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Miscellanea

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Miscellanea

The Possibility of Miracles

In the July 30, 1942, issue of the *Watchman-Examiner* (Baptist) Prof. William Hazer Wrighton of the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa., submits a helpful discussion of miracles in an article entitled "Miracles and the Laws of Nature." We reprint a part of the article.

"If we seek the answer to the question, Are miracles possible? we will finally conclude that they are actualities, possible at any time, but occurring only when the Supreme Will would have them. This will work through the medium of the material and living things which it has already created. It is a perfectly reasonable happening, since it is willed by the Supreme Will, and since it is not contrary to any external forces and none of these forces have to be suspended for its operation. 'A "miracle" is not a mere marvel; it is rather an event caused by a direct or immediate exercise of the Supreme Will, acting either above and independent of natural forces, as in creation or in raising the dead—or else in co-operation with natural forces, as in the provision of quail for Israel in the desert; these latter have sometimes been termed "special providences." Let it be clear that evangelical Christianity does not hold that miracles are wrought or produced by simply natural forces alone; if so, they would not be miracles.'

"Some people believe that miracles are impossible because of the 'uniformity of natural laws,' but we must remember that the term 'law' as used here is 'just another name for an apparent usual mode of action—it is not a principle of action, it simply shows how, not why. Put into terms of cause and effect, this "uniformity" means, merely, the same causes, acting under the same conditions, produce the same results; i. e., the course of nature is uniform until causes other than those currently operating intervene. Clearly, this does not prevent the introduction of a new cause or condition at any time. . . . As Professor Albertus Pieters says, "No law of nature is suspended or violated when personal causation is added to natural causation.'" When I raise my hand, I do not contradict the law of gravitation, I transcend it by the law of free personality. Personality is a cause. Moral will is itself a cause; it can initiate.

"Again, uniformity of natural laws involves a creative Intelligence—it can't come from chance. But intelligence involves the power of choice, or will. Hence, nature manifests the will of its supernatural Creator, but only so far as He has established a given sequence for natural occurrences and has instituted the physical causes by which that sequence is secured. Clearly, this cannot limit a further exercise of that will; else you would have the anomaly of the first cause (God) being subject to effect (nature)—a plain absurdity. So, when God further and directly manifests in nature His will—beyond that seen in existing natural laws—you have a miracle. This plainly evidences the essential

freedom of the Divine Will. Accordingly, one who recognizes the fact of a personal God cannot deny the possibility of miracles. In short, the term 'uniform law' does not express an immutable principle according to which events in nature must occur, but is only a name for the manner in which they have been observed to recur.

"The true miracle is added evidence of the superiority of spiritual over material things and a token of that infinite benevolence which seeks to reconcile men to their Maker. Man's dire need and helplessness—even in material matters—would sometimes require an exercise of omnipotent power for redemptive ends. That the Supernatural One has sometimes shown His supernatural power is the more probable after His having already done so in the work of creation. Yet, miracles were ever economically used and only at certain great and decisive epochs in the carrying out of the redemptive plan."

Sir (William Matthew) Flinders Petrie

On July 28, 1942, there died in Jerusalem at the advanced age of 89 years "the patriarch of scientific archeology, the man who made ancient Egypt intelligible to the modern world" (cf. *Time*, Aug. 10, 1942).

Great wars usually bring to an end many great peace-time pursuits and among these, missions and archeological excavations. The present world war made it necessary for *Time* to confine its obituary of Sir Flinders Petrie to 27 meager lines. Other periodicals passed him by altogether, so that this prominent English excavator, famous the world over because of his amazing discoveries, died in relative obscurity.

Perhaps this quiet, peaceful departure, unnoticed by the nations now destroying one another, was quite fitting to a man so modest, deeply pious, and altogether oblivious to his own glory as was Sir Petrie. Dr. M. G. Kyle, who knew him well and who at times joined him in his spadework, once told the writer of his great modesty and humility, joined with invincible determination and restless aggressiveness. Early in the morning before taking up the day's task, the men would gather around the camp fire (for Oriental nights are often cool) to read the Scriptures and invoke upon their enterprise God's blessings to His glory.

