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ART. I.—MODERN CRITICISM OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

No. I.—INTRODUCTORY.

IN one of Sir Walter Scott's novels there is a striking passage in which the rank and file of the soldiers are described as suspending their strife while the combat between their two great champions is going on. In like manner the perpetual combat between the two great parties in the Church has suddenly ceased, in the face of the great struggle which has now commenced on the question of Old Testament criticism. There is this difference, however, between the two cases. In the former, the combatants on both sides, by mutual consent, ceased to fight, in order that they might be spectators of the conflict between their respective champions; but in the present case the combatants themselves are marshalling themselves into new camps. Nothing is more remarkable than the way in which —among "High Church" and "Low Church" alike—new and unexpected lines of cleavage have been sprung upon us almost like a miracle. As in the case of the recent earthquakes in Japan, sudden fissures have appeared, and sundered men who a short time previously were standing side by side on what seemed to be *terra firma*. Leading "High" Churchmen, whose creed has been supposed to involve a resolute assertion of the paramount authority of Scripture, have shown a disposition to come to terms with the new criticism. Not a few "Low" Churchmen, who might have been supposed to construe the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture in the very strictest terms, have shown a readiness to accept almost any theory of the growth and composition of the sacred books, so

long as they were permitted to maintain a belief in the Divine character of their contents.

A good deal of this tendency towards rash and premature surrender is due to the sudden nature of the crisis. Men of observant minds, no doubt, have seen it coming on for some time, and have done their best to prepare the minds of the members of our Church for it. The CHURCHMAN, it will be admitted, has not been neglectful in the matter. But those who discharged this duty were as a "vox clamantis in deserto." The parties in the Church continued their disputes over the old Shibboleths, until the discussion at the recent Church Congress, and the appearance of Professor Driver's *Introduction*, suddenly aroused them. Then it was seen for the first time how very strong a hold these new views had gained on rising scholars at both the Universities. So general a consent has seemed to many to indicate the necessity of abandoning the traditional view of Old Testament history, and too many men of each of the two great parties in the Church are now vying with one another in the completeness of their surrender, while others, cowed and dispirited, are feebly endeavouring to rally under the old flags of Church authority, propounding the Bible to the unconditional acceptance of the faithful, or the absolute inerrancy of the Scriptures as a whole on the ground of a mechanical inspiration.

It is the object of these papers to endeavour to show that the alarm which is felt is a good deal greater than the occasion demands. As one is accustomed to lead a timid horse gently up to the object which terrifies him, and to show him that there is in reality nothing to fear, so it is hoped that the endeavour to familiarize those who have taken fright with the real character of the new criticism will abate a good deal of the dismay which the too sudden introduction to it has occasioned. It is true that many of our leading scholars at the two Universities have given in their adhesion to what Mr. Gladstone has called the school of "negative speculation." But two reasons may be assigned for this—first, the reaction from what must be admitted to be too blind a conservatism, and next, the tendency to exaggerate the value of German criticism. It is impossible to praise too highly the industry, the patience, the ingenuity of our German brethren. Unfortunately, when we come to generalizations, German criticism is almost invariably found to fail us. In almost every branch of science it will, I think, be found that the palm for the constructive faculty must be given to men of other nations. The German is too fantastic, too unpractical, too visionary to inspire confidence in the ordinary mind. But his ingenuity and industry have caused him to dominate the realm of

theological science more than is desirable or reasonable. No man is regarded as a scholar in any branch of theology unless he display a very wide acquaintance with the writings of the Germans in that particular subject. Even Bishop Lightfoot's masterly defence of the orthodox position in regard to the New Testament would have failed to carry the weight which his knowledge of the original authorities deserved, had he not also possessed a thorough mastery of the German literature on the subject.

