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I.

THE INCARNATION AND OTHER WORLDS.

IT has been objected to the Biblical doctrine of the Incarnation, that it is suggestive of conceit on the part of us men. Large as the earth seems to us, it is small when compared with even our own sun. But there are stars, themselves suns, in comparison with which our sun itself is small; so that astronomy shows how insignificant this little earth of ours is amid the multitudinous items that make up the universe. Whether or no the starry worlds or the planets of our own system are now or ever have been or ever will be inhabited, has long been an open question. The latest word on the subject has been uttered by Mr. Alfred Russell Wallace, who, in his recent discussion of *Man's Place in the Universe*, has urged with great zeal the thesis that our earth is the only one of the millions of globes throughout the universe that has or can become the seat of intelligent life. Both his reasonings and his conclusions have been combated by competent critics, so that the question remains an open one as far as the scientists are concerned.

But granting for the moment Mr. Wallace's contention, our humanity would then be but as a speck of intelligence in the universe; and the objector to the Incarnation asks, "Why should the Son of God ally Himself—and so irrevocably—with such an insignificant part of his wide creation?" The very question, in the judgment of the objector, shows how absurd is the conceit. Possibly it is enough to say, in reply to the objection as thus stated, that, with astronomy in mind, the Bible itself comes to the exactly opposite conclusion. The objection is predicated upon the insig-

VI.

CRITICAL NOTE.

AN UNDESIGNED COINCIDENCE.

NO ONE doubts that our books of Samuel and Kings were the main source for the author of Chronicles. It is not unusual for critics to compare these existing sources with those parts of Chronicles evidently derived from them, to the disparagement of the latter; and then, arguing from the known to the unknown, to infer, with respect to the parts of Chronicles for which we have no sources preserved, either that they have no source save the author's imagination, or that, even if some vague documentary or oral tradition must be allowed, the author has no claim to credence because he does not accurately reproduce but disfigures and overlays his sources.

If, however, within the limits of the material peculiar to the Chronicler there are found presupposed the same conditions or situations as are vouched for by Samuel or Kings; if especially such presuppositions are found in connection with material which by its nature (persons, places, dates and the like) suggests a written source, then obviously a strong presumption is raised, first, that in these places the Chronicler did use a reliable written source, and second, that he used it honestly. Such points of contact belong to the class of "undesigned coincidences," of which we find so many examples in a comparison of the Acts and the Epistles. And it is manifest that the law in their case is; the closer the correspondence, and the less obvious the correspondence, the stronger the confirmatory force. In the case of the Book of Chronicles in particular, the theory of artificially developed correspondences, designed coincidences meant to look like undesigned coincidences, is especially untenable. The radical critic should be the last man to deny this, for according to his hypothesis, in the words of Graf,* "the Chronicler knows no distinction of times, but always and everywhere has his own contemporaries, for whose instruction and edification he wrote, before his eyes." Indeed, such critics as Thenius and Graf develop this characteristic of the Chronicler most insistently in immediate connection with that particular episode to which the reader's attention is now directed.

In Kings† we are told very briefly of a reform in worship that took

[* *Die geschichtlichen Bücher*, p. 170.

† II Kings xviii. 3-6, esp. ver. 4.

place in the reign of Hezekiah, king of Judah. As it is the first thing told of Hezekiah, the narrative of whose reign occupies three chapters,* the natural presumption is that this reform took place in the beginning of the reign. In Chronicles, while a space of four chapters† is allotted to Hezekiah, three of them are occupied with affairs of worship, while into the fourth are crowded all the personal and political affairs that bulk so largely in Kings. The three chapters dealing with Hezekiah's relation to ritual, temple and priesthood are divided between an account of the purification of the polluted temple in the first month of the first year of the new reign; the celebration of a great Passover in the second month; and the royal provision for the maintenance of the cult thus reinaugurated.

Hezekiah, according to II Kings xviii. 1, succeeded his father Ahaz in the third year of Hoshea, that last monarch of the Northern Kingdom, whose nine years' reign ended with the fall of Samaria in the winter of 722-721. A few verses later we are informed that the siege of Samaria began in the fourth year and terminated in the sixth year of Hezekiah, king of Judah. By these data the accession of Hezekiah is fixed in the year 728 or 727, and the reformation of Hezekiah should apparently be dated in the spring of 727.

