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THE  
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA

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ARTICLE I.

HEBREW MONOTHEISM.

BY HAROLD M. WIENER, M.A., LL.B.

IN the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA for January, 1907 (pp. 1-18), it was shown how the Wellhausen school had been led into blunders which vitiated their treatment of the laws and history of Israel by reason of their attempting to accomplish without expert training that which could be safely undertaken only by specialists. As the *differentia* of this School consists mainly in the view taken of the religious development of Israel, the theories that had been woven with respect to "sanctuaries" were naturally taken as a crucial instance of the results of the Wellhausen methods. In the present article it is proposed to attack another important portion of their hypothesis of the religious development, namely, their conception of the growth of monotheism, and to show how the ideas that are now current are merely due to the bias of the late Dr. Kuenen, which led him to put forward a theory that was flagrantly contradicted alike by the evidence and by his own earlier statements made under the influence of that evidence. But, first, the readers of this Review should be acquainted with the results of the publication of the former article, and with such other salient facts as will enable them to draw their own inferences from those results.

It will be remembered that I explained how I had attacked the central Wellhausen theory in the *Churchman*<sup>1</sup> for December, 1905, with special reference to the Oxford Hexateuch,<sup>2</sup> and had received no answer whatever, although a copy had been forwarded to each of the writers who were concerned in its production. This time I have been slightly more fortunate. I sent a copy of the article in the *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* to the editors of the Oxford Hexateuch and in due course I received a courteous communication from the senior editor, acknowledging receipt of the Review, and stating that he was unwilling to enter into a controversy. To appreciate the full force of Principal Carpenter's attitude two things are necessary,—an acquaintance with the terms of the original challenge, and a knowledge of the way in which the Oxford Hexateuch came into existence.

The terms of the challenge are as follows:—

"I shall show that the critics, by using the ambiguous word 'sanctuary,' have confounded three entirely different things; viz. (1) an altar of earth or unhewn stone, on which sacrifices of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, sheep and oxen, might lawfully be offered to the Lord by laymen without the assistance of a priest; (2) the 'House of the Lord,' where alone certain sacrifices might be performed, and then only with the assistance of a priest; and (3) a heathen high place, which was generally situate on a high mountain or a hill, or under a green tree. Such high places seem normally to have contained altars, pillars, Asherim, and graven images, sometimes also houses, and the worship was always offered to some god other than the Lord.

"As it will doubtless seem incredible to most readers that men who have the reputation of being scholars should be unable to distinguish a house from an altar, and a heathen high place from either, I shall insert references to the Oxford Hexateuch. This will serve a double purpose: first, it will enable my readers to

<sup>1</sup>The *Churchman*. Edited by the Rev. W. H. Griffith Thomas, D.D. London: Elliot Stock.

<sup>2</sup>The Hexateuch . . . Arranged in its constituent Documents by Members of the Society of Historical Theology, Oxford. Edited by J. Estlin Carpenter and G. Harford-Battersby. 2 Vols. 1900.

verify my statements; secondly, it will throw the onus of putting forward any answers there may be to my charges on certain defined persons. In criticism as in other things, what is everybody's business is nobody's, and doubtless the members of the Oxford Society of Historical Theology will not lack an advocate if they have a defence" (p. 799).

After examining the evidence, I continued thus:—

"We may now briefly see how the confusion engendered by the ambiguous word 'sanctuary' runs through the Oxford Hexateuch. First (i. 50) the law of Exodus is quoted, but on the next page we are told that 'D lays down a very different principle. The Deuteronomic code opens in xii. with the demand that all local sanctuaries shall be abolished.' We have here a tacit identification of altars with heathen high places. Four pages later (p. 55) an altar of earth or stone, called a 'sanctuary,' suddenly develops a door, which is 'the centre of the administration of justice,' and a door post, to which is affixed the ear of the slave who desires to remain with his master six years after he has been purchased. Finally, in a note on page 241, the 'house of the Lord' is identified with the 'local sanctuary.' No wonder that in a note on page 247 we are told that 'the laws as to the site of the sanctuary present perhaps the clearest instance of the modifications introduced by time in the legislation. The stages are clearly marked from (JE) the earlier sanction of the primitive plurality of sacred places to (D) the urgent demand for centralization of worship, succeeded by (P) the quiet assumption of a single lawful sanctuary.'

"There is probably no parallel in literature to the reconstruction of a nation's history by the higher critics on the basis of the mental confusion induced by a single ambiguous word of their own choosing. It stands out as an awful warning to all who would attempt to do the work of lawyers, historians, and other specialists with no better equipment than an extensive but unintelligent acquaintance with the roots of dead languages" (p. 804).

The following extracts from the preface of the Oxford Hexateuch will make clear the genesis of that work:—

"These volumes are intended to place before English readers the principal results of modern inquiry into the composition of the first six books of the Old Testament.

"The work was first executed by a small Committee appointed by the Society of Historical Theology, Oxford, 1891. The original members were G. Harford-Battersby, M.A., J. E. Carpenter, M.A.,

E. I. Fripp, B.A., C. G. Montefiore, M.A., and W. B. Selbie, M.A., with the Rev. Prof. T. K. Cheyne for consultative reference in special matters. On the removal of Mr. Selbie from Oxford, his place was taken by G. Buchanan Gray, M.A., and the Committee was further reinforced by the co-operation of Prof. W. H. Bennett, M.A.

"The preparation of the Analysis occupied about three years; the results were very carefully revised during another year; and Messrs. Carpenter and Harford-Battersby were then requested to prepare the work for the press. . . . The Introduction in Vol. I., with the exception of Chap. XV., most kindly contributed by Prof. Cheyne, was written by Mr. Carpenter, on the basis of a detailed abstract first approved by the rest of the Analysts. . . .

"This recital renders it unnecessary further to point out that the responsibility of the Society in which the work took its rise is limited to the appointment of the original Committee, while the Committee in its turn must be understood rather to sanction the method of presentation and the general distribution than to guarantee the allotment of each separate half-verse" (vol. i. pp. v, vi).