And yet, it must be confessed, the study of many of these German writers is a terrible waste of time. That in their most patient and minute researches they occasionally come across a fact of importance, which rewards one for a considerable amount of study, may frankly be admitted. But it must also, I think, be admitted that in the writings of these diligent students there is a great deal of misdirected energy and unprofitable labour. You often find them in full cry after a keen scent, but it frequently, in the end, proves to be a theological red herring—sometimes a whole shoal of red herrings. I cannot but believe that the researches which are supposed to have ended in the discovery of the so-called Priestly Code is an instance of this. There are, no doubt, indications, in Genesis especially, of compilation from documents which were before the writer as he wrote. Forthwith German ingenuity is devoted to an endeavour to discover these documents by methods of pure criticism alone. The first object is the discovery of a "Grundschrift," or simple historical basis, on which the composite narrative of the Hexateuch was constructed. As the investigation proceeds, we meet with occasional passages which, unless carefully dealt with, tend to overthrow the hypothesis. These passages are carefully bracketed, and added to the larger portions which have already been selected. Thus, by degrees, with infinite care and pains, a very respectable historical outline has been extracted from the general narrative, on which, it is supposed, the subsequent historical structure—with its various details of greater or less historical accuracy—has been reared. But this "Grundschrift" theory attracted little attention in England. It was not until Julius Wellhausen, a writer endowed with much fertility of speculative imagination, combined with a more attractive style than is usual with his countrymen, was introduced to the attention of English scholars in the pages of the new edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, that these speculations began to be regarded seriously. But as Professor Driver, in his recent *Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament* tells us, "literary criteria are insufficient to decide a question of this kind," a statement in which most reasonable persons will be

inclined to agree with him. Therefore Wellhausen introduces historical considerations also. He discovers that previous to the exile there are few, if any, traces of the observation of the Jewish law as it now stands in the Pentateuch. On this basis, combined with a few discrepancies between what he terms the "Priestly Code" and Deuteronomy, as well as the supposed fact that no distinction is made in Deuteronomy between priests and Levites, he founds a theory that the "Priestly Code," in its present shape, is subsequent to the return of the Jews from the Captivity. He accepts the "Priestly Code" in the shape in which it has been previously marked out by the researches of others. But he utterly fails to see that his theory has deprived their researches of any true critical basis. For, as we have already seen, they were in search of a "Grundschrift," whereas he desiderates a supplement. That on the German hypothesis (stated frankly enough by Knobel)[1] of the impossibility of miracles and prophecy, we might not unnaturally expect to discover the brief outline of facts on which the existing edifice of portent and marvel was subsequently raised, is a proposition not in itself unreasonable. But it is in the highest degree incompatible with the ordinary course of historic evolution that the brief, dry, unadorned narrative should come last in the series. In our own history the Saxon Chronicle is the basis of the more detailed and artistic narratives which succeed; it is not the ultimate result of the research of the eighteenth or nineteenth century. But Wellhausen's theory, involving this curious inversion of the natural order of things, is now presented to us by men of ability and learning—without a shadow of anything which can be regarded as proof — as the accepted result of modern science. And this though no critic of note, except the late Professor Kuenen—a Dutch writer of equal ingenuity, equal industry, and, it must be added, equal unreliability—has supported it.[2]

The object of these papers will be to explain to the English reader the grounds on which these modern theories are based, and to enable him to judge for himself in regard to them. They have been confidently presented—somewhat too confidently presented—to the English public as ascertained facts. When English people of religious instincts

[1] "Prophetismus der Hebräer," ii. 401.

[2] I fear I can point to few signs of independent research on the part of English critics, however distinguished, Professor Cheyne excepted. He is daring enough. The rest appear to follow German methods in a singularly slavish fashion, sometimes, however, shrinking from conclusions, though accepting the strange premisses on which these conclusions are based.

know on what grounds they have been so presented, it may be pretty safely predicted that another reaction will ensue. It will be seen that the supposed grounds for the acceptance of these views are no grounds at all. They rest on a very slender basis of truth, and a very wide one of assertion, and that the assertion of only one or two writers. The chain of German testimony, down to the time of Dillmann, regards the so-called "Priestly Code" as anterior to Deuteronomy, and does not accept the argument of the silence of history on the observance of the Levitical law. It is perhaps one of the most surprising features of the present controversy that there should be so general a *consensus* of those who profess to be scholars in this country on the soundness of the theories of Wellhausen and Kuenen. For it is absolutely impossible to discover any demonstration whatever of their system. In regard to the separation of the "Priestly Code" from the rest of the Pentateuchal narrative, there is not a shred of anything that can be called evidence, historical or other. You are referred from Professor Driver to Wellhausen, Kuenen and Dillmann on this point, from them to Nöldeke, Stähelin, Bleek, from these to Hupfeld, and from Hupfeld to Knobel; and all you find is a gradual and most ingenious construction of a "Grundschrift" which shall defy all hostile criticism on linguistic grounds, and a gradual elaboration of a system of first and second Elohists and Jehovists, first and second Deuteronomists and Redactors, gradually increasing in complexity and elaboration, until it resembles a Chinese puzzle more than the conclusions of rational men.[1] Even in the pages of Pro-