The blow that fell upon Samaria in 724, and that eventuated in the final overthrow of the Northern Kingdom, was not the only blow dealt it by the Assyrians. Rather it was the last of a series, and it fell upon what was but a remnant of the really mighty kingdom over which, only a few years before, Jeroboam II had ruled.‡ The fall of the nation was swift, yet it was accomplished by stages. Shalmaneser, the conqueror of Hoshea, was but finishing the work begun by his predecessor, Tiglath-pileser. As we are informed by the brief statement, II Kings xv. 29, it was in the days of Pekah, predecessor of Hoshea, that considerable portions of the kingdom were overrun by the Assyrians under Tiglath-pileser, who carried the population captive to Assyria. With this record of Kings agrees perfectly the information obtained through the decipherment of Tiglath-pileser's annals, and by their means we are enabled to date this great Syro-Palestinian campaign positively in the years 734-732.

The following geographical terms are used in II Kings xv. 29, in describing the parts of the kingdom then conquered and deported: "Ijon, and Abel-beth-maacah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali." The first two names are mentioned in I Kings xv. 20, in connection with "Dan, Chinneroth, and all the land of Naphtali." Janoah may well be the modern Januh, about fifteen miles (as the crow flies) directly west of Abel-beth-maacah. Kedesh is the Kedesh-Naphtali of Judges, the home of

* Chs. xviii-xx.

† Chs. xxix-xxxii.

‡ II Kings xiv. 25-28

Barak, while Hazor is the neighboring capital of Barak's enemy Jabin. Thus far all are names of cities. The three remaining terms are of wider application. Gilead is frequently applied (*e.g.*, II Sam. ii. 9) to all the country east of the Jordan; as its limitation, when it is limited, is rather on the north than on the south, and as Tiglath-pileser's operations were pressed from north to south, it can hardly be maintained that in this case it should be limited to any particular portion of trans-Jordanic Israel.* Galilee is a name which we are wont to associate with all Palestine north of the plain of Esdraelon and west of the Jordan valley, because that was its extent in the time of Christ. But at first it designated a limited district lying wholly or partly within the territory of Naphtali. In Joshua xx. 7, Kedesh is described as "in Galilee, in the mount of Naphtali." By the time Samaria fell, that extension of application may already have commenced which ultimately embraced in Galilee all the northern hill-country.† But however this may be, the historian of Kings upon mentioning Galilee at once adds "all the land of Naphtali." The question whether this is meant as an equivalent or a supplement has, therefore, no practical bearing upon the geographical question.

With this severe blow to the nation, there is associated, by both the author of Kings and the Assyrian annalist, a change of rulers. Hoshea obtained by conspiracy and murder a throne which he was permitted by the Assyrian to retain only on condition of vassalage and tribute. For seven years (730-724) he was the ruler of the remnant of Israel. In subjection to the foreign power which had carried off their brethren, this kinglet and his decimated nation awaited the final blow.

It is within these seven years that the Biblical records place the accession and reformation of Hezekiah of Judah. In Kings no event of Hezekiah's reign is associated in any manner with the Northern Kingdom. We feel no surprise at this, since the reformation, the only event professing to date from the beginning of that reign, is confined to a single verse, from which all geographical reference is absent.‡ But in Chronicles, where the same event is so much expanded, there are repeated references to the Northern tribes. Hezekiah not only summons his own subjects to the great Passover of chapter xxx, but also invites by letter the people of the neighboring and kindred nation, "Ephraim and Manasseh" (ver. 1). All Israel is to be bidden to the festival, in the ancient phrase, "from Beersheba even to Dan" (ver. 5). The posts "pass through the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun" (ver. 10). The result is that although "they derided them and mocked them, nevertheless some from Asher and Manasseh and from Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem" (ver.

* I Chron. v. 26 informs us expressly that all trans-Jordanic Israel was included in this earlier deportation.

† Isaiah ix. 1 probably favors this supposition.

‡ II Kings xviii. 4.

11). Among those who came were "a multitude from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun," who were not ceremonially clean, and were therefore unfitted to eat the Passover lawfully. For these Hezekiah interceded with that notable prayer, "The good Jehovah pardon every one that setteth his heart to seek God, Jehovah, the God of his fathers, though not according to the purification of the sanctuary" (vers. 18, 19). Finally, after the Passover, the iconoclastic zeal that brought destruction to the altars and images of Judah and Benjamin extended itself to the altars and images of Ephraim and Manasseh (xxxix. 1).

