

*THE BOOK OF DANIEL IN THE LIGHT OF
RECENT RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY.*

III. CYRUS.

THE fame of the great conqueror is celebrated in Scripture, in inscriptions, and in profane history. From Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezra; from annalistic tablet and cylinder; from Herodotus, Ktesias, and Xenophon, the student of to-day may cull and sift his materials. They want sifting.

(1) Herodotus had at his command "three ways in which the story of Cyrus was told, all differing from his own narrative." With laudable sobriety he declares that he "followed those Persian authorities whose object it appeared to be not to magnify the exploits of Cyrus, but to relate the simple truth."¹ That sobriety only produced "a beautiful narrative sufficiently romantic."² But Mr. Grote's verdict, if not declined by Canon Rawlinson,³ is now set aside as too mild. Messrs Blakesley, Mahaffy, Wiedemann, Sayce and others refuse on various grounds to exonerate the "Father of history" from that verdict of antiquity which dubbed him consciously dishonest. He is to be reckoned "a mere λογόποιος," "no more trustworthy than Marco Polo or Defoe." "In his account of Persia, as of Babylonia and of Egypt, the affectation of a knowledge he did not possess, and concealment of the sources from which he derived his information, diminish his authority. . . . It is only where his statements are confirmed by the native monuments which modern research has brought to light that we can rely upon them. . . . Egyptology and Assyriology have made it impossible for us ever again to accept the unsupported assertions of Herodotus in matters pertaining to the East."⁴ Xenophon is no better.

¹ *Herod.*, i. 95.

² Grote's *Hist. of Greece*, iv. 112.

³ *The History of Herodotus*, i. 68 n. 6.

⁴ Cf. Sayce's *Herodotus* pp. xxiv.-xxxii. Brüll, in his *Herodots Babylonische Nachrichten*, estimates the historian more highly, at least as regards inaccuracy in Babylonian matters.

“The Cyropædia is memorable and interesting, considered with reference to the Greek mind, and as a philosophical novel.” “Xenophon has selected the life of Cyrus as the subject of a moral romance, which for a long time was cited as authentic history, and which even now serves as an authority, express or implied, for disputable and even incorrect conclusions.”¹

(2) If now we turn to Scripture, are we on safer, firmer ground? So we have been taught, and so we have been accustomed to think—until lately. I collect some of the passages² which deal with Cyrus. In Isaiah’s pages, the Lord saith of him, “He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure.”³ In one passage, he is “a ravenous bird from the east, the man of My counsel:”⁴ in another, “I have raised up one from the north, and he is come; from the rising of the sun one that calleth upon My name; and he shall come upon rulers (marg. *deputies*) as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.”⁵ His worth and work are described in the well-known passage: “Thus saith the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the rugged places plain: I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I am the Lord, Which call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me. I am the Lord, and there is

¹ Grote, iv. 110, 142.

² I give them from the Revised Version.

³ Isa. xlv. 28. It will be noticed that the Rev. Ver. retains the translation “shepherd,” as against the rendering “friend” advocated *e.g.* by Kuenen.

⁴ Isa. xlv. 11.

⁵ Isa. xli. 25.

none else ; beside Me there is no God : I will gird thee, though thou hast not known Me.”¹

A simple exegesis has hitherto found in these extracts a conviction that Cyrus was a chosen instrument in God's hand, and chosen (*int. al.*) because there would be recognised in him as a Zoroastrian a reverence for monotheism as opposed to polytheism.² Something akin to this conception of his character, as estimated in Scripture, has usually been found in the language of (a) his proclamation :—“ In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord, the God of heaven, given me ; and He hath charged me to build Him an house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all His people, his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord, the God of Israel, (He is God,) which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem ”³ :—and of (b) the decree which followed it : “ In the first year of Cyrus the king, Cyrus the king made a decree ; Concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, let the house be builded, the place where they offer sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid : . . . and let the expenses be given out of the king's house : and also let the gold and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which

¹ Isa. xlv. 1-5.

² Cf. *int. al.* Stanley's brilliant pages, *History of the Jewish Church*, iii. 47-9 (ed. 1883).

