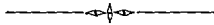


a mere infinitesimal part of the inhabitants of the kingdom, gives an almost ludicrous character to the entire function. In any case, it has an air of unreality resembling the histrionic performance of the dethroned Pope, Petrus de Luna, at Pensacola, or the fictitious excommunication of the King of Naples, which used to be annually inflicted and removed with every appearance of consistency and solemnity. It would seem that the isolation of the Roman Catholic body from the great mass of their fellow-countrymen prevents them from seeing the effect of these eccentric proceedings on the bulk of our population. That they do not promote the interests of the Roman Church in England is only too clear; nor can they have any useful influence on those who are within her fold. It is time for them to turn from such puerilities to the great social and practical questions in which every Christian Church has an equal interest and a definite post of labour.

Not a thousand years' possession of the vineyard, even if they could prove it, would avail them anything unless they were working in it, for Christian labour is the only title to Christian possession. Thus only can they dedicate themselves in soul and body to Christ, a far higher dedication than any imaginary consecration of their country to St. Mary or St. Peter, for it is a living sacrifice, and not a mere ceremonial fiction. It is a relief to pass from the scene in which Cardinal Vaughan took so fruitless a part to the great work he is carrying on among the poorer members of his Church in East London, which cannot fail to bear the richest fruit in future years. This is a fruit which will remain according to our Lord's infallible promise, and its cultivation is a work in which every division of the labourers of Christ may unite in holy and active competition.

R. C. JENKINS.



## ART. II.—“THE HIGHER CRITICISM AND THE MONUMENTS.”<sup>1</sup>

PROFESSOR SAYCE'S writings are always welcome. His style is fresh, bright and clear; his method of treatment is lucid, healthy and suggestive; he collects and assort his materials well, and puts his case effectively; and he is thoroughly “up to date.” As a reasoner he is somewhat impulsive, almost too quick in jumping to conclusions, regardless of consequences, and perhaps a little too positive. He is so frank and outspoken

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<sup>1</sup> “The Higher Criticism and the Monuments,” by the Rev. A. H. Sayce. S.P.C.K., 1894.

that we can tell in a moment where and why we cannot agree with him, and he carries our sympathy with him, in spite of his most unguarded utterances.

The book before us was (we suppose) made to order. It does not profess to introduce new matter; but the writer is familiar with all the discoveries bearing on this subject, and he himself is not only a gifted linguist, but a brilliant investigator, who has contributed in no small degree to our knowledge. The work covers a great deal of ground, and deals with Biblical archæology, topography, history, chronology and language. This list looks big enough, and we can well afford to put aside for the moment the greater matters which have to be considered by the student of sacred literature, such as theology, law, prophecy, inspiration, the supernatural, and the coincidences and various points of linguistic relationship between the books of the Bible.

What is the upshot of Professor Sayce's work? It may be stated briefly thus: The position of the revolutionary critic is shaken; the historical character of the oldest portions of the Bible is reaffirmed; the antiquity of primitive religious literature is established.

As the writer says (pp. 24 and 25): "The period of scepticism is over; the period of reconstruction has begun. The explorer and decipherer have given back to us the old documents and the old history—in a new and changed form it may be, but nevertheless substantially the same." He reminds us that early in this century a small glass case in the British Museum held the whole collection of Assyrian and Babylonian antiquities, and no one could even dream that a vast literature was awaiting the spade of the excavator. Now "discovery has been crowding on discovery, each more marvellous than the last, and bearing more or less directly on the Old Testament records. So rapidly has the work proceeded that it has been difficult even for the Oriental archæologist to follow it and estimate its consequences for the study of ancient history. Still less can it be expected that either the 'higher critic' or the public at large has been able to follow it. The assumptions and preconceptions with which the Higher Criticism started, and upon which so many of its conclusions are built, have been swept away wholly or in part. The revelations of the past which have been made to the archæologist of late years have inclined him to believe that there is nothing impossible in history, any more than there is in science" (p. 23).

