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A Dummy Between Two Mummies.

We dislike to take Dr. Breasted to task. His age, his years of hard work in the field of archeology, and the very dignity of his profession demand respect. But he has gone beyond the range of decency in his recent utterances at the dedication of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago, and his impertinence should not pass unrebuked. We take it that he was quoted correctly in the papers; a week has passed since his speech was reported and no letter of correction has appeared. The offensive passage reads:

"Not projected from the outside into a world of unworthy men by some mystic process which our old school theologians call inspiration or revelation, but springing out of man's own life, illumining the darkness of social disillusionment and inner conflict, a glorious vindication of the worth of man, the dawn of the age of conscience and character broke upon the world, a historically datable event, about 2,000 B.C."

To illustrate his thesis (or perhaps to prove it - for he gives no other evidence to save himself from the charge of gratuitous assumption) he cites two exhibits. One is a collection of painted limestone figures taken from the tomb of a cemetery official of 5,000 years ago; they represent his household "engaged in grinding flour, mixing and making bread, brewing beer, slaughtering cattle and poultry and cooking them," and so forth. The other is an inscription inside a coffin "containing the earliest intimations that happiness in the next world will be dependent on worthy moral conduct in this world." He dates the mummy of this coffin perhaps 500 years later than the cemetery official. Then he adds:

"Today you may walk between these two cases in the museum and, standing there, contemplate the original evidences, the actual tokens of the supreme transition in the life of man in its rise from savagery to civilization; the first defeat of materialism - the earliest dawn of conscience, the discovery of character, the emergence of social idealism. - This tremendous transition went on as a process entirely independent of religion. It transformed religion, however, for it brought forth for the first time a god of brotherly kindness. While men lived as tillers of the soil they discerned only a god of fertility; when the state arose and men caught their first vision of a supreme personality they called their god a king. - Then when society developed and the friction and ferment of social struggle had taught men kindness and forbearance, they saw a god of character and of brotherly kindness whom they called 'the good shepherd,' two thousand years before the Good Shepherd of Christian faith."

By that same process of reasoning we can prove that Herbert Hoover never existed. Let us suppose a scene in the Attic Archeological Congress of A.D. 6,931. Dr. Procopius Pretzelbender has just read his paper on President Hoover and the Moratorium of 1931. He is receiving the plaudits of his learned colleagues when Dr. Adolphus Windbag arises, gravely adjusts his spectacles, and announces: "It hurts me more than it hurts Dr. Pretzelbender, but I must denounce him as a fraud. There was never such a man as Herbert Hoover. I have here a cook book of the year 1931, and I find in it not a single mention of Herbert Hoover, not so much as a fried chicken, a cocktail, or a leaf of lettuce named for him."

Dr. Breasted and his fellow-agnostics have spent millions of dollars excavating in Africa and the Levant in a vain attempt to disprove the historical character of the Scriptures. What they have succeeded in doing is to confirm, bit by bit, the claims of the Bible to authenticity. Dr. Breasted's own collection will confirm the language, the topography, the geography of the Mosaic account. Was Moses deceived? The thought is impossible if you read his account attentively. Could he have deceived the Jews? Could he have had a motive for so doing? Impossible. And Moses tells us where the soul began and where character began. God lets people make fools of themselves when they are too wrapped in their own conceit. Dr. Breasted should stick to his shovel and let clearer heads interpret the mummies he unearths.