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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR
OF
JAMES HENRY BREASTED
1865-1935

BY
JOHN A. WILSON

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James A. Dreated

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JAMES HENRY BREASTED

1865-1935

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INTRODUCTION

James Henry Breasted was the first American whose profession was ancient history. In that fact reside the corollaries that the times were ripe for such a study and that this man shaped the course of the study. These statements do scant justice to a man whose presentation of material carried his influence beyond the limits of college halls and made him a figure of international significance. He brought to America the realization that our cultural ancestry is rooted in the distant past and made European scholars aware of the peculiar contribution which American scholarship might make to humanistic research.

Although he was essentially an historian and his life was devoted to a study of the "career of man," he insisted that this study could not be divorced from the data presented by the physical and natural scientists. He gave active support to research in geology and palaeontology, in order that the story of man's sojourn on this planet might be as complete as possible.

FAMILY DATA

The Breasted line runs back to the Netherlands and thence ultimately to Denmark. The first record of the family in this country is in 1647, when Jan van Breestede was in New Amsterdam. This Dutch stock united with English stock, and a branch of the family moved west until Breasted's father Charles, settled as a hardware merchant in Rockford, Illinois.

In this town, about 80 miles northwest of Chicago, James Henry Breasted was born on August 27, 1865. The Midwest town and the period following the Civil War were important factors in shaping his outlook on life.

In 1894 he married Frances Hart, of Oakland, California. Their three children are Charles, James Henry, Jr., and Astrid.

Mrs. Breasted died in 1934. He married Imogen Hart Richmond, sister of his first wife, in 1935.

His death in New York City on December 2, 1935, was due to a hemolytic streptococcic infection contracted as he returned from a trip to the Near East.

THE STUDENT PERIOD, 1888-1894

Breasted received his B.A. at North Central College (then North-Western College) at Naperville, Illinois, in 1888. The necessity for earning a part of his way through college and seminary set him at a number of tasks, such as working in a pharmacy. Essential to his early background was the belief that learning was highly prized, but it was also highly priced and one must work hard to gain it.

The young man was destined for the Congregational ministry and went on from college to the Chicago Theological Seminary. His family life had been strongly religious in a quiet assurance. The teachings of the seminary did not harmonize with Breasted's ideas on theology and doctrine. He did not complete the course. However, a new interest had been awakened. As a small boy he had been fascinated by the illustrations in Layard's "Discoveries among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon." Now the study of Hebrew revived some of the small boy's excitement over a distant world. He went to Yale University in 1890 for graduate study in the Hebrew language.

Yale was a stimulating place because of the electric personality of William Rainey Harper, who had a new and interesting method of teaching Hebrew, and who was later to become the first president of the University of Chicago. In this environment at New Haven, Breasted's career took its definite shape. In 1892 he received his M.A. With the encouragement of Harper, he went to Europe for study in Egyptian.

It should be pointed out that in 1892 Oriental studies—with the exception of Hebrew for Old Testament work—were almost unknown in the United States. Scientific excavation had just begun, but the antiquity-hunter and the dilettante were still very

much in the field. The Egyptian hieroglyphs had been deciphered 70 years earlier, but there was still no orderly presentation of the Egyptian language in any text-book. Cuneiform studies were in essentially the same incoherent state. Translations were often intuitive rather than controlled by grammatical rule. Almost every history of the ancient Orient had its orientation in the Biblical and classical sources instead of using the increasing amount of original material. A few men had gained a greater mastery over their material, but they had not yet committed it to writing.

All of the progress which had been made up to 1890 was the product of European scholarship. Americans were aware of the new technique of excavation just introduced by the Englishman Petrie, of the brilliant historical writing of the Frenchman Maspero, of the grammatical studies of the Germans Delitzsch and Erman. But as yet there was no instruction in these lines in the United States, as no Americans were competent to teach the new disciplines.

