the Qumran manuscript. So we find that "God's Word" according to the A.V. is far from accurate!

In 1961 Dr. Yadin, Professor of Archaeology of the Hebrew University brought to light what is described as "the largest collection of historic documents ever found in Israel". These documents, which were found in a cliff-side near the Dead Sea, date from A.D. 88 to A.D. 135 and include two Bible fragments. These documents are in Hebrew, Aramaic, Nabatean and Greek. They make no mention of Jesus, an omission which Dr. Yadin regards as "strange".

"Strange" is a mild word to use; for it was only a little while before that Jesus is said to have performed the most amazing miracles, which included the feeding of a multitude of 5000 people, followed immediately afterwards by the feeding of 4000 more, in each case with a few loaves and fishes. (We note that not one of the disciples was able to recall the feeding of the 5000 — a remarkable lapse of memory, surely! See Matt. 15 : 33; 16 : 9 and Mark 8 : 4). One stupendous miracle was the restoring to life of a man four days dead and whose body had undergone decomposition. Yet the community referred to by Dr. Yadin knew nothing of, or disregarded, these miraculous happenings. Had Jesus performed the miracles he is said to have performed his fame would have extended far beyond Palestine.

### **The Acts of the Apostles.**

All that need be said here is that if Paul's account of his sayings and doings in his Epistles be accurate then that of *Acts* is not. The two accounts are very much at variance. (See the author's booklet *The Bible Contradicts Itself*).

### **The Christians of Rome.**

Paul is referred to as speaking of "Caesar's household"; and we are told of a market gardener who found slabs of stone

which bore the inscription, "Vaults for the members of Caesar's household". How very convincing!

Let it be noted in passing that our pamphleteer refers to Simon of Cyrene, "who was compelled to bear the cross of Jesus (Mark 15 : 25)". All three Synoptic Gospels declare that this Simon carried the cross of Jesus. But the Fourth Gospel has it that Jesus bore his own cross! Yet another Bible discrepancy!

## WAR WITH RUSSIA

A recently-published Christadelphian pamphlet announces, in flaming headlines, that *War with Russia is Inevitable!* Russia is to involve the entire Middle East in a devastating war, and it is to be the prelude to the Coming of Christ (who is to descend from a heaven many billions of light-years distant!) It is all prophesied — in Ezekiel 38 and 39! The prophet is told: "Son of Man, set thy face against Gog (of) the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him . . ." Meshech, it is explained for our benefit, is the ancient form of Muscovy, whence the name Moscow; whilst Tubal relates to the Tiberenes, who gave their name to Tobolski, "the capital of Siberia"! We are next informed that *Russ* is the original form of Russia.

It is impressed upon us that *Rosh* is a Hebrew word meaning "prince", or "dictator" (!) "not necessarily a royal prince" and that it is used as a proper noun, as in the *Revised Version* (and some later versions). This is equated with "Russ" that is, Russia.

We now have (redundantly) Russia, Moscow, and Tobolsk.

Let us be quite clear on this point: the Hebrew word *rosh* simply mean *chief* or *prince* or *head*, and is so rendered more than a hundred times in the *Old Testament*. For some unfathomable reason the compilers of the *Revised Version* of the Bible left the word untranslated, and gave it a capital letter. In this they were followed by some other translators (who probably had in mind the Arabic analogue Emir). *It has no connection whatever with Russia.* To equate *rosh* with "Russ" (Russia) phrases such as "Aaron the chief priest" (Ezra 7 : 5) would have to be rendered "Aaron the Russian priest"! The compilers of the *Revised Standard Version* fully perceived the absurdity, and they reverted to the original English translation as given in the *Authorised Version*.

It happens that there is an *Assyrian inscription* which refers to **Tabali and Mishki**, and classical writers speak of it as **Tibarine and Moshi**. The testimony of archaeology on this point is conclusive. The **Tabali and Mishki** of the inscription, which are the

Meshech and Tubal of Ezekiel, were a kindred people (Gen. 10 : 2), holding commonly-owned land.

And they were **Asians**, whereas the Russ (also known as Varangians) were Vikings and therefore Europeans. The Muscovites have all along been distinctively European.

Moscow was founded in 1147, some 1700 years after the time of Ezekiel, while Tobolsk did not come into existence until 1587, two thousand or more years after Ezekiel's time. It was set up as a trading post by a band of Cossacks and abandoned by them three years later. It was then occupied by people of the region, many of whom were of Mongol-Tartar origin.

**And more than a thousand miles separate Tobolsk and Moscow.** Ezekiel has made it abundantly clear that his Meshech and Tubal were a related, contemporary people. What our exponents of prophecy have done, or attempted to do, is foist upon us as "prophecy" a coincidental resemblance of names!

