

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.

VARYING DEGREES OF UNBELIEF.

THE "higher critics" differ considerably. It would be amusing, were it not so serious a subject, to note how the one class upbraids the other for "destructive criticism of the Word of God," and then in the same article proceeds along the same lines, – only a little less destructive of the faith. For instance, note the following from the *Presbyterian Standard*: –

"On Sunday last Dr. Josiah Penniman, dean of the University of Pennsylvania, delivered an exceedingly interesting address or lay sermon from the pulpit of the Asheville Presbyterian Church at the morning hour, in which he told of the remarkable revelations made by pick and shovel in excavating the site of the ancient city of Chalneh in the valley of the Euphrates. This city is mentioned in Gen. 10:10, and the work of digging it out has been done by the University of Pennsylvania during the last thirteen years. The destructive critics say that the art of writing was not known at the time of Abraham. But the University of Pennsylvania has exhumed more than forty thousand burnt clay tablets full of written records dating back 4,000 years before the Christian era, and so 2,000 years before the time of Abraham. The destructive critics say that the war of the kings as recorded in Gen. 14 is all a myth, as at that early age of the world such armies could not have been collected. But on some of the 40,000 tablets in the possession of the University of Pennsylvania taken from the site of this ancient city, the names of the very kings who carried on this war are given just as they are recorded in Gen. 14, and some of the spoils which they carried off from Chalneh have been found in excavating the ancient city of Susa.

"These excavations have upset the already tottering chronology of Usher and have put the existence of man on the earth back some 10,000

years before the Christian era, and they show the existence of a high civilization at that early period. The work of exhuming Chalneh began on what seemed to be merely a mound of sand in a desert of drifting sand. The dome of a building was soon reached, which proved to be a magnificent temple of Baal, of whose worship this city was the center. The temple had been covered to the depth of more than forty feet from its base by the drifting sands. Among other curiosities found in adjacent buildings was the strong room of a real estate and banking house, containing certificates of deposit, title deeds, tax receipts and the like, all on baked clay tablets and beautifully written in cuneiform characters, and they read very much like similar 'papers' in a modern real estate dealer's office.

"Dr. Penniman had beautiful photographs of the buildings in the city, which were strong, massive and imposing, and very much like the best buildings in our modern cities. The names of the various kings and dynasties are given, with the dates of each, which extend back to a period 2,000 years before Abraham, or to the time of Adam, according to our common chronology.

"But the pick and the shovel went deeper, and the very surprising discovery was made that this ancient city of Chalneh was built on the site of a still more ancient city beneath it, of which there seems to have been no memory or tradition at the founding of the city of Chalneh. This city dated back at least 4,000 years more, or to a period 8,000 years before the Christian era. Its inhabitants, whoever they were, were very skilled builders, and had massive stone houses and temples several stories high, in which the arch is freely used. The arch was unknown to the Egyptians or to the Greeks or to any of the peoples whom we call 'the ancients,' and is considered a Roman invention. But the modern pick and shovel unearths it where the sands of the desert had buried it so deep that all memory and tradition of the mighty builders who invented it and used it some 8,000 to 10,000 years before Christ had passed away from among men; and what has been considered an invention of the Romans was really one of the 'lost arts' of a highly

civilized people who lived and built and wrote and thought and perished, and the record of them and of their doings has lain for probably a hundred centuries so deep beneath the sands that their burial place was used by other men as a place [R3220 : page 212] for their building; and these in turn were buried in the sand, the removal of which shows that the Bible record is accurately true in its minute details, for while man must come and man must go, the Word of God abideth forever."

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All should recognize clearly and distinctly what is implied by the foregoing. It means that the lecturer wholly disagrees with that open form of infidelity which denies the Bible *in toto*, claiming that the books of Moses, as well as the books of the prophets of the Old Testament, were written only a short time before Christ – after the return of the Israelites from the Babylonian captivity. The claim is that these books are pious frauds, having little, if any, foundation in truth. Dr. Penniman, the lecturer, was not in sympathy with such open infidelity. He was glad, therefore, when the excavations he mentioned disclosed certain outside information, corroborative of some of the statements of Genesis. We are glad that the Doctor is with us thus far; but we regret to note that he is so tinctured with the spirit of higher criticism that the researches which he mentions have not convinced him that the Bible is of divine origin, and, therefore, unqualifiedly true. He merely admits that it is not unqualifiedly false – that these findings prove that there is some reliability in the Scriptural account; – but he evidently is as far from accepting the Bible narrative as it stands, as are the most destructive of the higher critics.

