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Editorial

THE death of Sir Leonard Woolley on 20 February, 1960, at the age of 79 took away from us yet another of the small band of distinguished British archaeologists who did so much, mainly between the two Great Wars, to establish in this country a high tradition of technique and discipline. He was born in 1880, the year which saw Schliemann working at Orchomenos, Flinders Petrie beginning work in Egypt and Pitt-Rivers starting his excavations in Cranborne Chase; and to our younger generation, Woolley seemed to have around him something of the aura of the heroes of an earlier archaeology, and to call back the romance and excitement of Layard, Rawlinson, Schliemann and Petrie and the days when archaeology itself was young. He will be remembered as a great excavator, but also as one who could write simply and clearly for a wide public. His *Ur of the Chaldees*, and *The Sumerians*, and, most of all, his *Digging up the Past*, first published in 1930 (and later reissued by Pelican Books in 1937), were noteworthy essays in the very difficult art of archaeological *haute-vulgarisation*.

For us, however, one of Woolley's most interesting and delightful popular books was *Spadework*, a sort of archaeological autobiography first published in 1953, and we reread it when we heard he was dead. It contains two of the finest archaeological anecdotes ever. The first is the story of how Leonard Woolley became an archaeologist at all, and it is summarized in two sentences: 'I have seldom been more surprised than I was when the Warden of New College told me that he had decided that I should be an archaeologist. . . . I must confess that when the prospect did present itself, not as a mere idea to be played with (for one did not lightly play with the Warden's decisions) but as something definite and settled, I was not altogether happy about it.' The second is the story of how Woolley dug for the first time—at Corbridge. Haverfield had agreed to supervise the excavations there and Woolley was put in charge of them. 'In point of fact I had never so much as seen an excavation,' he writes. 'I had never studied archaeological methods even from books (there were none at that time dealing with the subject), and I had not any idea of how to make a survey or a ground plan: apart from being used to handling antiquities in a museum, and that for only a few months, I had no qualifications at all.' Woolley records his disappointment at the fact that Haverfield only looked in at the excavations one day a week, but his pleasure at the fact that the plans were being done by W. H. Knowles. He concludes, 'The work went very merrily . . . and we were all . . . happily unconscious of the low standard of our performance, nor did anyone from outside suggest that it might have been better: actually of course it did improve with time, as both we and our workmen learned our job.'

Thus began a great archaeological excavator; the decision of a Warden and the luck of

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Corbridge—luck that produced the Corbridge Lion. Woolley's reluctance to become an archaeologist was that for him 'archaeology meant a life spent inside a museum, whereas I preferred the open air and was more interested in my fellow men than in dead-and-gone things.' As it happened, his life was to be spent in the open air and he always thought of himself as essentially a field archaeologist. He did not understand by this phrase what Crawford meant, using as Crawford did the English archaeological usage of Williams Freeman. Indeed, when Woolley came to review Crawford's *Archaeology in the Field*, he wrote 'I must admit that in one respect this book gave me a rather unpleasant shock. For the best part of fifty years, since I gave up museum work for digging, I have called myself a field archaeologist, and now Dr Crawford assures me that "field archaeology does not cover excavation"' (*Observer*, 22 February, 1953).

Disputes as to what constitutes field archaeology apart, Woolley, like Crawford, had a clear and inspiring vision of the perspectives of archaeology. He wrote 'the real end of archaeology is, through the dead and gone things, to get at the history and minds of dead and gone men.' These were the sort of words which could have been found in *Man and his Past* or any editorial in ANTIQUITY from 1927 to 1957.



