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THE
CHURCHMAN

AUGUST, 1892.

ART. I.—THE NEW CRITICISM.¹

I MUST, in the first instance, express my sense of the kindness and confidence to which I owe the invitation to read a paper before this conference on the important subject of recent Biblical criticism. I had rather, indeed, have listened to someone better qualified by special learning, and with the advantage of more time than I can command for such a controversy; but I could not refuse a request made to me on behalf of so important a body of clergymen and laymen to offer them such suggestions as I may be able upon a question which is certainly of vital importance, and which no clergyman can any longer disregard. Until very lately the mass of the clergy and laity had no immediate occasion to be disturbed on the subject of Old Testament criticism. It was well known that revolutionary theories were prevalent in Germany, and were represented in this country by the same section of scholars and writers who were disposed towards rationalistic criticism of the New Testament. But such theories respecting the Old Testament were regarded as of no greater consequence than those relating to the New, which had been, in the general judgment of the English Church, clerical and lay, so decisively refuted. Just as the great mass of English scholars were undisturbed by the revolutionary movement in New Testament criticism connected with the name of Baur, almost until that movement had run its course, so they acquiesced in the old belief respecting the Old Testament, with a similar confidence that the revolutionary theories of some German scholars on that subject, after running their course, would leave the old beliefs in the main, not merely undisproved, but confirmed. But the situation has been gravely altered by the sudden adhesion to

¹ Read before a society of clergymen.

the main contentions of the predominant school of German critics, within the last few years, of persons in authoritative positions in our Church. When it is maintained in a series of Bampton Lectures that there are no Davidic psalms in the Psalter; when another Bampton lecturer, representing some of the most earnest Christian thought of Oxford, calls on us to be prepared to accept some of the most characteristic contentions of German criticism on the Old Testament; when the successor of Dr. Pusey at Oxford publishes an introduction to the literature of the Testament, in which he maintains positions as unquestionable which Dr. Pusey devoted his whole learning and his best energies to refute; when, finally, the Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge, though speaking in more moderate tones, practically surrenders the traditional position, and tells us we need not be disturbed, even if we should have to believe that what we once supposed to be literal history in the Old Testament is but "truth embodied in a tale"—when the matter has reached this pass, it is evident that the struggle which has been in progress in Germany has come closely home to us, and that we can no longer afford to rely on the weight of authority within our own Church. When, above all, the matter has gone so far that it has become a question for newspaper discussion whether, not merely the Apostles, but our Lord Himself, could have spoken and taught on an erroneous assumption respecting the origin of the Old Testament books, it becomes obvious that the central principles of our faith are, at least in some degree, involved in the controversy. It is clearly a duty of thoughtful men in such circumstances to consider the position of the question, and to be prepared, according to St. Peter's injunction, "to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason" of the hope and belief which is in us on this great subject. It is impossible for everyone, or for many persons, to enter into the details of the controversy; but it is of the more importance that its cardinal points should be clearly apprehended, and the principles distinctly recognised on which we should proceed in forming our judgment on the subject. In a single paper this is, of course, all that can be attempted, and my endeavour will be only to offer you a few suggestions for this purpose.

Now, the first thing it is imperative to recognise for a satisfactory treatment of the subject is that there should be no question of the right of criticism to discuss the matters at issue, or, rather, that it is at once our duty and our privilege to listen impartially to all the arguments which can be adduced upon it. We should put ourselves entirely in the wrong if we indulged the slightest suspicion or jealousy of critical in-