The chronology of the Bible is so thoroughly interwoven with its narrative that the two are bound up together as web and woof: to destroy the one destroys the other; to invalidate the one invalidates the other; to corroborate the one corroborates the other.

There is no question whatever that the Bible contains a chronological chain down to the Babylonian captivity – even the captious find it impossible to disagree more than 128 years with what we have presented as the chronology of the Bible; – and then they must make that period *shorter* than we do instead of longer. No kind of reasoning or figuring based on the Bible statements of chronology can extend the period from the creation to the birth of our Lord beyond 4128 years which we have assigned to the period. Dr. Penniman, as the Dean of a University, and a lecturer upon this subject, is, of course, thoroughly aware of these facts. Yet how strange it is that he should address an audience as a champion of the Bible, and at the same time discredit the Bible by asserting, as he does, that man had been on the earth some ten thousand years prior to the Christian era! If this gentleman is a friend of the Bible, the latter has good reason to cry out, "Save me from my friends!"

If the Doctor is a disbeliever in the Bible, and is posing as its friend and champion, he is occupying a dishonest and dishonorable position. In any event, the Bible is far better off without such friends and such champions. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, they are serving the cause of infidelity – they are overthrowing faith in the Word of God. True, we are to expect just such things at this particular time, for the Apostle assures us that every man's faith-structure shall be tried so as by fire; and that all the wood, hay and stubble shall be destroyed. We are, of course, sure that those who have built their faith according to the direction of the Lord's Word, upon the proper foundation, and with the proper materials, the gold, silver, precious stones of divine truth, the Word of God, – these will never fail, will never be stumbled, but will come off conquerors. But we also know that this class is a remarkably small one, out of the millions of Christendom. Let us not be surprised, then, that the "fire of this day shall try *every man's* work, of what sort it is." Let us, on the contrary, take the more earnest heed and the more firmly hold on to the things which we have received of the Lord, which in the end will shine forth gloriously bright and convincing to the whole world of mankind.

HOW SHALL WE UNDERSTAND THEM?

The question naturally arises, if honorable men, students "learned in all the learning of the Egyptians," find in the ruins of ancient civilization evidences satisfactory to them that man has been on the earth at least six thousand years longer than the Bible records teach, how shall the average person of medium ability and intelligence and opportunities determine what is the truth on this subject? If he cannot rely upon the savants, upon whom or upon what can he rely?

We answer, that the savants base their estimates on their guesses, – and their guesses vary according to their mental makeup. Many of them guess that man has been on the earth for millions of years; others, like Dr. Penniman, congratulate themselves upon getting their faith down to a difference of only six thousand years from the Bible standpoint; but the humble child of God, who has made a proper use of the opportunities now within his reach, has learned to have little confidence in the guesses of the savants and higher critics, in proportion as he has learned to have great confidence in the Bible as a divine revelation. Those who will be easily moved to doubt the reliability of the Scriptures, under the instructions of its injurious friends (?), will, generally, be those who have never come to a clear appreciation of the divine plan of the ages, revealed in that wonderful Book and in it alone. Those who have been for any considerable [R3221 : page 213] time in the school of Christ, and have been faithful to the instructions there received, have learned that the Bible contains a plan so wonderful that it is not possible that *man* could have conceived or originated it; – a plan which fits into all the features of past history, and is as fully in accord with the declarations of the Old Testament as with those of the New Testament, – though in many things out of accord with the teachings of Churchianity.

As we open the old Book, which some one has said is an anvil upon which numerous hammers of infidelity have worn themselves out, we find its declaration respecting our day, – "The wisdom of their

wise men shall perish; the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." (Isa. 29:14.) Dr. Penniman and other D.Ds. and LL.Ds. and Professors corroborate and fulfil this divine testimony today. Their difficulty is not so much a dishonesty of mind which hinders them from receiving the truth, but rather that they approach the subject from the wrong standpoint. Instead of approaching geology and scientific research from the standpoint of faith in the Bible, and a desire to find and prove it correct, they approach these from the reverse standpoint, with a conviction that the Bible is certainly wrong in some measure, great or small. Imbued considerably with the spirit of higher criticism, even when resisting its conclusions, they approach their investigations with a view merely to reduce the discrepancy between the Bible statements and the extreme position of infidelity. And it is needless to say that in such matters, where it is the mind that is concerned, and opinions that are to be formed, one usually finds corroboration in line with the sentiment of his search.