Americans had been further removed from the European and Oriental scene and were preoccupied in making their own history, looking toward the future rather than the past. Interest in the past was firmly rooted in the Bible and in the Greek and Roman classics. Now the nation was more mature and could cast a reflective glance backward. It had reached its geographical boundaries and was conscious of a larger world. It is significant that Breasted was not the only American who went to Europe in the '90's to study ancient history.

As Yale had been an exciting place under the influence of Harper, so the University of Berlin was stimulating under the influence of Adolf Erman, the genial young Egyptologist. He was bringing the Egyptian language into scientific form and had just published a most satisfactory study of life in ancient Egypt. The brilliant group of young students attracted to his seminars was no less animating. There were days of intense study in an air electric with new ideas. There were occasional evenings of that whimsical geniality which the serious German student permits himself. The young man from a midwest town was drawn

into an entirely new world, in which he found himself able to compete on his own merits.

In 1894 he received his Ph.D. from the University of Berlin, writing a Latin dissertation on certain hymns of Akhenaton, the Egyptian heretic pharaoh. He became Assistant in Egyptology at the new University of Chicago.

THE RESEARCH PERIOD, 1894-1907

From 1894 until 1925 Breasted taught Egyptian at the University of Chicago, advancing from Assistant to the rank of Professor of Egyptology and Oriental History by 1905. During the first decade of his teaching pupils were few and far between. He was the only teacher of Egyptian in the country and was relatively unknown. To spread the gospel of his subject and to supplement his meager salary he traveled extensively in the United States giving popular lectures. The young scholar turned into the fluent interpreter.

During this first decade President Harper allowed him generous leaves of absence to pursue his work in Europe and Egypt. All this traveling was a serious drain on a temperament so taut. Throughout his active career he suffered severe attacks of indigestion. That same driving force which subjected him to these protracted attacks carried him through them to complete work which he wanted to do. When he took an arduous trip up the Nile in 1905-06 his doctor forbade him to travel without a physician in attendance. Breasted could not afford such a luxury, took the trip anyhow, and worked long every day under trying conditions. It is characteristic of him that when he was suffering severely at a later time he said: "I cannot walk . . . to my office . . . but I am going to Egypt, if I go on a stretcher!"

It has already been stated that the era of intuitive and individualistic Egyptologists was drawing to a close and that discipline was being introduced into the young science. Two corollaries of this were that co-operative activity was necessary to establish the new régime and that the existing documents must be re-examined in the light of a better understanding. None of

the new school was willing to take an old copy or an old translation at its face value. They wanted to make their own first-hand copies and translations. The notation "verified by my own collation" was essential to the final study of any document.

In 1897 the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences, with the assistance of the German government and the personal interest of the Emperor, began a dictionary of the ancient Egyptian (hieroglyphic) language. Individual scholars had compiled small glossaries before. This was to be a "complete" dictionary on historical principles, fully documented with references. Texts were to be copied and analysed by the most competent scholars. The work is still in process, now well into the publication stage.

Breasted became associated with this project and spent the years 1899-1901 traveling about Europe to make careful copies of the inscriptions in various museums. He was on a limited budget, so that it was not an easy period. But every week brought some new discovery, and that was compensation for a great deal of discomfort. Parenthetically, it might be noted here that the dictionary reached its publication stage in the 1920's. Germany was then a republic; there was no emperor to promote so learned a project. It was Breasted who called the dictionary to the attention of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., so that the volumes might be published in satisfactory form.

Along the course of the Nile River there are hundreds of inscribed temples and tombs, documents on the history of Egypt. Many of these had been copied in the nineteenth century. In view of the conditions limiting this earlier copying, it is no real disparagement to state that it was incomplete, haphazard, and lacking in linguistic competence. Year after year these monuments lose value, as they are exposed to water, weather, and vandalism. It is essential that they be recorded with care. Modern copyists have two great advantages over their predecessors: portable, rapid cameras and a much better understanding of Egyptian.

Breasted conceived the idea of copying *all* the monuments of ancient Egypt. It was a titanic project, characteristic of the man and of the University of Chicago at the time. The Univer-

sity of Chicago made no commitment to Breasted on the complete project, but he spent the two years 1905-06 and 1906-07 in recording the monuments of Nubia and the Sudan.

