

## Canon Driver's Introduction to the Old Testament.

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### II.

HAVING been unable, in my former paper, to advance beyond the author's elaborate treatment of the critical problems of the Pentateuch, I have still before me the double field of the Prophets and the Hagiographa. To discuss these at the same length is neither possible nor necessary. The same method of treatment is followed in the main as in the books of the Pentateuch, although in matters of detail the treatment varies somewhat with the character of the different books. To each chapter or section is prefixed a selection from the relative literature, on which follow a careful summary of the contents of the book under examination, and a study of the linguistic and other evidence as to unity, authorship, and date. Through all this troubled sea of critical investigation one recognises the guiding of a master-pilot familiar with every strait and rock and shallow; there is no fearful hugging of the shore, but sail is set for the open sea, where the outlook is wide and the breezes are fresh and strong. Indeed, one hardly knows which of the many good qualities of the book to admire most, whether the fulness of the author's knowledge, his careful marshalling of the facts to be investigated, or the fine critical self-restraint which keeps him from advancing a hair's-breadth beyond what the evidence seems to warrant. A conspicuous instance of the combination of these excellences will be referred to later on.

It is scarcely to be expected that Dr. Driver should be equally at home in every section of the Old Testament, or that each book in the Canon should have had the same amount of independent study bestowed upon it as the Professor has evidently devoted to the Pentateuch. In his treatment of Job, for instance, he follows in great part the capable guidance of Professor A. B. Davidson, of whom we have here and there almost unavoidable echoes, as of Professor Cheyne in the handling of Ecclesiastes; but generous acknowledgment is made in the preface of the labours of the author's predecessors. His readers, I feel sure, would have rejoiced if a somewhat fuller treatment could have been given to the Psalter,

to which, strictly speaking, only some twenty pages are devoted. Perhaps in the third edition, for which I am confident we shall not have long to wait, Dr. Driver will deal more liberally with this important part of Holy Scripture, more particularly in the light of the recent investigations of Professor Cheyne in his Bampton Lectures.

In a field of such extent, even the humblest of our author's fellow-workers will find many points on which to differ from his conclusions. It may still be questioned, for instance, whether the southward advance of Sargon is not, after all, the more probable background of the great prophecy, Isaiah 10, 5-12, 6, or whether a care for the ancestry of David is really a sufficient *raison d'être* for the idyll of Ruth. As to Nahum, to take but one other example, the learned Professor is surely at fault when he thinks it "impossible to fix the date more precisely" than by saying that it falls between 664 B.C. as a *terminus a quo*, and 607 as a *terminus ad quem*. It is true that we may be able to determine "the date only within tolerably wide limits," but the limits given above may be confidently pronounced at least twenty years too wide, 626 B.C., the year of Assurbanipal's death, being, as I think I have shown elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> the real *terminus ad quem*.

Enough, however, by way of criticism. I shall, it seems to me, be conferring a greater benefit on the readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES if, returning to the lines of my former article, I refer briefly to some of the reasons that have led to the abandonment by Canon Driver and almost all recent critics of the Old Testament of the traditional views concerning the authorship and date of certain books. For this purpose we may begin conveniently with Ecclesiastes, or, as in the original Hebrew, Qoheleth.

Now, as to this book, we find that down to a comparatively recent date the all but unanimous opinion of Jewish and Christian scholars was that we have here King Solomon (cf. 1, 1 with 1, 12) as an "aged penitent," meditating in sorrow on the

<sup>1</sup> *Good Words* for November.

sins and follies of his earlier years, and from the depths of a sad experience pronouncing the world's show: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." But with increasing knowledge of the Hebrew language and its historical development, and with the increasing conviction of a similar development of Hebrew thought, the difficulties in the way of the Solomonic authorship became more and more apparent. To begin with, the very name of the preacher, Qoheleth, seems incapable of explanation save as a grammatical anomaly which first appears in proper names *after the Exile* (as Sophereth and Pochereth, Ezra 2, 55, 57 = Neh. 7, 57, 59), and more frequently in post-biblical Hebrew.

