

ARTICLE VII.

THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE BIBLICAL
THEOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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WE may fittingly style biblical theology the pulse of both biblical and theological studies. The occasion and circumstances of its rise, the steps of its growth and development until it has become a clearly defined and justly recognized department of biblical inquiry, together with its central position as related both to other biblical studies and also to all departments of theological investigation, lead to the sure conviction that the condition of this science, at any given period, may be taken as a definite symptom of the general situation and trend of religious thought.

We may truly say that biblical theology sits as queen among the various biblical studies, the foundations of her throne resting not in one alone, but in all. As these, therefore, are firmly grounded, she sits securely; as these are shaken, severally or collectively, her seat is jeopardized. Biblical canonicity lie at the foundation of biblical theology; all questions relative to the extent and authority of the Scriptures must be determined before the limits of her territory have been clearly marked off. Biblical textual criticism must discover the exact text of the biblical writings in its original form, so far as may be possible, that her data may be in proper shape for investigation. Biblical literary criticism must have grappled with questions of the style, authorship, integrity, and date of the several biblical books before she can proceed to arrange in order the several truths these bring her. Biblical archæology must

have made answer, up to the present, as to our knowledge of the biblical past before the path along which she shall advance has been properly illumined. Biblical philology and hermeneutics must have testified as to the fundamental principles of the genius of the biblical languages and the essential rules of interpretation, and biblical exegesis must have applied these principles and rules to the individual passages of the biblical writings before biblical theology is at length fully ready to essay her task. Again, theology in all its various departments—dogmatic, historical, practical—finds its common foundation in the facts and principles of biblical theology.¹ It is the purpose of the present article, in view of this essentially intimate relation between biblical theology on the one hand and all biblical studies and lines of theological inquiry and advance on the other, to endeavor to take a survey, somewhat comprehensive in character, of the present situation of Old Testament studies, and of the necessary influence of this situation upon theological inquiry, in so far as this present situation may be seen mirrored in the present status of Old Testament biblical theology, broadly considered.

To clearly understand the present status of biblical theology we must view it in relation to the past development of the science. What Principal Fairbairn has said, with particular reference to the present state of investigation regarding the origin, authorship, authenticity, and contents of the several biblical books, may here be quoted as especially pertinent regarding Old Testament biblical theology as a whole:—

“The present state of knowledge does not mean the stage of final conclusions, but rather of tentative inquiry. On some points—indeed on many—fixed conclusions have been reached—conclusions that inquiry

¹ For an admirable survey of the place and functions of biblical theology, see Briggs, *The Study of Holy Scripture*, pp. 569-606. See also *Introd. to Theology and its Literature*, Cave, pp. 405-421.

may illustrate and confirm, but can hardly change. . . . As regards others the process of determination still goes on, and we may hope that what is still dark may yet be illumined, and what is still uncertain made finally sure. It is a matter of immense consequence that the student should see what has been proved, what cannot be proved, and what he may yet hope either to see proved or to find the proof of himself."¹

This "matter of immense consequence," at the present time, not only to the student, but especially to the thoughtful Christian mind in general, can be realized only by noting the path along which biblical thought and its conclusions, as crystallized in the positions of biblical theology, have been moving.

Biblical theology had its rise, during the latter part of the last century, in the appeal to the scriptural books, regarded as the record of concrete facts as distinguished from the abstract teachings of philosophical theologians. In a certain true sense it was an appeal to the sources. The appeal was made in the conflict arising between supernaturalism and rationalism, and strangely, yet naturally, by both parties.² From the beginning the instinct was correct that in the records of the biblical religion must be found the character of the religion itself, whether it be natural or more than natural in its origin. Immediately was it also seen that the appeal to the scriptural books is an appeal to the record of history and to historical movement and progress. John P. Gabler, professor at Jena, a rationalist characterized by great moral earnestness, first clearly expressed the idea of biblical theology as an historical science, and marked it out as a distinct branch of biblical study. He defined it, in an academical address, as the statement of "the religious ideas of Scripture as an historical fact, so as to distinguish the different times and subjects, and so also the different stages in the develop-

¹ Introduction to a Guide to Biblical Study, Peake, pp. xii, xiii.

