

volume would cease to be an actual record of facts. If a desire "to secure euphony and avoid tautology" be dominant with the sacred writers, then their writings have little more than a vague and semi-poetic signification. Matters of elegance of diction are subordinate to those of accuracy of expression. Questions of "subtle euphonic influence" and of conjectured indifference of meaning are out of place amongst technical nautical terms. The work of a generation of textual critics and learned editors is dissipated by such theories. The especial work of the Reformation in the department of theology was the recovery of long-buried and long-forgotten Greek. Previously tradition, supplemented by a Latin version, was the only means available for ascertaining the actual events that took place during the Lord's earthly life and ministry. Considering all that that movement accomplished, my readers will probably acquit me of any hostile intentions when I contend for something more than mere elegance of style and euphony of diction when writing about the records which the sacred writers have bequeathed to us. The faith of future generations is founded on facts, not fancies. Possibly no question of immediate vital importance is involved *per se* in the "smack and dinghy" theory; but it does entail as an ultimate consequence the technical accuracy of the evangelists, which places them upon a higher platform than those writers who merely make literary perfection the leading feature of their work. The four Gospels are unique. They present the unilateral impressions that inspired their authors respecting the Lord's life and person. The evangelists wrote regardless of human criticism, because their mental vision was concentrated on truth and heaven.

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ART. VI.—STUDIES ON ISAIAH.—II.

HISTORICAL SURVEY.

THE writings of a prophet such as Isaiah, with their wide historical and political allusions, will be but ill understood by the reader, and especially by one who desires to make their contents intelligible to others, without some idea of the condition of the world at the time at which they were written. We may defer the consideration of the state of the less imposing nationalities, such as Syria and Moab, until we come to the chapters in which reference is made to them. But the drift of whole chapters will be imperfectly apprehended unless we have some idea of the position of the great

world-empires in the prophet's day, and unless we understand the political, social, and religious condition of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah at the time at which he wrote.

Until lately the only authorities for the history of the period were the books of Kings and Chronicles; but of late archaeological discovery in the East has largely multiplied our store of information. It is the fashion just now to depreciate the trustworthiness of Hebrew historians. If we are to believe recent critics—and, little as we desire controversy, we are compelled, for the information of the reader, to refer to their position on this and one or two other points—never was national history, religious or secular, handed down in so careless, slovenly, and even intentionally inaccurate, a manner as that contained in the Old Testament. The modern critic asks us to believe that at a period when Israel had ceased to be a nation her whole history, especially her religious history, was fashioned afresh by priestly hands in order to recommend the acceptance by the nation of the institutions contained in the Pentateuch as we now have it. Not only was the history boldly, and yet at the same time clumsily, fabricated out of documents of various periods, but the Jewish people was somehow persuaded to accept it, when thus reconstructed, as dating from the Mosaic era. Nor is this all. The remaining books, founded apparently on the public records of Israel and Judah, contain deliberate falsifications of the contents of those public records, designed to suit the views of the priestly party. The thought might occur to an inquiring mind that the substitution of falsified documents for ancient records, the entire disappearance of the former, and the blind and unquestioning acceptance by the nation of the fabrications of the priestly party, are events of a kind extremely unusual in history. And some might think it not a little strange that the very history in which the presence of truth is most essential is precisely the one of all others in which it is least to be found. The Vedas, the Zendavesta, the obscure histories of Buddha, the Koran, are subjected to no such hostile analysis. The statements of the Egyptian, Assyrian, and Babylonian monuments are accepted almost without question. The Old Testament alone among the historical writings of the world has, it would seem, to undergo an amount of reconstruction which is needed by no other history in the world. This, it must be confessed, is hardly treating the Bible "like any other book." It must also be confessed that archaeological discovery has in no way tended to confirm the theory of the modern critic. Save in some slight details of chronology, the testimony of the Assyrian and Egyptian inscriptions has been to establish very emphatically the accuracy

of the statements in the Hebrew Scriptures, whether they regard early or contemporary history; whereas, if the modern critic is to be believed, the earliest writing contained in the Old Testament is that of an obscure Hebrew scribe or scribes writing long after the facts he so correctly records had faded into the obscurity of a far distant past.

Into the vexed question of chronology we will not enter. There seems some reason to believe that, beside the evident tendency of the Hebrew writers to substitute generality for exactness in the matter of dates, some change in the Hebrew notation of figures has thrown Hebrew chronology into confusion. In the period with which we are dealing, the difficulty appears to be well-nigh confined to the synchronism between the kings of Israel and Judah. But the question is one of pure scholarship, and has little bearing on the objects which the present "studies" have in view.

