

## ARTICLE XII.

## SEMITIC AND ORIENTAL NOTES.

## PROFESSOR SAYCE ON ARCHÆOLOGY.

THE recent article by Canon Cheyne in defense of literary criticism has drawn from Professor Sayce a very noteworthy article in the *Contemporary Review*, wherein he sets forth in a very forcible way his reasons for abandoning his former hospitable attitude toward the results of the literary criticism of the Pentateuch. The article is significant for many reasons. It not only shows that Professor Sayce is no longer fearful of losing his standing by taking a conservative position on this matter, but that he really feels that he has his opponents "on the run." Here are some interesting extracts:—

"Let me briefly review some of the reasons which preclude me from offering any longer the same welcome to the method and conclusions of the 'higher criticism' that I was prepared to accord to them fifteen years ago. The pivot upon which the whole question turns is the Pentateuch, or the Hexateuch as our critical friends would make it. If the Pentateuch is really a hodge-podge of ill-digested morsels none of which is older than the age of the Jewish monarchy, while a considerable part of them is post-exilic, we may at once give up the contest, and follow our critical friends whithersoever they lead us. . . . Moses will vanish no man knoweth where, and the history of the patriarchs and of the wanderings in the desert will become a mere series of myths and popular legends. Israel, according to our newest lights, has no history before its settlement in Canaan."

Then after stating that, by this process, what has been held to be history, becomes mere delusion and fraud, and that Israel and its religion lose their necessary historical background, he has this striking and pungent paragraph:—

"Such revolutionary doctrines require a good deal of evidence to support them. But what do we actually find? Primarily an 'analysis' by certain Western scholars in the nineteenth century of what are alleged to be the original elements of the text. The whole of the Pentateuch is sliced up into minute fragments each of which is ticketed with a kind of algebraic symbol. The beginning of a verse is ascribed to one writer or 'source,' the middle of it to another, and the end of it to a third. The critic knows exactly what each author wrote or pieced together, where

'J' and 'E' dovetail into one another, or where 'P' breaks off and 'Q' commences. That this should sometimes happen in the middle of a sentence is of little consequence. The critic is as cocksure of his 'analysis' as he is of the approximate age to which each writer or redactor should be assigned. A 'polychromatic edition of the Old Testament' is even being published in America in which the 'eminent biblical scholars in Europe and America' exhaust all the colors of the rainbow in the effort to represent the literary mosaic-work of the ancient Hebrew books."

Hereupon Professor Sayce presents the case against the literary critics with great strength and thoroughness, the special argument which is most powerfully used being that the literary analysis of the Pentateuch was strong simply because the scientific test of comparison could not be brought against it. With the great accessions to our historical knowledge within the last twenty years this comparison is now possible, and not only does it successfully confute the results, but it also condemns the method of the literary critics. "The higher criticism," he says, "was triumphant only so long as the scientific instrument of comparison could not be employed against it."

That such a discussion as the present is in progress is in itself a very suggestive fact. What Professor Sayce says about the cocksure attitude of the literary critics is absolutely true, and was tolerated only because of the absence of some effective instrument by which the evidence which the literary criticism offered could be tested, as evidence. Until such a test was forthcoming, little could be done, and it must be said that the legitimate results of the literary examination of the Old Testament were accepted quite generally with great freedom and hospitality. Emboldened by this reception, extravagance was heaped upon extravagance until the ridiculous statements quoted in these notes from Professor Lefevre's "Race and Language" reached the high-water mark of this style of folly.

The appeal which Professor Sayce makes to common sense as a useful element in making a critical estimate is sound. And it is the common sense of the church which has held it true to the practical ideal of the gospel, when logically this ideal ought to have been annihilated according to the dicta of the critics. Besides, the question of evidence is a very much larger one than the mere recital of probable linguistic inferences. While evidence has often a very different real, from the supposed value attached to it, and while there is always room for different estimates of the meaning and use of a given body of facts presented to prove a doctrine, in the long run, it may be said that common sense will make the fewest mistakes and represent the truth more nearly than the laborious interpretations and the vague profundities which are too often employed.

