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THE HISTORICAL METHOD IN THE STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*

How should the books of the Old Testament be studied? We have no hesitation in saying that they ought to be regarded as coming in among that large number of ancient documents, the study of which is regulated by the great principles of history, just like every writing that antiquity has bequeathed to us, whatever be its language and origin. In other words, we cannot do better than place the name of Moses, or, for that matter, of every other Biblical writer, within that phrase of a German critic who, speaking of Homer, has said:

* This article is the translation of a paper entitled, "La methode historique dans l'étude de l'Ancien Testament," which was read before the Congress of Students of the Historical School, in Paris (November 1923) by the Nestor of Egyptologists, M. Édouard Naville. It is now forty years since M. Naville was sent out by the Egyptian Exploration Fund as its first excavator. In his first campaign he discovered and identified the site of the store-city of Pithom. Among the sites at which he subsequently conducted excavations are Goshen, Bubastis, Dêr el Bahâri, and lastly Abydos, where the work was interrupted by the World War, and has not been resumed. M. Naville has published many books. Most of these are in the field of Egyptology, but some, especially his more recent works (*Archæology of the Old Testament*, *The Text of the Old Testament* [Schweich Lectures]; *The Law of Moses*, *The Higher Criticism in Relation to the Pentateuch*), are concerned with the scientific defense of the Old Testament. The scope of the present article is clearly indicated by the title. M. Naville is speaking as a historian, not a theologian. He is therefore treating the Scriptures as historical documents pure and simple, and not appealing to their authority as the inspired Word of God. The apologetic value of such purely scientific historical investigations will be apparent to the readers of the REVIEW. The translation which was both authorized and approved by M. Naville was prepared by Professor John R. Mackay of the Free Church College, Edinburgh.

THE FALL OF NINEVEH

A Babylonian tablet of unusual interest and value came to light recently in the British Museum and has been published by its discoverer, Mr. Gadd, who is to be congratulated both upon his discovery and also upon the promptness with which he has made it public.¹ The tablet in question is a comparatively small one;² and the fact that it begins with the 10th year of Nabopolassar (616 B.C.) and breaks off abruptly at the beginning of the 18th year³ indicates that it belongs to a series. The contents of the tablet may be briefly summarized as follows:

The tenth year (616) tells of an expedition of Nabopolassar up the Euphrates, of a victory at Qablinu⁴ over the Assyrians and the Mannai, followed by a return to Babylon; then of the advance of Egyptian and Assyrian armies down the Euphrates, an advance which Nabopolassar "hastened" to meet; also of operations on the Tigris. The eleventh year (615) tells of an unsuccessful siege of Ashur by the Babylonians, which was raised by the Assyrians who defeated the besiegers and forced them to retreat. The twelfth year (614) records an expedition against Nineveh by the Medes, the capture of Ashur by them and an alliance between Nabopolassar and Cyaxares. The thirteenth year (613) speaks only of minor operations. The fourteenth year (612) tells of a junction of Babylonians, Medes and Scythians and of the capture of Nineveh (?) after a three months' siege in which three (?) battles were fought, and of Ashur-uballit's assuming the throne of Assyria in Harran. The fifteenth year (611) records a Babylonian expedition up the Euphrates and the capture of Rugguliti. The sixteenth year (610) tells of the expulsion of Ashur-uballit from Harran and its capture by the

¹ *The Fall of Nineveh*. The newly discovered Babylonian Chronicle, No. 21, 901, in the British Museum. Edited with transliteration, translation, notes, etc. By C. J. GADD, M.A., Assistant in the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities, British Museum. London: The British Museum, etc. 1923. 4to, pp. 42, frontispiece and 6 plates.

² It is approximately $5\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{7}{8}$ inches, and has 76 lines of text, both sides and the upper end being inscribed. It is considerably smaller than the famous Babylonian Chronicle and has only *one* column of text on obverse and reverse.

³ Only part of the first line is given, obviously as a catch line.

⁴ Mr. Gadd locates it in the vicinity of Dêr-az-Zûr.

Scythians and Babylonians. The seventeenth year (609) tells of an unsuccessful (?) attempt of Ashur-uballit⁵ to regain Harran.