It is, however, as I have just indicated, the double argument from the language and ideas of the book that has proved fatal to the Solomonic claims. "Linguistically," Dr. Driver tells us (p. 444), "Qoheleth stands by itself in the Old Testament," inasmuch as its vocabulary shows to a greater extent than any other book in the Canon affinities with Aramaic and post-biblical Hebrew. A glance at the list of such affinities as given in the commentary of Delitzsch, or of Dr. C. H. H. Wright, will convince every unbiassed student of the truth of the former scholar's words: "If the Book of Qoheleth be of Solomonic origin, then there is no history of the Hebrew language."

The attention of scholars has recently been directed anew to the linguistic peculiarities of Qoheleth by the inaugural lecture and subsequent papers of the new Professor of Arabic at Oxford on the original text of Ecclesiasticus. The language of Jesus ben Sirā, whose date is *circa* 200 B.C., displays, he argues, a far larger admixture of neo-hebraic forms than any Old Testament book, and consequently a very considerable interval must be allowed between Ben Sirā's book and the close of the Hebrew Canon. The question is one on which but few scholars are competent to pronounce an opinion. Professor Driver refers to it here in a footnote (p. 447, and again more fully on p. 483), in which he does not seem to lay much stress on his colleague's argument.

Not less convincing are the arguments from ideas expressed in the book. "The tone, the social and political allusions," according to Driver, "show that it is in fact the product of a far later age." For the illustration of this assertion the reader is referred to Driver's pages. It must suffice to give his conclusion. "The author of Qoheleth . . .

must have lived when the Jews had lost their national independence, and formed but a province of the Persian empire,—perhaps even later, when they had passed under the rule of the Greeks (third century, B.C.). But he adopts a literary disguise, and puts his meditations into the mouth of the king, whose reputation it was to have been the great sage and philosopher of the Hebrew race, whose observation and knowledge of human nature were celebrated by tradition, and whose position might naturally be supposed to afford him the opportunity of testing systematically in his own person every form of human pursuit or enjoyment" (pp. 441, 442).

I have not thought it necessary to bring forward the arguments formerly adduced in support of the Solomonic authorship, seeing that the latter has been abandoned by three such champions of critical orthodoxy as Hävernick, Hengstenberg, and Keil.<sup>1</sup> It will also be sufficient to refer my readers to the standard commentaries for a vindication of the author, if such is needed, against the exploded charge of being guilty of a "pious fraud."

Another conspicuous illustration of the abandonment of the literary "traditions of the elders" is found in the judgment of critics regarding the authorship and date of the Book of Daniel. On this point so cautious and fair-minded a critic as the late Professor Riehm of Halle writes thus in his posthumous Introduction:—"That Daniel is not the author of the book which bears his name belongs, like the authorship of Deuteronomy and Second Isaiah, to the most assured results of criticism" (*Einleitung*, vol. ii. p. 298). Canon Driver's chapter on Daniel (chap. xii. pp. 458-483) I consider one of the most careful and finished pieces of scholarly criticism to be found in recent theological literature; and being complete in itself may be confidently recommended to any one wishing to inform himself of the author's method and standpoint, and to judge for himself of the excellence of the "Introduction" as a whole.