It will thus be seen that the responsibility for the central theories of the book rests not on Messrs. Carpenter and Harford-Battersby (now Canon Harford) alone, but on the whole body of analysts who approved a detailed abstract of the introduction and sanctioned the method of presentation.

So the position is this. A number of writers group themselves together and put forward a statement representing their collective views on the origin of the Hexateuch. Quite a short article is published in which their main theory<sup>1</sup> is shown to be due to most extraordinary mental confusion, and chapter and verse are cited in support of the charge. In spite of the clearest challenge possible, they all remain silent for many months. At last, when additional pressure is put upon them, their spokesman states that he is unwilling to enter into any controversy. Is that the conduct of men who have an adequate answer to the charge made against them? How comes it in that case that they are so anxious to avoid controversy and

<sup>1</sup> Wellhausen, *Prolegomena* (E. T.), p. 368.

leave their opponents to disseminate the news that these writers are unable to distinguish between a house and a mound of earth or stones and have rewritten the history of Israel on the basis of the confusion caused by that strange incapacity? The contrast between their present reticence and their former conduct is indeed instructive. "A crowd of scholars," wrote Mr. Carpenter<sup>1</sup> of the development hypothesis, "a crowd of scholars in Germany, Holland, France, Great Britain, and the United States, are ranged side by side in its defence. No other critical hypothesis has won so great a variety of adhesions in so short a time. It may be safely said at present to command the field." We offer our respectful congratulations to this gallant "crowd of scholars" whose defense of their favorite hypothesis against our repeated attacks has been distinguished by such incomparable discretion.

And now for the branch of the evolutionary hypothesis of Israel's religion that deals with the origin of monotheism. The ablest account of it, together with the arguments on which it rests, will be found in an article by the late Dr. Kuenen in the *Theological Review* for July, 1876 (vol. xiii. pp. 329-366). Although so many years have elapsed since its publication, that essay is still the main foundation of the views entertained on this topic by the higher critics,<sup>2</sup> and it will therefore be well worth our while to subject it to searching examination. The methods adopted will be such that no higher critic can reasonably take exception to them. The whole critical position as to the composition of the Pentateuch will be assumed for the purpose of discovering whether

<sup>1</sup> Oxford Hexateuch, vol. 1. p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Driver, *Deuteronomy*, p. 91; Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments*, pp. 47, 81; Kautzsch, art. "Religion of Israel," in *Hastings's Dict. of Bible*, Extra vol. p. 680a.

Kuenen's work is sound and unprejudiced *even from his own point of view*. He will be treated as a witness is treated in a court of justice. So far as practicable, his own utterances will be arrayed against him; and, where that cannot be done, the facts that he has overlooked will be brought to bear on his case. If his view be true, *all* its parts will be consistent and will fit in with all the known facts, for the coincidences of truth are infinite, and the correct hypothesis necessarily explains *all* the data. If, on the other hand, it be found that Kuenen has involved himself in the most hopeless contradictions and is in constant conflict with texts that he has ignored, this portion of the modern theory will go the way of the Wellhausen "sanctuaries."

Only one more remark need be made before grappling with the arguments. Kuenen habitually used a transliteration of the Tetragrammaton. As the use of the Name of God is offensive to Jewish writers, I shall follow the practice of the English Versions in substituting for it "the LORD" in those passages of Kuenen's works that I shall have occasion to quote.

Kuenen begins by stating his thesis: "Israel gradually rose from the worship of *a single god* to that of *the Only God*. The LORD, from one of many gods, gradually became to his worshipers the one true God" (p. 329). Then, after a few lines devoted to the argument from analogy, he very properly asks, "What does the Old Testament itself teach us as to the origin of Israelitish monotheism?" (p. 330). Dealing with the opinions of some other theologians, he points out how they rely on the testimony of the "source" now generally known as "P" (Wellhausen's "Q"), which is regarded as post-exilic. We shall revert to his remarks on this subject later. He then considers the testimony of Second Kings as to the

state of affairs in the eighteenth year of King Josiah (pp. 335-339), and so comes to the point where

"the controversy begins. It is admitted that the majority of Israelites were polytheistic in theory and practice down to the time of the captivity; but it is maintained that from the first, i.e. from the time of Moses, this polytheism was regarded as *heretical*, or, in other words, that it existed side by side with another and purer belief, with reference to which it was looked upon as a relapse into a lower conception which had already been surmounted. The real point at issue is whether this representation of the case is just" (p. 339).

Beginning with the writings of "the eighth and seventh centuries B.C." (including in accordance with his theory Deuteronomy), he finds two groups of passages (pp. 340-342). In the first the LORD appears as the God of Israel, the Holy One of Israel, etc. In the second His "might and dominion . . . are extended far beyond Israel and the borders of Canaan" (p. 341); as, for example, in such a passage as Deuteronomy xxxii. 39: "See now that I, even I, am he, and that there is no god beside me." Then he asks what the connection is between the two groups of passages. A somewhat longer quotation than usual must here be given to account for the phenomena to which attention will hereafter be drawn:—

"How are we to explain the fact that the LORD is spoken of at the same time—often by the same author, and even in the same chapter—as one of the gods, and as the Only God? We may look for a solution in two directions, according to whether we start from the first or from the second group of texts. Those who adopt the latter course see in the particularistic passages the simple expression of Israel's consciousness of a special possession in the LORD, and the LORD's condescending and special favor to Israel. Though the LORD is himself the Only God, yet inasmuch as he has *made himself* the special god of a single people, he becomes liable as such to comparison with the deities of other peoples. Those, on the other hand, who choose the first group of texts as their point of departure, suppose that the god of Israel gradually assumed sublimer proportions in the eyes of his worshipers; increased and expanded,

so to speak, until at last he pushed the other gods entirely into the background, or utterly overwhelmed and extinguished them" (p. 342).

This passage is valuable because it shows so very clearly some of the vices of the method employed alike by Kuenen and his opponents. To ascertain an author's views, the right course is to collect *all* the material passages and to read them not as isolated texts, but in their contexts. These principles are obvious and need not be labored. We therefore proceed at once to consider the results of Kuenen's neglect of them. The better to exhibit these results, passages from the "Religion of Israel" and the *Theological Review* will be set out in parallel columns (using Kuenen's italics).

#### THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.

"From a purely monotheistic point of view, the union between God and Israel can hardly have been regarded otherwise than as a temporary limitation preparatory to a general revelation to all mankind. The scheme of salvation planned by the Only God could not possibly be confined to Israel in perpetuity. As Duhm expresses it, it must 'pass beyond this people to some future goal' as universal as he who had established it. In a word, the permanent restriction of the one true God to a single people is a *contradictio in terminis*. And accordingly the conception of the counsel of God, which has been current under various forms among Christians, has always carefully avoided such an absurdity. But can we say as much for the conception of the prophets? Is their particularism simply provisional? Were we compelled to give a single general reply to this question, we could only answer in the negative; but it will be better to distinguish between the several

#### RELIGION OF ISRAEL.

"But first we have forced upon us a conclusion which we must state at once. If the prophets' ideas of the LORD, his being and his might, have been interpreted aright, then their belief in him was *monotheism*. We use this word, here and hereafter, in the stricter sense, and therefore we mean *the recognition and worship of one only god*. That we have a perfect right to ascribe this to the prophets, follows from the description which we have already given of their standpoint. In the idea that the LORD is the 'God of Israel,' there undoubtedly lies a certain limitation. So long as we know nothing more of the LORD than this, we expect to find that other gods are acknowledged besides him. But in proportion as we prosecute our search, it becomes more evident that this expectation is not realized. The LORD is not only 'lord' and 'king,' he is also 'the god of hosts' and 'the holy one,' whose glory fills the whole earth. He is the creator of nature; man also has to

prophets. Hosea's outlook into the future is from first to last national. There is not a trace in his writings of any kind of universalism whatever." (Vol. xiii. p. 344.)

thank him for existence. With his eye always upon Israel, but yet directed towards all things, he exercises unlimited dominion. In the thoughts of the prophets of the eighth century before Christ—for it is of them alone that we speak—there is no room for other gods beside a deity such as this. The LORD can have *servants*—and he has them, great in number and of various ranks<sup>1</sup>—but *gods*, who would always have to possess a certain independence and a special authority, he does not tolerate beside himself. 'I am the LORD, thy god from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me, and there is no saviour beside me.' (E. T., vol. i. pp. 50-51.)

It would certainly be difficult for anybody to refute the passage from the *Theological Review* in clearer language than Kuenen himself has used in the "Religion of Israel." But how comes it that he is in such flagrant contradiction with himself? The answer is not far to seek. In the *Review* he cites the following passages: Hosea ii. 1-3, 16-25 (A.V., i. 10; ii. 1; ii. 14-23); iii. 5; xi. 8-11; xiv. 2-9 (A.V., 1-8), and places on them a construction that no impartial critic could adopt, and that Kuenen himself when he took the trouble to examine the evidence decisively rejected. On the other hand, he ignores Hosea xiii. 4 and the other passages on which he had relied in the "Religion of Israel."

It is, however, right to notice that even in the "Religion of Israel," Kuenen was of opinion that "the words which we have just quoted from Hosea [i.e. xiii. 4] properly mean rather that Israel knows no gods beside the LORD, than simply

<sup>1</sup> [In a footnote reference is made to Hosea xii. 4; Isaiah vi. 1 *seq.*, and the passages in which He is called "the god of hosts"; Amos iii. 13; iv. 13; v. 14-16; vi. 8, 14; Hosea xii. 5.]

that those gods do not exist" (p. 51). He then shows that (on his own critical assumption) the rest of the prophets of the eighth century "do not mention the non-existence of the other gods at all" (p. 52). But, lest any of Kuenen's disciples should imagine that in this way they can save his consistency, it must be pointed out that, in the further discussion, he proceeds to hammer in again what he had already said about the monotheism of the prophets. In particular he quotes Hosea viii. 4b-6a (referring also to xiii. 2): "Of their silver and their gold have they made them images—that they might be cut off! Thy calf, O Samaria, repels from itself; mine anger is kindled against them; how long will they not endure innocency? For this (calf) also is from Israel; a workman made it, and *it is no god.*"<sup>1</sup> And then he concludes that "passages such as these are the best proof" that the worship of the prophets "leaves no room for the recognition of other gods; the adoration of those gods they turn into an absurdity by placing it upon a par with the worship of the images themselves; nay, they consider this to be so essential a characteristic of the worship of false gods that the image of the LORD himself is to them a no-god" (p. 53).

All very true and sound. But why is there no mention of these passages—in Kuenen's own words "the best proof"—in the *Theological Review*?

I resume Kuenen's statement on page 345 of the latter. This time the passages from the "Religion" that refute it are too long for a parallel column, and must be summarized subsequently.

"Amos announces the restoration of the falling tent of David, and anticipates the conquest by Israel of the territories of Edom and of all the peoples over whom the name of the LORD had been proclaimed (as the name of their conqueror) (Amos ix. 11, 12). It

<sup>1</sup> Kuenen's translation and italics.

appears from the context that he refers to the neighboring peoples, who had formerly been subdued by David. But even supposing his expectations to have had a wider range, he would still have regarded the religion of the Lord as confined to the *people of Israel*. Micah borrows from a predecessor the well-known prophecy concerning the many peoples who should go up to Zion to receive instruction from the Lord (Mic. iv. 1-5). This is the first passage in the prophetic literature in which the national boundaries of Israel are overstepped, though by no means obliterated; but as far as Micah is concerned, it remains a mere isolated and momentary departure from the usual point of view. The Assyrians, for instance, are not included in the Lord's scheme of salvation. After the appearance of the Messiah they make a renewed attack upon Judah, and as a punishment they are 'pastured with a sword' by shepherds of Israel (Micah v. 4, 5 (A.V., 5, 6))."<sup>1</sup>

We need not come down to the time of Micah. It will be sufficient to cite as shortly as possible some of the most striking passages of the "Religion" relating to Amos. "With him the LORD is the creator and supreme ruler of heaven and earth" (p. 46). Then he quotes *in extenso* Amos v. 8 and iv. 13, comparing ix. 6, and proceeds:—