The question, however, of the value of Chronicles as an authority, when dealing with the historical situation, is one which it is impossible altogether to pass over. The position of the modern Biblical critic on this point is once more unique, so far as I know, in historical criticism. It certainly differs from that adopted by every historical writer of note. The position is this. The modern critic discovers in the books of Chronicles a tendency to magnify the ancient greatness and glory of the Abrahamic race, and especially of the kingdom of Judah. And he further contends that their author or authors, writing at a very late date¹ with the intention of recommending the religious polity which they had invented, or accepted, or developed in the course of ages from the obscure germ of religious and moral teaching handed down by Moses, found it convenient to embellish their presentation of the ancient history of their country with a series of wonderful exaggerations and purely imaginative descriptions of pretended Mosaic observances which they represented as being in use in the times of which they wrote. Now, even if this were the case—and we are very far from admitting it—it would be foolish to attach no weight whatever to the chronicler's history. It must be full of interesting information, which, when properly sifted, would be found most valuable. That is not the way of the modern critic. Chronicles is rejected *en bloc*; and Wellhausen, the *coryphæus* of the school of criticism at present in fashion, has overwhelmed the chronicler with a torrent of ridicule, as amusing as it is—in historical criticism, at least—unprecedented, when dealing with an ancient document.

¹ The date assigned to Chronicles by writers of this school is 800 to 200 B.C.

Unprecedented, we say. For, to begin with, Chronicles was written some 2,000 years before its critics sat down to destroy its credit. Now, as a rule, the historical critic approaches an ancient document of that kind with some degree of respect—with a desire to learn from it, not to set it aside. And next, Chronicles alone, of all the books of the Old Testament, is written on modern historical principles. As a considerable time had elapsed since the occurrences the chronicler set himself to record, he specially names the authorities on which he bases his account. Modern criticism, however, as usual, is equal to the occasion. The chronicler, it declares, had never seen the books he professes to quote, but had only found them embodied in a later volume. This statement will not bear investigation. But it is only another illustration of the unique character of modern Biblical criticism. The historical student will consult in vain the works of Gibbon, Macaulay, Froude, Freeman, Stubbs, or Lecky, to say nothing of other historians, for an instance of this summary method of treating ancient authorities. The Assyrian and Egyptian inscriptions of the time of which we are writing receive, as has been said, no such contemptuous treatment at anyone's hands. It is books in the Bible only which are treated by Christian clergymen as an adverse witness is treated in a court of justice. We shall see, when we come to our historical survey of Israel and Judah, what important touches of detail the history receives from the chronicler. And we shall probably feel that, whether the accusations of exaggeration and invention have any foundation or no, a more respectful treatment of an ancient document than that which has been described will be desirable if our object is to arrive at the truth. We proceed to a brief sketch of the general history of the period at which Isaiah writes.

1. *Assyria and Babylon.*—The statements of Holy Writ in regard to the history of Assyria and Babylonia have been confirmed to the very letter by recent discoveries. Gen. x., which describes the settlement of the nations after the Flood, represents the Japhetic, or, as it has since been called, the Aryan, race as having spread more widely than the others, as having intermingled itself geographically with the Semitic race at an early period, and even as having already—see Gen. ix. 27, unless this is to be regarded as a prophecy—enslaved some of its brethren of the third, or Turanian, race. The Turanians, however, as we learn from Gen. x. 8-13, were the first to settle in the fertile lands between the Euphrates and the Tigris. The statement of the sacred historian has been most surprisingly corroborated by modern research. Traces of Turanian occupation of that territory at a very early date have been found. The language of the settlers has been

recovered, and proves to have been Turanian. A kingdom of Akkad or Agadé has been discovered, answering to the Accad of Gen. x. 10, and the ruins of the other cities mentioned in the sacred narrative have been identified. Now, the theory in fashion at the present moment insists that the earliest parts of the Bible were written by one or more anonymous writers of the eighth or ninth century B.C.—*i.e.*, not before 900 B.C. How these writers attained to such minute accuracy in regard to facts so long past is not explained. But as these Turanian, Accadian, or Sumerian monarchs are supposed by some to have flourished as far back as 3500 B.C., it must be confessed to be difficult to understand how a Palestinian scribe, writing nearly 3,000 years after the events he records, contrived to possess himself of such accurate information. It is still more surprising if, as has been suggested, the Israelites were a race unacquainted with the art of writing.¹

Recent criticism divides Gen. x. between the Jewish scribe who lived after 900 B.C., the Priestly Codist, writing after 500 B.C., and the redactor, who combined the narratives of the two other writers at a somewhat later date. But this only increases the difficulty. The Priestly Codist, to whom the larger part of Gen. x. is ascribed, deals correctly, it is admitted, with a period 3,000 years anterior to the date at which he writes. It is true that he is supposed to have been one of the Babylonian captives, and to have therefore had access to the Babylonian archives. This is a tolerably wide supposition in itself. And we must remember that the critical investigation of historical records is a thing of very recent date indeed, and to imagine that a Jewish captive in Babylon would approach his subject in the spirit of a modern historian or archæologist is a very large assumption indeed. Besides, the passage Gen. x. 8-12 is ascribed to the *earlier* of the two writers,² who could not have had access to Babylonian authorities under the circumstances in which he is supposed to have written. The impartial student must perforce admit that there is considerable ground for the supposition that Genesis was compiled at a very early date, that the compiler, whosoever he may have been, had access to documents of an earlier date still, and that the modern critic of the type popular just now approaches his facts under the dominion of invincible preconceptions.