³ Ezra i. 1-4 ; cf. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23.

is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to its place, and thou shalt put them in the house of God." ¹

Now, however, such conceptions of the character and motives of Cyrus are to be surrendered. "We must give up the belief that Cyrus was a monotheist, bent on destroying the idols of Babylon. . . . Cyrus was a polytheist, who, like other polytheists in other ages, adopted the gods of the country he had conquered from motives of state policy." ² He was "a complete religious indifferentist," says Dr. Cheyne, ³ "willing to go through any amount of ceremonies to soothe the prejudices of a susceptible population." "The theory," we are told, "which held that Cyrus had allowed the Jews to return to their own land; because, like them, he believed in but one supreme god, the Ormazd or good spirit of the Zoroastrian creed—must be abandoned. God consecrated Cyrus to be His instrument in restoring His chosen people to their land, not because the king of Elam was a monotheist, but because the period of Jewish trial and punishment had come to an end." ⁴ Henceforward, we must "detract somewhat from the accuracy of the inspired prophet" (Isaiah), to whom Cyrus "appears like an idealized David," and one "whose conquest of Babylon was to be the signal of an iconoclasm which marks the downfall of the false religions." ⁵

¹ Ezra vi. 3-5. I must confess myself quite unable to see with Kuenen (*Hibbert Lectures*, p. 134) that the language of this edict and that of the proclamation (Ezra i. 1, etc.) are mutually contradictory. The one is a proclamation, the other a decree; the one is supplementary to the other: the one is general, the other special.

² Sayce, *Fresh Light*, etc., p. 149; cf. *The Ancient Empires of the East*, p. 246.

³ *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, ii. 290 (3rd edition). See also Canon Rawlinson, *The Character and Writings of Cyrus the Great*, in the *Contemporary Review* for Jan. 1880, p. 93.

⁴ Sayce, *Fresh Light*, pp. 149, 150.

⁵ Cheyne, *Ibid.*

On reading such conclusions, we must do something more than share the regret with which some of their advocates affirm that they have reached them. Rather, we have to ask, Upon what are they based? And the answer is, Upon the lately discovered Cyrus-inscriptions.

I. I have already given the pith of these important documents.¹ If, alas! I cannot read a word of the originals, I do not for a moment dispute the general accuracy of the translations. The names of the translators are sufficient guarantee to all reasonable men. But I do, with all respect, consider "not proven" the conclusions which have been drawn from them: and I rise from the re-perusal of Scripture and inscription with a renewed conviction that the prophet is more trustworthy than the Babylonian scribe, and that the truer character of Cyrus is to be gathered not from the inscriptions of Babylon, but from the records of Scripture.

Let us give to the language of the inscriptions the fullest possible force. In them Cyrus is called the "young servant" of Merodach, the patron-deity of Babylon. Merodach "proclaimed him by name for the sovereignty. . . . He beheld with joy the deeds of his vicegerent, who was righteous in hand and heart. . . . To his city of Babylon he summoned his march, . . . like a friend and a comrade he went by his side." Cyrus himself asserts, "I am Cyrus . . . of the ancient seed-royal, whose rule has been beloved by Bel and Nebo, whose sovereignty they cherished according to the goodness of their hearts. . . . My vast armies (Merodach) marshalled peacefully in the midst of Babylon. . . . For the work (of restoring the shrine) of Merodach, the great lord, I prepared; and he graciously drew nigh unto me, Cyrus, the king, his worshipper, and to Kambyeses, my son. . . . The gods of Sumer and Accad. . . . I settled in peace in their sanctuaries by the command of Merodach, the great lord.

¹ EXPOSITOR for March, 1885, p. 220, etc.

In the goodness of their hearts may all the gods whom I have brought into their strong places daily intercede before Bel and Nebo that they should grant me length of days: may they bless my projects with prosperity, and may they say to Merodach my lord that Cyrus the king, thy worshipper, and Kambyses his son (deserve his favour)."¹

This is the language not of a polytheist (in the sense advocated), not of an indifferentist, not of a syncretist, but of an ardent devotee of Merodach, Bel, and Nebo. The name of Ormazd does not appear once; there is not the slightest allusion to Zoroastrian belief. Let this be granted unhesitatingly, but—and this is the real question—does the language of the inscriptions represent as a matter of course the only true belief of Cyrus?

From whence came these inscriptions? Who wrote them? They are usually admitted to be Babylonian in language and in form of writing; to have been written by the Babylonian priest-class, and to be couched in the style of the Chaldæan hierarchy. If so, must they not have been compiled with the evident intention of conciliating the Babylonians and representing to them their new master from a Babylonian point of view? It has been pointed out² with a good deal of probability, that the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus was facilitated by the support he received from friends within the camp of Nabonidus. There were two great parties alienated from or angry with Nabonidus, and there was a third party looking for deliverance at all hazards. (a) The first was the band of conspirators tired of the indolent and irreligious monarch whom they had once helped to raise to power: a party probably supported by that "ancienne noblesse" which had never forgiven the act of usurpation by which Nabonidus had become king. (β) The second was yet

¹ For the sake of justice to one whose opinions I venture to question, I give these extracts from Professor Sayce's translation only (*Fresh Light*, etc., pp. 142-8).