"Common people," in reading such statements as the foregoing by the Doctor, should not forget to take them with the proverbial "grain of salt." It is natural that the Dean of a college which has spent several thousand dollars in scientific research – partly with the laudable object of securing information, and partly with another laudable object of advertising itself – should feel disposed to inflate the results of these investigations and expenditures, and to parade them just a little.

Surely it is neither ungenerous nor unwise to conclude that Dr. Penniman's statements magnify considerably the service accomplished for the world by his college. The evidences of this, in the foregoing account, are numerous. For instance, it is not beyond the province of reasonable judgment to believe that the exploration committee found something of the ancient city of Chalneh. It is not beyond conception that this was buried as much as forty feet below the surface. It is quite believable that a palace and a temple were found, and that under the temple was found the ruins of a structure somewhat older still. But this is as far as reasonable judgment can follow the Doctor's narrative. We

cannot take as literally true the statement that a whole city has been unearthed, or even any considerable portion of it, nor that another whole city under it was found – built, buried and forgotten thousands of years before the upper one was built, and yet the upper one *accidentally* built exactly on top of it – one temple over the other, etc. Neither can we take literally the statement that the buildings in these cities were "strong, massive and imposing, and very much like the best buildings in our modern cities." There are numerous reasons why we should not take these statements literally; – unless prepared to write ourselves down as credulous simpletons; – "common people" of the dark ages. The most forceful of these objections is the financial one. Any one of experience in the cost of grading, excavating, etc., can see at a glance that the few thousand dollars and the few representatives of the Pennsylvania University could accomplish practically nothing under such conditions as are *implied*. It would require millions of dollars to accomplish anything like what may be understood from taking the foregoing *too literally*.

If we analyze the above report, on this literal basis, we find that it contradicts itself. It declares that the principal building was the temple, whose dome, covered by sand, evidently constituted the chief eminence of the sand-hill excavated. How deep the sand may have been on the top of this dome, completely obscuring it, we can only surmise. We will suppose it to have been covered to a depth of five feet only, for the report declares that it was "soon reached." When, then, we read that the top of this sand mound was "*more* than forty feet" above the foundation of the temple, we will allow an extra foot, and say forty-one feet, and then deducting the five feet above the dome we find that the entire height of the temple, dome and all, was about thirty-six feet. And this was the principal edifice in the city – far out-topping the other buildings, evidently, according to the description given. How, now, does the statement appear, that the buildings were "massive and imposing, and very much like the *best* buildings of our *modern* cities"? The best buildings in our modern cities range in height from fifty to four hundred feet or more, while in this city the chief building, dome

and all, was about thirty-six feet high. We have need to keep well before our minds such evidences as these that the language is not literal, but highly figurative, hyperbolic, and then we need to flavor the remainder of the Doctor's statements with the same kind of salt of reason and cool judgment if we would not allow them to interfere [R3221 : page 214] with the process of our mental digestion, when studying God's Word. "Salt is good!"

When we come to examine the findings in the libraries of these buildings, we are to appreciate them for what they are worth. We do appreciate them highly. They give evidence most conclusively that evolutionists are entirely wrong in their theory that man evolved from a monkey, and that present-day civilization is proof of this. These findings corroborate the Scriptural statement that there was a civilization in the past, though of a somewhat different kind from that of the present – that there were wise men in the past without present-day advantages, which belong to the period called "the time of the end," which we hold are incidentals of this day of preparation for the Millennium. That those people had some knowledge of justice, equity, business regulations, etc., is evident from the records found in these rooms. But nothing has been found in conflict with the Bible, nor in conflict with the chronology of the Bible. The conflict is wholly in the minds of the learned gentlemen whose wisdom in such matters has perished, as the Scriptures declare – because they have abandoned the true foundation, and are no longer seeking to harmonize archaeological findings with the declarations of the Bible – especially as respects chronology.

MISLED BY THEIR EVOLUTION THEORIES.