Modern archeological excavations in Bible lands with rich discoveries so convincing as once for all to stop the mouths of carping, Bible-blaspheming higher critics, certainly belong to God's own self-vindication in this last time of the world's existence, as much perhaps as do the great foreign mission enterprises of this and the last century. Christ's prophecy "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14) awaited fulfillment, and Christian archeologists have done their share that it might be fulfilled, since they established the reliability of the Bible also in historical and scientific matters. The armchair higher critic who meant to destroy God's Book by his fanciful, but preposterous theories was overcome by the archeologist's spade.

Sir Flinders Petrie lived to be the "patriarch" of all Bible-land diggers. His last years were given largely to the sorting of the abundant material he had dug up and to the array of the overwhelming evidence on be-

half of the truthfulness of the Old Testament. The British *Who's Who* strangely describes his recreations as follows: excavating, collecting antiquities, photographing. If these were his avocations, then his vocation consisted in teaching, either *viva voce* or by writing.

Sir Flinders Petrie was born on June 3, 1853, the son of William Petrie, a civil engineer of prominence, and of Anne, daughter of Captain Matthew Flinders, famous Australian explorer.

After having been educated privately, he became interested in archeological research, and between 1875 and 1880 he studied the ancient British remains at Stonehenge and elsewhere. The fruits of this early scientific excavation work were two books, *Inductive Metrology* (1875) and *Stonehenge* (1880). From 1880 to 1924 he excavated in Egypt, beginning with the pyramids at Gizeh and following up this work by excavations at the great Temple at Tanis (1884). He discovered and explored the long-lost Greek city of Naucratis in the Delta (1885) and the ancient towns of Am and Daphnae (1886). Here he found important remains of the time when these places were inhabited by the Pharaohs.

Between 1888 and 1892 he labored in the Fayum, opening such places as Hawara, Kahun, and Lachish. In 1892 he discovered the ancient temple at Medum. Much of this work was done in connection with the Palestine Exploration Fund, and by it he established his reputation as the foremost scientific explorer and archeologist of his time. In 1892 he was elected Edwards professor of Egyptology, University College, London. In 1894 he founded the Egyptian Research Account, which in 1905 was reorganized as the British School of Archeology in Egypt. Perhaps his most important work was that done in connection with the investigation of the site of Memphis. Flinders Petrie was knighted in 1923. He resigned his professorship in 1933.

Besides a long list of monographs on special subjects in his field, he wrote a large number of books on archeological, historical, and anthropological themes. The British *Who's Who* (1933) lists 76 works written by him between 1875 and 1931, and his pen remained busy practically to the time of his death.

Which of his many books is the most important depends largely on the judgment of the individual reader, for at this point the subjective evaluation of his works is decisive. But very popular have been his *Ten Years' Diggings in Egypt* (1893); *History of Egypt* (1894-1905); *Religion and Conscience in Ancient Egypt* (1898); *Hyksos and Israelite Cities* (1906); *Religion of Ancient Egypt* (1906); *Revolution of Civilization* (1911); *Eastern Explorations* (1919); *Religious Life in Ancient Egypt* (1924); *Descriptive Sociology of Ancient Egypt* (1926); *Ancient Gaza* (1931); *Seventy Years in Archaeology* (1931).

In his interesting monograph *The Old Testament and Modern Discovery* Stephen L. Caiger writes: "Modern discovery has shed such a brilliant light upon the Bible that it may almost be said to have rediscovered the Book itself. Of the Old Testament in particular it has given us a clearer and more comprehensive view than was ever possible before and has thus succeeded in making the oldest collections of writings in the world one of the freshest and most fascinating studies of the day" (p. IX).

Sir Flinders Petrie belongs to the great archeologists who have had a large share in accomplishing this noble work. Time is right when it says: "Other archeologists, notably the late great James Henry Breasted, dug as brilliantly into the antique past. But none denied having built on the dramatic ruins uncovered over 62 years by Sir Flinders Petrie."