[1] The system of analysis is a remarkable one. First of all, passages containing particular words and phrases are separated from the mass of the narrative, and then arguments are drawn from the presence or absence of such words and phrases in favour of the distinction between one writer and another. We have an amusing example of this in the treatment of what we may venture to call the third Isaiah. Dillmann objects to the inclusion of Isa. xxiv.-xxvii. among the genuine writings of Isaiah because the expressions in them are "far-fetched and rare." What reason we have for knowing that Isaiah was not likely to use "far-fetched" expressions we are not told. And when the whole of the second portion of his prophecies are assigned to another hand, and there remain just twenty-three chapters from which to gain an idea of his style, it might certainly occur to ordinary minds that there was not much left on which to form conclusions as to what his style really was. Nor is this all. We are told that chapter xii. is not Isaiah's, because "nowhere else" does he allow "his prophecies to break into song." This is a typical instance of the "vicious circle" in which German criticism is wont to revolve. First of all, nearly every passage which displays certain characteristics is carefully removed. And then we are told that any passage containing these characteristics must be rejected because it is alien to the spirit of the author. That is to say, we first of all assume what is to be proved, and then, the

fessor Driver's "Introduction," although he has given up everything in regard to J E (that is to say, the combined narrative of the Jehovist and second Elohist), except the conviction that "it *is* composite," we find a tolerably numerous catalogue of writers which the new criticism has evolved out of its own moral consciousness, or (we may concede this as a possible, though not very probable, alternative) out of the contents of the "Hexateuch" itself. First of all, we have the mingled narrative of the Jehovist and second Elohist,[1] represented in symbol by JE. Then we have the Deuteronomist (D_1), who bases all his precepts upon the details in JE. Then we have a Deuteronomic editor (D_2), who has drawn up the narrative in Joshua so as to accord with the system of D_1.[2] Then there is the Priestly Code (represented by P), which in many cases has several "strata," which contains also a "foreign element" (indicated by H), and to which must be added "a secondary and posterior stratum, representing a later phase of ceremonial usage."[3] It must be admitted by every fair-minded man that a system of such complexity should be proved up to the hilt before we are called upon to accept it. And it must also be admitted that the fact of the scheme requiring so many qualifications and reservations and exceptions seems to indicate a weak point somewhere, in spite of the labour and pains displayed upon it. But Professor Driver is moderate indeed compared with those from whom his ideas are borrowed. Wellhausen and Delitzsch regard the Priest's Code as having "passed through more stages than one before it reached its present form."[4] So, too, other writers

assumption once made, we proceed triumphantly to draw conclusions from it. And this is called science! I am indebted for this illustration to a monograph on Isa. xxiv.-xxvii. by the Rev. W. E. Barnes, B.D., Chaplain and Fellow of Peterhouse. But we shall meet with a good many more instances of this remarkable description of logic before this series of papers is brought to a close. One in particular, may be noticed here. Ezekiel is full of allusions to the Levitical law, which, *ex hypothesi*, was not in existence when he wrote. This difficulty is met by the theory of the "codification of pre-existent usage." Thus, if Ezekiel refers to a precept in the Priestly Code, it belonged to the class of pre-existent usages. If he omits to refer to one, it was not in existence in his time. One cannot but admire the ingenuity which has invented double-edged weapons of this kind. There is but one objection to them. There is no proposition whatever which they cannot be used to establish.

[1] This "second Elohist" has properly become the *first* Elohist, since the *bouleversement* under Wellhausen and Kuenen.

[2] We make the remark in passing that though we do not for a moment charge Professor Driver with intending this, the distinction between the process he describes and downright falsification is by no means clear, and we should be glad to have it pointed out.

[3] Driver. *Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament*, p. 35.