² *Biblische Theologie*, Zacharia (supernaturalist), 1772; *Entwurf einer reinen Biblische Theologie*, Ammon (rationalist), 1792.

ment of these ideas."¹ Thus the unity of the biblical theology of the Old and New Testaments was emphasized, while at the same time the separation of Old and New Testament theology was called for. De Wette,² under the influence of Herder, entered into a discriminating consideration of the historical and organic features of the Old Testament, dividing its biblical theology under the two leading periods, Hebraism and Judaism. We find him making such statements as these :—

“The whole Old Testament is one great prophecy, one great type of that which was to come, and is come”; “As every phenomenon in time is interwoven with the time that precedes and follows, so Christianity proceeded from Judaism.”

The broad genetical-historical method is thus already being emphasized. To the great Neander,³ biblical theology is under lasting obligation. Coming after the negative work of Strauss and F. C. Baur regarding the New Testament sources, he emphasized the fact that negative criticism must be met with positive, and that apparent contradictions may be justly regarded as supplemental views of truth. Individuality in view-point and the separate expressions of the several partial elements of truth were merged by him into a higher organic unity. Schmid⁴ brought prominently forward the intimate relation between biblical theology and the most thoroughgoing and painstaking exegesis, showing the character of biblical theology as the higher exegesis which unifies the exegetical process in all its details. Oehler⁵ gathered together all the excellences of those who had preceded him, uniting the several elements which had been successively emphasized in an harmonious whole. Rejecting the Reuss-Graf-Wellhausen

¹ *De justo discrimina theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae* 1787.

² *Bibl. Dogmatik des Alt. und Neuen Testaments*, 1813.

³ *Geschichte der Pflanzung und Leitung der christlichen Kirche*, 1832.

⁴ *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 1853.

⁵ *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 1873.

position regarding the late development of the Levitical legislation and the date of the Pentateuch, from the point of view of the religious development of Israel, as he saw it, saying, "How can a genetic delineation of the Old Testament doctrine be reached from the supposition that the Pentateuch is a comparatively recent production?" he treated Old Testament biblical theology under the three divisions of Mosaism, including the covenant of the law, Prophetism, and Wisdom, the former of the two last named being regarded as the objective, and the latter as the subjective development of Old Testament religion. Schultz¹ emphasized the treatment of the development of religion—as distinguished from, and in addition to, that of doctrine—together with the growth of ethics, as the constituent elements of biblical theology. Later he embraced the Wellhausen hypothesis,² occupying, however, what may be justly styled a middle ground in his critical positions, emphasizing strongly the ethical and spiritual principles of Mosaism, and tracing the development of religion and morals in Israel, as well as Israel's consciousness of salvation and her religious view of the world. Beginning with Schultz, we notice the influence of the changing critical views upon the conception of the historical development of Old Testament biblical theology, and the tendency to treat the science topically rather than historically. This treatment is especially marked in Ewald's great work,³ doubtless, however, more from personal than critical considerations. Recent treatises upon Old Testament theology, by Piepenbring,⁴ Riehm,⁵ Smend,⁶ Dillmann,⁷ the sec-

¹ *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, 1869.

² *Old Testament Theology*, Schultz (T. & T. Clark), 1892.

³ *Lehre der Bibel von Gott*, 1876.

⁴ *Theologie de l'Ancien Testament*, 1887.

⁵ *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, 1889.

⁶ *Lehrbuch der Alttestamentlichen Religionsgeschichte*, 1893.

⁷ *Handbuch der Alttestamentliche Theologie*, 1895.

ond and fourth being posthumous, show either the abandonment of the historical arrangement of the material, as in the case of Dillmann, or an arrangement into three periods,—the first extending to the eighth century, and designated either as *Mosaism* or as the Religion of Israel; the second extending either to the return from exile or only to the reformation of Josiah, designated as *Prophetism*; the third, continuing practically to the New Testament period, and designated as *Judaism*. The newer views of criticism are seen modifying, with more or less thoroughness, along various lines, the former ideas and treatment.