Those two years were difficult and adventurous. Breasted, his wife and son, with a photographer and a copyist, spent much of the time on small native boats, harried by local incompetence, plagues of gnats, weeks of sandstorms. Once they were shipwrecked in the Third Cataract, and it seemed that the entire season's work might be lost. When they finally emerged into calmer waters they carried a record of the historical monuments of pharaonic times along 1200 miles of river. It was an heroic undertaking.

President Harper had died in 1906, and the University of Chicago was facing a period of retrenchment. The ambitious plan to copy all the monuments of Egypt had to be abandoned, to be revived in modified form twenty years later. Breasted returned to his academic duties in Chicago.

THE PERIOD OF INTERPRETATION, 1905-1919

During the decade following 1894 Breasted was concerned chiefly with ancient Egyptian texts. His interest, however, was not in the linguistics of inscriptions but in their historical content. In 1906-07 he completed a colossal task by publishing translations of all the historical inscriptions of ancient Egypt down to the Persian period, 525 B. C. In view of the magnitude of the task the translations are very good, and the work is in daily use today. A characteristic feature of the study is its insistence on first-hand acquaintance with the inscriptions, whether by personal collation or the use of photographs.

These *Ancient Records of Egypt* were also the source materials for a connected account in *A History of Egypt*, published in 1905. This is still the best book on the subject, even though it lacks the results of the past thirty years of research. Breasted was planning a complete rewriting of the volume at the time of his death. The history was based directly on the *Ancient Records*, thus permitting the Egyptians to speak for themselves.

The book was scholarly and authoritative, but what lifted it out of the category of other histories was its charm. Breasted's style was lucid and attractive, and he wrote with a verve and enthusiasm which were infectious. Without distorting the facts presented, he exhibited the Egyptians as a people worthy of warm admiration and their career as a romance. The work loses considerably in attractiveness in its later chapters, which tell the story of an Egypt which had no longer an upward lifting force. Here the author's enthusiasm is not so keen. Despite that, there has been no better writing, even by Breasted himself.

The publication of the *Records* and the *History* made the young scholar a more widely known figure. His "barnstorming" lecture trips had laid the foundation for an understanding of his *History*. In the dozen years preceding 1905 successful and spectacular excavations had aroused an extraordinary interest in ancient Egypt. Breasted was already known to the European scholars. They received his new works cordially. It is significant that the translations of the *History* into French and German were made or supervised by Egyptologists of standing.

Breasted was now teaching the general course in Ancient History at the University of Chicago, and was gaining an acquaintance with materials from fields other than Egypt. His success in presenting this survey to graduate and undergraduate students moved a publishing firm to request him to write a high school text book on ancient history. Breasted refused with definiteness. He was an Egyptologist and claimed no authoritative competence in all branches of ancient history. He had no experience in presenting material to the high school mind. The publisher kept returning insistently, until finally Breasted agreed. The result was a collaboration in 1914 with James Harvey Robinson on a general history of Europe, with Breasted covering the period from earliest pre-historic times to the fall of the Roman Empire.

This work prepared the way for the high school text book, *Ancient Times*, published in 1916. Breasted told his story in

simple and vivid terms and gave a great deal of attention to the illustrations. Nearly 300 illustrations and 50 maps and plans help to explain the popularity of the book. It received the accolade of an enthusiastic review by Theodore Roosevelt in the *Outlook* and was soon in extensive use in schools throughout the country. It is difficult to measure the influence of such a book, but it is probably true that it was responsible for the creation of the Oriental Institute because it presented Breasted to a very wide public as America's foremost ancient historian.

From such a standpoint *Ancient Times* was Breasted's greatest work. For the scholarly world he was engaged in other, more important research. In 1912 Breasted was invited to give a series of lectures under the Morse Foundation at Union Theological Seminary in New York. For reasons which will be indicated below he chose as his subject "Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt." The seminary students and the general public attending these lectures were disappointed. They had heard that Breasted was a brilliant lecturer and lucid expositor. They found the lectures slow, apparently repetitious, and heavily documented. They were unaware that Breasted was doing an exciting piece of pioneering, that he was presenting most important material for the first time. It was necessary for him to emphasize and document every step of his argument. It was only after the lectures were published as *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt* that their full importance was appreciated.