Unfortunately the tablet which has been pieced together out of four fragments is not in very good condition. This applies more especially to the reverse. And it is particularly to be regretted that the section (14th year) which treats of the fall of Nineveh is badly mutilated, so badly in fact that it is only an inference, though we believe a justifiable one, that Nineveh fell in that year. That such may be regarded as actually the case despite the mutilated condition of the tablet is argued convincingly by Mr. Gadd as follows:

“The very name of their⁶ objective appears only in a half-obliterated form upon the tablet, but that this section actually deals with the Fall of Nineveh would be certain even if the name had completely disappeared since (1) the end of Sin-shar-ishkun is expressly indicated, (2) the Babylonian king receives in Nineveh the spoil of Assyrian provinces, and (3) henceforth the kingdom of Assyria and the struggle against it are transferred to the west.”⁷

The importance of this tablet dealing as it does with a period regarding which we have been hitherto, as Mr. Gadd reminds us, “in almost complete darkness,” is obvious. We shall confine ourselves in the main to two matters, the fall of Nineveh and the “rôle” played by Egypt in the stirring events of this period, and consider them primarily in their bearing upon the Old Testament.

I. By dating the fall of Nineveh in the 14th year of Nabopolassar (612 B.C.) the new Chronicle shows that neither of the dates generally given for this epoch-making event is correct. The year 625 B.C., which has been advocated by some scholars⁸ because of the ancient tradition which connected it with the beginning of the reign of Nabopolassar, proves to be too early. On the other hand, the year 606 (or thereabouts)

⁵ Aided, Mr. Gadd believes, by “a great army of Egyptians” (see below).

⁶ *I. e.*, Nabopolassar, the Scythian king and Cyaxares.

⁷ P. 13.

⁸ George Rawlinson, Rollin, Philip Smith, Leathes in Kitto's *Cyclopaedia*, Keil.

proves to be several years too late. That Nineveh fell before the battle of Megiddo, and consequently before the accession of Necho seems now to be certain. It is, therefore, to be noted that this discovery does not conflict with, but rather confirms, the statement of the Second Book of Kings⁹ that it was against "the king of Assyria" that Necho's expedition was directed. It is not necessary to hold that "king of Assyria" may refer to Nabopolassar "as the existing ruler of the Assyrian empire, which had already fallen."¹⁰ For in the 17th year of Nabopolassar (609) with which the Chronicle ends, we find a "king of Assyria" (Ashur-uballit) attempting to recover Harran which he had vainly striven to make his capital after the fall of Nineveh. Consequently we are justified in supposing that in the following year (?) when Necho made his expedition, there still was a "king of Assyria" and that this king of Assyria was in western Mesopotamia or Syria at or near the Euphrates.¹¹ In this respect the new tablet corroborates the Old Testament record in a very gratifying way.

II. A second matter of importance which emerges in connection with this tablet is the rôle which Egypt played in the affairs of Western Asia at this period. We learn from it that, in the 10th year of Nabopolassar (616), Egypt was in alliance with Assyria against Nabopolassar. This seems to be a necessary inference from the statement (*ll.* 10-11) of the tablet: "in the month Tishri the army of Egypt (*ummanini matmi-sir*) and the army of Assyria marched after the king of Akkad¹² as far as the city of Qablinu (but) they did not overtake the king of Akkad." The failure to mention the *king* of Egypt is perhaps of significance.¹³ That it is to be re-

⁹ xxiii. 29.

¹⁰ So Keil, who placed the fall of Nineveh at 625 B.C.

¹¹ 2 Chron. xxxv. 20, specifies Carchemish as Necho's particular or immediate objective.

¹² Except for a couple of times at the beginning of the tablet Nabopolassar is regularly referred to simply as "king of Akkad."

¹³ Nabopolassar, Sin-shar-iskun, Ashur-uballit and Cyaxares (Umakishtar) are mentioned by name.

garded as meaning that the reference is to an army of Egyptian mercenaries hired by the king of Assyria is possible, but far from certain. Psammeticus I may have been too old to lead his armies in person. Although conquered by Esarhad-don half a century earlier, Egypt had shortly afterwards become virtually independent and had as early as 640 B.C. resumed her effort to dominate Palestine and Syria. But Psammeticus' ambitions in this direction had been checked by the invasion of the Scythians (*Umman-manda*) which played such havoc with the Assyrian empire and also threatened his own. In view of this new peril it is not altogether surprising to find Psammeticus, now nearing the close of a long reign (663-609), aiding the Assyrians, who had left him in peace for many years and were perhaps no longer regarded as a menace to Egypt's welfare, aiding them against what he felt to be a common foe, the Babylonians, whose rise to power, and especially their advance westward, may have caused him serious uneasiness.