Summarizing this sketch of the rise and development of Old Testament biblical theology, we may say, first, that the growth of the science has emphasized the appeal to the records of the Old Testament religion as the data in accordance with which the character of that religion, whether to be regarded as natural or supernatural, shall be determined, the question constantly arising as to how these data shall be interpreted. The growth of the science has also, in the second place, emphasized the appeal to these records as representing a recourse to history and historical movement and progress, the inquiry constantly emerging more and more evidently as to what actually is history, or more exactly as to what course Old Testament history in reality followed. The growth of the science has, thirdly, emphasized the genetical-historical method of study of the Old Testament religion. But the question is constantly seen presenting itself, Is this development the outcome of mere natural law, or is there a perpetual divine initiative, both at the beginning and also moving along with the historical advance, above and behind the process, both guiding it and giving it unique character? Here, then, in these constantly emerging inquiries, lie before us in epitome the problems of Old Testament study at the present as disclosed in the mirror of

Old Testament biblical theology. How are Old Testament students facing these problems? Or, rather, what may we properly regard as the probable outcome of the present condition of Old Testament studies as bearing upon their solution? Let us investigate more carefully and widely.

First, a few words as to the relation of the literary criticism of the Old Testament Scriptures to the present condition of Old Testament biblical theology. There can be no question that there is an intimate and a peculiarly proper and helpful relation between this criticism and our science. The words of that eminent and lamented Old Testament critic, Professor William Henry Green, so widely and ably known as a leader of conservatives, well express this fact:—

“No objection can be made to the demand that the sacred writings should be subjected to the same critical tests as other literary productions of antiquity. When were they written, and by whom? For whom were they intended, and with what end in view? These are questions which may fairly be asked respecting the several books of the Bible, as respecting other books, and the same criteria that are applicable in the one case are applicable likewise in the other. Every production of any age bears the stamp of that age. It takes its shape from influences then at work. It is part of the life of the period, and can only be properly estimated and understood from being viewed in its original connections. Its language will be the language of the time when it was produced. The subject, the style of thought, the local and personal allusions, will have relation to the circumstances of the period, to which in fact the whole and every part of it must have its adaptation, and which must have their rightful place in determining its true explanation. Inspiration has no tendency to obliterate those distinctive qualities which link men to their own age. . . . If now inspired writings, like others, are in all their literary aspects the outgrowth of their own age, then the most thorough scrutiny can but confirm our faith in their real origin; and if in any instance the view commonly entertained of their origin or authorship is incorrect in any particular, the critical study which detects the error, and assigns each writing to its proper time and place, can only conduce to its being better understood and more accurately appreciated.”¹

Dr. Green very properly adds,—and the strongest possible emphasis should be laid upon the statement,—

¹ *Moses and the Prophets*, Green, pp. 17, 18.

“But, in applying the principles and methods of literary criticism to the books of the Bible, it must be borne in mind that these books have a character peculiarly their own, as a revelation from God; and a criticism which denies this at the outset, and conducts all its investigations upon this presumption, is under a bias which must necessarily lead to false conclusions.”

In other words, distinction must most clearly be made between literary criticism, honest and unbiassed, to which the largest liberty should be afforded, and a negative criticism which starts from anti-supernatural premises, and therefore must reach anti-supernatural conclusions, though it may deal with the same data apparently according to the same method of procedure.

Professor Driver, an English scholar, cautious, reverent, and conservative in principles, reaching, however, personal conclusions much less in conformity with traditional ideas than those of Professor Green, puts the matter still more strongly :—

“Criticism in the hands of Christian scholars does not banish or destroy the inspiration of the Old Testament; it *presupposes* it; it seeks only to determine the conditions under which it operates, and the literary forms through which it manifests itself; and it thus helps us to form truer conceptions of the methods which it has pleased God to employ in revealing Himself to His ancient people of Israel, in preparing the way for the fuller manifestation of Himself in Christ Jesus.”¹

Still another able English student, possessing the same characteristics as Dr. Driver, putting the matter both positively and negatively, concisely says :—

“The special work to which our age is called is that of the historical study of the Old Testament in its origin and growth, as the record of the divine education of Israel.” “But nothing can be more fatal than to approach the study of Scripture with a rigid theory, and to attempt to force phenomena into agreement with that theory.”²

In addition to these opinions, which are to be heartily endorsed, certain other things should also be said in this connection. When a higher critic, guided by his individ-

¹ Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament, Driver, p. xiii.