"The LORD gives fruitfulness and regulates the seasons (Amos ix. 13, 14), but the calamities which overtake mankind, drought, mildew, pestilence, earthquakes, inundations, are also sent by him (Amos iv. 6-11; viii. 8, 9; ix. 5). It would be useless to attempt to escape the punishment ordained by him: his might extends over all places, over the realm of the dead and over heaven, over the heights of Carmel and the depths of the sea, over Canaan and the most distant lands (Amos ix. 2-4). "But although the herdsman of Tekoa (Amos i. 1; vii. 14, 15) may have been more deeply impressed

<sup>1</sup> Here and in some other passages Kuenen confused two different ideas: (1) monotheism, i.e. the belief in the exclusive divinity of a single god; and (2) a belief in the present or future universality of a single faith. It is possible to be a monotheist without holding the second belief or advertising it if held. In fact it is possible to be a monotheist and yet recognize that other people hold different opinions. The gist of Kuenen's complaint in this passage really is that the early prophets failed to indicate their views of the future religious state of other nations; and he omits to show that these views would have had any relevance to the missions of these particular prophets.

by natural phenomena, and may therefore find more inducement to represent them as revelations of the Lord's might than the rest of the prophets, this does not make it the less true that in this they unanimously agree with him. . . .

"The Lord rules and orders the human, as he does the natural world. It does not require to be shown by quotations that the prophets were convinced that He directed Israel's destinies. 'He knows Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from him' (Hos. v. 3a). It should merely be observed that this direction is understood by them in a very wide sense, so that it includes also the greatest events which affect the destinies of the world. Thus, for example, the extension of the power of Assyria, which will soon be found to be dangerous and fatal to Israel, is, according to Amos, a dispensation of the Lord (Amos vi. 14). But the same prophet goes further, and sees in the Lord the supreme disposer of the destinies of nations in general, even when Israel is not concerned in them. It is the Lord who has brought the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir to the places where they afterwards dwelt (Amos ix. 7); who punishes not only the acts of violence committed by the surrounding nations against Israel (Amos i. 3-15), but also the assaults of the Moabites upon Edom (Amos ii. 1). And as he disposes important events, so he rules also over the incidents of daily life: 'Is there evil in the city, that the Lord doeth not?' (Amos iii. 6b.) The rest of the prophets too agree with Amos, although each of them, as was to be expected, expresses his conviction in his own way" (pp. 46-48).

Now these extracts give the lie direct—it is nothing less—to the passage quoted from the *Theological Review*. If in Amos the Lord is "the supreme disposer of the destinies of nations in general, even when Israel is not concerned in them," it is clearly impossible to maintain that some verses in Micah constitute "the first passage in the prophetic literature in which the national boundaries of Israel are overstepped."<sup>1</sup>

But again I desire to draw especial attention to Kuenen's faulty methods and extraordinary indifference to facts. It is not that between the publication of the "Religion" and the

<sup>1</sup>The confusion to which attention was drawn in the last footnote is partly responsible for the view taken by Kuenen.

article in the Review a fresh examination of the evidence had led him to different conclusions: it is simply that in his later writing he chose to pass by unnoticed the whole body of texts on which he rested his earlier conclusions. His conduct is the more inexplicable, since, on page 341 of this very article, in speaking of the two groups of passages relating to the subject, he writes: "The second group includes all those expressions in which the might and dominion of the LORD are extended far beyond Israel and the borders of Canaan," and actually refers to the "Religion of Israel"! Why he did not read what he had there written, or how, in the face of his earlier work, he came to make the astonishing statements cited from pages 344 and 345 does not clearly appear.

He closes this section of the Review article thus: "Is the basis of the anticipations of Amos and Hosea, for instance, monotheistic? The answer can hardly be doubtful" (p. 346). And we reply, that the answer is not in the least doubtful, and that it was given once for all by Kuenen himself when at the close of his interesting discussion of the relevant passages he found himself confirmed in the opinion which had been "forced upon us previously"—the phrase surely indicates Kuenen's bias with singular felicity—that the religion of the prophets was—monotheism (p. 67).<sup>1</sup>

In view of all this, we read the following passage from the *Theological Review* with amazement:—

"There is one more difficulty that suggests itself. Schultz leaves no room for difference of belief amongst the various prophets, or more generally the enlightened worshippers of the LORD, on the subject of Israel's god and the gods of the peoples. Absolute monothe-

<sup>1</sup> Here, again, Kuenen's mental confusion has been at work. Amos and Hosea may have been monotheists without expressing any opinion as to the future religious state of peoples with whom they were not immediately concerned.

ism may of course be more or less spiritual or moral, but does not in itself admit of *degrees*. Is this the case with the ideas presented to us in the literature of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.? Far from it. There is one phenomenon in particular which Schultz entirely fails to bring out, chiefly because he vitiates his results by treating the whole prophetic period—from 800 to 500 B.C.—as a single and uniform whole. *It was in the seventh century B.C. that the LORD was first declared in so many words to be the only God.* The fact itself is undeniable. Monotheism is only *implied* in the prophecies of the eighth century B.C., and was not expressly taught till about a century later, and then especially by the Deuteronomist. How can Schultz explain these gradations from his point of view? He has to leave them unexplained. According to his theory, Amos might have expressed himself just as strongly as the Deuteronomist, and his not having done so is—an accident! Then how about Hosea, the earliest Zachariah, and the remaining prophets of the eighth century? If the LORD was to, all of them ‘absolutely the Only God,’ how comes it that not one of them ever once says so? Surely not for want of a suitable occasion!” (Pages 346-347.)