Professor Sayce is thus prepared to regard even the most ancient documents of the Bible as historical. While freely asserting that the writers were occasionally mistaken, or, at any rate, that they did not view or record things with the dry

accuracy of a modern German professor, he nowhere suggests forgery or pious fraud. It is a characteristic of the Bible that its pages bristle with local and historical touches. This would be an element of danger if they were inventions, but it is a decided advantage if they are true. How is their accuracy to be tested? One obvious answer is, By archæological research; and it is just here that the writer's survey is so useful. The greatest gain which modern discovery has supplied to the Biblical student lies in the resuscitation of national life and literature contemporaneous with the patriarchal history, and the tendency of all such discovery is to show that the oldest documents in the Bible are within measurable distance of the events which they narrate. As the writer says (p. 172), "To the historian the precise date of the narratives of Genesis in their present form matters but little. So long as he is assured that they are derived from ancient documents contemporaneous with the events they record, he is fully satisfied. What he wants to know is, whether he can deal with a professedly historical statement in the Book of Genesis as he would deal with a statement in Gibbon or Macaulay. Let him be satisfied on this point and he asks no more."

We must not attempt to expound the method whereby Professor Sayce re-establishes the general historical characters of the early books. Most of our readers know something of the Creation and Deluge Tablets, and of the later "finds" which have thrown so much light on the ancient history of Palestine; on the Hittites, Amorites and Philistines; on the age of Jerusalem; and on the position of Melchizedek; as also on the relations existing between Israel and the surrounding empires. It may be more useful in this sketch to pass over into some less trodden paths.

Professor Sayce is, amongst other things, an acute student of palæography. He reminds us that Greek and Hebrew writings spring from Phœnician, and that the late M. de Rouge's view had generally been accepted, namely, that the Phœnician letters are modifications of a cursive Egyptian hieroglyphic. But Dr. Glaser's explorations in Southern Arabia, together with Professor Hommel's comments thereon, tend to show that there is an intermediate stage between Egyptian and Phœnician, viz., Sabean, and that the old Sabean and Minean Kingdom, whose princes were priests like Jethro, extended far north in the time of Moses; also that alphabetical writing was at that time current amongst them.

Further, the Tel el Amarna Tablets discovered in 1887 prove to us indisputably that in the eighteenth Egyptian dynasty there was free correspondence between Egypt, Canaan, and Mesopotamia, the language of which was Semitic,

and the character cuneiform. Those were days of civilization. There were high-roads for the transit of men, goods, and letters. Egypt's border reached to the Euphrates. The rulers intermarried. Every gentleman was able to write or to command the use of a scribe. There were characteristic hand-writings, north and south and east and west.

Thus our palæographical interest seems to drift away from hieroglyphics to cuneiform writing. And this naturally leads to a question which Oriental scholars will have to face sooner or later, namely, how much of Genesis was originally written in cuneiform character? No one can read attentively what Professor Sayce and others have advanced without being led to the conclusion that Abraham must have been familiar with cuneiform, and that he must have had access to the oldest and most trustworthy of the sacred historical documents of the East. If it be true that "the history of Melchizedek and his reception of Abram may have been derived from a cuneiform record of the age" (p. 178), who committed the narrative to writing? and who authorized the writings of the kindred narratives contained in Genesis? If it be the case that "the Biblical writer was acquainted either directly or indirectly with the Assyrian and Babylonian tradition" of the Sabbath (p. 77), what is more reasonable than to suppose that it was Abram himself who conserved it? If "the Elohists caught the echo" of the Babylonian story of creation (p. 95), what more probable than that Abraham brought that "echo" away with him from Ur of the Chaldees safely inscribed in imperishable clay? The tendency of archæological discovery is to push back the age of literature into the most remote past, *possibly*—we venture to think *probably*—into the antediluvian age, where the geologist and the archæologist clasp hands over the records of palæolithic man.