² The Divine Library of the Old Testament, Kirkpatrick, pp. xii, ix.

ual constructive imagination, entertains in his own mind certain conjectures, it were well not to place these at the foundation of a superstructure also conjectural, and especially well to await the verdict of tried and universally acknowledged fellow-critics before presenting these conjectures to the general public in popular form, to win, under the authority of a name, a consideration to which in themselves they are not entitled. It is unfortunate, to say the least, to remark in two successive sentences that the material with which one is dealing is "so fragmentary and of such doubtful interpretation," "but that the general picture here offered is correct, may safely be asserted."¹ It could be wished that in every case that apologetic utterance—withal not without its strongly assertive accent—so frequently found of late in the writings of this critic² might be also found in the case of others equally given to conjecture, to put the lay reader upon his guard. It is neither wise nor scientific to illumine the pathway of the general public by such doubtful light as, to use our writer's own figure and phrase, "the torch of conjecture." The people do not want conjecture regarding the historic course of the history of revelation, and are quite willing to wait until something more and better can be given them. While acknowledging the great obligation of Old Testament studies and Old Testament biblical theology to a legitimate literary criticism, it must be strongly said that conjecture and imagination confused with criticism, first by some of the critics themselves, have justly brought about much of the unfavorable opinion which is entertained regarding the process of criticism and much of the fear as to its results. The cure of the real evil which exists is not less criticism but more, not fewer critics but a larger number. Professor Green aptly says:—

¹ *Jewish Religious Life after the Exile*, Cheyne, p. xx.

² *Founders of Old Testament Criticism*, Cheyne, pp. 251, 293, *et passim*.

“There is a demand now, as never before, for high biblical scholarship, for trained exegetes and critics. . . . We must have an English and American scholarship that is fitted to grapple with these questions as they arise. We need, in the ranks of the pastorate, men who can conduct biblical researches and who can prosecute learned critical inquiries.”¹

Of greater importance than the consideration of the relation of literary criticism to Old Testament biblical theology is the realization of the influence of ideas of development upon our science. Here also an important distinction is to be made. It is most accurate to say that the New Testament view of the relation of Christianity to the Hebrew faith which had preceded it, is that of the conception of development. The connection between the two is regarded as a vital one, and it is emphasized as one of growth. The apostle Paul peculiarly dwells upon this conception of the relationship. The same is true of the writer of the letter to the Hebrews. Both, in occupying this attitude, are but following the lead of Jesus, as he is portrayed to us in both the Synoptists and the Fourth Gospel. The divine revelation is in the nature of the case progressive. So says this revelation itself. The chosen people are to be considered as learners in a divine school, whose lessons are constantly suited to the stage of their advancement. Such is clearly the New Testament position. Modern science and philosophy in making so much of the genetic principle in the study of all life, history, and experience, are only taking their place side by side with the scriptural position. This attitude of science and philosophy, it is being more and more clearly seen, instead of bringing them into conflict with revelation, makes them most helpfully interpretative. We can heartily accord with these words of Edward Caird, when speaking of the removal of difficulties in the pathway of a halting faith:—

“In dealing with such difficulties, in the present day, we are greatly assisted by those better methods of historical and philosophical criticism

¹ *Moses and the Prophets*, Green, pp. 31, 32.

which are making the book of the past so much less hard to read than it was to a previous generation; and, above all, by the great reconciling principle of development, upon which these methods are based."¹

Indeed the conception of the reality and force of the supernatural lying back of the natural and manifesting itself through its phenomena is peculiarly seen from this vantage point.