Tobolsk, be it noted in passing, is **not** the capital of Siberia. It is a minor city of 24,000 inhabitants. There are several Siberian cities with populations of a quarter of a million or more.

It may be that their obsessive viewpoint has rendered Christadelphians incapable of discerning the obvious. But then we are left wondering why, when they refer us to the *Book of Revelation*, our pamphleteers have not one word to say about the Gog and Magog of that book. That "St. John the Divine" adopted and adapted these names from Ezekiel is very evident: he seemed to like the sound of the heavy gutturals — Gog, Magog — they are very impressive, and satisfying; and he made the couplet part of his weird and fantastic apocalypse.

Let it be borne in mind that in Ezekiel "Gog" is a **person**, the ruler of the land of Magog (it is he who is to be the reincarnated, or resurrected dictator of Russia and let loose the "Russian hordes" upon the Middle East!) In Revelation (20 : 8) Gog and Magog are "the nations which are in the four corners of the earth". And they do not come into the picture until 1000 years after the time set by Christadelphians (and other sectaries) for the appearance of Christ. "Satan" (to Christadelphians a shadowy figure) is first of all to be freed from durance vile — he is to be kept immobile in the "bottomless pit" (!) for exactly 1000 years, when a capricious deity is to let him go on the rampage "for a little season"!

There can be no question of "oversight". To Christadelphians *Revelation* is a favourite book. It is for them a veritable blueprint of current and future events. The omission of any mention

of Rev. 20 : 8 is therefore significant: it indicates that they fully realise that it cannot be brought into harmony with Ezekiel.

Let it be noted that according to Ezekiel the "Gogites" are to suffer total annihilation. A fire is to come upon their land. God's people are to consume by fire "the shields and bucklers; the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves and the spears". This burning is to take seven years to accomplish.\*

The interpreters of prophecy explain that the weapons mentioned have to be regarded as "symbolic". Arrows presumably will be intercontinental ballistic missiles; bows their launching pads; spears doubtless represent flame-throwers; shields and bucklers have to be equated with steel and concrete fortifications or armoured tanks!

According to Ezekiel 39 : 11-15 "Gog and all his multitudes" are to be **buried**, the burials to be completed in the space of seven months. Citing Jeremiah 25 : 33 the Christadelphian author of *Christendom Astray*, Robert Roberts (p. 308) has it that "the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, **nor buried**; they shall be as dung upon the ground"! (Emphasis mine, J.B.)

It appears that the prophets speak with two voices!

## THE ADVENTISTS

**Seventh-Day Adventists** have taken up the pastime of forcing ancient inscriptions to yield scriptural verification. In an article in *Progressive World* some time ago Merril R. Holste pillories the deceits of a writer on *Archaeology and Prophecy* in the Adventist magazine *These Times* of Nov., 1954. The pious writer of this article affirmed that verification of Bible historical and geographical data by archaeological research is "a fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the last days". This, as Holste pointed out, is an obvious non sequitur: "proving the historical records of a nation to be true does not prove the truth of the myth, fables and

\*Christadelphians used to cite in full the prophecies of a Dr. John Thomas, a champion of former times. Dr. Thomas was positive that the passages in Ezekiel relate to war in the Middle East in which Russia was to be involved. But according to the learned Doctor it was **Czarist Russia** which was to precipitate the holocaust; he had not the slightest prevision of a Soviet Russia. We are told that "Gog of the land of Magog" signified the Emperor of Germany, who is to be "the prince of Ros, Mosc and Tobl". But we discover that the Czar, as well as being "Czar of all the Russias" is at the same time to be the Emperor of Germany!

These details are discreetly omitted by Christadelphians of today.

folklore the people believe in. Nor does it prove their religion to be the true one, inspired by a supernatural diety”.

Having got into his stride, the Adventist writer continues: “Leading the way was the discovery in 1789, of the Rosetta Stone in Egypt’s Nile delta . . . . The Rosetta Stone contained such Bible names as Asenath (the wife of Joseph) and Potiphah (Joseph’s master). See Gen. 41 : 45”.

Holste took the trouble to obtain a complete translation of the three texts of the Rosetta Stone and says: “We can say with positive knowledge that the writer of *Archaeology and Prophecy* drew entirely upon his imagination when he says it ‘contained such names as Asenath . . . and Potiphar’. The nearest we can find is ‘Arsinoe’ who is described in every instance as the mother of King Ptolemy Epiphanes Eucharistus, who lived no less than 1500 years **after** the supposed date of Joseph and Potiphah.”