J. T. M.

Remarks on Music in Our Church Services

The summer of 1941 at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest, Ill., Dr. Edward Rechlin, known in our circles as one of the foremost interpreters of Bach now living, delivered a lecture (the joint product of himself and his daughter, Miss Henrietta Rechlin) which was enthusiastically received by his audience and from which a paragraph is here submitted.

"True as it is that there is a fraction of the expression of any Christian faith which is common to all Christians, yet we know that Protestantism has, in that it expresses a world philosophy different from the Catholic, an essentially different culture. The individual Protestant is himself one of the royal priesthood; he stands alone with his saving faith, without intermediaries to shield him, without vestments and incense to opiate him into forgetting his personal responsibility. His religion is not only part of life and the whole duty of only his priest; it is his whole life, and the expression of his faith is then the statement in musical language not of the temporary, the artificially produced moment of elation, but of his oneness with God throughout every day of all his life. His music is individual and much more all-inclusive of life than is that of the Catholic Christian, and the most important form in which it has appeared in history is the hymn of supplication and praise. Deserted though the Protestant may be by all on earth, even by his Church, yet the symphony of the hymn remains to him to declare his immediate contact with his God. If this hymn represents the deepest expression of faith, it should also be the basis for communal musical worship, which is, after all, the gathering together of two or three, each of whom has the desire to sing to the Lord his praise, his own needs, and the needs of his fellow men. We realize at once that the Lutheran *chorale* fulfills the requirements for such worship. That it has been replaced to a large extent by expressions of later types of Protestantism is due not to any fault in the *chorale*, but rather to the changed philosophy which has permeated Protestant bodies during the years following the Reformation. We need only think back to the Rationalistic Movement which, sweeping the Protestant world from the year in which Johann Sebastian Bach died and taking with it even his great son Karl Philipp Emmanuel, weakened the might of the all-conquering faith which had effected the Reformation.

Since the musical part of our church services is often not given the importance that rightfully belongs to it and since in this sphere our Church possesses treasures which are viewed with warmest admiration by all great musicians, we ask our readers to ponder carefully the thoughts here submitted.

A.

On the Book of Mormon

The Book of Mormon was immediately questioned upon its first publication, according to a series of articles now running in *The United Presbyterian*. The pertinent passage in one of the articles runs as follows:

When Joseph Smith's book was published, it was immediately challenged as a manuscript which had been stolen from the home of the widow of the Rev. Solomon Spaulding, a Presbyterian minister, residing in Ontario, N. Y. Mrs. Spaulding swore that her husband had written it as a work of fiction to meet the deep interest created by the recent discovery of the ancient ruins in Central America, Mexico, the Cliff Dwellers and Mound Builders (of Ohio).

She said that her husband prepared two copies. One was sent to Mr. Patterson, a bookseller and printer of Pittsburgh, Pa., asking its publication. Mr. Patterson and Mr. Spaulding both died soon after, and the manuscript was not returned. The other manuscript mysteriously disappeared from her trunk when Joseph Smith, in his early years, was digging a well for her next-door neighbor. She, a brother of her husband, Mr. Redick McKee, who had lived in the Spaulding home, Mr. Joseph Miller of Washington County, Pa., and others who had frequently heard Mr. Spaulding read the manuscript, made affidavit that they were well acquainted with the Spaulding manuscript and knew positively that it, with numerous interpolations and omissions, inserted after it was stolen, was the Book of Mormon.

Another curious bit of history helped to confirm this. While Smith and his fellow workmen were digging the well mentioned above, they unearthed a beautiful white stone, almost transparent. It was given to the employers' children. It also disappeared at the same time with the manuscript, and these persons identified it as the "Urim and Thummim" used by Smith to interpret the golden leaves.

Another interesting fact is that some years ago President Fairchild of Oberlin College, while delving among old volumes in the college library, found the copy of the manuscript which had been given to Mr. Patterson of Pittsburgh and lost. This manuscript was the same as the Book of Mormon without the omissions and interpolations mentioned above. It would be hard to find a case more clearly proved. This, however, is all declared by Mormon leaders to be false and is unknown to the masses of Mormons.