Professor George P. Fisher, with the acumen of the trained historian and the insight of the spiritual philosopher, rightly estimates the situation, in his most helpful little treatise upon the "Nature and Method of Revelation," as he says:—

"When we contemplate the true religion in its long, continuous advance upwards to its culmination in the Gospel of Christ; when we survey this entire course of history as a connected whole—we are struck with the conviction of supernatural agency and authorship."²

Moreover from the point of view of development, we best see, in connection with the apostle Paul and the Fourth Gospel, the relation of heathenism to both Christianity and the Hebrew religion. "On a comprehensive view, the whole previous history of the world and of its religion might be said to be a divinely ordered preparation for the coming of Christ"³—so wrote one of the ablest and most reverent of Christian apologists, whose recent death the whole world of Christian scholarship laments. Professor Bruce, in another connection, bids us realize that this "does not commit us to an optimistic view of ethnic religions, as these might be to a large extent fruitless experiments to find out God, and yet help to prepare the nations for welcoming Christ as the Light of the world."⁴ In other words, negative preparation is linked to positive by the law of development. It is also clear that ethnic religion in a certain true sense, stands in the line of positive prepa-

¹ *The Evolution of Religion*, Edward Caird, p. ix.

² *Nature and Method of Revelation*, G. P. Fisher, pp. 50, 51.

³ *Apologetics*, A. B. Bruce, p. 164. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

ration for Christianity. Just as the universal religion of Jesus strikes its roots into the national Hebrew religion of revelation, so in turn this Hebrew faith of revelation strikes its roots into ethnic religion, nearer at hand or farther back in the past. If we may say, "What we find in the Hebrew prophets is, therefore, a national religion in the very process of breaking away on every side from its national limitations,"¹ so must we not also say, that we find, at the birth of the Hebrew national religion of revelation, an ethnic faith in the very process of breaking away, under a divine impulse, from its ethnic limitations? Melchizedec is not yet to be relegated to the realm of myths, nor is Jethro to be left as "having no hope, and without God in the world." But all this is very far from saying that the Hebrew religion had a merely natural development; indeed, it is as far away as the east is from the west from such positions as find expression in language like the following:—

"What we observe with certainty in the utterances of Yahweh and in the religious customs of the oldest period [of Israel's religion] corresponds only too well to the picture given us by historical research of the religions of the Semitic nomad tribes."²

It utterly repudiates, as unhistorical as well as unbiblical, such words as these:—

"This pedantic supranaturalism—sacred history according to the approved recipe—is not to be found in the original accounts. In these Israel is a people just like other people; nor is even his relationship to Jehovah otherwise conceived of than is, for example, that of Moab to Chemosh."³

It believes that the data of history give ample proof that the God of revelation not only is powerful enough to reveal himself under conditions of Hebrew life, but also, when it is in the line of his purpose so to do, in conditions of ethnic life as well. Israel's religion may both be

¹ *The Evolution of Religion*, Edward Caird, p. 393.

² *Religion of Israel to the Exile*, K. Budde, p. 31 *et passim*.

³ *History of Israel*, Wellhausen, p. 235.

rooted in ethnic faith and may be influenced, both negatively and positively, by surrounding ethnic religions, and yet be emphatically from the God of revelation.

We are thus naturally led to consider the influence of the study of the science and philosophy of religion upon Old Testament biblical theology. The believer in revelation cannot fail to welcome all the light which can be obtained from this quarter. Whether the world's religions be viewed as illustrations of that sense of religion which universally belongs to humanity, and are thus regarded from the standpoint of the philosophy of religion, or are regarded as phenomena of the science of religion inductively built up, the outcome of accurate observation and legitimate philosophizing can have but one result. The words of Max Müller well set this forth:—

“I make no secret that true Christianity, I mean the religion of Christ, seems to me to become more and more exalted the more we know and the more we appreciate the treasures of truth hidden in the despised religions of the world.”¹

“It is but natural that those who write on ancient religions . . . should have had eyes for their bright rather than for their dark sides. . . . They have raised expectations that cannot be fulfilled, fears also that, as will be easily seen, are unfounded.”²

In relation to Old Testament studies, however, the present tendency of the influence of the study of ethnic, and especially of Semitic and primitive, religions,³ is not so much to exalt these in comparison with Old Testament religion as to draw such comparisons between ethnic rites and institutions and those found in the Old Testament religion as lead, in the eyes of some, to the minimizing of the element of revelation in that religion, if not to its elimina-

¹ Introduction to the Science of Religion, Müller, p. 37.