If a thing is worth doing, it is worth doing well: and certainly Kuenen could not have exposed his own characteristics as an inquirer into the origin of Hebrew monotheism more forcibly than he has done here. Schultz, he complains, leaves no room for difference of belief amongst the various prophets; but it was Kuenen himself, who, when he examined the evidence, declared that the rest of the prophets agreed with Amos though each of them expressed his conviction in his own way. “Amos might have expressed himself”—so runs the charge—“just as strongly as the Deuteronomist, and his not having

<sup>1</sup> Here the confusion to which I have alluded is once more operative. The charge against Amos is that he does not put forward any scheme of salvation for other peoples. From this it is inferred that he was not a monotheist. But *neither does the Deuteronomist*. Kuenen nowhere suggests that he expects the religion of Israel to extend to all the world. On the contrary, relying on Deuteronomy iv. 19, 20 and xxix. 25 (A.V., 26), he writes: “the heathen world, and its religions are ordained by him” (i.e. the LORD) (p. 350). A very different conception to the *universal* recognition of a single exclusive deity.

done so is—an accident.”<sup>1</sup> Yet he expressed himself sufficiently strongly for this same Kuenen—when he took the trouble to read the prophet’s work—to admit that to him the Lord was “the supreme disposer of the destinies of nations in general, even when Israel is not concerned in them”! “If,” he continues, “if the LORD was to all of them ‘absolutely the Only God,’ how comes it that not one of them ever once says so?” But they had said enough to *force* our author to proclaim that their faith was “*the recognition and worship of one only god,*” that in their thoughts there was “no room for other gods beside a deity such as this.” Can self-contradiction go further?

But we must hasten on. Kuenen next attacks the Deuteronomist who, it will be remembered, was, on his theory, a writer of the seventh century B.C. He finds passages which in his opinion point to a polytheistic origin of monotheism, and condescendingly explains what the sacred author *ought* to have written. I have before pointed out in this Review that one of the characteristics of the school of which Kuenen was a recognized leader is an unfortunate lack of literary appreciation, and it would be quite useless to attempt to convince his adherents by endeavoring to explain to them the literary beauty and real sense of the passages cited. Fortunately we are not driven to any such difficult course. For, after dealing with Deuteronomy in his own way (and incidentally altering the reading in a passage of the Song of Moses (Deut. xxxii.) so as to give it a polytheistic tinge—he substitutes “sons of El” for “sons of Israel” in verse 8—), he most rashly propounds a test which (when properly applied) utterly destroys his theory. And, in citing it, I shall also cite a few other sentences which produce a strange effect on the mind.

"If still more ancient documents contradicted this result [i.e. Kuenen's thesis as to the origin of the Deuteronomist's monotheism], if their antiquity were as undoubted and their evidence as unequivocal as those of the authorities we have now examined, then indeed, but then only, it might be safe or even necessary to modify our conclusions. But, as every one knows, this is far from being the case, inasmuch as the antiquity of the most important passages cited against us is more than doubtful. Strictly speaking, then, I might here conclude. But yet I cannot bring myself to do so. Even the appearance of withholding from the reader any portion of the material upon which his opinion is to be formed must be avoided" (p. 352).

How successfully the appearance of withholding from the reader any portion of the material was avoided is shown by the length of time for which Kuenen's views have been accepted by the higher critics. How successfully that material *was* in fact withheld—presumably through carelessness—has already been shown in part, and will appear more clearly in the sequel.

Kuenen then considers three passages from the Psalms and Samuel (Ps. xviii. 32 (A.V., 31); 1 Sam. ii. 2; 2 Sam. vii. 22), all of which he regards as late or corrupt. The most convincing course will therefore be to leave them out of consideration. And that brings us to the following question: What are the principal documents that he regards as more ancient than Deuteronomy? They fall into three main groups: (1) the early prophets, (2) certain supposititious "sources" of the Hexateuch, and (3) certain other historical narratives.

We have already dealt with the early prophets sufficiently for the purposes of this article, and it is patent that their testimony alone is sufficient to upset the whole of Kuenen's theory, for, from his point of view, "their antiquity" was "undoubted," and on his own involuntary admission "their

evidence" was "unequivocal." But, as will appear in the sequel, it is desirable to deal with the other evidence, also, because, on Kuenen's own testimony, the results to which we shall be led have an important bearing on critical questions.

Here great difficulties confront us in carrying out our method. Since the days of Kuenen many conflicting views have been put forward as to the dates of the several relevant passages, and it is quite impossible to make any selection which will meet with universal approval. Accordingly it will be best in the first instance to set out the material facts derived from a study of the supposititious JE, leaving each reader to form his own conclusions as to the dates of the several passages, and then to show how on any hypothesis of their origin they militate against Kuenen's view. At the same time it will be well to note incidentally passages that bear on minor theories which will be considered later.

At the very opening of the "sources" that we are considering, we learn that God made earth and heaven (Gen. ii. 4b), that he is the God who causes rain to fall upon the earth (ver. 5), that he formed man and gave him life (ver. 7), that all vegetables owe their existence to him (ver. 9). He formed every living creature (ver. 19). "Is every deity," asks Kuenen in the *Theological Review*, "to whom the creation of the world is ascribed therefore *per se* the only God?" (Page 354.) Certainly not: but in a polytheistic system we should expect to find some trace of other gods or some account of how they came into existence. "JE" not only contains nothing of the kind, but is full of expressions that imply, if they do not actually assert, monotheism. And there is yet another answer. We have seen that when he examined the evidence Kuenen was persuaded that the religion of the early prophets was monotheism. Even in the *Theological Review*,

when he was attempting to show that it was at best only nascent monotheism, he recognized two groups of texts, and wrote as follows:—

“In the other series of texts the attributes assigned to the LORD are absolute, and accordingly the existence of the other gods is denied, or the LORD is asserted unequivocally to exist *alone*. . . . The second group includes all those expressions in which the might and dominion of the LORD are extended far beyond Israel and the borders of Canaan, in which heaven and earth are called his possession or his heritage, and in which, accordingly, the other gods are spoken of either as utterly powerless or simply non-existent, an idea which embodies itself in the very names applied to these gods and their images” (pp. 340, 341).

We are therefore amply justified in showing that precisely the same conception dominates the texts of “JE.” It cannot be denied that in Genesis ii. and in many other passages of these “sources” God’s “might and dominion are extended far beyond Israel and the borders of Canaan,” and that the conception is entirely monotheistic, as in the prophets. The significance to be attached to this fact will be discussed when our survey of the passages is completed: meanwhile attention is drawn to the fact itself.