Far more significant, however, than this reference to Egypt which occurs in the record for the 10th year of Nabopolassar is the fact that near the end of the tablet (*l. 66*), in the account of events of the 17th year (609), Mr. Gadd finds a *second* reference to an Egyptian army ("a great army of Egyptians"), which he believes had come up to *assist* Ashur-uballit against his enemies. He renders the line as follows: "In the month of Tammuz Ashur-uballit, king of Assyria, a great army of Egyptians" (*ina arabdu'uzi m.d.Ašur-uballit! šar mataššur unman matmi-šir mat-at-tam . . .*). This leads him to the conclusion that Necho could not have been waging war *against* Assyria in the following year, as is asserted in Kings. Consequently he is disposed to regard the statement of Josephus according to which Nabopolassar "marched to the Euphrates, in order to fight with the Medes and Babylonians, who had overthrown the dominion of the Assyrians," as the more reliable:

"In the year 608, 'Pharaoh-nechoh, king of Egypt, went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates.' His march

was opposed by Josiah, the king of Judah, who was defeated and slain in the ensuing battle of Megiddo. The account of Josephus, however, names the Medes and Babylonians as the enemies against whom the expedition was directed, and, in view of the information derived from the Chronicle, this latter version must clearly be accepted. Necho's march was evidently but one among a number of efforts made by the Egyptian kings to bolster up the falling power of Assyria as the most reliable support against the northern barbarians. The operations on the Euphrates in 616, the reinforcements lent to Ashur-uballit in 609, and the final collision of Carchemish in 605 form, together with the events of 608, successive steps in a consistent policy pursued by the Egyptian kings of the XXVIth dynasty. The only respect in which Josephus might be called in question concerns his mention of the Medes."¹⁴

Elsewhere Mr. Gadd expresses himself still more positively in favor of rejecting the account of the expedition of 608 B.C. as given in Kings and accepting that of Josephus:

"2 Kings xxiii. 29. Necho did not 'go up against the king of Assyria' but, as Josephus (*Antiq.* x. 5. i), rightly says, 'to fight against the Medes and the Babylonians.'"¹⁵

This view of the matter has been accepted by Professor Welch of Edinburgh and receives favorable comment in the *Expositor*.¹⁶

¹⁴ P. 15 f.

¹⁵ P. 7, note 1.

¹⁶ Professor Welch (cf. "The Significance for Old Testament History of a New Tablet," *Expository Times* for January, 1924, p. 171) in discussing the bearing of this tablet upon the Biblical record says: "What is of significance there is the remarkable information that an Egyptian army came to the help of the Assyrians at Harran. . . . That is to say, in these last critical years of the Assyrian empire, Nineveh and Egypt were allies against Babylonia. Now 2 K. xxiii. 39, in the account of Josiah's end at Megiddo, states that Pharaoh Necho was marching against the Assyrians. Josephus, x. 5. 1, on the other hand, names as the enemies of Egypt the Medes and Babylonians. Evidently the new tablet proves Josephus to be in the right." Professor Welch not merely regards the tablet as proving Egypt and Assyria were in alliance, thus discrediting Kings, but he proceeds to argue further that this discovery makes Josiah's conduct at Megiddo most singular and he is inclined to question whether there was really a battle at all (thus discrediting Chronicles) or whether Josiah was merely executed for disloyalty to his suzerain. He concludes as follows: "Whether he (Josiah) was defeated at Megiddo in a pitched battle, or was merely executed after a drum-head court-martial, his death was due to the fact that he was not sup-

In view of the tendency to regard this tablet, especially this *second* reference to an Egyptian army, as disproving the correctness of the declaration in Kings that it was *against* the king of Assyria that Necho's expedition was directed, the following points are worthy of careful consideration.

1. In the first place, it is very questionable whether there is any such *second* reference to an Egyptian army on this tablet as is claimed by Mr. Gadd; and for the simple reason that the tablet is badly mutilated at this point and the reading is uncertain.

a. That the reading is questionable, is clearly shown by the photograph of the tablet and by Mr. Gadd's own transcript of it, although there is nothing in his translation or transliteration to indicate this. No one of the signs which compose the word "Egyptians (literally, "land of Egypt," *matmi-šir*) is certain.¹⁷ Under such circumstances the reading should be regarded as merely tentative. Yet nowhere in his discussion has Mr. Gadd intimated that there can be any question as to the correctness of his reading.

b. The context, in so far as it is intelligible does not favor the reading "great army of Egyptians" given by Mr. Gadd.