² Sacred Books of the East, Müller, Vol. i. pp. ix, x. For an admirable presentation of so-called Ethnic Theology, see Introduction to Theology and its Literature, Cave, pp. 187-239.

³ See, e.g., The Religion of the Semites, Robertson Smith; Religions of Primitive Peoples, Brinton.

tion. There can be no question that ethnic elements, low and degrading, are to be found in the popular religion of Israel down to the time of the exile, nor is the period after the exile without their presence. Indeed that degeneration which is so painfully manifest in all evolution where the influence of the supernatural through the natural is not manifest, shows itself also most clearly in Israel's history. The failure of heathenism is not more evident, indeed not nearly so evident, among the Greeks and the Romans as among the Hebrews. But this very failure and degeneracy of the merely ethnic element in the Hebrew national religion only makes the victory and advance of the element of revelation in that religion the more marked and signal. Ewald saw this most clearly and truly, and strongly set it forth.

“As, therefore, the community of Israel, sprung forth under Moses in sharpest conflict with heathenism, and appointed by its very origin to the continuance of this inevitable and direct conflict, was the community within whose firm walls this conflict actually reached at last its ultimate goal; so the Bible shows us as a whole and in detail the history of this conflict in all its different aspects and stages up to the highest victory which could be won in this community, and then the gradual breaking down of these walls, now become too narrow, that the whole wide world of men might share the struggle.”¹

In other words, the study of comparative religion, of Semitic and primitive cultus, rightly employed, is of especial value not to show the absence of the element of revelation in the history of Israel, but its powerful presence as measured by the elements of resistance and degeneration which discovered themselves in that merely natural evolution with which the development of spiritual religion was constantly contending. The flesh was lusting against the spirit, and the spirit was contending against the flesh, through all the centuries of the national life of Israel. The apostle Paul, as he develops in his letter to the Ro-

¹ Revelation, Its Nature and Record, Ewald, pp. 208, 209.

mans the thought of this deadly grapple, is, as it were, but rehearsing the experience of Israel's national career.

The peril, in the existing situation of Old Testament studies, does not, therefore, lie in the influence of those surrounding sciences which bear upon these studies, or in the influence of the scientific, critical, or philosophical spirit upon the consideration of Old Testament religion. It lies rather in the disposition, which manifests itself strongly in certain quarters, not to give to the data of the Old Testament writings their proper value as the record of the phenomena of the national and religious experience of the nation of Israel. All laws of human experience and history are to be scientifically determined by a complete, not a partial, induction of the phenomena concerned. To take a given group of phenomena, which are confessedly unique in character, lay them to one side, determine the laws which should inhere in and govern them by induction from other phenomena, and then, in turn, interpret these unique phenomena by the laws induced from the phenomena from which they have been excluded, is the height of arbitrary procedure and preëminently unscientific. Yet, certain critics themselves being witnesses, this is what is being done, and the results are pressed home as so scientific in character that the lay mind should accept them upon the mere testimony of authority. Let a few quotations suffice as a sample of many which might be made to substantiate the above statement. Regarding the revelation which the records testify that Moses received from the God of the Hebrews, we are told:—

“It is of no real consequence to determine by what means Moses received the revelations which transformed him into the enthusiastic apostle of this God of mountain and desert.”¹

On the other hand, we are told:—

“What the prophets and historians of Israel later call ‘Israel's covenant with Yahweh and Yahweh's with Israel’ . . . offers nothing at all

¹ Religion of Israel to the Exile, K. Budde, p. 26.

wonderful when read in the light of ethnology and the history of religions. . . . This covenant is nothing else than an alliance of Israel with the nomad tribe of the Kenites at Sinai, which had as its self-evident condition the adoption of their religion, Yahweh-worship."¹