Ever since he published his doctor's dissertation on hymns of the heretic pharaoh Akhenaton, Breasted had been persuaded that there was progress in ancient Egyptian thought and that the Egyptians had made major contributions to the philosophy and moral feeling of mankind. No book on Egyptian religion took account of the fact that religion might be a changing, progressing force. The books were either catalogues of the gods, with the confusions and contradictions inherent in 3000 years of history, or they presented separate periods of Egyptian religion without any connection or causation. Egyptian religion when thus presented was so diverse and remote that it was

taken by all sorts of crank doctrines and weird cults as their ancestral origin. It still has the same appeal to the cabalistically minded, but now Breasted's work stands as a bulwark against such nonsense.

In 1908-10 a body of Egyptian religious texts was published in hieroglyphic manuscript. They were texts inscribed in Old Kingdom pyramids and constituted the earliest large body of religious material available anywhere. Breasted translated these texts with care and saw their significance. Egyptian religion could be shown to be a progression from a materialistic and timorous attitude to a moral and reverent attitude toward deity and toward the good life. From earliest times to a period when the Hebrew nation was taking significant form, the development of moral thought in Egypt was a logical progress and a romantic chapter in man's life. This was the message which he laid so painstakingly before the seminary students.

It is easy to criticize Breasted's presentation as it appeared in *Development of Religion and Thought* and later in *The Dawn of Conscience*. He emphasized the rôle of Egypt in the development of human morals to such an extent that he antagonized three groups: those who were interested in the claims of other ancient civilizations, those who felt that Egypt was a phenomenon remote from the course of western history, and those who were so firmly rooted in the Bible that they felt that other developments were meaningless, derived, or tributary. Breasted was always firmly persuaded of the important rôle which Egypt had played. He was eager to admit the contributions made by other civilizations, except where they might compete with Egyptian claims. There he felt that the facts clearly demonstrated Egypt's priority. He was willing to concede that other men had a right to their contrary opinion, and he would assist them to publish that opinion, but he felt a little discouraged that they could not see the light of Egypt as brilliantly as he.

Another criticism which might be leveled against the *History of Egypt* and the *Development of Religion and Thought* is that they emphasize the glorious early progress of the Egyptians and devote correspondingly less attention to the fact that Egypt

finally degenerated into a sterile and spiritless unimportance. Part of the history of the people is their woeful slump from the heights. Breasted's answer would probably be that he wanted to show the heights that man might attain, that "the processes which brought forth inherited religion have never ceased, that they are going on around us every day, and that they will continue as long as the great and complex fabric of man's life endures." This was his matured philosophy, and this theme recurs through all his later writings.

Many of Breasted's later writings were modifications of works already discussed. *The Conquest of Civilization* (1926) retells the story told in *Ancient Times* for the more mature reader and adds important new material. *The Dawn of Conscience* (1933) is a reworking of *Development of Religion and Thought* in terms which would reach a wider public. This book, the product of a man approaching his three score years and ten, is profoundly significant. Breasted had a conviction that man could and would rise. He was troubled that the world should be so torn by doubts and suspicions. He was sure that social and economic "tinkering" did not go to the heart of the problem, that a knowledge of man's moral potentialities was fundamental to an attack on our difficulties. Moderns must not be dismayed by world problems, they must not doubt; they must have confidence in man, so that they may begin a recreation of the world. The very earnestness of the book robbed it of that *élan* which had been so charming in his earlier works. Nevertheless, it is an important *credo* by a great humanist.