Although prehistoric archaeology has been in existence as a scientific humanity for nearly a hundred and fifty years, very few prehistorians have, as yet, felt that they had both the archaeological scholarship and the philosophical and historical background to essay an account of the new perspective of man's past which prehistory provides—or appears to provide to us—at the present day. Two such essays have, however, appeared in English in the last few months. The first is 'Perspectives in Prehistory', his Presidential address to the Prehistoric Society by Professor J. G. D. Clark (*Proc. Preh. Soc.*, 1959, 1), and, the second, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's *The Phenomenon of Man* (London, Collins, 1959, 25s.). In his Presidential Address, Grahame Clark discusses the varying approaches to the study of antiquity, warmly commending, as we all do, the way in which Gordon Childe broke down the insularity of British prehistory, but commending even more warmly the contribution of O. G. S. Crawford. He quoted the words of Crawford on the first page of the first number of ANTIQUITY. 'Our field is the Earth, our range in time a million years or so, and our subject the human race . . .', and adds that this 'was no idle gesture.' Clark went on to say, 'This is a view of prehistory I think we would all do well to entertain because, however limited as to time and place our own interests in prehistory may be, our studies will gain immeasurably if we only see them in the widest perspectives. Personally I would go further and admit that for me prehistory is only worth pursuing because it sets not merely history but contemporary life in the kind of perspective allowed, and in the final resort necessitated, by modern science.'

But what really are these perspectives of prehistory—these widest perspectives? One wonders what Childe and Crawford and Woolley would have thought of *The Phenomenon of Man*, or for that matter what contemporary archaeologists think of this work of Teilhard de Chardin, for the book has been reviewed hitherto mainly by non-archaeologists. *The Phenomenon of Man* was written by Teilhard de Chardin in Peking between June 1938 and June 1940 and revised with a Preface dated Paris, March 1947, and an Appendix dated Rome, October 1948. This last year was the one in which he was forbidden by his Church to put forward his candidature for the Professorship in the Collège de France vacant by the resignation by age of his friend and mentor the Abbé Henri Breuil. It was widely known in Paris, in France as a whole and in England that he would probably have been elected to

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this post and his non-candidature must have been a heavy blow to him. Even heavier was the refusal by Rome in 1950 of permission to publish the book now presented to us in English. In 1951 Teilhard de Chardin moved to New York to work with the Wenner-Gren Foundation. He died in 1955 at the age of 74; his friends and admirers set up committees which are publishing his writings posthumously. *Le Phénomène Humain* was published in Paris in 1955 by *Les Editions du Seuil*, and now appears in English with a preface by Sir Julian Huxley.

Teilhard de Chardin's publishers in France and England describe *The Phenomenon of Man* as 'one of the outstanding intellectual events of the century' and 'a key book of our time'. In his preface to the English edition Sir Julian Huxley describes it as 'a very remarkable work by a very remarkable human being'. In *Le Figaro Littéraire*, André Rousseaux declared that 'not since the 12th century has there been such a satisfying exposition of the perfect understanding between the material world and that of Christ Incarnate', and Arnold Toynbee was sure the book gave 'our generation something that is sorely needs'. On the other hand, Alasdair MacIntyre in the *Guardian* described the book as 'monumentally dull' and said, with reason, that 'the attempt to turn the concept of evolution into a metaphysical key to the universe is one of the graveyards of the intellect, and the present work is merely one more testimony to that fact.'

Everyone interested in human history ought, I am afraid, to read *The Phenomenon of Man*: all who knew of this Jesuit palaeontologist and archaeologist will want to know his views on the perspective of prehistory. Let no one suppose it is easy reading. To begin with, Teilhard de Chardin has invented a new language with words like *hominization* and *complexification*, *planetization* and the *noosphere*, and the translator has had to wrestle with these neologues as well as the complexities of metaphysics. And the book is, by its very nature, out of date; the main text was written over ten years ago, before radio-carbon dating had produced the new prehistory we are all learning at the moment. And there are strange statements which were inaccurate even ten years ago like the declaration that America was first peopled in Neolithic times.

Let us allow all these difficulties. What is the core of Teilhard de Chardin's observations? His overall thesis seems to be that he is describing the evolution of the world from the primal stuff of the universe through life to consciousness and man, and its probable future progression to the omega point. To him 'Religion and science are the two conjugated faces or phases of one and the same act of complete knowledge,' and this was the point of view set out by Breuil in his Huxley Memorial Lecture for 1941 when he said 'Faith and Science in well-balanced minds have ceased to conflict, and correspond to two orders of reality which our minds attain by different, but not adverse, routes.'