(1) The word "great" (*ma-at-tam*) which according to Mr. Gadd immediately follows "Egyptian" and which he

porting Assyria. For Necho who put him to death was Nineveh's ally." But both of Professor Welch's main facts are questionable. As we shall see presently the evidence that Egypt and Assyria were in alliance is conjectural; and where is the proof that Josiah was at this time a vassal of Assyria? The brief editorial discussion in the *Expositor* (London), p. 53, is much more cautious; but there also the view advanced by Mr. Gadd that the account in Kings is inferior to that in Josephus is accepted as probable: "If the Babylonian chronicle is correct, he marched to the aid of the struggling Assyrians, not to attack them; his real opponents were the Babylonians and their allies. Consequently the tradition in Josephus (*Antiquities*, x. 5. 1) is more correct, viz., that Pharaoh Necho marched to attack the Medes and the Babylonians who had destroyed the Assyrian kingdom."

¹⁷ The surface is either mutilated or scaled away. Thus the sign (*šir*) is doubtful because Mr. Gadd is able to find traces of only four of the six or seven wedges which normally make up this sign and some of these are dubious.

treats as an attributive adjective in the accusative case, is questionable. The last of the three signs seems to be somewhat uncertain, and even if it is correctly read, it has several different phonetic values. Since all the rest (about one third) of the line is illegible we cannot be sure that these three signs are to be read as a single word.¹⁸

(2) The first part of the line which seems to be well preserved has an important bearing upon the reading in question. It is to be noted that there is no conjunction joining the words "Ashur-uballit, king of Assyria" and "army"; they are placed in simple juxtaposition.¹⁹ This is important for two reasons. The first of these is that elsewhere when the tablet speaks of joint action of two sovereigns or their armies there is some connecting word. In line 10 we read that "the army of Egypt *and* the army of Assyria (*ummanini matmi-šir u ummanini mataššur*) marched after the king of Akkad" (cf. l. 61, Ashur-uballit *and* the army of the land of Gul . . . ;" l. 29, "the king of Akkad (?) *and* Cyaxares (?) at the city met one with the other"). That is, it is used of *joint* action of two independent armies. We also find it used of a king and his *own* army: e.g., "the king of Akkad and his army" (ll. 8, 28, 30, 37); "the king of the land of Assyria and his army" (ll. 22, 37?); "Cyaxares and his army" (ll. 30, 47),—several times in the expression "returned to his land." But where there is no "and" the construction is quite different; it is that of subject and object. It occurs repeatedly in the expression, "the king of X his army *mustered and*" (*umman-šu id-ki-e-ma*, ll. 16, 32 (?), 38, 58, 76, cf. 1; *umman-šu id-kam-ma*. l. 17). Once the verb is "sent (?)"

¹⁸ There is not a single line of the reverse of the tablet that is not damaged to some extent: on the average about one third to one half of the line is illegible, according to Mr. Gadd's transcript. Line 67 has suffered almost if not quite as much as line 66. This makes the record "scrappy" and the interpretation uncertain. Hence, while "great" may be a feminine adjective agreeing with "army," the argument is inconclusive because "army" is common gender and the context is doubtful.

¹⁹ We assume that the reading is correct; the photograph seems to confirm it.

(l. 7); another time it is "brought up" (l. 19). Since in nearly all of the instances in which the verb "mustered" occurs it follows (usually immediately) a date formula, the most natural conjecture would be that we should read in line 66, "In the month Tammuz²⁰ Ashur-uballit, king of Assyria, his army mustered and" (*umman-šu id-kam-ma*, or *id-ki-e-ma*), or "the army of his land (*umman mati-šu*) mustered."²¹ Such a reading would accord well with the words with which the record resumes at the beginning of the next line: "he crossed²² the river and marched upon Harran to conquer(?)²³ it" (*nâra ibbalkit-ma ana eli aluḥar-ra-nu ana ka-ša-(di) illik . . .*). But while the frequent occurrence of the phrase "mustered" (his army) may be regarded as constituting something of a presumption in favor of the reading suggested, any reading must be regarded as conjectural and tentative in view of the condition of the tablet.²⁴

2. A second reason for questioning Mr. Gadd's right to reject the testimony of Kings on the ground that the new

²⁰ The failure to mention the year at the beginning of the sentence is probably due, as Mr. Gadd points out, to an oversight of the scribe. Since the last date given in the record of the 16th year is the "month of Adar" (12th month), the reference here must clearly be the fourth month of the following year (609).