To resume: as God creates man—and not the Israelites alone—in Genesis ii., so in the next chapter he pronounces a doom that falls on all the sons and daughters of man—not merely of Israel. In chapter iv. we find Cain and Abel offering to the LORD and we also meet with two other passages that are important. Cain will be hid from God’s face (ver. 14), and goes out from it (ver. 16), and, on the other hand, in verse 26 we read, “then began men to call upon the Name of the LORD.” The first eight verses of chapter vi. (especially 3, 5–8) once more show us the LORD as creator and God of the world and all mankind, and the same conception characterizes vii. 3–4 and viii. 21–22. Moreover, in viii. 20, we find

Noah—not an Israelite—sacrificing to this Deity. In a poetical passage (ix. 26) the LORD is called the “God of Shem,” and the critics lay great stress on this.<sup>1</sup> Next (x. 9) Nimrod, who has no connection with Canaan or Israel, is a mighty hunter before the LORD. The story of Babel (xi. 1-9) once more shows God’s dominion extending far beyond the land of Canaan, and presents the phrase (ver. 5) “The LORD came down to see the city and the tower”—from which it would seem that he was conceived of as dwelling in heaven. Then comes the history of the patriarchs, and here we see God’s power manifested in every country that the narrative touches. He gives commands in Haran (xii. 1), and promises that in Abram “*all the families of the earth*” shall be blessed (xii. 3, etc.). He plagues Pharaoh and his house in Egypt (xii. 17), he destroys Sodom and Gomorrah (xviii. 16-xix. 28), he manifests his might in Gerar (xx.), he aids Abraham’s servant on his journey to Aram-naharaim (xxiv.), and Laban and Bethuel recognize that which proceedeth from him (ver. 50). The same view pervades the whole story of Jacob and Joseph. It is useless to cite further passages in proof of this. It will be universally recognized that there is no country touched by the narrative to which his power does not extend.

Attention must now be directed to another phenomenon. Whithersoever they go, the patriarchs, their children, and their servants unhesitatingly pray to God. There is no conception

<sup>1</sup> It seems right, in passing, to make a remark which disposes of many strange inferences. It is natural that stress should frequently be laid on the relation of the Godhead to the individual soul or the family or the tribe which is the subject of immediate concern. Such phrases as “my God,” “God of my father,” “God of Israel,” do not limit the range of the Deity’s dominion: they are merely natural expressions of the relationship on which it is desired to dwell. They must be construed by way of specification, but not of limitation.

that he cannot hear his worshipers because they are outside Canaan. And the epithets that are bestowed on him are not less significant. If in the eyes of a slave, he is the "God of my master Abraham" (xxiv. 12, etc.), in the eyes of Abraham and the narrator he is "the God of heaven" (ver. 7), "the God of heaven and the God of the earth" (ver. 3). He, too, is the "judge of all the earth" (xviii. 25). Two other features that are at least equally striking, and bear closely on our argument, present themselves in the book of Genesis. The view taken of other gods deserves especial notice. Chapter xxxi. presents us with the story of Laban's teraphim. The picture of Rachel stealing these deities and subsequently sitting over them for purposes of concealment should surely provoke thought. What manner of power can be ascribed to gods that are treated thus? And is not the contrast between this narrative and the view taken of the God of Israel sufficient to prove to the most skeptical that the belief of the narrator was monotheistic? And this argument is reinforced by the story in xxxv. 2-4, where Jacob *buries* the strange gods. It is difficult to believe that any narrator could have for one moment conceived of such treatment being mentioned in connection with the God of Israel! The other remark that falls to be made here is that the narrative of JE is familiar with the notion of a covenant between God and the patriarchs (Gen. xv., etc.). The importance of this will appear later. For the moment we need only note the fact.

In the book of Exodus we again meet with the idea that God is the Creator of all mankind, and that he is all-powerful. "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? is it not I, the LORD?" (Ex. iv. 11.) His power too is manifested in Egypt. But undoubtedly most light is obtained from the narrative of the Sinaitic Covenant

in chapters xix. to xxiv. The LORD proposes to the children of Israel to enter into a sworn contract with them. The terms of that proposal are as follows: "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me *from among all peoples: for all the earth is mine*: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation" (xix. 5-6). Then come the prohibitions of the worship of other gods and kindred precepts (xx. 3, 23; xxii. 19 (20); xxiii. 13) and in xx. 11 God is once more recognized as the Creator. Similar ideas also characterize the contents of chapter xxxiv., which need not be detailed here. To conclude this branch of the evidence, mention must also be made of the commands to overthrow other gods, etc. (Ex. xxiii. 24 and xxxiv. 13).

Lastly, Numbers xiv. 21 and the story of Balaam are purely monotheistic. The book of Joshua may be passed over on the ground that the analysis is there too uncertain even from the point of view of the critics, and the other early historians will be considered in another connection.

Now, first, if these narratives *as a whole* be regarded as præ-prophetic, *cadit quæstio*. But, further, if any one of them be so regarded, there is an end of Kuenen's theory. As already stated, there are too many differences of opinion among the higher critics themselves for any argument to be based on any particular passage: but it is well to point out that in a work that is considerably *later* than the paper in the *Theological Review*, Kuenen himself classed the following "as præ-prophetic, or at least as unaffected by the spirit of canonical prophecy": Genesis ii. 4b-iii.; iv. 1-16a; vi. 1-4; xi. 1-9; Exodus xxiv. 1, 2, 9-11.<sup>1</sup> This gives us the creation story, the Babel narrative, and other passages. And this again

<sup>1</sup> Hexateuch (E. T., 1886), p. 242.

hopelessly contradicts his reasoning on page 355 of the *Theological Review*:—"In Hosea and Isaiah, the LORD is called the 'Maker of Israel' and of 'mankind.' Why should we not suppose that one of their contemporaries, penetrated by the same conviction, adopted the story of the creation from some foreign source, but substituted the name of the LORD for that of the deity he found mentioned in it"? The answer is that Kuenen himself was of opinion that the story was præ-prophetic, and was therefore not at liberty to attribute it to a contemporary of the prophets.