Now, as to the authorship of Daniel, we find that modern scholars are almost, though not quite, as unanimous as in the case of Ecclesiastes in regarding the admitted claim of the book itself to be written by the historical Daniel of the Exile, as

<sup>1</sup> But not by Keil's English translator. See his *Introduction to the Old Testament*, vol. i. pp. 512-529. This, however, was more than twenty years ago!

nothing more than a transparent literary device. An excellent summary of the reasons for this conclusion will be found in the chapter already named. These fall—as we have seen to be the case with similar investigations regarding the Pentateuch and Ecclesiastes—under the two general heads of (1) the language, and (2) the contents of the book, to which are added in the case of Daniel (3) certain considerations of a more general nature, which Dr. Driver rightly places in the foreground. Of these last, the most important, perhaps, is “the position of the book in the Jewish Canon, not among the prophets [as in our English Bibles], but in the miscellaneous collection of writings called the *Hagiographa*, and among the latest of these, in proximity to Esther” (p. 467). The upholders of the traditional view of the authorship of the book have never been able to give a satisfactory explanation of the separation in the Jewish Canon of the Book of Daniel the prophet from those of his fellow-prophets of the Exile, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. With regard to language, the Book of Daniel, as is well known, is written partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic. But “the Hebrew of Daniel resembles not the Hebrew of Ezekiel, or even of Haggai and Zechariah, but that of the age *subsequent to Nehemiah*” (p. 474); while the “Aramaic of Daniel is a *Western Aramaic dialect of the type spoken in and about Palestine*.” How, on the traditional theory, can these facts be explained? Or how explain the presence, I do not say of the Persian words—although these also are a serious difficulty—but of at least three undoubted Greek words in a book presumably written in the sixth century B.C. On this point I shall quote but a single sentence from Driver’s book; it may serve at the same time as one instance out of many that might be given of his skill in gathering up in a few happy phrases the results of a long and technical argument. “The verdict of the language of Daniel is thus clear: the *Persian* words presuppose a period after the Persian empire had been well established; the Greek words *demand*, the Hebrew *supports*, and the Aramaic *permits*, a date *after the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great* (B.C.[?] 332).”

There still remains the third and last category of objections to the author of Daniel being a contemporary of the events recorded, namely, those presented by the contents of the book itself. One or two illustrations must suffice. One of the most striking of these is the peculiar meaning of a guild

or caste of wise men attaching to the term “Chaldeans” in chaps. 1, 4, 2, 2, and elsewhere. What, for instance, would the future historian of the Victorian age make of a paragraph like the following in the Court Circular?—“Yesterday the members of Her Majesty’s Privy Council, the bench of Bishops, the Fellows of the Royal Society, and the *English* had an audience of the Queen at St. James’s Palace. Addressing Her Majesty *in French*, the English said: ‘Vive la reine,’” etc. Now this is on all fours with the report by a presumed contemporary of an incident at the court of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2, 2 ff.)!

But more serious still for the fate of the traditional view is the representation, on the one hand, of Belshazzar as the *son of Nebuchadnezzar*, and as the *last king* of Babylon; and, on the other hand, of Darius, the Mede, as the *captor of Babylon and first king of the new dynasty*. Now, if any fact of ancient history is more certain than another, it is, as we now know from contemporary documents, that Belshazzar was the son of *Nabonidus*, who was himself the last king of Babylon, and survived the peaceful entrance of the Persian troops into his capital. Nor is it one degree less certain that it was Cyrus, “king of Anshan . . . son of Cambyses,”<sup>1</sup> who put an end to the empire of Babylonia, and who had already filled, and was still to fill, an undivided throne. The only natural explanation of these difficulties is that we have, in the Book of Daniel, a later tradition, which, as the manner of tradition is, has omitted the links between Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and has confounded the latter with his father, and Cyrus the Great with his kinsman and successor Darius Hystaspis.

One other remarkable feature, finally, of the contents of Daniel may be noticed, which will be found to suggest a likely date for the book in its present form. I do not refer to the fact, otherwise remarkable enough, that the predictions of the book “are out of harmony with the analogy of prophecy” elsewhere, but, to this other fact, that while down to the period of the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes “the *actual* events are described with surprising distinctness, after this point *the distinction ceases*; the prophecy either

<sup>1</sup> The most recent and trustworthy translations of the cylinders of Nabonidus and Cyrus, giving their respective accounts of the fall of Babylon, will be found in Schrader’s *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, vol. iii. pt. ii., 1890.