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THE
CHURCHMAN

DECEMBER, 1894.

ART. I.—THE PRESENT POSITION OF OLD TESTAMENT CRITICISM IN ENGLAND.¹

(Concluded.)

IT may be said that, in this country at least, there are scholars and critics who, while accepting the results of the analytical criticism of the Old Testament in such a form as they take in Dr. Driver's "Introduction," are at the same time strenuous upholders and defenders of the integrity and veracity of the New Testament. This is no doubt, in a general sense, true: Professor Sanday is an example, and an eminent one, of those who take up such a position. Yet there are "concessions" made even by such a writer as Professor Sanday to the disintegrating spirit of modern criticism, which no one who takes the "orthodox" view (the word is now generally used *ad invidiam*, but it must sometimes be employed) of the New Testament can accept. The Professor has admitted that, as St. John wrote his Gospel late in life, when his memory was untrustworthy, it is "not necessarily and in all points an exact representation of the facts"; he will not "vouch for the literal accuracy" of the discourses of our Lord which St. John has recorded; he holds that "certain points are selected by the Evangelist for special emphasis, which would not bulk so large in the actual teaching of Jesus";² so that, instead of having the *ipsissima verba* of our Lord, we have His teaching largely coloured and modified by the individuality of the writer. Yet St. John has not only recorded the promise of the Comforter already referred to (or was this one of the points which "bulked large" in the mind of the Evangelist, but scarcely existed in the actual teaching of Christ?), he has

¹ Since this article was written the accomplished and esteemed author has passed away, to the great regret of his large circle of friends and of Churchmen generally. When he sent it, he wrote that he had but a few weeks to live. He did not live a week longer.

² See *Contemporary Review*, October, 1891.

emphatically asserted his own truthfulness and accuracy, at the close of his Gospel: "This is the disciple which testified of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true" (John xxi. 24). As neither Professor Sanday nor any other human being can tell us which are the parts of the Gospel where St. John is recording the actual teaching of his Master, and which are those where he is drawing, more or less largely, on his own imagination, it follows that we can never know where, or if at all, we have a faithful transcript of the *Verba Verbi Dei*, the teaching of the Incarnate God, the Word who "was made flesh and dwelt among us."

Again, in controversy with Mr. T. H. Huxley, Professor Sanday, while defending the miracle of Gadara, has admitted that that part of the narrative which relates the passing of the "unclean spirits" into the swine may be an unhistorical addition to the genuine story. And yet all three Synoptists record that part of the miracle which Professor Sanday gives up, as clearly and unmistakably as that which he defends. If we are only to accept, in the Gospel narratives, those parts which may commend themselves to the critical judgment of the University Professors for the time being, we may find in the end that we have no more of the New Testament left than of the Old.

Moreover, writers of this class have never been able satisfactorily to explain or vindicate their position with regard to references made by our Lord and His Evangelists and Apostles to events or persons in the Old Testament now pronounced to be unhistorical (such as Noah and the Flood), or their distinct statements as to the authorship of particular books, etc. The explanations tendered seem to be all either frivolous and trivial—as when it is said that our Lord's attributing Psalm xc. to David is no more than a modern writer speaking of "Henry VIII." as Shakespeare's, when criticism has shown that it is the work of other hands—or to require an amount of special pleading and minute distinction and theological hair-splitting which, if applied to any other subject, would be rejected as of no argumentative value, as in Mr. Gore's explanations and "concessions" in "Lux Mundi." A good deal of this speculation as to our Lord's ignorance of certain matters which have hitherto been supposed to be within His cognizance appears to have been grounded on the single expression of St. Paul in Phil. ii. 7, *ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε*, assisted by the strange translation of the Revised Version, "emptied Himself." Suppose it be said of any character in history, "he emptied himself," the sentence would be at once pronounced to have no possible meaning, because we are not told of *what* he emptied himself. The words of the Authorized Version, "made Himself of no reputation," might be called archaic or cumbrous, but they