[4] *Ib.*, p. 146.

divide P into P_1, P_2 and P_3. We have also J_1 and J_2, if not a *third* Jehovist. We have, according to some authorities, at least *three* redactors or editors. And two German professors have recently reduced the whole theory to writing, and have distinguished the work of the six or seven distinct authors by different types, without the slightest indication that the task was to be regarded as one of difficulty, or that there could possibly be any doubt of the results.[1] We simply put it to any person of ordinary common-sense, Can any one suppose —however much criticism may show that there are traces of different documents in the Hexateuch as it stands—that any one can claim to have *established* results like these? There may very possibly be a problem to be solved, but that anyone will be able to solve it with the amount of information at our command, seems extremely improbable.[2]

How, then, it may be asked, do you account for the fact that so many of our English critics of note have given in their adhesion to this "negative speculation"? I have already indicated the direction in which the answer is to be found. First, there is a reaction from the somewhat extreme form of Bibliolatry which has held the field for centuries. Next, there is a fashion in scholarship, as in everything else, and the fashion at present is to pay undue attention to German researches. Next, there is a certain feebleness, intellectual and moral, about people's minds in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which indisposes men for the turmoil of conflict. There is none of the "grim joy" with which the veterans of philology and theology and other branches of science used to rush into the fray, and belabour an antagonist with the choicest phrases of scholastic Billingsgate. We have now gone to the opposite extreme. There is at present rather a tendency to swim with the stream, to escape the odium which attaches to a maintenance of an unpopular theory, and above all to fear wrecking one's reputation for

[1] A specimen of this remarkable description of criticism is here appended. The following, Bible-readers may be interested to hear, are the "sources" from which Gen. xxi. 1, 2 is compiled. "And Jehovah visited Sarah as he had said (J_2), and (P) Jehovah (R, *i.e.*, redactor) did unto Sarah as He had spoken (P). And Sarah conceived and bare Abraham a son in his old age (J_2) at the set time of which God had spoken to him" (P). Such criticism as this is infinitely reassuring. No one can for a moment contemplate the possibility of its being received by persons possessed of common-sense, even when supported by some attempts at argument, which it is not.

[2] The German critics differ on the respective periods at which J, E and P were written, but it is remarkable on what slender evidence they seem to have arrived at their conclusions. One writer asserts that the documents are clearly of a particular age; another contradicts him, but gives no evidence in support of his contradiction.

scholarship by running counter to the prevailing fashion of the day. There must also, in all fairness, be added the fascination of attempting to solve an insoluble problem, which is akin to the pleasure with which we attempt to guess a riddle or to read a communication in cypher. But scholastic fashions must ultimately give way to the verdict of the public at large. When the question is fairly laid before them, the Christian people in this country will decide it according to the evidence. "Securus judicat orbis terrarum," not on the *ipse dixit* of any Pope or other infallible authority, but by the exercise of enlightened reason on the facts which are brought to our notice. The proceeding may be a long and difficult one. Its difficulty is greatly enhanced by the absence of contemporary literature and history. But if we are to be guided by the principles on which questions concerning the history or literature of other countries have been decided, and not by ingenious guesses and bold hypotheses, we shall end pretty much as we began. We may recognise the presence of composite elements in the historic and prophetic books. We may admit that there may be reasonable doubts as to the precise period at which they were compiled. But we shall be convinced of the substantial accuracy of the traditional view of Jewish literature and Jewish institutions.

J. J. Lias.

Art. II.—LENGTHENING THE CORDS AND STRENGTHENING THE STAKES.

THE following Address was lately delivered to the Liverpool clergy, and also to the clergy of the Rural Deanery of Huddersfield:

For the sake of clearness of outline, and to help my mind and yours, I will found my remarks on Is. liv. 2:

"*Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.*"

I have no need in this assembly to show how the words which I have just read are connected with the liii. of Isaiah. They foretell the results of Messiah's atoning death. The pre-eminence of the Hebrew Church as the mother church of Christendom is the leading thought. The image of the enlargement of a tent to receive the great increase of children is appropriate because the tabernacle or "tent of witness" was the symbol of the Jewish Church. The more the tent is enlarged, and the more widely her curtains are spread, the more needful is it to lengthen the cords; and the more canvas is exposed to the wind, the more necessary is it to strengthen the tent-pegs or stakes. The Church of Christ must not merely "preach the Gospel to every creature," and so lengthen her cords, but she must build up her converts in the faith, "teaching them to observe all that Jesus commanded"; in other words, she must strengthen her stakes.