The Presbyterian

An Attack on the Reliability of the Scriptures

As a review in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* shows, Dr. Millar Burrows of the American School of Oriental Research in a recent book entitled "What Mean These Stones?" makes the statement that at least in two points archaeology contradicts the statements of the Bible. The reviewer says, "One of these is the case of Darius the Mede (Dan. 5:31; 9:1; 11:1), who is said to have conquered Babylon. This personage has not been discovered by archaeological research, which on the contrary clearly seems to prove that the conquest was carried out by Cyrus the Persian. No one familiar with the facts can deny that there is an apparent contradiction. However, on the same page (277) Dr. Burrows recounts the

solution which archaeology has already brought to what seemed to be an equally obvious contradiction, in the case of another personage from the same book of Daniel, namely, Belshazzar. It seemed impossible that there could be any king of Babylon named Belshazzar, since scholars possessed a complete list of the later kings of Babylon, no Belshazzar appearing among them. The solution, when found, was simple. Belshazzar was reigning as a co-king with his father, who was in Arabia. It would be foolish to try to suggest a solution to the problem of Darius the Mede when so many scholars have already worked on it. But in view of the very numerous vindications of the Bible in similar circumstances, many of which vindications our author relates, it would seem the part of prudence to name the case of Darius a *seeming* contradiction while awaiting further light on the question, which we may confidently expect will eventually come. — The other contradiction named by Dr. Burrows is the case of the Philistines mentioned in Genesis 26. All the indications of archaeology are to the effect that the Philistines first invaded Palestine about 1200 B.C., so that the conclusion would seem to be that either the Bible is wrong or else archaeology has erred. No archaeologists would accept the latter conclusion when the evidence is so strong. However, if eminent scientists in this field are willing to postulate two invasions of Palestine by the Hebrews, more than a century apart, on the basis of archaeological findings, would it not be just as logical to assume two invasions by the Philistines, the first one of which would be timed to fit the conditions of Genesis 26? It need not have been a very large invasion to meet Biblical requirements, and hence what traces it had left could easily have escaped the excavators thus far. This is just one hypothesis, which may not be correct, but it would be more prudent to denominate this case also a *seeming* contradiction, and to await further information on this matter likewise."

We submit the above because our pastors and other teachers of religion in our Church should be informed on attacks made on the inerrancy of the Scriptures. At the same time the two instances mentioned demonstrate how little the Bible has to fear from a truly impartial, objective study of historical facts.

W. ARNDT

The Federal Council and Its Antecedents

While we condemn the unionistic principles on which the Federal Council of Churches is founded, our readers ought to be acquainted with its character and its methods of work. From the *Lutheran* we reprint the following sketch of its historical background and its various organizational features, written by Dr. Charles Schaeffer of the Evangelical and Reformed Church:

"The first ecumenical movement in America occurred just 200 years ago, in 1742, under Zinzendorf — when he sought to bring the Protestant bodies among the German-speaking people of Pennsylvania into one body known as "The Congregation of God in Spirit." This movement, however, failed, for reasons which need not now be enumerated. But the urge for united action on the part of religious bodies persisted. The Reformed Churches of the Netherlands a few years later raised the in-

quiry as to the possibility of effecting a union between the Presbyterians, the Dutch Reformed, and the German Reformed Church as in Pennsylvania. But this plan was likewise blocked. The missionary impulse, to care for the spiritual life of frontier settlements, led the churches of New England and the Middle Colonies to organize societies of a missionary character which disclaimed any sectarian objective.

"These societies multiplied rapidly. The avowed purpose was to create a non-sectarian agency or agencies under which all benevolently disposed persons could co-operate. Some of these societies were named after the States, but there were others of a variety of names, like Cent Societies, Female Missionary Societies, Young People's Societies, Youth's Missionary Societies, Children's Cent Societies, etc. Then came the American Tract Society and the American Bible Society and the American Sunday School Union, formed in 1824.