have at least the advantage of conveying a definite and intelligible meaning. Our translators evidently regarded *ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσε* as used in the secondary or metaphorical sense of the verb *κενόω*, as explained by Schleusner in his *Lexicon*, "*se ipsum ad statum tenuere depressit, seu, ut alii circumscribere malint, usu majestatis divinæ, humanæ naturæ communicatæ, plenario liberrime sese abdicavit.*" He refers to the use of a corresponding Hebrew expression in *Judg. ix. 4*, "vain and light persons." "Made Himself vile or worthless" was perhaps in the mind of the translators, but was softened into "made Himself of no reputation." If we are allowed to give to the expression this, the only intelligible sense, the whole theory of the *κένωσις*, so far as it rests on this-text, falls to the ground.

There are two points on which it would be very desirable, for the benefit of non-experts, that the acknowledged specialists in Biblical criticism should enlighten us. The first is, why the Jewish tradition about their own Scriptures should be pronounced so absolutely worthless as it is pronounced, *e.g.*, by Professor Driver in the "Introduction,"¹ and by Professor Sanday in the "Bampton Lectures";² whether this is on the general ground that all tradition, in all times and countries and on all subjects, is worthless, or whether there are special grounds for condemning the Jewish tradition as worthless, and if so what those grounds are. The second point is one which will give the critics more trouble, and may be expected, in fact, to find them employment for some years to come: *viz.*, to point out to us, in the four Gospels, what part is genuine history, and what part spurious addition; where the "halo of legend" ends, and the "nucleus of fact" begins; and to state their reasons for the distinction.

A document which demands a passing notice, though it has scarcely ruffled the surface of the sea of controversy, is the "Declaration on the Inspiration of Holy Scripture" which appeared in May or June of the present year, and the first of whose signatories bears the honoured name of George Body. This declaration certainly shows a great advance on the similar document emanating a few years ago from the "Thirty-Eight"³—that *verbosa et grandis epistola*, containing so much which all lovers of the Bible would accept, mixed up with so much which most of them would consider as in the highest degree "not proven and unprovable." The declaration we are now considering is a clear and temperate statement of the belief held by a vast number of our fellow-Christians in this country on inspiration. The only sentence which might, perhaps,

¹ P. xxvii.² P. 120.³ Look for this in the *Times* of January, February, and March, 1892.

prove a stumbling-block to an Evangelical Churchman is the following: "The way in which Holy Scripture has been sometimes isolated by the attempt to use it as the sole ground of faith, and without the precedent condition of belief in Christ and fellowship with His Church, has been the cause of much misconception and confusion." Regarded, however, in its bearings on the higher criticism, the document is one which might be easily signed by a great number of those who accept that criticism, at least as regards the Old Testament, as is shown by the immediate adhesion of Mr. Gore.

The very small part which the present writer has taken in these discussions has been sufficient to call down upon him the severest strictures from the great apostle of analytical criticism in this country, Canon Driver.¹ Among other things, he says of the attempt I had made to show that some of the contradictions which he alleges in the Old Testament narratives were not borne out by a comparison of the passages he has adduced, that it "merely shows that the Bishop has not himself succeeded in understanding either the passages of the Old Testament referred to, or the arguments which I have grounded upon them." Now, with regard to the charge of not understanding the passages referred to, it seems no presumption to say that where no question of critical Hebrew scholarship is involved, a reader of the Bible, even of so low a degree of intelligence as Dr. Driver ascribes to myself, may be able to comprehend the meaning of the author; and where his view of the passage is confirmed by reputable and competent scholars, he need not be ashamed of maintaining it. But this will not satisfy the infallibility of Dr. Driver. Not to understand a passage in the sense in which he takes it is not to understand it at all. It seems, however, that even when the Professor meets a foe far more worthy of his steel, his method of warfare is much the same. Principal Cave having written some strictures on the "Introduction" in the *Contemporary* for December, 1891, and Dr. Driver having replied, I find the former, after complaining that the Professor of Hebrew had "drawn a red-herring across the scent" by directing attention to side issues, and leaving the main contention untouched, writing as follows: "Such further diversions concerning my assurance, haste, insufficient knowledge of the facts, failure to understand or represent what has been written by other critics, and isolation in opinion, how amusing they are, and how irrelevant! Such charges, like torpedoes, are very apt to