In the spring of 1919 Breasted gave a significant series of lectures before the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, under the William Ellery Hale Foundation. These lectures were published as "The Origins of Civilization" in *The Scientific Monthly*. Beginning with the Old Stone Age, the argument ran down into historic times, showing the stream of human progress from savage man to the highly developed Oriental cultures. The Egyptologist had branched out and was here making a formal statement on the place of all ancient civilization in the course of human history. This was significant in color-

ing the later work which Breasted was to do in founding the Oriental Institute, which was not an institution to study Oriental languages or civilizations, but was to be a "laboratory for the investigation of the early human career," tracing the rise of man from the savage to the moral and intellectual being.

Two general criticisms have been leveled at these lectures, criticisms which apply to all of Breasted's later work. A minor objection might be raised to Breasted's pro-Egyptian bias, as in the statement that "western Asia was far behind Egypt at the opening of the fourth millennium B. C." This is a controversial matter. It is certainly not as simple as Breasted states it, and a good case may be worked up for the priority of Babylonian civilization. However, part of Breasted's success lay in the fact that he believed in Egyptian priority and was able to make it a simple and appealing fact to others.

A more serious criticism which might be directed against Breasted's philosophy of history is its optimism. The story told in the lectures might easily lead to the naive conclusion that man's progress is automatic. Breasted had no such idea; he told the story simply and in enthusiastic terms, which might be misinterpreted. We shall return again to the discussion of his sanguine views on human history.

Breasted had a youthful buoyancy, and he greatly enjoyed his contacts with young people. In years when his administrative duties were urgently pressing, his secretary was troubled that he gave so much time to interviews with students. He always wanted to see them, if only to give them a friendly warning that Oriental studies were hazardous as a career. His classes were a pleasure to students and teacher. His course in ancient history was easy even for an undergraduate, as he held closely to the broad central channel and avoided those disturbing little eddies which present problems to helmsman and crew. If his students thus lost a training in historical method and discipline, they carried away a lasting memory of an inspiring story. It was more important to Breasted that they should have some of that high vision than that they should be trained in the critical analysis of source material. The former

he held to be fundamental to a general survey course, or even to the interpretation of a text, the latter was more a matter for advanced graduate study.

His courses in grammar and translation were equally invigorating. His linguistics were sound, and he could make grammar interesting as an aspect of the mind of man. He was, however, chiefly interested in the content of texts as historical material. It was very easy for a student poorly prepared to drop a question or two and prompt an hour's exposition of some historical point. His pupils carried away three important convictions: grammar is not an end in itself but is a key to the understanding of ancient man; it is essential to have a commanding control over this key; every document from an ancient civilization puts the translator in intimate touch with a vital personality from the past. If they were thus armed, Breasted felt that he could count on them to deal with their material creditably.

THE PERIOD OF ORGANIZATION, 1919-1935

The advance of the growing field of Oriental studies brought greater specialization in the various branches. Too often this specialization meant isolation, with limited funds and insufficient knowledge of related branches. Breasted's work on the Egyptian Dictionary had shown him the value of co-ordinated effort. A group of scholars working in community produces more than the sum of individual studies, because of the interplay of ideas and the synthesis of results.

In the early years of the twentieth century Breasted was working on plans for some type of organization in which scholars would be working together, free from financial worries. One such plan, when he proposed to copy all the historical monuments of pharaonic Egypt, provided for a "floating laboratory," a houseboat on the Nile equipped with living quarters, library, and dark room. A more ambitious plan proposed the essentials of that institution later realized in the Oriental Institute. It called for expeditions in Egypt, Syria-Palestine, and

Mesopotamia. The budgets proposed for these expeditions were, by modern standards, absurdly low. It is a question whether final answers to problems could be given by expeditions operating on such tight financing. However, it must be recognized that in 1902 expeditions were not "scientific" in the sense of 1920, that the post-war technique has made a fundamental difference so that archeology is now a profession for specialized technicians, instead of being an avocation for teachers and men of means.

These early proposals did not reach realization. The University of Chicago had its own financial problems, and the remarkable first decade of expansion made caution necessary. Possible donors were not persuaded of the ultimate value of archeology. One of them commented that the Bible would stand without the aid of archeology. This is entirely true, but it reflected the narrower convictions of the nineteenth century. Breasted did not cease his efforts to enlist interest, until the war intervened and put a halt to such possibilities.