But we must pass on from writing to language. The Tel el Amarna Tablets prove to us that in the age of Moses, if not earlier, there was one literary language all over Western Asia, and that was the language of Babylon. The Confusion of Tongues had left room for this at least. As in China the same characters are pronounced differently in the different districts, so it may have been in the West. Possibly, indeed, as some linguistic students hold, there is a near relationship between the most ancient form of Chinese and the oldest cuneiform; if so, the analogy becomes something more. The language which Abram brought with him from Ur was practically the same as he would find in Canaan (p. 357), and would be understood by many when he went down into Egypt. The dialect which he transmitted to Israel would be modified in course of time, for Hebrew is very absorbent (as

can be readily found out in East London). Canaan, Syria, Edom, Egypt, and perhaps the regions of Asia Minor, would modify or expand its grammar and vocabulary. Such expressions as "pure Hebrew" and "late Hebrew" are to be regarded as only comparative. Many words which "higher critics" call late may prove to be early, but provincial. In fact, this process of restitution is already going on. The strange thing is that Greek is beginning to take its place under the form of Ionian (Javan) as a most ancient language. Professor Sayce sees no reason why Greek words should not have found their way into the earliest Hebrew books (p. 495). We need not accept his view, though we cordially avail ourselves of the researches of Professor Petrie (see his "Ten Years' Digging in Egypt"), which remove all difficulties rising from the occurrence of Greek words in Daniel. The truth is that the linguistic phenomena of the Hebrew Bible have never yet been fully dealt with. This will have to be the work of the future, but until it is fully gone into critics will not be able to dislodge the sacred books from the position which Judaism and primitive Christianity accord to them; and perhaps, after all, Moses and the other writers will justify their existence.

Something must be said about the attitude which Professor Sayce takes up towards the revolutionary critics. While acknowledging that their labours may not have been altogether in vain, he complains of their unscientific dogmatism, he objects to their "historical hair-splitting," and he throws scorn on their boasted "literary tact." Above all, he freely exposes their ignorance. "Time after time," he says (p. 16), "statements have been assumed to be untrue because we cannot bring forth other evidence in support of the facts which they record. The critic has made his own ignorance the measure of the credibility of an ancient document." With them the unknown was the unhistorical. Even supposing that there has been a blending of documents in Genesis and elsewhere, it does not follow that the contents of either or of both are untrue. Professor Sayce thinks that some of the oldest Egyptian and Babylonian records show signs of a double recension, and that in very ancient times; so that even if there are blended documents in Genesis, they may have been pre-Mosaic. But, after all, the disintegration of the text, and the distribution of it amongst various authors, does not altogether find favour with him. He raises the question "whether the time has not arrived for correcting and supplementing the literary analysis of the Pentateuch by an analysis based on the archæological evidence" (p. 231); and he goes still further on p. 561, where we read that "the archæology of Genesis seems to show that the literary analysis of the book must be

revised, and that the confidence with which one portion of a verse is assigned to one author, and another portion of it to another, is a confidence begotten of the study of modern critical literature, and not of the literature of the past. Such microscopic analysis is the result of short sight.” We commend this sentence to the consideration of the hair-splitters.

Of course, those who take Professor Sayce as infallible will have to sacrifice a great deal. There are unhappy as well as happy guesses in his book. He reasserts his well-known views about the dates of the kings, the age of Darius, and Jerusalem topography, and follows the multitude with regard to the Pharaoh of the Exodus. We cannot follow him in his treatment of Gomer, nor are we sure that Gog is Gyges, or Abrik a seer, or that *mene tekkel* and *peres* meant “a maneh, a shekel and its parts.” We are not prepared to endorse his free handling of portions of the Book of Daniel, or his constructive argument on the Book of Canticles. We do not believe every solution or identification which the Professor offers, nor do we see why the Hebrew writers should be criticised for misspelling foreign names. We question wholly his view about Sinai, which seems to have been formed without giving weight to the results of Sinaitic exploration. We are not always prepared to accept Assyrian official chronology as against Jewish semi-official and sacred history. Of course, as Professor Sayce says, the testimony of archæology is final, and both parties must accept it; but we must be quite sure of our facts, and of the inferences which may legitimately be drawn from them. Are we always to whittle down our Bible to make it consistent with a clay tablet? Are the tablets themselves always consistent with one another? Were the Assyrian scribes and copyists infallible? Valuing as we do the chronological documents of Assyria and Babylon, we are willing to keep our mind in solution on many points where they seem to be out of harmony with the Biblical records; for we know that for honesty of purpose and for candour of spirit the latter are pre-eminent. Great allowance must be made for late interpolations in the Hebrew books, and far greater allowance than is usually realized for textual corruption; but we are slow to acknowledge deliberate falsification or even wholesale ignorance.

R. B. GIRDLESTONE.

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