¹ "The Old Testament and the New Criticism," by A. Blomfield, D.D., Bishop Suffragan of Colchester, 1893; letter of Dr. Driver to *Guardian*, November 29, 1893.

return to the place whence they start," etc.¹ Fortified by the thought of being in such good company as that of Dr. Cave, I venture to repeat that Dr. Driver holds a brief against the credibility and authenticity of a large part of the Old Testament Scriptures, and that in the arguments he employs to support his case he has often made a very unfair use of the facts which those Scriptures themselves supply to him. I can only ask space for one further instance of this unfairness. Commenting on Josh. x. 28-43—part of the account of Joshua's victories—Dr. Driver observes that "Hebron and Debir are represented in Josh. xv. 14-19 as having been taken under circumstances very different from those here presupposed," the taking of those towns being in the later passage ascribed to Caleb. "It seems that these verses are a generalization by D² in the style of some of the latter parts of the book, attached to the victory at Gibeon, and ascribing to Joshua more than was actually accomplished by him in person." There is certainly no great historical inaccuracy in the process described in the last sentence, any more than there would be in ascribing to Napoleon I. victories some of which were, in fact, won by his marshals. But the alleged contradiction between Josh. x. and xv. as to Hebron and Debir, and the necessity for bringing in the "generalization by D²," disappear when we observe that there is nothing whatever to show that the two passages refer to the *same time*. Archbishop Ussher's dates of 1451 for the one occupation and 1444 for the other may be merely conjectural; but there is not a word to show that the later narrative may not refer to a *re-taking* by Caleb of these towns after an interval during which the occupation by Joshua's forces had been allowed to be relaxed. The point itself is of the smallest possible importance, but it is out of these alleged minute discrepancies that a large part of the fabric of analytical criticism is built up.

Dr. Driver's second charge, of not understanding the arguments which he has founded on certain passages of Scripture, is an instance of that curious position of intellectual arrogance taken up by so many of the higher critics, and by none more than the Professor of Hebrew, which forbids them to see that it is possible to understand an argument, and yet not to be convinced by it; that arguments which seem irresistible to them need not necessarily and in the nature of things appear equally convincing to everyone else. Thus, in treating of the authorship of the Pentateuch, in the "Introduction," Dr. Driver is not content with showing that the arguments which he presents against the Mosaic authorship are in his view far stronger than any that can be advanced in favour of that

¹ *Review of the Churches*, March, 1892, p. 387.

hypothesis; he asserts roundly that the Mosaic authorship "cannot be maintained." Now, in other departments of knowledge and thought we are not accustomed to dogmatism so self-confident as this. In theological discussion the Roman Catholic or Protestant controversialist does not assert that the views of his adversary "cannot be maintained"; he adduces arguments which to him seem convincing, and leaves them to have their natural effect on the minds of his opponents. In political controversy we do not find speakers or writers—Conservative, Liberal or Radical, Home Rulers or Unionists—laying down that the principles to which they are opposed "cannot be maintained"; they attack those principles sometimes with great violence, and often with arguments of a purely *ad captandum* character, but they are not in a perpetual state of astonishment that any Englishman can hold views opposed to their own. On the contrary, they know that a turn of the political wheel may change the situation at any time, and that next year it may be *their* principles of which it might be said, if it could be said of any, that they "cannot be maintained." And that a similar change may take place in the aspect of Biblical criticism the experience of the past shows to be very probable. It is from the higher critics alone that we get this assumption of autocratic infallibility, which would not be tolerated in theology or politics—the assumption that they are dealing, not with reasonable men who adduce intelligible arguments, *valeant quantum*, on points about which there will always be "two sides," but with eccentric monomaniacs like those who maintain that the earth is a flat disc, not a solid sphere, or that some undiscovered and imaginary descendant of the Stuarts is the legitimate heir to the British throne. Dr. Driver's own arguments against the Mosaic authorship or origin of Deuteronomy in the new edition of the "Dictionary of the Bible" (by the strange blunder of the editor, the late Sir William Smith, placed in close juxtaposition to the article on Daniel by Bishop Westcott, written in a wholly different spirit) are all of them abundantly clear, but they are not all convincing; some of them require far too much eking out with hypothesis and conjecture to make them so. Nor has Dr. Driver, in this very temperate statement of his case (modified by the restrictions of his environment), been able to avoid employing, in passages slightly removed from each other, statements which are, in fact, mutually contradictory. Thus we read of the supposed authors of Deuteronomy: "In thus building on a foundation supplied by tradition, in adopting laws which were, or were reputed to be, Mosaic, in providing them with hortatory introductions, *conceived in the spirit of the older legislation*, there is no