His philosophy in approaching possible patrons was that he was not a client soliciting funds from a man of means but had alluring opportunities which any intelligent person would desire to embrace. This was easy for a man who was such an enthusiast convinced of the permanent value of his work. The approach was particularly effective in the 1920's when Americans were seeking opportunities for their funds.

The period following the Great War was one which offered American scholars a brilliant chance. Europe was exhausted, both financially and spiritually. America was prosperous and alert for opportunity. The Near East was freed of the incubus of the old Turkish state and lay open to research under a series of friendly mandates and states. Archeology had been the preserve of a small number of European scholars. The interval of the war and an insistence on technology in archeology opened up the field to new scholars who could compete on an equal footing with the old. The time was ripe for a major attack on the ancient Orient.

In the spring of 1919 Breasted wrote to Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., calling attention to America's opportunity under these conditions. Mr. Rockefeller replied cordially promising \$10,000 a year for five years. On this slender basis the Oriental Institute was launched, "to trace as fully as possible the rise of man from Stone Age savagery through successive stages of advance, the emergence of civilization, the history of the earliest great civilized states, and the transmission to Europe of the fundamentals of civilization which we have since inherited."

The history of that Institute will be sketched only briefly here. It is a story which Breasted himself told brilliantly in *The Oriental Institute* (1933). The story of the Institute up to the present falls into four periods: 1919-25, experimentation; 1925-28, expansion; 1928-36, realization; and 1936-, retrenchment.

In 1919-20, Breasted, his Assyriological colleague Luckenbill, and three young scholars made a daring reconnaissance trip through the Near East to survey the possibilities for research work. Crossing territory which was still virtually in a state of war, they emerged with an enthusiasm for the possibilities apparent in the Oriental field. The following years saw a gradual growth, with the establishment of such projects as an epigraphic survey to copy the monuments of Thebes in Egypt and the Assyrian Dictionary, a project comparable to the Egyptian Dictionary already mentioned.

In the period 1925-28 increasing possibilities resulted from the support of the General Education Board. New expeditions were launched in Palestine, Egypt, Anatolia, and Iraq. The development of the Institute reflected the buoyant period in American finances.

The same statement applies to the action taken in December, 1928, by the Rockefeller boards. New funds provided for the erection of an Oriental Institute building on the campus of the University of Chicago, for a teaching endowment, and for a ten year period of research and publication. The Institute was thus enabled to go ahead on a scale which approximated the vision of James Henry Breasted, its Director. Mr. John

D. Rockefeller, Jr. expressed his interest by supporting three projects personally, and there were several other donors. At one time the Institute had six expeditions in Egypt and six in Western Asia (Palestine, Syria, Anatolia, Assyria, Babylonia, and Iran), in addition to the research carried on at the home headquarters. The Oriental Institute had become the leading archeological institution in the world and the outstanding organization devoted to research in the humanities. A brilliant group of research workers, American and European, formed this organization, but it was invoked by the unaided efforts of Breasted. The leaders of the various projects had considerable independence in administering their own fields, but Breasted was the Director, and ultimate authority was his.

The Institute is at present consolidating its work into a more compact organization. Its finances reflect the year 1935-36 just as truly as its expansion reflected 1928-29. Breasted had seen that a certain retrenchment was inevitable. The world financial situation gave him deep concern and occasioned impassioned outbreaks against those whom he considered responsible for the tightness of money. Fortunately, he saw the Institute at its peak of productivity and success in the autumn of 1935. Death spared him the necessity of reducing the organization which had become the consuming interest of his life.

It should be pointed out that Breasted raised more money for projects outside his Oriental Institute than he did for the Institute. Most notable was Mr. Rockefeller's offer to the Egyptian government of a fully equipped museum and institute, a magnificent proposal for which Breasted was the energetic but unsuccessful diplomatic agent. Many other large and small projects outside his Institute benefited by his ability to enlist the interest of men of means.