But, at the same time, it is to be remembered that during this period literary criticism has had no balance-wheel of any kind. Theory was simply matched against theory, and the latest was no more subject to scientific scrutiny than the first, and hence the abnormal development along

the line of fancifulness and extravagance was to be expected. Extreme importance was attached to things which were genuine enough, but which did not justify the conclusions drawn from them. It is certainly hard to think of the Pentateuch as a literary unit. And a rational theory of composite construction is possible without making it a "hodge-podge of undigested morsels" or "literary hash." But no such theory will be evolved which does not give adequate weight to the results of archæological discovery. A "polychromatic edition of the Old Testament" certainly has its ridiculous aspect; but none the less will it, as has done a "Genesis in Colors," render useful service along certain lines.

In the main, however, Professor Sayce's contention must be sustained. Literary critics have been irrational and absurd to a degree which could not have been the case if some means of comparison had been possible. And the very boldness of utterance and appearance of certainty which the critics assumed, often led astray even those who were accustomed to weigh carefully the evidence offered for any proposition presented for acceptance. The discussion is a healthy sign, and will be thoroughly fruitful if it leads to a greater candor in the examination of ALL the evidence, without bias in any direction. The danger is, that we shall be as extravagant again, in another direction, as we have been in literary criticism. But something we have surely learned.

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#### THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES.

AN ESTEEMED correspondent calls attention to the statement in October *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* (p. 757) with reference to the adoption by the Christian church of the Scriptures of the Jews, saying that we have made "their Scriptures our rule of faith and practice." This is, it is suggested, misleading, and not quite honorable to the New Testament. There is a sense in which this is undoubtedly true, and the discriminating chapters in the Westminster and Savoy confessions certainly fill a real place and make clear what might otherwise be misunderstood. In so far our correspondent is perfectly right.

Still the fact remains, that the phrase "Jewish and Christian Scriptures," frequently used, and designed especially to make the distinction, is not thoroughly descriptive, and carries with it no intelligible meaning. The Christian church certainly has adopted the Old Testament as an integral part of the canon of Scripture, and does not discriminate as to the equal authority of both Testaments in so far as their legitimate uses are concerned. No one pretends that the New Testament would be either intelligible or helpful, in the broad sense, without the Old, while many of its greatest passages would become utterly useless. One thing is very certain, namely, that the Testaments are inseparably bound together for the uses of faith and worship. Thus the Old Testament is as much "Christian" Scripture as the New Testament.

On the question as to whether the entire Bible can be alluded to as "Jewish" Scripture the conclusion is not so clear, though it must be said that there are many things which would warrant such a use of the term. The Christian religion is unquestionably of Jewish origin, and depends for its coherency and validity upon the facts of Jewish history and experience. In a still broader sense Christianity may be said to be a Semitic religion, since it sprang from Semitic sources, and has to this day maintained many of the distinctively Semitic characteristics. Classified on the ethnological basis, Christianity is Semitic; classified on the national basis, it is undoubtedly Jewish. So that it is unqualifiedly historically accurate to call the Scriptures of both Testaments "Jewish," speaking on the broad lines indicated.

There is in this statement no necessary antagonism to the ideas of the gospel or discredit to the gospel. Indeed we still look to those wonderful pictures in Isaiah of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah as furnishing our most vivid descriptions of the real mission and method of Christ. The gospel was undoubtedly latent in the Old Testament, and the great difficulty which Paul had in making the gospel acceptable to the Jews to whom he preached, arose not from the acceptance of distinctively "Jewish" ideas, but rather from ideas which are more properly described by the term "Judaic," and the opposition of the gospel was rather to Judaism as a religious institutional system than to Jewish ideas as these are found in the Old Testament. Our Lord constantly appealed to Moses and the prophets, and urged their sufficiency. Paul's great work was to urge the Scriptures of the Jews against the Judaic system, which had been reared upon false interpretations of them. Indeed it may truthfully be said that the main contention of the New Testament is to reveal Christianity, not in contrast to the religion of the Old Testament, but in continuation and development thereof, as against the stiff and lifeless formalism which had been reared upon them, and which Christ and his disciples had to contest under the name of Judaism.