dishonesty and no literary fraud." But on the preceding page we read: "It is believed that the prophetic teaching of Deuteronomy, the point of view from which the laws are presented, the principles by which conduct is estimated, presuppose a relatively advanced stage of theological reflection, as they also approximate to what is found in Jeremiah and Ezekiel." Now, it is difficult to see how these "hortatory introductions" can have been "conceived in the spirit of the older legislation" if their whole *ἡθος* (or that of the laws which they introduce), their "point of view," etc., breathes the spirit of times many centuries later than that legislation. They are *conceived* in the spirit of Moses, whom Dr. Driver admits to have been the author of the core or germ of the legislation, but they *express* the spirit of Jeremiah or Ezekiel, men of a "relatively advanced stage of theological reflection." It is not easy to avoid the conclusion that Dr. Driver has here, unconsciously, no doubt, "shuffled the cards"; has represented the passages in question as agreeing with the spirit of the old legislation, when the object is to acquit the Deuteronomist, or Deuteronomists, of the charge of fraud or forgery, and as evincing quite a different spirit, when the object is to show that Deuteronomy cannot be of the age of Moses. In so doing he is guilty of "no dishonesty and no literary fraud," but he appears to lose something of the attributes of infallibility.¹

In conclusion, the writer desires to emphasize the warning which has already been given by others of infinitely greater weight and authority, that in matters so closely affecting our most cherished and most valued beliefs as to the authenticity and inspiration of Holy Scripture, we should beware of trusting too implicitly to specialists. "Specialists," says Professor James Robertson, "are very prone to become theorists, and a specialist with a theory is a very unsafe guide when questions of evidence have to be settled. . . . The Hebrew scholar or

¹ Dr. Driver (*Guardian*, November 29, 1893) is glad to be able to quote the Bishop of Worcester as holding that there are "four different documents" in the "Hexateuch" (a very different thing, by the way, from the minute subdivisions of the analytical critics). He has, perhaps, failed to notice that at p. 39 of the same work from which he quotes—"Cambridge Companion to the Bible"—Bishop Perowne says of the view that Deuteronomy is of the age of Manasseh or Josiah: "There are serious difficulties in the way of this theory. . . . The writer or redactor of the book distinctly asserts that Moses is the author of the legislation, and that he provided for its custody (xxx. 24-26) and transmission." As the late date of Deuteronomy is, to the analytical critic, a cardinal article of faith, *quam nisi quisque integram inviolatamque servaverit*, he must be pronounced "beneath criticism." It is to be feared that the Bishop's heterodoxy on this point will much diminish the value of his testimony to the "four documents."

trained critic may, by the very possession of his special qualifications, see possible combinations and suggest possible constructions or emendations of a passage that the ordinary reader would never dream of; and he may combine, and transpose, and eliminate, and amend, and by a triumph of ingenuity bring out a most unexpected result, while all the time, perhaps, a simple and plain meaning of a phrase or passage stares him in the face, from which, however, he gets away to one quite recondite or fanciful."¹