The last fifteen years of his life saw him increasingly occupied with administration. In directing the Oriental Institute he had able assistance from his son Charles, but the organization was so large and complex that it demanded the major portion of his time. Yet a glance at the bibliography will show that he did not cease his scientific work. The outstanding technical

product of his later years was the *Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus* (1930), the translation and study of an old Egyptian medical treatise. From the philological, historical, and scientific aspects the work is excellent. It was done in hours and minutes snatched from a full schedule of administration.

Breasted kept himself under careful control in these later years. The nervous indigestion to which he was prone necessitated a frugal diet and sufficient rest. He retired early of an evening and was at his office before 8:30 in the morning. Neither social engagements nor vacations were permitted to interfere with the work which he wanted to accomplish.

THE MAN

James Henry Breasted represented the best aspects of that spirit which we cherish as the American ideal. He had a buoyancy and a faith which surmounted discouragements and believed in the future. He was born just after the Civil War, and his world outlook matured between that struggle and the World War, a period of moderate liberalism, of optimism, of faith in democracy and in education. The more general features of the theory of evolution became common currency in that time. He grew up in the Middle West, where a cardinal principle was that a man could realize on unlimited opportunities if he only were willing to invest hard work. These influences provided him with a deep faith.

As Breasted's work progressed this faith left conventional religion and became a pronounced humanism. An obvious break was his departure from the theological seminary. But he still retained a strong theistic feeling, until the *Development of Religion and Thought* in 1912 enunciated his belief in man. Thereafter his humanism became more emphatic in his various writings. One of the many phrases which he coined and made current was "the unconquerable buoyancy of the human spirit." This essential characteristic of man was all important. Breasted was untiring in his efforts to show its existence in the past and its importance for the future.

Stripped to its essentials Breasted's argument was this: if we study ancient history from the beginning we see clearly that man's course has followed an upward line through some mysterious lifting force in man. If thousands of years show this progress is it not essential to man? Thus stated, the argument seems simple to the point of naivety. It often seems naive in Breasted's presentation of it. When simplified, it would seem an argument that man's buoyancy will carry him ever higher by automatic process. Certainly Breasted did not mean this. He stressed and underlined man's possibilities in a way which over-simplified, simply because he did not believe that progress was automatic. He felt that it was necessary that modern man know the potentialities inherent in mankind, so that he might realize those potentialities by painful effort. The inspiration of the past was to be a lifting factor for the present and future.

Another of Breasted's telling phrases was "the new past." This implied the new methods and new techniques in recovering the early chapters of man's history, but chiefly it denoted a new attitude to and a new interpretation of the past. Man's pre-biblical and pre-classical history has been rediscovered in the past century. We are just beginning to realize the meaning of that story. When the implications of man's tremendous achievement in lifting himself out of savagery and into civilization are fully realized, we shall have a firmer basis for building modern society. "In the splendor of that buoyant life of the human soul which has somehow come up out of the impenetrable deeps of past ages and risen so high, they shall find a glorious prophecy of the supreme future of the race."

Putting his faith in man, Breasted was thus what has been called in these skeptical 1930's "an old-fashioned liberal." He had no patience with attempts to control men by governmental decree, and he decried a centralization of government which might inhibit man's urge to lift himself. Despite his discouragement over the actual working of democratic government, he believed in it and hoped that generations of education might provide the necessary moral implementing of democracy. As

his Oriental Institute grew into a large plant maintained by the patronage of individuals or philanthropic institutions, his political-social outlook became more conservative, and he expressed alarm at possible dangers to the established social order. To the end he retained his faith that individual man has the capacity to lift himself to higher things and that this fact is the basis of all progress.

Administrative cares prevented him from entering into society as much as he might have desired, for he was a charming companion and a skillful raconteur. His family life was delightful, marked by a warm sympathy and confidence. He wrote much on the essential buoyancy of man; in the warmth of his heart he was himself a great argument for the thesis which he advanced so vigorously.