But whatever view be taken of isolated narratives, two things at least stand out: First, at every period of which we have cognizance the Lord is regarded by the children of Israel as the Creator of the world. I doubt whether even Kuenen would have been prepared to contend that there was ever a period when the creation was ascribed to any one but Him by those Israelites who were not "heretical." Secondly, in every age of which we have knowledge the relationship between God and people is based wholly or in part on covenant. Some references to this have already been noted. We find it, too, in other books (e.g. Judges ii. 1; 1 Kings xi. 11; xix. 10, 14), and, as will appear immediately, Kuenen himself admits something of the kind. But if it be once granted that a God who created heavens and earth entered into special relations with a particular people, the traditional case is admitted. In the narrative of Exodus the covenant is based on the fact that "all the earth is mine," and Kuenen for that very reason supposes that the verses are late. In vain, when he admitted that the Creation story and the Babel narrative were præ-prophetic!

We pass to his interesting endeavor to evade the facts when he comes to sum up in the *Theological Review*:—

"The LORD is the god of Israel and of Israel's forefathers from

Shem (Gen. ix. 26) downwards, but especially of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen. xxiv. 12; xxxi. 29, 42, 53; xxxii. 10 (A.V., 9); xxxiii. 20; Ex. iii. 6-16; vii., and elsewhere). It is only by reading the texts themselves that we fully realize the emphasis with which the writers insist upon this connection" (p. 360).

It will be observed that Kuenen here carefully omits all notice of the texts that prove the extent of the Lord's power: but it would have been interesting if he had condescended to inform us what this God was before the relationship with Israel began. Perhaps an inquiry into this would have modified his views. Secondly, we must note the extraordinary way in which Kuenen handles such passages as he deigns to notice. Genesis ix. 26 is a fragment of song which proves nothing: but xxiv. 12 (his next text) comes from the story of Rebekah's wooing. That story is supposed by the critics to be homogeneous. It follows, therefore, that, if verse 12 is evidence,—and it is very good evidence either of the view that a servant did take, or else of the view that the narrator conceived that he would have taken,—verses 3 (the God of heaven and the God of the earth) and 7 (the God of heaven) are also evidence. In truth, Kuenen's unjustifiable conduct in wrenching a phrase from its context, and so distorting the author's meaning, is contrary to every principle of scientific investigation. The narrative as a whole conveys a very vivid impression of the writer's conception—viz. that Abraham was a monotheist, and that his belief was either beyond the servant's comprehension or at any rate was not shared by him. Indeed, the chapter admirably illustrates the narrator's insight into facts and his literary skill in presenting them. The Hebrew historians experienced no difficulty in realizing that in the eyes of heathens their God was not the only deity. Of the other references it will be observed that some give the view held not by the narrator or Jacob but by *Laban*, while

in Exodus vii. 16 the phrase "God of the Hebrews" is used with reference to Pharaoh. *Ex hypothesi* the worship of the Lord was not prevalent among the Egyptians: and the designation was clearly necessary to make Pharaoh understand from whom the command emanated. Surely even the most academic of theorists would not suggest that it would have been expedient or even sane for a monotheist to have explained to the Egyptians shortly before the Exodus that their gods were no gods.<sup>1</sup> As to the other texts, I invite any impartial person to inspect them, and say whether or not the emphasis laid on the connection is greater than the circumstances would have warranted even if the covenants had never been entered into.

It was stated earlier that this inquiry had an important bearing on the criticism of the Pentateuch. It is now possible to explain this in Kuenen's own words. Speaking of "P,"—the source which is now supposed to be exilic or post-exilic,—he writes as follows in the *Theological Review*:—

"It is not too much to say that the still prevalent opinion . . . as to the priority of the Elohist document carries with it the early origin of Israelitish monotheism, and inversely, loses one of its chief supports if the more recent origin of that monotheism can be proved or even rendered probable. To understand the intimate nature of this connection between the two questions, we have only to bear in mind the progressive revelation of God as represented in the Elohist document: Elohim, creator of heaven and earth, makes a covenant with Noah and his posterity, reveals himself to Abraham as El-Shaddai, and makes known to Moses his name the Lord. Thus He passes from the wider to the narrower circle. Naturally Lord of all, He voluntarily enters into closer relations with one special people. Now the orthodox of course accept these representations as a simple reflection of the reality; and though Ewald

<sup>1</sup> If a Christian missionary in dealing with some savage tribe spoke of "the God of the Christians" or "the God of the white man," would it be possible to argue that he was not a monotheist? And is not all speech conditioned by the circumstances in which it is uttered?

and his school do not go quite so far as that, yet since they ascribe the work to the age of David and Solomon, they are very strongly influenced by it in their own conception of the course of history. For if at that early period the connection between the Lord and Israel was so definitely regarded as a voluntary self-limitation on the part of the former, then certainly an absolute monotheism must have been established amongst the Israelites from the time of Moses downwards, if not still earlier" (p. 334).

It will now be evident that, even on Kuenen's own view, the idea of the Lord's voluntarily entering into closer relations with one special people is as characteristic of the early "sources" as of "P," and that in both alike he figures as the Creator and as naturally Lord of all. This argument against the early origin of "P" therefore falls to the ground.

We have now disposed of Kuenen's main contentions. Some minor points remain to be noticed. Our author deals with passages in which the older historians introduce heathens as speaking of the Lord (pp. 358-360), but he entirely omits the cases of Abraham's servant and Balaam. Yet Genesis xxiv. (discussed above) clearly shows that a Hebrew historian could be a monotheist while recognizing that *in the eyes of heathens* the LORD was merely a tribal deity. This completely answers Kuenen's argument that "the Queen of Sheba recognizes him as the god of Israel, and sees in Solomon's wisdom and prosperity a proof of the LORD's favor towards his people (1 Kings x. 9)." His next point is one that can tell only against himself:—

"The Syrians under Benhadad believe that the LORD is 'a god of mountains and not of valleys,' and make their plans for a new campaign against Israel in accordance with this idea. They are again defeated, however, as a punishment for their contempt of the LORD's power (1 Kings xx. 23, 28)" (p. 358).

That case, therefore, proves that in the view of the Hebrew historian the Syrian conception was wrong. If it is evidence

at all, it is evidence for the view that God's power was not limited by place.