A crucial instance of the danger of trusting to specialists in a matter which has no theological bearing, and does not touch the question of inspiration, is to be found in the Revised Version of the New Testament. This work was entrusted to men who, if any, had claims to be considered specialists in New Testament criticism. I am not aware that anyone who had any such claim was omitted. And yet the result, in the judgment of nine men out of every ten who have given any attention to the subject, is a complete fiasco. The revisers have, of course, removed many obvious blemishes in the translation of 1611, and have thereby, in many passages, greatly improved the sense; yet the impression given by the whole book is that it is not a translation at all, but what schoolboys call a "crib," so pedantic is its literalism, and so utterly un-English its style, in many of the thousands of passages in which changes are introduced. Instances have often been pointed out. Two within a page or two of each other may suffice. In 2 Pet. i. 7, translating *ἐν δὲ τῇ φιλαδελφία τὴν ἀγάπην*, the revisers have introduced the ridiculous anti-climax "and in your love of the brethren love." This has not even the merit of being literal, as no distinction is observed between *φιλεῖν* and *ἀγαπᾶν*; and if the older version, "and to brotherly kindness charity," needed mending, the change of "charity" to "love" was all that was required. In the same Epistle (ii. 12) we have this extraordinary "hubbub of words": "But these as creatures without reason, born mere animals to be taken and destroyed, railing in matters whereof they are ignorant, shall in their destroying surely be destroyed, suffering wrong as the hire of wrong-doing." It seems difficult to imagine that anyone to whom this version should be presented, whether for public or private reading, would hesitate to say, "The old is better."

But the revisers hampered themselves by a restriction which was certainly not contemplated by those who were the most forward in desiring the formation of their committee. They not only made a new translation—they adopted a new

¹ "Early Religion of Israel," p. 7.

text. Textual criticism is entirely beyond the scope and powers of the present writer; but he thinks that many will agree with him in holding that in the New Testament the best text is that which makes the best sense. Judging by this standard, anyone who follows the innumerable changes of the Revised Version, as they are given in the handy little volume issued from the Clarendon Press in 1881, with a preface by Archdeacon Palmer, will pronounce that the revisers have often failed signally. The man who can believe that the text adopted by the revisers really represents what was written by the Apostles and Evangelists will believe anything. Let one instance suffice. In 2 Cor. viii. 4 we read thus in the New Version: "beseeching us with much intreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints." What is the meaning of this singularly awkward sentence, compared with the plainness of 1611: "praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift and [take upon us] the fellowship of the ministering to the saints"? A reference to the volume above mentioned tells us. The text to which the revisers adhered implicitly, not to say slavishly, bids them strike out the words *δέξασθαι ἡμᾶς*, and thereby compels them to spoil the sentence. It is not too much to say that the MS. of least authority, which contains the words *δέξασθαι ἡμᾶς*, is here to be preferred to that of the highest authority which omits them.

It should be reassuring to the lovers of the Bible to know that not a few of those who are specialists, and a still larger number of those who, with competent knowledge and ability, have examined the critical questions which affect the Old Testament thoroughly and impartially, without the bias of specialists, find the new criticism, however valuable in some respects, in great part unsound and untrustworthy, and are therefore unable to accept it, quite independently of the consideration that a large proportion of those who do accept it either hold with extreme vagueness, or not at all, the idea of a "revealed religion" of any kind. For us the Christian religion, and the Hebrew as a preparation for it, are not only religions differing only in degree, not in kind, from the many others which the world has known; they are the revelation of the mind and will of the one, only true God. And for instruction in that which it most concerns us to know of our duties, our hopes, our position in the world which God has made, we look not to Plato or Aristotle, not to Kant or Hegel, not to Thomas Carlyle or John Stuart Mill, not to Matthew Arnold or Herbert Spencer, least of all to Graf, or Kuenen, or Wellhausen, but to Moses and the Prophets—to Jesus Christ and His Apostles and Evangelists. A. COLCHESTER.