² See Evers, *Das Emporkommen der persischen Macht unter Cyrus*, p. 12.

more powerful: the priest-class of Babylon. Their religious instincts were outraged and their interests neglected by the degenerate prince, and the devotees of Merodach and Bel turned against one who did not fulfil the promise of his earlier years. When Babylon had fallen, and its fall was to be recorded in the national archives, who would give the order for the inscription, and who would draw up the account? If it may be safely asserted that Cyrus or some one representing him would issue the order, may it not be as safely asserted that they who drew up the narrative graven on the lately discovered cylinder were not the same as those who drew up the decrees of *Ezra* i. 2 etc., vi. 3 etc? The very intimation that there was one "archive"-house in Babylon and another at Ecbatana in Media¹ supposes record-draughtsmen at both, whose language would reflect their respective nationalities and creeds. The Cyrus-cylinder represents Babylonian thought and belief; no Median or Persian would have composed it as it stands, even if he were ready to admit that Cyrus could and would command both the writing of it and the deposit of papyrus-copies in the other archives. If the exclusion of all but Babylonian belief is of itself a testimony to the inscription having emanated from Babylonian sources, does that therefore stamp it as containing the only true reflection of the personal faith of Cyrus? Granted that it served the purpose of a political manifesto, that it expressed what would wound as little as possible, or even flatter, the national vanity of the inhabitants of Babylon, yet is it not too hasty to regard it as classifying the Persian who sanctioned it as either indifferentist or polytheist?

(γ) There was yet a third party in Babylon. The position occupied by that party is not without its bearing on this

¹ Cf. *Ezra* vi. 1 with verse 2. There was a third at Susa, the records of which were employed by the writer of the Book of Esther (Sayce, *Introduction to Ezra*, etc., p. 96)

point. That third party was that of the Jews. They had never lost sight of the promises of deliverance announced to them by the Prophets; their calculations bade them at this very time look forward to a speedy termination of the captivity.¹ "Babylon is fallen" is a cry which, it is not at all improbable, they helped to realize. And if they were in any degree instrumental in advancing the interests of Cyrus, would or could he neglect or forget them? History has answered by pointing to his proclamations and decree of restoration. Analyse the style of those documents, and it is no longer that of the Babylonian scribe but of the Median or Persian; they express no Babylonian belief but that of a monotheist. I do not read in them the language of a worshipper of Israel's Jehovah; but the acts they announce are in accordance with the conception of the person and work of Cyrus met with in the Prophets,² and are quite consistent with the conduct of a firm believer in the monotheistic principle of Zoroastrianism.

II. This, however, brings us face to face with the second statement. We are asked to believe that Cyrus knew nothing about Ormazd; that he was an idolater pure and simple. If we ask, Upon what grounds? the advocates of the polytheistic tendencies of Cyrus allege, in support of their hypothesis, the title "King of Ansan" assigned to him in the Cyrus-cylinder. In the third year of Nabonidus, the army of Astyages, king of Media, revolted and delivered their king to Cyrus, "King of Ansan," and to Ansan Cyrus is described as bringing the goods which he captured at Ecbatana.³ Some cuneiform scholars replace the title

¹ Few writers have brought together the Scripture passages in more picturesque language than the late Dean Stanley. See *History of the Jewish Church*, iii. Lect. xlii. *pass.*

² Notice the undesigned confirmation of this supplied by the Babylonian inscription itself. "All their peoples I (Cyrus) assembled, and I restored their lands" (Sayce, *Fresh Light*, etc., p. 148). This principle applied to the component peoples of his empire, would not be withheld from the Jews who had assisted him.

³ Cf. Pinches' translation in *T.S.B.A.*, vii. 141.

Ansan by Elam¹ (Susiana) with which they identify it, and advance this identification in support of their view that Cyrus was not a Persian but an Elamite, and—if, by descent of Aryan blood—by birth and education belonging to another race.² This opinion is shared and upheld by such scholars as Sayce, Halévy, Floigl and others.

It is very presumptuous on my part, but the difficulties attendant upon this identification seem to me simply insuperable; and the deductions from it based upon perilously insufficient grounds.

