

ARTICLE VI.

NEW METHODS OF INQUIRY CONCERNING THE
PENTATEUCH.¹

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EVERY reader of the Bible is at once impressed, upon reading the book of Genesis, by the many repetitions which pervade the Mosaic writings; he is also impressed by the fact that not only separate verses but also entire parallel accounts repeat what has already been told, and, as a result, are, in their present relation, often very distracting. Because of these repetitions, Old Testament critics have concluded that the five books of Moses are a compilation from different sources. Each of these sources, three of which are thought to have been found in Genesis, has, according to the views commonly accepted until recently, its peculiar designation of the Deity and its special name for the third patriarch, and each points also to other peculiarities, viz. of language and matters of religious history. This source hypothesis has had almost universal acceptance among the students of the Old Testament throughout the whole world. Even to-day the older school of Old Testament critics, with the exception of Klostermann, consider it one of the most important results of scientific research.

The younger generation of scholars, however, are beginning to doubt seriously the correctness of this hypothesis.

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Recently there has appeared a long list of writings in which the authors point out its weak points. The worthlessness of the names of the Deity as a source distinction has been pointed out in the *American Journal of Theology* in 1904 by Redpath, in England by Wiener (since 1909),¹ in Holland by Eerdmans (1908), in Germany by Klostermann, Johannes Lepsius (in the *Reich Christi*, 1903), and by myself (in *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, 1903). Moreover, various Catholic theologians, as Hoberg, Hummelauer, Schlögl, and Weiss, have written appropriate contributions.

That the names "Jacob" and "Israel" are just as worthless for source distinction as the names of the Deity is shown in my "Textkritische Materialien zur Hexateuchfrage" (Gießen, 1912), and by Harold M. Wiener in the *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* (1910).

According to this view, the main reason for the existence of the records of the Jahvists who wrote "Jehovah" and "Israel" in the manner supposed, and the Elohistes who wrote "Elohim" and "Jacob," are invalid. The condition of things is somewhat different in the documents assigned to "P" (so named because they are said to have originated with priests). One sees at the first glance that, if not all, at least detached parts, of these records seem to stand apart from the rest of Genesis. The question then arises, Was P once an independent document, as is generally accepted, or have these parts of P been incorporated into the remaining parts of Genesis already at hand? Klostermann and Orr support this view. What better methods, then, are there of solving the problem of the five books of Moses than those used hitherto?

De Lagarde has already made this criticism of the meth-

¹ In the *Bibliotheca Sacra*.

ods of critical inquiry into the Pentateuch which have been in vogue up to the present time, viz. that they approach the solution of the problem concerning the origin and composition of the five books of Moses from the wrong point of view. Because of a few peculiarities of one edition of the books of Moses (but not valid everywhere without exception), viz. the Hebrew which is called the Massoretic text, they accept the existence of many sources without stopping to consider that we have other editions of these books, and without testing to see if the same peculiarities are found in them as in the usual Hebrew edition. Among other editions we have the Vulgate, which coincides with the Latin translation of Jerome, whose Hebrew source corresponds in the main points, though not everywhere (e.g. in the names of the Deity), with the Massoretic Hebrew text.¹ We have, also, the old Syriac translation, whose Hebrew source shows more deviation from the other Hebrew text than the Vulgate does.

We have, moreover, the Greek translation called the Septuagint, with its contributions by Origen, Lucian, and Hesychius, whereby the existence of four other valuable Hebrew texts is proved. Then we have fragments from other Greek translators — Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, whose Hebrew sources here again deviate in different places from the present Hebrew. Finally, there is the Hebrew text of the Samaritans, with its deviations. Thus we see a scientific inquiry has to deal with more than ten different textual editions of Genesis of which traces are found occasionally in extant Hebrew MSS. These may, however, all claim to be heard as to the origin of the Pentateuch; for who will guarantee that one of the most recent texts — the Massoretic — has preserved the correct

¹ See the valuable remarks of Wiener, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January, April, and October, 1910.

information? Is it not also improbable that we can from this text best recognize the alleged source material?

A few examples may serve to illustrate what as history the text of the Mosaic writings has back of it. What is the name of the first-born son of Jacob? We have all known him by the name of "Ruben." Thus he is called in the present Hebrew text. In addition to this form there appears in many Greek MSS. "Rubem," "Rubim," or "Rubeim," that is, a form in *m*. This form is used by the church fathers Origen and Chrysostom. But the Syriac translation of Genesis, the Jewish author Josephus, and an Ethiopic MS. call him "Rubel," and that seems to be the oldest form of the name.

