If the background of the offering of first-fruits and of the Greek word *aparche* is as we have contended, then to claim that Jas. i.18 teaches universalism is surely overstepping the mark, and reading some unintended subtlety into the mind of James.

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THE LUKEWARMNESS OF LAODICEA (Rev. iii.16)

In his study of the *Letters to the Seven Churches,* Sir William Ramsay argued that, at the time that the Apocalypse was written, each letter had been especially appropriate to the particular church to which it was addressed. The phraseology of each letter contained allusions to the contemporary circumstances of the city concerned. These allusions had been used as symbolic material to portray the spiritual character of each church. Some have dismissed Ramsay's interpretation as far-fetched, but on a recent visit to the sites of the seven cities it was felt that the majority of the suggested geographical allusions were plausible. This note arises out of some observations made around Laodicea, and is concerned with the significance of the terms ' hot ', ' cold ' and ' lukewarm '. It is curious that Ramsay offered no interpretation of this part of the letter. Most other commentators have taken ' lukewarmness ' as a symbol of compromise between the fervent ' heat ' of a believer and the indifferent ' cold ' of an unbeliever. But this interpretation involves a straining of the text. It assumes that even ' cold ' is better than ' lukewarmness ', that even a pagan unbeliever is preferable in God's sight to a lapsed Christian; whereas in the text the association of ' hot ' and ' cold ' is repeated three times in a way which suggests very strongly that they symbolize *equally* commendable alternatives to ' lukewarmness '

Ramsay pointed out that Laodicea was built on a site which was chosen only for its position at an important road-junction. It lacked a natural water supply, and had to obtain its water from some source lying to the south, for the terminal part of an aqueduct from that direction is still extant. It is in the unusual form of two stone pipes, which are badly choked with mineral matter similar to that deposited by the hot-spring at Hierapolis a few miles away. Hot-springs are not uncommon in the area, and it is possible that, in the absence of any permanent source of more normal water in the neighbourhood, Laodicea had to obtain its supply from *another* such hot-spring. If this was so, the hot water would have cooled very slowly in stone pipes, and even after flowing several miles it would probably still be warm when it reached the city. The ' lukewarmness ' of the Laodicean church may therefore be an allusion to the city's water supply.

It is possible that the terms ' hot ' and ' cold ' also had definite local significance. At Hierapolis the hot-spring water apparently played a major part in the healing cult which flourished there. The mineral matter deposited from the water has formed a terrace edged with spectacular white cascades. These are clearly visible from Laodicea, and are one of the more conspicuous features of the view. Hence the mention of ' hot water ' might well have reminded a Laodicean of the curative waters of his city's closest neighbour. For the greater part of the year the region is very hot and dry. In such a climate cold water is a most valuable source of refreshment, and the mention of ' cold water ' inevitably brings to mind associations of that kind.

If this reconstruction of the local situation is correct, Laodicea must have been notorious as a city which, for all its prosperity, could provide *neither* the refreshment of cold water for the weary, *nor* the healing properties of hot water for the sick; its lukewarm water would be useless for either purpose, nauseous in taste and only fit to be ' spewed out of the mouth '. The church in Laodicea may have been intended to see in itself a similar uselessness: it was providing *neither* refreshment for the spiritually weary *nor* healing for the spiritually sick; it was totally ineffective, and hence distasteful to its Lord. On this interpretation, the church was not being informed of the state of its own ' spiritual temperature '; instead, it was being called to reflect upon the quality and effectiveness of its *works.* The statement of its ' lukewarmness ' is followed by an analysis of the cause (' *for* you say . . . ') of its ineffectiveness: it is self-satisfied, complacent and unaware of its true state. But this self-deception, though culpable, is unconscious; there is no hint of deliberate compromise. It had not become ' lukewarm ' because worldy interests had chilled its proper fervour; but it had become ineffective because, believing that they were spiritually well-equipped, its members had closed their doors and left their real Provider outside.

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This interpretation of the verse is tentative, although a more thorough exploration of the area might place it on a firmer basis. However, it is felt to be more in accord with the local conditions of Laodicea and with the structure and argument of the Letter than the more usual interpretation. It is true that the cognates of *zestos* and *psychros* are used elsewhere in the New Testament (Acts xviii.25; Mt. xxiv.12) in metaphorical senses which seem to favour the traditional interpretation. But there is no reason why the words should not have been used with different meanings in a local context in which their literal senses were pregnantly allusive.

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THE STUDY OF GENESIS I - XI

The first eleven chapters of Genesis, down to the first part of verse 27 in chapter xi, form the section which can be conveniently distinguished from what follows. In chapter xi verse 26 Abram is introduced, and here begins the story of the patriarchs.

The excavation, between the wars, of such sites as Mari (1933-39), Alalakh (1936-39), and Nuzi (1925-31), has thrown considerable light on the time of Abraham and the patriarchs, and the post-war excavations are constantly adding to the picture. Cuneiform tablets from Mari and Alalakh, dating from the eighteenth century B.C., give a picture of the situation in the area stretching from Mesopotamia to the Syrian coast which agrees well with the patriarchal narratives, and tablets of the fifteenth century from Nuzi illuminate many of the local customs of the period. The time of Abraham is therefore now seen to fall within the first half of the second millennium B.C., though opinions vary as to any more precise dating. (This material is well surveyed in R. de Vaux, *Revue Biblique,* liii (1946) 321-48, lv (1948) 321-47, lvi (1949) 5-36; and H. H. Rowley, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library,* xxxii (1949) 44-79. De Vaux would place Abraham provisionally in the nineteenth century, but Rowley favours the sixteenth.)

For the first eleven chapters a different picture prevails. The people and events seem more remote, and archaeology has in the nature of the case yielded less which can have a definite bearing.

The main features of these early chapters have been the subject of much speculation. The Garden of Eden is placed in the Tigris-Euphrates valley, and Adam, if he is not a mythical character, is associated with the beginnings of civilization in Mesopotamia. The flood of Noah is taken as the folk memory of a serious inundation in Mesopotamia. The Tower of Babel is equated with *E-TEMEN-AN-KI,* the ziqqurat, or temple tower of Babylon. These are some of the most commonly held views, but many others have been put forward from time to time, and the majority centre on the area of Mesopotamia.

Great progress has been made in the field of prehistoric and early-historic archaeology in the last fifty years, and it is now a matter of common acceptance among prehistorians that the flint tools, found in large numbers from Pleistocene deposits, are the work of 'man'. If the great antiquity of 'man' implicit in this view is accepted, it is clearly in conflict with one which would place the first man of the Bible account in Mesopotamia at the beginning of civilization.

Perhaps in recognition of this consideration, many scholars have sought to interpret these early chapters of Genesis in terms of myth, or parable, seeing in them not circumstantial accounts, but poetic media for the transmission of divine truth.

There are thus many questions which must be resolved in the study of these early chapters. First of all the nature of the narratives must be determined; are they to be taken as poetic or historical? It is clear that no conclusion based solely on the apparent degree of likelihood of their historical nature will have any validity here, so they must be examined in the light of Scripture itself, the general literary usage of the Old Testament, and the view taken of them in the New Testament. A very important element here is a clear understanding of the Hebrew text, so that the issue will not be obscured by reading into the accounts, elements which do not exist.

Whether historically or poetically, Genesis i-xi covers the period from the creation of man to the time of Abraham in the second millennium B.C. The period of archaeology relevant to this will therefore be that from the earliest appearance of man down to the second millennium B.C. Five main branches of study come into play here, geology, palaeobotany, palaeontology, archaeology, and epigraphy. Geology, palaeobotany and palaeontology provide a relative

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