These allusions, when put together, yield the following result. The tribes of the Northern Kingdom to which Hezekiah's messengers came, or which were represented at the Passover, were Ephraim, Manasseh, Zebulun, Issachar and Asher. The tribes left unmentioned are Dan,* Naphtali and the trans-Jordanic tribes. There is just one time in the history of Israel when Ephraim, Manasseh, Zebulun, Issachar and Asher constituted the Northern Kingdom: the years between 734, when Tiglath-pileser carried off "Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali," and 721, when Sargon deported what remained.

Precisely into these few years this narrative of Hezekiah's reformation is fitted by the bungling Chronicler, who, as we have seen, according to Graf, "knows no distinction of times."† Thenius‡ is so confident of the Chronicler's ignorance of chronology or indifference to it that he even writes: "It is beyond question that the Chronicler, *in order to set Hezekiah's great zeal for Jehovah's worship in the brightest light,*§ has represented this Passover as occurring in the *first year of Hezekiah*. . . . But in his zeal he has assigned the misery that has come upon Israel through the captivity as a peculiar motive for this festival (II Chron. xxx. 5ff.); and in so doing he *has failed to notice, or perhaps hasn't wanted to notice,* that this captivity—mark well, *he assigns to it no date*—had not, in the *first year of Hezekiah*, as yet occurred."

By such opinions as these, which might be multiplied, two things become plain: first, destructive critics cannot deny that if there be a coincidence here it is an "undesigned coincidence," for the Chronicler would not be their Chronicler if he had so mastered the chronology and geography of the period of Hoshea as to conform his narrative of the relations between the two kingdoms in that period to these nice demands of time and place, and then, having so mastered these details, had scattered them about in two or three parts of his narrative as we have found them; and second, such critics are blind to the fact that we have here any coincidence whatever, whether designed or undesigned.

* Dan of the South disappeared early; Dan of the North (comp. Judg. xviii) lay within the bounds of Naphtali.

† As above, p. 299.

‡ *Könige*, p. 379.

§ The italics throughout the quotation are as in Thenius.

Not so the impartial student of Scripture, who, with a map of Palestine before him as divided among the tribes, observes the accuracy with which the author of Chronicles, or rather his lost source, draws the boundary of Northern Israel precisely as it should be drawn for the years 734-722, and only then in all the course of Israel's history.

It was either chance, or careful research, or a reliable source, which guided the Chronicler's pen when he penned these names. The first choice is a resource of despair, and is contradicted by the appropriate manner in which the names are used in their various connections.* The second may be the choice of some students; it requires a strain of the imagination to picture the author hunting out of Kings, his only source, the scattered data from which to construct his geography of Samaria in its decline, and then making such an unimpressive use of his investigations that few† have noticed, even in this day of minute Biblical research, the Chronicler's faithful correspondence with Kings. Is it not most reasonable to select the third of the three choices, namely, the existence of a reliable source, correctly used, and wholly outside of our book of Kings? If such be the choice adopted, then we have here another item to add to the growing list of historical statements in Chronicles, unparalleled in the other Biblical books, which appear to demand reliable sources of information for the Chronicler, outside of the historical sources now in existence.

But may not this undesigned coincidence, which has been shown to exist between the data of Kings and of Chronicles on the hypothesis that the general chronological scheme of Kings is correct, serve as an additional argument in favor of the correctness of that chronological scheme? In the source upon which the author of Chronicles depended for his narrative of Hezekiah's reformation, just as in our book of Kings, the accession of Hezekiah fell, not in or near 714,‡ but between the years 732 and 724. To argue thus is by no means to argue in a vicious circle: to prove Chronicles by Kings, and then to prove Kings by Chronicles. For an undesigned coincidence confirms both documents involved in the comparison. If, then, we have here a genuine coincidence, and if this coincidence is undesigned, it not only confirms the historical character of Chronicles, but adds a new prop to the general chronological scheme of Kings.

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* Comp. Zöckler on II Chron. xxx. 18 (in Lange's *Bibelwerk*).

† Among them Oettli and Meinhold, Zöckler and C. J. Ball, in their commentaries.

‡ So most modern historians, following Wellhausen in *Jahrbuch für deutsche Theologie*, 1875, pp. 637ff. On this whole problem of comparative chronology, see critical note by Prof. Davis in *Presb. and Ref. Review*, January, 1890.