²¹ This would involve the taking the *ma* of Mr. Gadd's *ma-at-tam* (great) as the conjunction "and," and would leave the reading and meaning of the other signs doubtful. But this is not a serious objection to the proposed reading, since, as was pointed out above, the fact that the rest of the line is illegible makes not merely the reading, but also the grouping of these signs uncertain.

²² The verb is written ideographically (*PAL*); the absence of the "plural sign" indicates that the verb is singular ("he"). This favors the view that line 66 contains no reference to allies. It may be noted that the expression is a strong one which may imply the overcoming of resistance: "he broke over."

²³ The reading is not certain, as Mr. Gadd points out, but seems probable.

²⁴ If there is not room for such a reading as we have proposed (the space may be hardly adequate) or if such wedges as can be clearly read indicate that it is improbable, it might be possible to read "Ashur-uballit, king of Assyria a great army of . . ." and supply the word "mustered" after "great."

Chronicle proves that Pharaoh-Necho went up to aid the Assyrians and not to fight against them is that, even if his reading ("a great army of Egyptians") were accepted as correct, the Chronicle would still contain no statement to the effect that Egypt as represented by this great "Egyptian" army was in alliance with Ashur-uballit. All that we have to go by, according to Mr. Gadd's own reading, is this: "In the month Tammuz Ashur-uballit, king of Assyria (nom. case) a great army (accus. case) of Egyptians . . . he crossed the river," etc. The latter part of line 66 being mutilated, we are completely in the dark as to the relation which Ashur-uballit sustained to this Egyptian army. Were the reference to joint action of the Assyrian and Egyptian armies we could expect to find as elsewhere (*ll.* 10, 29, 61) the coordinating conjunction "and" employed. The fact that, on the contrary, this Egyptian army is apparently the *object*²⁵ of the activity of Ashur-uballit would even favor the view that he *defeated* it, a supposition which might account for his failure to retake Harran, since in such a conflict his losses would doubtless have been heavy. But we are not concerned to determine,—it is impossible to do so—what Ashur-uballit did to or with this Egyptian army. What we are concerned to do is to call attention to the fact that there is even less warrant for the claim that Ashur-uballit was in *alliance* with an Egyptian army than for the assertion that it was an *Egyptian* army with which he was in alliance. In other words, there is no proof at all of this alliance. Mr. Gadd has apparently assumed²⁶ that the alliance of 616, despite changed conditions, must have been in force in 609 and therefore also in 608, and that therefore the Book of Kings which definitely affirms the contrary must be wrong.

3. A third reason for holding Mr. Gadd's rejection of the Old Testament account of Pharaoh Necho's expedition to be

²⁵ The syntax of the sentence (the absence of a conjunction) indicates this; and that Mr. Gadd so regards it is clear from his reading "great" (*ma-at-tam*).

²⁶ See his statement as quoted, p. 468f. *supra*.

unwarranted is found in the critical and even sceptical attitude which he assumes toward the very document to which he appeals as proving the incorrectness of the statement of the Biblical writer. Thus, he tells us that the newly discovered Chronicle is "written with a distinct Babylonian bias." In proof of this he cites the record of the 10th year where the advance of the Egypto-Assyrian armies is referred to and it is stated that Nabopolassar "hastened" after them:—

"The chronicler is at pains to assure us that he 'hastened after them' up the Euphrates. Were this strictly true it would be strange indeed that he failed to meet them. Our suspicion of the chronicler's candor at this point is deepened by the haste with which he passes on to the topic of a successful battle which took place, on his own showing, five months later, and not west of the Euphrates but east of the Tigris!"²⁷

A little later he suggests that possibly the chronicler introduced this latter topic "in order to gloss over the somewhat unheroic episode which precedes it." Yet, in spite of the doubt which he entertains of the reliability of this new source of information, Mr. Gadd assures us that "the facts it relates, even if not all the inferences it suggests, must be accepted without appeal . . ."²⁸ In other words, this Babylonian scribe may be suspected of concealing unpleasant facts or of a lack of candor in narrating them and still be regarded as a witness of such unimpeached authority that a doubtful "inference" suggested by an uncertain reading must be regarded as of more weight than the clear and specific declaration of an Old Testament writer. This is singular to say the least. The case would be somewhat different if there were strong external evidence to confirm the theory advanced by Mr. Gadd. But there is not. We are dealing with a period which Dr. Budge²⁹ describes as "historically little better than a blank" and as to which we have been, to quote again Mr. Gadd's own phrase, "in almost complete darkness." The only author-

²⁷ P. 7.

²⁸ P. 3.