It has been further established that as early as 3500 B.C.,

¹ This, the primary principle on which Wellhausen, the leader of the school of criticism at present in fashion, has based his theories, has been altogether exploded by recent archæological discovery.

² Driver, Introduction, p. 12.

and even earlier still, according to some authorities, a Semitic kingdom was established in Mesopotamia. The Semitic race ultimately reduced the Turanians to submission, and we find the predominance of the Semites firmly established by the time of Abraham. Gen. xiv. further describes a confederacy of monarchs under the chieftaincy of a King of Elam—a condition of things to which the monuments also bear witness—but we learn from other sources that the famous Mesopotamian King, Khammurabi, identified by more than one archæological scholar with Amraphel, King of Shinar, mentioned in Gen. xiv., afterwards overthrew his former suzerain, and established his own authority over his neighbours.¹

From that time forward Mesopotamia,² assisted by the excellence of its climate and its fertile and well-watered territories, advanced rapidly to a position of importance. Whether we are to attribute the superiority of Assyria over Babylon for a long period to the fact that Nineveh was near to the mountains, and that it nurtured a hardier race, we cannot tell. But certain it is that the Babylonian power, at one time in the ascendant, fell, not once, but repeatedly, under the sway of the chieftains of Northern Mesopotamia.

The Assyrian monarchy, at and after the very early date which has been assigned to Semite supremacy, was powerful and warlike. Yet at first it was overshadowed and kept in check by two Turanian empires, the Egyptian and the Hittite. The latter was crushed by the Egyptian King, Thothmes III., in the sixteenth century B.C. It would seem that after this period all three powers fell, from various causes, into decay, leaving an opportunity for the brief supremacy of Israel under David and Solomon. In the days of Ahab, however, the Assyrian monarchy appears to have revived. The monuments represent the Kings of Israel, after her separation from Judah, as paying tribute to more than one Assyrian Sovereign. But the formidable Assyrian empire with which readers of the Bible are familiar commenced with the great Pul, who, after founding a new dynasty, assumed, apparently

¹ No less than four of the kings mentioned in Gen. xiv. have been identified by archæologists with personages mentioned in the Assyrian tablets. This identification has, of course, been energetically contested. There are doubtless some scholars of repute who are too anxious to find in ancient records confirmation of the Scripture story. There are others who are ever on the lookout to prove Scripture wrong. Between these extremes lie two other classes of critics. One is so scrupulously afraid of claiming too much for the sacred record that it abandons every doubtful point to the adversary of Scripture. There is room for a *fourth* class of critic—one who, in consequence of the demonstrated general trustworthiness of the Bible historians, is inclined to accept their authority on points confessedly doubtful. Is this course altogether unreasonable, unfair, or unscientific?

² Aram-Naharaim—Syria of the two rivers.

from considerations of policy, the name of Tiglath-pileser, which had been borne by some of his predecessors. Under him and his successors, Shalmaneser, Sargon, and Sennacherib, the Assyrian power attained formidable dimensions, overthrew Syria, brought Egypt to her knees, reduced Israel to bondage, and seriously threatened Judah. Of their civilization, learning, and capacity the monuments convey to us a high idea. Of their warlike character, their cruelty, rapacity, and pitiless ferocity we have also abundant evidence. We can, therefore, well understand the terror and despair with which their devastating approach was expected by the peoples against whom they marched. We have a vivid description of it in Isa. x. 28-31.

One word in conclusion about Babylon. There was an attempt on the part of the capital of Southern Mesopotamia to assert its independence about the time with which we have to deal. Under the brave and capable Merodach-Baladan the Babylonian revolt seems to have had a measure of success. It was apparently when its prospects were brightest that the envoys of the Babylonian chieftain arrived at the Court of Hezekiah. Under the circumstances in which Hezekiah was then placed we can readily understand that they were likely to find a warm welcome from him. But Isaiah, under Divine inspiration, was enabled to announce to Hezekiah the vanity of the hopes with which he flattered himself. The prophet's anticipations were verified. The might of Assyria proved for the moment too great to be withstood. First Sargon, and then Sennacherib, crushed repeated attempts at rebellion on the part of the Babylonian chieftain. It was not until the time of the great Nebuchadnezzar that predominance in Mesopotamia passed once more to its southern capital. But under him Babylon took the place of Assyria, and the same fate which had befallen the ten tribes befell Jerusalem also. As Isaiah had predicted, "all that was in Hezekiah's house, and that which his fathers had laid up in store unto his day," was "carried to Babylon." "Nothing" was "left." Even "his sons whom he begat" were "taken away," and they became "eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon" (Isa. xxxix. 6, 7).¹

(To be continued.)

ERRATUM.

On p. 214, line 3, of my former article, the word *evolution* has accidentally been substituted for *revolution*. The omission of the one letter obscures the argument, which is that Nature has her moments of sudden as well as of gradual change.

¹ We may well regret to find that the commentary in the Cambridge Bible for Schools finds this prophecy "not easy to reconcile with the