

Professor Sayce and the "Higher Criticism."

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I AM sorry to have occasion to break a lance with my friend Professor Sayce, but the unjust light in which, in the last number of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES, he places, without distinction or discrimination, the representatives of the "Higher Criticism," obliges me to do so. The opening paragraph of his article on "The Fourteenth Chapter of Genesis" must, I am sure, leave upon every reader the impression that it is a conclusion unanimously held by modern critics, that the narrative contained in that chapter is altogether unhistorical. I desire to point out how far this conclusion is from being the general verdict of the "Higher Criticism," and to show that the "exaggerated scepticism," of which Professor Sayce speaks, is by no means shared, as the terms used by him would naturally be understood to imply, by all those who study the Old Testament upon critical lines.

It is true, I have had no occasion myself to express an opinion on the historical character of the narrative in Gen. xiv.: it did not fall within the plan of my *Introduction* to deal with the chapter otherwise than from a literary point of view; and I confined myself to saying (p. 14) that its [literary] character pointed to "its being taken from a special source" (*i.e.* from some source other than J, E, or P, of which the rest of the narrative of Genesis is composed). But let us hear some of those modern critics who have declared themselves explicitly on the subject. And firstly, Dillmann, whose methods throughout are those of the "Higher Criticism," but who certainly cannot be charged with ignoring or depreciating archæological discovery, and whose *Commentary on the Hexateuch* is the completest, and the most ably written, which exists. In the third edition of his *Commentary on Genesis* (1886), Dillmann defends at some length the historical character of the narrative contained in Gen. xiv.: against the view that it is an imaginative picture, designed for the glorification of Abraham, he remarks, for instance (his note is too long to quote in full):—"That what is actually impossible is here narrated, is not yet proven. In particular, the four eastern kings, neither individually nor in this connection mentioned elsewhere, and their expedition towards the West, must have a historical basis. Two of

their names have only recently found their explanation and attestation in the Inscriptions; that Elam was once a power, even superior to Babylon, might have been conjectured from x. 22, but is now confirmed by the Inscriptions." Dillmann next proceeds to meet objections drawn from the intrinsic character of the narrative, after which he continues:—"Even for the figure of Melchizedek the narrator will have found a support in tradition, and nothing obliges us to suppose that it is a creation of his imagination." And in his notes on the chapter he refers expressly to the corroboration which the names Ellasar, Ariok, and Chedorlaomer have received from the Assyrian monuments. Naturally, it is no fault of Dillmann's that, writing in 1886, he did not strengthen his argument by a reference to the more positive data that were only brought to light some years subsequently; but in so far as the historical inferences, deduced by Professor Sayce from the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, are justified, instead of overthrowing Dillmann's criticism, they are, on the contrary, a remarkable confirmation of its sagacity, and a striking proof of the soundness of his judgment.

Dillmann, however, in adopting this position, does not stand alone among modern critics. Delitzsch, who also accepts in general the literary conclusions of the "Higher Criticism," in his *New Commentary on Genesis* (1887), maintains the historical character of the narrative in Gen. xiv., and quotes Assyriological authority in support of his opinion. Rud. Kittel, the author of an elaborate *Geschichte der Hebräer* (of which the second part, dealing with Judges-Kings, has just appeared), in which he subjects the biblical narrative to a minute literary analysis, and considers in detail the historical value of the different sources, devotes five pages (pp. 158-162) of his first part (1888) to a discussion of Gen. xiv., and defence of its general historical character: the name Ariok of Ellasar, he points out, exactly as is done by Professor Sayce, agrees with Eri-Aku of Larsa, Chedorlaomer is formed on the analogy of other old Elamite names occurring in the Inscriptions; Melchizedek is like the other old Canaanitish name, Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, mentioned in Josh. x. 1; the supremacy of Elam agrees also with the testimony of the monuments. Of course,