Thus understood, the allusion to the Scriptures of both Testaments as "their" (that is, of the Jews) Scriptures is not only not improper, but rather illuminating. One has only to compare the lofty tolerance and inclusive spirit of the later prophets with the institutions of Judaism in the time of Christ to see how far from the spirit of Israel's religion the Jews had departed, and how really the teaching and preaching of our Lord had for its first object a return to the sources of the Jewish religion. Indeed it may fairly be questioned whether Paul ever rose to any greater height of religious charity than is found in some of these same prophets.

Thus the use of these terms becomes more clear. If we say the "Christian Scriptures," we ought to mean the accepted books of the Old and New Testaments, without any discrimination. If we say the "Jewish Scriptures," we ought to mean the same books, but from the ethnological or national point of view; while "Jewish and Christian Scriptures" is ut-

terly misleading, and cannot legitimately mean anything that makes the term either necessary or useful.

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#### CUNEIFORM ORIGINALS OF THE PENTATEUCH.

WITHOUT accepting all of the extravagances of the literary analysts of the Pentateuch, it still stands, as one of the best attested results of Old Testament criticism, that the Pentateuch as we have it is a composite, and has in it more or less distinct traces of various documents which were used in the construction of our present records. This general statement will probably not be very seriously challenged by anybody. This accepted, the questions immediately arise, What of the originals themselves? When and where were they written? and Have we any reasonable hope of ever knowing anything about them?

A few years ago these questions would have elicited little in the way of reply. Our knowledge was so limited, and the room for intelligent conjecture even was so small, that little could be offered as suggesting anything about the primary documents which were woven together to make our present narrative. But now this has all been changed. Conjectures are not only possible, but they may be presented as very reasonable guesses with a good deal of presumption in their favor.

The discoveries of Dr. Petrie and Mr. Bliss at Tell-el-Hesi, the recently exhumed site of Lachish, together with the various finds of beads, vases, inscriptions, and other evidences dating from, say, 800 to 1400 B. C., give very fair reason for believing that further discovery will carry our chronology, with historical material to vouch for it, still further back, and possibly back to the very Mosaic period itself. What if the suggestion recently made in England, that possibly the originals of the various Pentateuchal narratives written in the cuneiform characters may be found, should really turn out to be true, and we should find ourselves in possession of the documents from which our present writings were arranged?

This is by no means so unlikely as at first sight it looks. It is no more chimerical than it would have been some years ago to predict the discovery of an Assyrian original or parallel, as one may choose to view it, of the Deluge story, and yet this has come to pass. It is an entirely possible occurrence, and even more than possible, even if it is doubtful whether it could be regarded as probable. Still, so many strange things have come to pass lately, and we have been compelled to take as serious history so many matters which the critics had positively assured us were myths, or survivals of folk-lore, or one thing or another, that we are more easily led to believe that we may some day actually have before us cuneiform originals of the Pentateuch or more properly, possibly, of its various substratal documents.

Perhaps the most fruitful work in this direction which could be done by the linguists themselves would be to examine very carefully the age of the vocabularies of the oldest of the Pentateuchal documents, and sift out, if possible, the more ancient from the words of later origin or form, and this might reveal to what extent these narratives as we have them in our present form, have a verbiage which could be traced in the Assyrian documents which we already have. The percentum of words which have an Assyrian equivalent, apart from the cognate connection, would easily show the possibility, or even the probability, of transcription from Assyrian originals; and this in turn would lead to a closer inspection of the ideas contained in them with reference to Assyrian parallelisms. This is in the line of a suggestion made at the Ninth International Oriental Congress, which urged more direct work with the language itself, in the hope of producing so much material for comparison as to make the argument more useful, as well as more intelligible, for inferential uses. At all events there is here a very interesting possibility, and there is good reason to believe that persistent investigation will lead to important and startling results.