POSITIONS AND AWARDS

University of Chicago—Assistant in Egyptology, 1894-96; Instructor in Egyptology and Semitic Languages, 1896-98; Assistant Professor, 1898-1902; Associate Professor, 1902-05; Professor of Egyptology and Oriental History, 1905-33; (Distinguished Service Professor, 1927-29; Charles H. Swift Distinguished Service Professor, 1929-30; Ernest de Witt Burton Distinguished Service Professor, 1930-33); Professor Emeritus, 1933- ; Chairman, Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures, 1915-33; Assistant Director, Haskell Oriental Museum, 1895-1901; Director, 1901-31; Director, Egyptian Expedition, 1905-07; Director, Oriental Institute, 1919- .

Editorial—Associate Editor, *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, 1902-05; Co-operating Editor, 1906- ; Associate Editor, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 1925- ; on editorial staff, *Art and Archaeology*, 1923- .

Honorary degrees and awards—B.D., Chicago Theological Seminary, 1899; LL.D., University of California, 1918; Litt.D., Oxford, 1922; LL.D., Princeton, 1929; gold medal, Geographic Society of Chicago, 1929; Rosenberger gold medal for achievement through research of benefit to humanity, 1929; gold medal,

Holland Society of New York, 1930; Fine Arts Medal, American Institute of Architects, 1934.

Lectureships—Thomas Museum Lecturer, Richmond College, Virginia, 1898; Morse Lecturer, Union Theological Seminary, 1912; Earl Lecturer, University of California and Pacific School of Religion, 1918, 1930; William Ellery Hale Lecturer, National Academy of Sciences, 1919; Haskell Lecturer, Oberlin College, 1922; Henry Ward Beecher Lecturer, Amherst College, 1924; first Messenger Lecturer, Cornell University, 1925; first Mary Flexner Lecturer, Bryn. Mawr College, 1929.

American Associations (partial)—American Association for the Advancement of Science, fellow, 1933- ; American Association of Museums, member of council, 1932-34; American Association of University Professors, member of council, 1930-31; American Council of Learned Societies, member of advisory board, 1931- ; chairman of advisory board, 1933- ; American Historical Association, president, 1928; American Institute of Persian Art and Archaeology, member of board of directors, 1930; American Oriental Society, president, 1918; American Philosophical Society, vice-president, 1927-33; American Schools of Oriental Research, trustee, 1927- ; Art Institute of Chicago, honorary curator of Egyptian antiquities; Field Museum of Natural History, honorary member, 1926- ; History of Science Society, president, 1926; Laboratory of Anthropology, Inc., trustee, 1932- ; League of Nations Association, Inc., member of advisory council, 1930- ; National Academy of Sciences; National Research Council; New Orient Society of America, honorary president, 1932-33; Pan American Union, member of co-operating committee of the United States, 1932; Princeton University, member of visiting committee for the Department of Art and Archaeology, 1932- ; Renaissance Society of University of Chicago, member of board of directors, 1930-31, 1933; Southwest Museum, member of advisory council, 1927- ; World Fellowship of Faiths, member of national committee, 1933- .

Foreign Associations—Collaborator on Egyptian Dictionary, Berlin, 1899-1900; on mission to museums of Europe for Egyp-

tian Dictionary, by commission of Royal Academies of Germany, 1900-01; Second International Archaeological Congress, Cairo, Egypt, United States delegate, 1909; Seventeenth and Nineteenth International Congresses of Orientalists, Oxford, England, 1928, and Rome, Italy, 1935, United States delegate; Eighteenth International Congress of Orientalists, Leyden, Holland, chairman of United States delegation, 1931; Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux Arts de Belgique, corresponding fellow; British Academy, corresponding fellow; Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, corresponding member; Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, corresponding member; Academia de la Historia (Spain), corresponding member; Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres (Institut de France), foreign member; Kongelige Danske Videnskabskabernes Selskab, foreign member; Society of Antiquaries (London), honorary member; Association pour l'Etude de l'Histoire Turque, honorary member; Royal Asiatic Society, honorary member; Archaeologisches Institut des Deutschen Reichs, honorary foreign member.

JAMES HENRY BREASTED

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