Again regarding the Decalogue, we are informed:—

"Now the Ten Commandments base all their demands on the nature of the God of Israel. If, then, they really did come from this period, it appears that there existed, even in the earliest times, a conception of God so sublime that hardly anything could have remained for the prophets to do. This of itself should suffice to show the impossibility of the Mosaic origin of the Ten Commandments. But they were, besides, for oldest Israel, both superfluous and impossible. For morality within the limits of a nomad tribe is regulated spontaneously by the feeling of blood-kinship without the need of any written word. But a universal prohibition reaching beyond the limits of the tribe . . . is simply inconceivable to the nomad."²

Again we are asked: "How did Israel come to its religion?" And the answer is: "It went over, at Sinai, to a rude nomad religion, a religion which did not stand higher than that of other tribes at the same stage of civilization."³

Once more Kuenen tells us, regarding a matter of ritual development:—

"One hypothesis only I must exclude, viz., that of the descent of all the priests from Aaron; for it rests exclusively on the witness of the priestly legislation, and to accept it would be tantamount to acknowledging the pre-exilian origin of this legislation—an admission which, to my mind, makes any rational conception of Israel's religious development impossible."⁴

And yet Kuenen tells us elsewhere:—

"The Bible is in every one's hand. The critic has no other Bible than the public. He does not profess to have any additional documents, inaccessible to the laity, nor does he profess to find anything in 'his Bible' that the ordinary reader cannot see."⁵

"The ordinary reader," therefore, may appeal from the arbitrary procedure of the critic to his own study of the phenomena of the biblical sources, and by all means he

¹ Religion of Israel to the Exile, K. Budde, p. 24.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 33, 34. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁴ National Religions and Universal Religions, Kuenen, pp. 78, 79.

⁵ Modern Review, July, 1880.

should do so. The call is emphatically away from the *a priori* theory of a naturalistic bias to the facts, approached in a thoroughly scientific and inductive spirit. We may say, with Dr. Sanday:—

“Our age needs above all something positive—not exactly, as it is sometimes urged, positive teaching or dogma, for which it does not see the reasons, but positive *reasons*, few, simple and fundamental, which it can apprehend for itself and on which it can take its stand.”¹

It seems clearly evident, therefore, that the biblical theology of the Old Testament must become the watershed between a naturalistic *a priori* theory of criticism and an unbiassed, scientific criticism which seeks to include all the phenomena in its induction. The outcome of the former criticism must be a mere history of the religion of Israel. It will not necessarily confine itself to the data given in the canonical books, for it is unready to perceive or acknowledge the spiritual sense of the church, both Hebrew and Christian, which has recognized in these writings of the canon the true reflection of its spiritual and supernatural experience, an experience which is as thoroughly a fact in the psychological realm as is any verity of the physical order a fact in that realm. Nor will this criticism be content to abide by the results of textual criticism conducted upon its own scientific principles as broadly established, but will the rather dominate and control it, not by scientific literary criticism, but by the behests of an *a priori* theory which arbitrarily removes from the several sources all passages not in conformity with its preconceived ideas as to what these sources severally should contain in the environment of the various historical circumstances to which they have been assigned. Literary criticism with its canons applicable to literature which is not that of revelation will not be satisfactory to it, for the biblical books will not be to it the materials out of which the

¹The Oracles of God, Sanday, p. viii.

structure of the history is to be built, but "a mere scaffolding, within which out of other materials—say of a purely subjective character—the building is to rise."¹ There must for it always be "a certain amount of reasoning in a circle, *the theory of the history* being introduced to determine the dates and order of the documents, which otherwise could not be determined; while the books themselves, rearranged according to this hypothesis, are appealed to as proofs of the new theory of the history."² Archæology will not be permitted to bear its testimony until it has pronounced the shibboleth of its own critical school. Philology and exegesis must each be instructed how to coöperate in bringing about the desired result. When all these things have been accomplished, then will a history of the natural religion of the Hebrews be wrought out which shall accord with the laws drawn from an induction which has excluded the operation of revelation from the outstart. Then, too, as in the case of the work of the Tübingen school upon the New Testament literature, it may be discovered, in the language of Harnack, that "the *possible* picture it sketched was not the *real*, and the key with which it attempted to solve all problems did not suffice for the most simple."³