Kittel, writing in 1888, could not, any more than Dillmann in 1886, make use of inscriptions which were not yet discovered; but his conclusion, from the materials at his disposal, was that the contents of Gen. xiv. were of a character that pointed to their being genuine historical reminiscences derived from remote antiquity. Graf Baudissin, another representative of the "Higher Criticism," in his *Geschichte des Alttestamentlichen Priesterthums* (1889), gives it likewise as his opinion (p. 67) that the account of the expedition of the kings from the East must rest upon an actual historical occurrence. Professor Francis Brown of New York, who is also in thorough harmony with the methods of modern criticism, in his volume entitled *Assyriology: Its Use and Abuse in Old Testament Study* (1885), writes (p. 51 f.):—"It was the fashion among a certain school of critics, not many years ago, to prove, and prove again, the unhistorical character of Gen. xiv.—the Elamite campaign into Canaan. Wise exegetes are not doing this now.¹ There is too much light out of the East." And to quote, in conclusion, two or three critics of an earlier date, Ewald, in his *History of Israel* (Eng. tr. i. pp. 52, 301, 307 f.); Diestel, in the *Jahrbücher für Deutsche Theologie*, 1869, p. 345; and Tuch, in his *Commentary on Genesis* (2nd ed., 1871, p. 247, etc.), all express their conviction that the same narrative is, in its substance, historical. Ewald even inferred, from the description in ver. 13 of Abram as "the Hebrew," that it was derived from some non-Israëlitish source, a conclusion in which Dillmann and Kittel also agree, and which is supported, with fresh arguments, by Professor Sayce.

It would have been fairer, I venture to think, and more equitable, if Professor Sayce had limited the terms of his censure, and not brought upon the representatives of the "Higher Criticism" indiscriminately the odium of being indifferent to archæological discovery, and of indulging in an exaggerated historical scepticism. It may, indeed, be doubted whether any of the best modern critics are indifferent to archæology, or adopt conclusions which they do not believe to be reconcilable with the evidence of the monuments; but this is a question which I have no need here to consider. It is sufficient for my present purpose to have shown that there are modern critics of the highest autho-

rity and repute who have expressly argued against the conclusions which Professor Sayce attributes (apparently) to all critics without exception. I do not for a moment suppose that Professor Sayce's misrepresentation is intentional; but it is, I think, to be regretted that, before pronouncing judgment on the views taken by critics on Gen. xiv., he should have omitted to acquaint himself with what, at least, men such as Dillmann, Delitzsch, and Kittel have written upon it.

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P.S.—I may be allowed to take this opportunity of criticising one or two points of detail in Professor Sayce's paper:—1. The identification of *Ham* (הם), in Gen. xiv. 5, with *Ammon* (עמון) appears to me to be questionable. The regular name of the Ammonites in the Old Testament is not "Ammon" simply, but "the children of Ammon" (the only exceptions being the poetical passage, Ps. lxxxiii. 8, and 1 Sam. xi. 11, where the LXX. and Pesh. express בני עמון, in agreement with the uniform usage of Hebrew prose writers on other occasions); and their territory is correspondingly "the land of the children of Ammon" (ארץ בני עמון: see Deut. ii. 19, 37; Josh. xiii. 25; Judg. xi. 15; 2 Sam. x. 2, etc.); and even in the Assyrian Inscriptions, to judge from Schrader, *KAT*², p. 141, l. 9 ff., cf. 194, l. 23, 257, l. 22, 288, l. 22, 355, l. 18, the name is similarly "the land of Ammon," or "the house of Ammon." It seems to me, therefore, difficult to think that "in the territory of Ammon" (which must evidently be here meant) could have been denoted by a Hebrew writer by an expression so alien to Hebrew usage as בָּהֶם (*ex hyp.*, the equivalent of בעמון). Had הם been the equivalent of עמון, the form used would surely have been בארץ בני הם. (It is an old conjecture of Tuch's (*ZDMG.* 1847, p. 167), that הם was the ancient name of the city known afterwards as "Rabbah" (2 Sam. xi. 1, xii. 27 *al.*), or, more precisely, as "Rabbah of the children of Ammon" (רבת בני עמון: see Deut. iii. 11; 2 Sam. xii. 26, xvii. 27; Jer. xlix. 2; Ezek. xvi. 25). But this does not imply the verbal identity of הם with עמון.)

2. I do not understand what bearing the formula . . . ברוך "blessed be . . . of . . ." in Gen. xiv. 19, has on the date or authorship of the narrative in question. The formula occurs several times in the Old Testament (Judg. xvii. 2; 1 Sam. xv. 13, xxiii. 21; 2 Sam. ii. 5; Ruth ii. 20, iii. 10; Ps. cxv. 15); and, as there is nothing peculiar about it, it is one which it seems to me might have been used by a Hebrew writer of any age.

¹ Professor Brown does not state whom he has here in view; but the reference is probably to the second edition of Dillmann's *Commentary*, which appeared in 1882.