These are fine words, but Teilhard de Chardin's book does not show us how he understands, or wants us to understand, the interaction or conjugation of religion and science into the same act of knowledge. Here is the first great disappointment of a thoughtful book written by a priest with a very wide scientific knowledge and experience. The second and major disappointment is that, in the end, we seem no wiser about prehistoric perspectives than when we started. Teilhard de Chardin quotes Breuil as saying to him: 'We have only just cast off the last moorings which held us to the Neolithic Age.' If this means what it appears to mean we ought now to be able to set out history in the perspective of the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic, but no one seems able to do it satisfactorily. Certainly not Teilhard de Chardin in *The Phenomenon of Man*, which, for all its publicity, is vague, woolly, unconvincing, and dull. Teilhard de Chardin made a brave effort at what he might have called perspectivization (to offer him another of his horrid neologues), but his failure should not dissuade others from attempting to set the phenomenon of human physical

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evolution and prehistorical cultural development in their widest biological and historical contexts.

The prehistory of man is not yet integrated into the general study of human history; we have a vista down the long corridors of time, but no real perspectives which the intelligent layman can appreciate. If comparable attempts to that of Teilhard de Chardin are not made from time to time archaeology will become a deadly dull story of potforms and striking platforms. To quote Woolley again, 'The importance of our archaeological material is that it throws light on the history of men very like ourselves . . . and this enlightenment is not merely for the specialist. . . . The opening up of the world affects us all, becomes part of the general intellectual inheritance. . . . The justification of archaeology is that it does in the end concern everyone.'

Of course it concerns everyone, and must be made to concern everyone. As we write these words, speeding across France in the *Barcelona Express*, our disappointment at not lingering in the Dordogne or walking on the *causses* tempered by the delights of seeing the megaliths of Gerona in a day or two, it seems to us that the problems of synthesis and communication are still very rarely being met by professional archaeologists. A splendidly successful example was Stuart Piggott's *Scotland Before History*, and so, in many ways, was Richard Atkinson's *Stonehenge* and his *Stonehenge and Avebury*. But the problems of getting scholars to write clearly and lucidly and simply yet authoritatively for a wide public of professional and general readers are great, as all editors will know. One of the immediately successful ways is the graphic representation of the past by picture and map and this is why we commend in the highest possible terms the recently published *Atlas of the Classical World* (Nelson, London and Edinburgh, 1959, 70s.). This indispensable book, first published in Amsterdam as the *Atlas van de Antieke Wereld* is a successor to the already well known *Atlas of the Bible* (edited by Grollenberg) and the *Atlas of the Early Christian World* (edited by Ven der Meer and Christine Mohrmann), and reviewed in an earlier number of this journal (ANTIQUITY, 1959, 222). It is a beautiful production and with its clever interweaving of text, photographs and maps produces a guide to the phenomenon of classical man which is immediately understandable by all. Here is *haute-vulgarisation* at its very best—organized scholarship displayed in an authoritative and readable way.

Is it too much to hope that Messrs Nelson and their continental associates can organize for us an *Atlas of the Prehistoric World*? Such a work is badly needed, and might do more for the real understanding of prehistory than many a lucubration on perspective and phenomenon, including these present train-jerked words. We must get life back into the aridity of taxonomy and typology, man back into the forefront of a subject which is becoming a dry study of tool-types and type-tools. It was no accident that Woolley called one of his books *Dead Towns and Living Men*, no accident that he insisted that the study of dead and gone things was only valuable if it led to an understanding of dead and gone men. What was it Ophelia sang?

*He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone;
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.*

Let us not forget, though all we study in antiquity is dead and gone, there is more than the grass-green turf at the head of the men who are dead, and more than the stones at their heels. Otherwise we are no better than the collectors of the 18th century, even though we can lay up to our souls the flattering unction of being scientific.