²⁹ See his Preface to Mr. Gadd's volume. He is speaking particularly of the New Babylonian kingdom founded by Nabopolassar.

ity cited by Mr. Gadd in favor of his contention is Josephus, whose statement may for all we know to the contrary be in entire accord with Kings and Chronicles. The record of the new Chronicle ends abruptly as we have seen with the commencement of the year 608 and the last part of the record for 609 is illegible. It may well be that in the year 608 Necho fought first with Ashur-uballit, whose days after his failure to regain Harran were probably numbered, and then with the Babylonian army of Nabopolassar who was seeking to secure Mesopotamia and Syria for himself. This would not be the first time that an Egyptian monarch fought with two enemies in the course of the same campaign!

4. But this disposition to discredit Kings, is all the more unwarranted because, as has been pointed out, the account in Kings finds confirmation in other statements of this tablet. In Kings we read simply that "Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates." Our tablet tells us that there was a king of Assyria after the fall of Nineveh and that he was in western Mesopotamia or Syria shortly before the time of this expedition. If we reject the second hypothetical reference to the Egyptian army, or its equally hypothetical interpretation, it is easy to give several good reasons why the Egyptian Pharaoh might in 608 or thereabout have been making an expedition *against* the king of Assyria. There was a new king on the throne of the Pharaohs; and Necho may not have shared the pro-Assyrian policy of the last years of Psammeticus. Furthermore, the circumstances were different. Psammeticus may well have deemed it wise, as Mr. Gadd points out, to aid the king of Assyria to save his eastern capital, Nineveh, in the hope that Assyria might prove an adequate buffer state to protect him against the dread menace of the Scythians, or from an attack of the Medes, or the Babylonians. He may have felt that Assyria was too busy on the eastern frontier to prove a dangerous rival in Syria and Palestine. Necho faced a different situation. Nineveh had fallen. Ashur-uballit was trying to establish his kingdom at

Harran. If he succeeded, he might from it dominate Syria. If he failed, he might seek to retire into Syria, pushed westward by the Babylonians and their allies. Who this Ashur-uballit was we do not know. He may have been a traitor to Sin-shar-iškun and it may have been his defection which was responsible for the fall of Nineveh. If so Necho may have regarded him as an enemy, just because he, and Psammeticus before him, had been friendly toward the successors of Ashurbanipal. Necho may therefore have had many good reasons for going up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. He had, as Josephus expresses it, "a desire to reign over Asia." And now, he believed, the opportunity had arrived. And even if his successes were only ephemeral, the fact that he was in possession of "all Syria" (Josephus) when Nebuchadnezzar defeated him at Carchemish, may well mean that in 608 he had triumphed over both Ashur-uballit and the Babylonians, who as a matter of fact had after the fall of Nineveh fallen heir to a considerable part of the domain once ruled by Assyrian monarchs.

In this connection the account in 2 Chronicles is to be carefully compared. It gives us the words of Necho's message to Josiah and its cryptic phrasing may indicate that Necho either did not know or did not wish to state whom he expected to meet at Carchemish. "The house wherewith I have war" (literally, "the house of my warfare") may mean that Necho was actually in doubt as to what state of affairs he would find confronting him on the Euphrates and was merely determined to defend his claim to Syria against all comers, a claim which, in dealing with Josiah, he did not deem it wise to refer to more explicitly. If this were the case, the words, "against the king of Assyria," as found in Kings, could be understood as a succinct description of the expedition written from the standpoint of the outcome. If, on the contrary, he had the king of Assyria definitely in mind, his failure to mention him explicitly might mean that the breach with Assyria was a recent one or perhaps was yet to take place.

In view of the interest which attaches to this tablet as an

in all probability nearly contemporary document which throws welcome light upon a critical period in ancient history, a period regarding which historians have long been groping in the dark, it is to be regretted that the discovery should be made the occasion for wholly unwarranted attacks upon the Old Testament. The student of ancient history, whether his interest be primarily Biblical or archaeological may well take to heart the wise counsel of Professor Edward Mack: "Surely the time has come, when all fair-minded men should recognize that a clear and straightforward declaration of the Sacred Scriptures is not to be summarily rejected because of its apparent contradiction by some unknown and irresponsible person who could stamp clay or chisel stone. It has been all too common that archaeological and critical adventurers have doubted and required accurate proofs of every Bible statement, but have been ready to give credence to any statement from any ancient pagan sources." If Professor Mack felt justified in speaking thus of the actual statements of the monuments, what shall we say of a conjectural interpretation of a questionable reading of one of these sources?

Princeton

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