The writer of *Archaeology and Prophecy* next got to work on the inscription of Darius as it appears on the Rock of Behistun. “This rock,” declared our veracious writer, “lists eight kings who lived before the biblical flood”. It comes as **no** surprise to learn that nowhere in the trilingual inscription is there any mention of antediluvian men. The kings listed by Darius are his own immediate ancestors. Says he: “There are eight of my race who have been before me. I am the ninth.” As Holste remarks: “Rawlinson’s translation lists no other kings excepting allies or enemies, contemporaries of Darius”.

**The Moabite Stone** next comes in for treatment. On this stone king Mescha tells how he turned upon the Israelites after they had “afflicted Moab many days”. The Adventist writer informs his readers that the Moabite Stone “admits the invasion and subjection of Moab by the armies of Israel. **There is not one word in the inscription about the subjection of Moab.** Mescha makes it clear that he turned the tables on the Israelites and avenged a temporary defeat. He records that he “took the altar hearths of Jahweh and dragged them before Chemosh”.

Adventist writers are not always truthful.

## JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

**Digging up Bible History** is the subject of a recent issue of the Jehovah’s Witness journal *Awake* (8-10-67). Many of the details are utterly irrelevant, but among them is an account of Abraham’s erection of an altar to Jahweh, Gen. 13 : 4. But according to Exod. 3 : 13 and 6 : 3 none of the patriarchs had any knowledge of Jahweh. The references to Jahweh in Genesis



are anachronistic. What is known to biblical scholars as the **Jehovistic Document** is the product of the 10th century B.C.

An equally bad, if not worse, blunder is the confounding of Joshua's account of the Conquest of Canaan with that narrated in the *Book of Judges*. "The archaeologist Wright" is quoted as saying that "the evidence is plain . . . the inhabitants of the Canaanite cities were not disturbed or displaced"; and "these data agree so strikingly with the conquest tradition that it is difficult to see how the correspondence can be mere coincidence". By the insertion of six words in square brackets the "Witness" writer has succeeded in transferring the account of the conquest as given in *Judges* to that related in *Joshua*. As has already been pointed out in Keller's *Bible as History* there is a vast difference. In Joshua's first 12 chapters the whole of the Canaanites are exterminated in short order, but in *Judges* the two races merge and ultimately become one people. (See Jud. 3 : 6.) It was many centuries before the merger was completed.

### Summary and Conclusion.

By direct assertion, and by implication, the leading lights of all Fundamentalist sects claim to have a full knowledge and understanding of "God's Word". If that claim be well-founded then these people are aware of the facts set out above; they **know** that archaeological research not only has *not* established the entire truth of the Bible but has made it abundantly clear that in many instances biblical statements purporting to be factual are the very reverse of true in any historical sense. The question of motive arises here: on the face of it the dissemination of false information has a material motive: religion is for these sects a lucrative "racket". One is reluctant to accept this view. But it can be avoided only on the assumption that these people are victims of a compulsive "will-to-believe" which has led them to concentrate their attention on biblical passages which support, or appear to support, their preconceived ideas, everything that negatives those ideas being automatically excluded from consciousness. In short, their knowledge of the Bible is limited to selected passages; their **understanding** of that venerable book being precisely nil. Their every utterance reveals a total ignorance of the background of the Bible. They are oblivious of the anachronisms in the books which they regard as Mosaic and which reveal to the discerning reader that these books are the product of different ages and many different hands; they are unable to see that the many contradictions of the Bible are often due to the merging of two or more conflicting traditions; that many — perhaps most — of the books of the Bible are composite.

Let it be made crystal clear: no one denies that archaeology has shed light on much that formerly was obscure in Bible History.

There is a very substantial kernel of fact in so-called "Holy Writ". But in establishing the accuracy of a biblical allusion the archaeologist will quite often have demonstrated the falsity of a conflicting tradition. If, for example, an inscription were to come to light which records that king Baasha of Israel died in the 26th year of Asa of Judah, as stated in 1 Kings 16 : 5-8, it will completely discredit the statement that the said Baasha engaged in warfare with Asa in that monarch's 36th year, as affirmed in 2 Chron. 16 : 1. If it were proved archaeologically that Aaron died and was interred at Mosera, as indicated in Deut. 10 : 6, then it would prove that he did *not* die at Mt. Hor, as stated in Deut. 32 : 50 and Num. 33 : 38. Coming to the New Testament: if it were established that Jesus was taken away to be crucified at the sixth hour, as indicated in the Fourth Gospel, then assuredly he was not crucified at the third hour, as affirmed in Mark 15 : 23. And so on — and on and on. (See **The Bible Contradicts Itself.**)

A statement that is demonstrably false completely shatters the case for "inspiration" and the Bible is without authority.

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