Again, what is the name of the mountain upon which the Law was delivered to Moses? The Greek translation gives "Sina" and not "Sinai." What is the original order of sequence of the Ten Commandments? To the laity, of course, it is "Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt not steal." We need go no farther than the New Testament to find in various places a different order of sequence, which order is also found in the Septuagint, viz. adultery, murder, theft. This order is also cited by the Jew Philo. Codex B, regarded by many as the best MS. of the Septuagint, has, along with other MSS., a different order of sequence, viz. adultery, theft, murder.

Finally, how many sons had Joseph? Every one will answer according to Genesis xlv. 27, "Two, Ephraim and Manasseh." But Genesis xlviii. 6 presupposes a greater number; and, in fact, in the Greek translation of xlv. 27 the number of Joseph's sons is given as nine, not as two. The Hebrew source of the Septuagint corresponds in meaning with the present Hebrew text of Genesis xlviii. 6.

These few examples show how familiar facts get an entirely different meaning when one takes into account all the available materials, and not merely the usual Hebrew text. Is it not then the simple duty of every scientific investigator of the Old Testament to search all available texts in order to distinguish the sources of the five books of Moses? To what results careful investigation of this kind will ultimately lead is shown in my "Textkritische Materialien."

Having, however, established the oldest available text, we are still not in a position to recognize the authoritative sources of Genesis. We still have to consider that the five books of Moses were used in worship in the synagogue. Books, however, which are read in worship, contain not merely the text, but also directions for the reader, chapter headings, indexes, recapitulations, etc. Before me lies an old German Bible (Sulzbach, 1827). I open to Genesis xxviii., and find there this superscription: "Jacob flees towards Haran, sees the ladder to heaven and receives like his fathers the great promises." Now I assume that all was written without interruptions and remarks upon verses, as was customary in the old MSS. Then we shall have here a text with repetitions in which Jacob flees, before verse 1, to Haran, sees the ladder to heaven, and receives the great promises, all of which is told again in detail in verses 10, 11, 12, and 13 ff. Besides this we are reminded in these words, before verse 1, of something which has been already reported concerning the promises which the fathers have received. He who does not know that the words before verse 1 are a superscription can apparently find there traces of a special written source which would have its continuation in the superscription of chapter xxix.: "Jacob serves Laban and receives his two daughters in marriage. His four sons by Leah." Such superscriptions may be recognized by this: they

contain nothing new so far as content is concerned, but point to that which is to happen, and now and then cast a retrospect upon what has already been related. Would it be strange if something similar to what occurs in the present Pentateuch were found in the copy of the Holy Scriptures designed for reading in the synagogues? Let us see. Genesis v. 1-2 gives this impression. It is a recapitulation of chapter i. Genesis vi. 9-12 repeats the contents of Genesis v. 32-vi. 8. Genesis xii. 4 is the superscription to what follows. The same is true, e.g., in xvi. 1-3; xxi. 1a; xxv. 19-20; xxx. 22; xxxi. 3, etc. All these references which in their present arrangement present distracting repetitions give the impression of superscriptions and recapitulations. Most of them belong to the document P. And the remarkable fact is that they occur in exactly those places where the old paragraphs or sections of the synagogue readings begin or end. For particulars, see my "Textkritische Materialien."

The Old Testament critics are right in that they ascribe a recent origin to these passages of P, but they are in error in so far as they consider P an independent writing and anything more than an explanatory aid in conducting worship. They are also in error in holding that the whole of P in Genesis is post-exilic; for, e.g., Genesis xvii. and xxiii. belong to the old history, and they have not noticed that there are many late additions and so-called glosses in the P writings which were not found in the Hebrew source of the Septuagint.¹

When we have purged the texts of glosses and of the supplements designed for use in worship, the question arises, whether traces of perhaps still older editions are to be found. Not until this problem is solved are we able to approach a final working out of the ultimate sources.

¹ See Wiener, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April and October, 1910, and my *Textkritische Materialien*.

The purpose of this short sketch is to show that we are not at the end of Pentateuchal criticism, but at its beginning. As in New Testament criticism, so here, a backward movement has set in, and it is possible that again in the future a greater portion of the Pentateuch than formerly will be ascribed to the time of Moses or to the oldest times of Israel.