"At the opening of the century in 1801 the Plan of Union was formed by the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists. Out of this developed the American Home Missionary Society in 1826, in which Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and others joined to establish churches in unchurched sections of the country. Then came the Evangelical Alliance for the United States, as the American branch of the Evangelical Alliance of England in 1846. The American branch was organized in 1867. The Young Men's Christian Association followed in 1851 and the Young Women's Christian Association in 1858. The Women's Christian Temperance Union, representing women of all denominations, and the Young People's Society Christian Endeavor in 1883, the Students' Volunteer Movement in 1886, and the Laymen's Missionary Movement, organized in 1906. All these cut across denominational lines and pioneered in the field of co-operative effort.

Then came the Federal Council, the preliminary meeting of which was held in 1905 and the formal organization in 1908. The Foreign Missions Conference had already been founded in 1892. The Home Missions Council was organized in March, 1908, and the Council of Women for Home Missions in the fall of the same year. State and local interdenominational organizations were formed at a comparatively early date. The development of the spirit of co-operation shows itself in the fact that since the opening of the present century an indefinitely large number of local interdenominational organizations have been formed for the purpose of doing work unitedly. More than 1,300 such organizations are known to exist. This includes ministerial associations and similar groups.

"Apart from State, City, or Local Councils, there emerged a number of Interdenominational Agencies with a view of co-ordinating and integrating specific types of work. The following eight were definitely organized with offices and staffs, with a total operating budget of \$780,000 annually. They are: The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the International Council of Religious Education, the Home Missions' Council of North America, the Foreign Missions' Conference of North America, the Council of Church Boards of Education, the National Council of Church Women, the United Stewardship Council of

the United States and Canada, the Missionary Education Movement of the United States and Canada.

"For some time in the past the leaders in these various organizations were aware of overlapping at many points and at times of working at cross-purposes. Consequently, the question presented itself, whether the time had not come to unite the union agencies into something that would give the impression of and express the closer solidarity of the same. Consequently in 1940 a committee was appointed representing the first six of these agencies to make a preliminary study of the possibility of forming closer relations among these agencies." A.

"Αγχι, Luke 24:21

Exegetes are in disagreement on the precise interpretation of the way in which Luke employs the verb *ἀγχι* in the passage mentioned. As to the general meaning of the passage there is no difficulty. The A.V. rendering "today is the third day since these things were done" quite satisfactorily expresses the sense. What interpreters are not agreed on is the question whether *ἀγχι* is a personal verb or whether it must be considered an impersonal one. Plummer in his *Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Luke* thus describes the view of exegetical writers: "The verb is probably impersonal, 'one is keeping the third day, we are at the third day' (Grotius, Bengel, De Wette, Noesgen, Wordsworth, Hahn). Perhaps we may understand *ὁ Ἰησοῦς* (Meyer, Godet, Weiss, Alford): the speaker has an impression that there was a prediction about the third day. But it is not probable that either *ὁ ἡλῖος*, or *ὁ οὐρανός*, or *χρόνος*, or *Ἰσραήλ* is to be supplied. Compare *περιέχει ἐν γραφῇ* (1 Pet. 2:6)." Blass-Debrunner, one of the best modern grammars, takes the view that *ἀγχι* is impersonal (par. 129). It seems to me that the question is decided in favor of the personal construction by a sentence in the famous quotation found in the *Antiquities of Josephus* (XVIII, 3, 3) with reference to Christ. Whether these words are genuine or not we need not now investigate. They at any rate are evidence as to Greek usage. Having stated that even after Christ's death his followers clung to him, the passage continues, *ἐφάνη γὰρ αὐτοῖς τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν πάλιν ζῶν*, "for he appeared to them on the third day being alive again." The phrase *τρίτην ἔχων ἡμέραν* can hardly be translated literally. It seems to be a perfect counterpart of *τρίτην ταύτην ἡμέραν ἀγχι*. That the Josephus passage has the personal construction in the phrase submitted is clear. Hence I think that the passage in Luke 24:21 must be viewed the same way. The subject of *ἀγχι* is Jesus. We have no idiom in our language which resembles the Greek one and hence have to translate like the King James Version.

W. ARNDT