They predetermine that because there are these good evidences of so pronounced a civilization in Abraham's time, there must have been long, long periods preceding that *for the development of man from a monkey condition up to that degree of intelligence*. Thus, in supporting their theories respecting evolution, they have an incentive

to make the records as favorable as possible to a long period prior to Abraham. They find names of kings and dynasties, and attempt to separate them out in chronological sequence, but seem entirely to overlook the fact that conditions which prevail today in Europe may also have prevailed to some extent in Egypt, and in Babylonian times. For instance, suppose that some city in Bavaria, Germany, had been buried today from the world, and that the civilization of the present time in all other cities of Europe were completely blotted out. Suppose, too, that general world histories of the present time were not kept, but that, as in ancient times, every nation and city kept records and a chronology of its own, paying no attention to the year of the world, A.M., B.C. or A.D., or any other arrangement but simply reckoning by its own dynasties. Suppose also that some one should uncover the Bavarian city mentioned, and should there find records of the Bavarian line of kings, and in connection with it a record of the German emperors, and references to the many other lines of German kings and princes. He would there find records of the Napoleonic dynasty, and of the present Bavarian dynasty, and of the present imperial dynasty. How much likelihood there would be that, with nothing to guide him except Frederick I., William I., William II., William III., he would become all confused, and fail to realize that there are kings in Bavaria at the same time that others reign as emperors of the whole German empire. Thus he might allow so many years for the emperors, and so many years for the kings, and be doubling his count every time. Our savants look over a pile of ancient clay tablets, written in a language they do not *fully* comprehend; they see in them names of hundreds of kings, princes, etc., and string them out to support their theory of a long and slow development from monkey-man to the degree of intelligence witnessed in our day.

This seems to fairly represent the tangled and unsatisfactory records of these ancient civilizations unearthed by explorers. They give some evidence, but nothing in a chronological order that will in any sense of the word compare with the Bible record. The Bible gives us the only chronological record from Adam down to the Babylonian

captivity that is worthy of calling history or chronology. Our wise men in universities, colleges, theological seminaries, etc., in passing by this only reliable record, and attempting to construct chronology from other sources, are doing the impossible thing, as well as the unwise thing. The Christian who recognizes the Bible as the Word of God, because of its internal evidences, and who harmonizes its statements *with themselves*, accepting the conclusions with implicit faith, is the only one who will stand the shakings and siftings of this present time. Such will be found to be right when that which [R3222 : page 214] is perfect is come, and when all matters will be fully revealed.

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!"

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The South-Western *Presbyterian* of March 27 quotes Rev. J. P. Peters, director of the Nippur Expedition, as follows: –

"An immense mass of inscribed material has been secured from Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria and Persia. We have a very fair picture of the advanced civilization prevailing in the ancient civilized world in and from the latter half of the third millennium B.C.

"These records discredit the extravagant claims of China and India in regard to the antiquity of the civilization claimed by them. It was only in the latter half of the third millennium B.C. that civilization spread to China, and shortly after this India was occupied by a civilized race.

"These records, so far discovered, confirm the [R3222 : page 215] statements and the historical representations of Samuel, Kings and the Prophets. Hebrew history, as recorded in these books, is proved by the comparison to be honest and trustworthy.

"The statements of the earlier books of the Old Testament in regard to a high civilization, advanced religious development, and

literary activities, which but a little while ago were held up as a proof of the inaccuracy and untruthfulness of the Bible record, are now proved to be literally true."

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"LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?"

– ACTS 9:6. –

Anxious soul, dost thou inquire
How thou mayst thy fealty prove?
In this day of "thine espousal,"
In the dawn of thy "first love,"
While thy heart is now o'erflowing
With a new-found peace and joy;
Where wilt thou, a willing servant,
In his service find employ?

Listen! Wouldst thou tell the story
Of the Father's wondrous plan,
And its consummation-glory
Now appearing unto man?
Wouldst thou be a faithful witness
To the truth thou hast received?
Seek "his fulness" for thy portion;
Empty souls have naught to give.

Hear the Master's voice directing,
As to him thou drawest nigh,
"Tarry till endued with power
Of the Spirit from on high."
Learning first, thyself, the lesson
Which thou wouldst have others know;
Eating daily at his table,

Thus in "grace and knowledge grow."

Following close in Jesus' footsteps,
That whate'er you say or do,
It shall be "your Father's spirit"
That shall speak and act through you.
Seeking the divine direction,
Blessings rich thou mayst expect;
As thou dost his ways acknowledge,
He thy pathway shall direct.

Thus in trials that await thee,
In the way, so rugged, steep,
God's own peace which passeth knowledge
Shall thy heart through Jesus keep.
Then thou mayst go forth and comfort
Those beneath affliction's rod,
With the comfort wherewith thyself
Hast been comforted of God.

– *John La Dow*.

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