On the other hand the biblical theology of the Old Testament must plant itself firmly and securely upon revelation as a fact of mental and spiritual experience, and in the light of this fact work out its present problems. We must not by any means assume that its conclusions will agree, in all or in most particulars, with those which have been traditionally held. Nor is this by any means necessary or desirable. The Protestant principle of the right of private judgment, standing face to face with the facts of the Scripture, will lead to results that cannot but commend them-

¹ *The Early Religion of Israel*, Robertson, p. 40. ² *Ibid.*, p. 42.

³ *Nature and Method of Revelation*, G. P. Fisher, p. ix.

selves to all who will consistently stand upon this tried platform of the religion of the Reformation. It will be clearly seen that the history of the spiritual development of Israel was a divinely given revelation, moving consistently and progressively forward to the coming of the expected Messiah, and preparing for the Christ in a way altogether different from that in which a simply natural development of the consciousness of a uniquely religious people could. It will also be clearly seen that the essentials of biblical history stand securely. The patriarchal period and its characters will remain historical, and it will be evident, as Dillmann has well said, "that the entire work of Moses admits of no historical explanation except in the supposition of a preparatory, comparatively 'pure type of religion, such as, according to Genesis, belonged to the fathers of Israel." Moses will still stand one of the greatest of the world's spiritual leaders, living in intimate fellowship with an ethical and spiritual God, whose ten ethical and spiritual words he gave forth to his people, and of whose ritual law he was the divinely appointed fountain source. The early prophets and the later will be found to stand in one continued line of reception, and application to existing needs, of a spiritual revelation of one God, having themselves no doubt as to whence their knowledge of God came, but recognizing it, with a quickened spiritual insight, as being a direct revelation from this God unto themselves. In the language of Romanes, it will be seen that, "If revelation has been of a progressive character, then it follows that it must have been so not only historically, but likewise intellectually, morally, spiritually. For only thus could it be always adapted to the advancing conditions of the human race."¹ And even where the development of Israel may appear to be by natural law, it will be seen that back of this law was the constant pres-

¹ *Thoughts on Religion*, Romanes, pp. 182, 183.

ence of God, so that "the incarnation is the congruous climax of such development . . . while conversely the incarnation presupposes such a past."¹

The Old Testament biblical theology which shall manifest these essential peculiarities will in all its details be founded upon the relation of the God of revelation with his people, Israel, through a covenant, which is a revelation of his own character as both just and gracious. It will find the details of the development of revelation along these three lines of experience, the prophetic, the priestly, and that of reverential fear of God in the pursuit of a wisdom of which he is the source, and it will gather together these three tendencies, as they disclose themselves in the Old Testament literature of revelation, into the organic unity of the history of redemption, as this redemptive history was seen by prophet, priest, and wise men.

Such a biblical theology of the Old Testament, as distinguished from a naturalistic history of Hebrew religion, will bear constant witness to this conviction so admirably stated by G. F. Oehler:—

"Before one criticizes the Bible, he must surrender himself to its contents without preconceived opinion; he must let the revelation in its majesty work directly upon him in order 'to make it a constant factor in the experiences of his personal life.' He who has in this way the conviction that Holy Scripture is the truly witnessing record of the fact of divine revelation—him the joyful self-consciousness of his faith in revelation will forbid to surrender himself to traditions of man about Holy Scripture, whether these originate with the Jewish scribes, or with the Church of Rome, or with our Protestant theology, whatever the respect which he may feel due to them, but he will as little surrender himself to a criticism in which he can mark that it has not for its basis this same self-consciousness of revelation as a majestic fact. He, at least, must know that a criticism with whose results revelation as a majestic fact is incompatible, cannot have found the truth, because it fails to explain that which the Bible in the church has proved itself to be, and so leaves unsolved the very problem of historical criticism—the explanation of the actual facts of the case."²

¹ *Divine Immanence*, Illingworth, p. vii.

² *Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 12, 13.