Take first the identification of Ansan. What and where was it? Was it a city, or a plain, or a district? Was it in Susiana, or in Persia, or Assyria? These points are, in the opinion of some critics, so uncertain, that they prefer to pronounce themselves better able to say where Ansan was not than to say where it was.³ In the face of this uncertainty, and in the face of much difference of opinion as regards the translation of the cuneiform records containing the name, is it possible to affirm positively this identification of Ansan with Elam?

But the name Cyrus itself is supposed to relieve us of this uncertainty. It is suggested that it is a "non-Aryan" name, and indicates that Cyrus was not of Persian but of Elamite origin.⁴ This is not the view which has been hitherto held. Until the appearance of the Cyrus-cylinder—or rather until the identification of Ansan with Elam—Cyrus was considered to be a Persian by birth, and of the race of the Achæmenids, who raised by various acts of conquest the Persians to the supremacy of the East. In the Bible, in the Greek historians, and in the Persian in-

¹ Cf. Sayce, *Fresh Light*, etc., p. 143; and see the *EXPOSITOR* for March, 1885, p. 221.

² See Sayce's *Introduction to Ezra*, etc., p. 45.

³ The various opinions may be seen collected in Evers, *Das Emporkommen der persischen Macht unter Cyrus*, pp. 31-2.

⁴ *The Ancient Empires of the East*, pp. 143-4. Cf. also p. 243.

scriptions he is the "King of Persia." Even in the Babylonian annalistic tablet, if called "King of Ansan" (the title also in the Cyrus-cylinder of his father Cambyses and grandfather Teispes)¹ in the sixth year of Nabonidus, he is called in that king's ninth year "King of Persia," the lesser title being merged in the greater. The question now arises, Which view are we to take? Before we are "off with the old and on with the new," must it not be asked, Has the new view, which has now been some years before scholars, met universal acceptance at their hands? Surely not. In addition to its resting on the *uncertain* identification of Ansan with Elam, (*a*) M. de Harlez seems to me to have not only reasserted successfully the Aryan character of the name of Cyrus,² but also to have with others proved that Susa became his chief city only after the subjugation of the Median empire.³ And (*β*), Is it possible to resist the testimony of the Behistun inscription?⁴ This makes no distinction between the faith or family of Darius Hystaspis, and that of his predecessors Cambyses and Cyrus. Ormazd is the god of them all; and the unity of the Achæmenian family asserted throughout, is of itself opposed to another *uncertainty* adduced in connexion with this question, viz. an hypothesis that the two sons of Teispes parted from each other, and established separate kingdoms, of which that which was the abode of Cyrus was peopled by a non-Aryan and idolatrous race.

For these reasons I respectfully submit that the Cyrus-cylinder does not give the truest account of the character and faith of Cyrus. I see no reason for surrendering the Scripture estimate of this prince, or for preferring to the Persian inscriptions a cuneiform Babylonian record which it is probable that Cyrus never saw, could not have read

¹ Cf. Budge, *Babylonian Life and History*, p. 81. In each case Sayce reads "King of Elam;" cf. *Fresh Light*, etc., p. 147.

² *Muséon*, i. p. 557, etc. ³ Cf. Evers, *Das Emporkommen*, etc., p. 35, etc.

⁴ See *Records of the Past*, i. p. 107, etc.; vii. p. 85, etc.

had he seen it, and which M. Oppert has pronounced one of the most difficult to decipher among the many records of the past.

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A STUDY IN THE CONNEXION OF DOCTRINES.

GALATIANS ii. 20.

GREAT is the interest of this verse, alike to the student of the spiritual history of St Paul and to the reverent investigator of revealed truth at large. Here is the great Apostle of Justification in the midst of one of his main treatments of the subject, a treatment full of the force and absoluteness of statement called out by special circumstances of peril to the truth in hand. Well, he opens up to us, in passing, out of the depths of his own experience of revealed certainties, and in strong and living coherence with the main truth before him, something also of the central secret of the inner life in Christ and by Christ. And accordingly, as we look through St Paul's experience at the eternal truths for which alone it is recorded, we have given us here the thought that the Divine gifts of our acceptance in Christ and of holiness through Christ's life in us, are things which lie vitally together, in the plan of God and in the experience of the disciple. "Christ liveth **IN** me; Who gave Himself **FOR** me."

I attempt no examination of the entire passage. The words just quoted are, for the present purpose, its essence. The **IN**-ness and the **FOR**-ness of Christ, in their connexion, here is our immediate and sufficient study. I attempt it with a humble sense of the depths that surround it, and well remembering that every action of the Christian's mind is to be carried on under recognition of the presence and in-