Kuenen then discusses the case of Naaman, and, to deal adequately with that, it becomes necessary to consider another of his conclusions, and expose the blunders on which it rests:—

“As the God of Israel, the LORD is worshiped in the land of Israel, but nowhere else. ‘If,’ says David to Saul (1 Sam. xxvi. 19), ‘if men [have incited you against me], may they be cursed before the LORD’s face, for they are driving me out this day, that I cannot abide in the LORD’s inheritance, saying, Go, serve other gods’” (pp. 360–361).

Is it true that, according to the early sources, the Lord is worshiped nowhere but in the land of Israel? Most emphatically not. To him Cain, Abel, and Noah bring sacrifice. On his Name men call (Gen. iv. 26). To him the patriarchs and their servants offer supplication in all lands. To avoid going through the passages in Genesis it will be sufficient to mention the cases of Abraham’s servant, and subsequently Jacob in Aram-naharaim and Joseph in Egypt. We may now also cite the other early historians. In the very house of Dagon the blind Samson calls unto him (Judges xvi. 28). In the early chapters of Samuel even the Philistines are reduced to doing homage to him. At Mizpah in Moab David assumes his omnipotence (1 Sam. xxii. 3). He gave victory to David whithersoever he went (2 Sam. viii. 6). At Geshur in Syria Absalom vowed to him (2 Sam. xv. 7–9). He manifests his power at Zarephath (1 Kings xvii. 8–24). In a word, those who are true to the faith of Abraham and Moses recognize him as the sole omnipresent omnipotent Deity wheresoever they may be.

But the Mosaic legislation appears to have restricted sacrifice (*not* all worship) to “all the place where I shall cause my Name to be mentioned” (Ex. xx. 24), i.e. (after the desert

period) the land of Canaan. Hence Absalom, who can vow to God in Geshur, must sacrifice not there but in Hebron. Hence too, Naaman's desire for Israelitish earth (2 Kings v. 17), which would possess exterritoriality,—i.e. would be reckoned as part of the land of Canaan even when physically situate in Syria. The case is particularly instructive because Naaman recognized that there was no god in all the earth, but Israel (ver. 15), and admitted (ver. 18) that, strictly speaking, it was wrong to bow down in the house of Rimmon even in the land where that deity was especially worshipped. His belief was therefore pure monotheism, not monolatry; but this did not interfere with his recognition of the technical rule by which sacrifice was limited to the Holy Land. And this no doubt is the meaning of the expression "Go, serve other gods." A David would not sacrifice to other gods even when he was outside the land of Canaan: but there seems no reason to suppose that the bulk of the people (who were frequently unfaithful to their God even in the land of Israel) would have maintained the same high level of conduct. To them sacrifice was essential: and if they were incapacitated from sacrificing to the God of Israel, they would doubtless sacrifice to Dagon or Chemosh or any other convenient deity. But that does not prove the late rise of monotheism—it merely confirms the biblical account.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The special character attributed to the Holy Land appears in other ways, but those who emphasize it usually succeed in conveying a wholly false impression of Hebrew religion by neglecting to note the concomitant facts that set it in a true light. For instance, in Jonah i. 3 we read that the prophet "rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD," but, as a rule, the critics, while dwelling on this phrase, neglect to mention that in this very book we see God represented as "the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land" (i. 9); who manifests his omnipotence on the sea and in Nineveh, as well as in Canaan; and who can hear

Lastly, Kuenen argues (pages 361 and 362), that "the actual existence of other gods is expressly recognized" in Numbers xiv. 9; Judges xi. 24; and 2 Kings iii. 27. The inference from the first passage appears to me unjustifiable. In the other two cases I agree with him; but I apprehend that the mass of evidence that has been cited, and that was ignored by the Dutch professor, proves to demonstration that (in his own words) "this polytheism was regarded as *heretical*, or, in other words, that it existed side by side with another and purer belief, with reference to which it was looked upon as a relapse into a lower conception which had already been surmounted."

To sum up:—Adopting the critical positions of the school to which he belonged, Kuenen endeavored to prove the late origin of Israelitish monotheism. Assuming all his premises for the purpose of testing his view, we have found that his work was vitiated by mental confusion, that he ignored the great bulk of the material evidence altogether, that as a result he was in perpetual conflict alike with the facts and with his own statements, and that he distorted the plain meaning of the canonical writings by wrenching texts from what were admittedly their true positions and putting on them interpretations that could not be accepted by any unprejudiced mind.

These evils spring from three main causes. First, Kuenen approached the subject under the domination of an *idée fixe*, which made impartial inquiry impossible. Secondly, he was too much out of sympathy with the Hebrew genius and with practical considerations to have any comprehension of literary form. Hence he found difficulties in expressions like "the Holy One of Israel," and "What mighty people is there which

prayer and repentance wheresoever they be offered to him. Facts like these call for consideration when it is sought to estimate the force of Jonah i. 3; Genesis xl. 5, etc.

has a god [so] near to it as the LORD our God [is to us] when we call upon him?" Such phrases could not have caused a moment's difficulty to any man possessed of a modicum of literary insight. And, thirdly, he made no attempt to survey the whole of the relevant evidence. What more need be said of him?

For the benefit of subsequent inquirers I would fain add some further remarks. In the hands of any *practical* exponent of a *non-missionary* religion, monolatry and monotheism are in fact indistinguishable. The religion of the Old Testament is certainly not a missionary religion, and a practical man confines himself where possible to the immediate task in hand. Moses and the prophets sought to fulfill that task, not to deliver academic lectures on abstract theological doctrine. At no time was it the duty of any prophet to convert any but the Israelite to Judaism. At all times God's servants endeavored to impress upon the Israelites that for them the worship of One Only God—who at the same time was the national God—was obligatory. That accounts for much of the form of the Old Testament.

One other matter:—Deuteronomy admittedly contains declarations of monotheism so clear that not even a Kuenen could misinterpret all of them. But Deuteronomy is just the portion of the Pentateuch in which we should expect to find general statements of doctrine, for it consists chiefly of speeches to the people and was intended for public reading. In dealing with the complex problem of the Pentateuch, no solution can be regarded as scientific that fails to note the different purposes for which its various portions were intended,—purposes that involved alike their style and their subject-matter,—and to show us how and why such diverse elements were blended into one harmonious whole.