quiries, as such, in the matter. We must never forget the great saying of Butler at the conclusion of the fifth chapter of his second part: "Let reason be kept to; and if any part of the Scripture account of the redemption of the world by Christ can be shown to be really contrary to it, let the Scripture, in the name of God, be given up." We base our belief in the Scriptures and our allegiance to Christ upon their claims on our conscience and our reason, and that conscience and that reason we must follow wherever they lead us. The representatives of rationalistic views are always endeavouring to put us in the wrong on this point. They speak of themselves and their allies as "the critics," and they treat those who adhere to the old views as opponents of criticism in general. Let us take care that we allow no justification for such reproaches. The difference between ourselves and them is not that they are critics and we are blind believers, but that they are unsound critics and we are sound ones. Our whole contention is that their arguments will not bear the test of wise and thorough investigation; that they are often marked by lack of common-sense, by a failure of spiritual insight, and by an arbitrary temper; and we maintain that the most thorough investigation, if accompanied by that sound thought and historic sense which are essential to a satisfactory judgment, will justify in the main the old views. I could not say we start without prejudice, for it is doubtful whether anyone can start without some prejudice in investigating matters of such traditional, as well as profound, interest; and certainly the critics, to whom the present position of Old Testament criticism is due, started with an intense prejudice against the old beliefs—a prejudice which is expressly avowed at the outset of their investigations, and which biasses their judgment all through. A Christian, I venture to say, ought to have a prejudice in favour of the belief of the Christian Church from its very commencement; but we, none the less, fully acknowledge that, in exercising our critical judgment, we are bound to put all such prejudices aside, just as a jury are required by a judge at the outset of their deliberations in an important trial to dismiss from their minds any presumptions they may have formed before they came into court. We are as capable of doing this on our side as the rationalists are on the other, and no more can be asked of us or of anyone.

But at the same time it is idle to shut our eyes to the immense issues which are involved in the controversy. Nothing is to be gained by trying to persuade ourselves, as is done by some earnest representatives of the new views, that no serious consequences to Christianity would come from their adoption. If that which purports to be literal history in the Old Testament be

not history at all, but legends or traditions worked up or worked over; if the Pentateuch alleges solemn events to have occurred which did not really occur; if the writers of the Scriptures state that God gave revelations which He never did give; if a book to which our Lord appeals as containing solemn declarations of God's will be really a fictitious representation designed to persuade the Jewish people at the time of Josiah or Manasseh that Moses prescribed ordinances which he never did prescribe—then it is folly for us to disguise from ourselves the fact that the authority of a great part of the Bible is gone, and that, for practical purposes, the authority of the Apostles, if not that of our Lord, is grievously shaken. It is quite clear that if the contentions, for instance, of Professor Driver be true, no plain man can read the Old Testament narratives with any confidence that he is reading a trustworthy statement of matters of fact. The Pentateuch has, in point of fact, produced the impression upon the whole Jewish and the whole Christian Church, since the days of Ezra at least, that Moses delivered the legislation therein contained; but this impression, which it not only has, in fact, produced, but which it was admittedly intended to produce, is, we are told, an erroneous one. Moses, it is said, probably laid the basis of the legislation, but the repeated statements that "the Lord said" so and so "unto Moses and Aaron," in the Book of Numbers for instance, are simply not true. The Lord never did say those things to Moses and Aaron, and the person who wrote the book represented that he did so for the purpose of producing an impression which is not a true, or, as the favourite phrase runs, a "historical" one. How can we trust a book which is undermined at every point by this sort of suspicion? We are not only justified, but compelled, by such considerations, to examine these alleged critical results with the utmost stringency before we admit them. Apart altogether from questions of inspiration, there is a strong presumption in favour of the credibility of a book which has been believed to tell a true story from the first moment when it is known to have existed, and the uniform belief of the Christian and the Jewish Church has similarly a right to be presumed true until the contrary has been strictly demonstrated. A great mistake is, I apprehend, made, though with the best intentions, by some who would minimise the consequences of this criticism. The enemies of the Christian faith will not minimise them, and weapons of the most formidable character are placed in their hands by such admissions. I do not wish to show how such weapons might be employed, but it is enough to suggest what use an opponent of the Gospel might make of the admission, by authoritative English

scholars, that the belief of the whole Jewish and Christian Church respecting the origin and authenticity of their sacred Scriptures has been founded on an illusion. That such an allegation could be without its effect on the authority of a more sacred Name is, I fear, impossible.

From this point of view I would suggest that we have a right to lay far more stress than is often done on the weight of the argument from tradition. It is admitted by the rationalistic critics that there is no exception to the belief, from the earliest times to which unquestionable records reach, that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch; and the probable truth of this belief has of late years become far stronger, as it is now established that the art of writing was well advanced before the time of Moses, and that he did write something. Dr. Driver showed a true apprehension of the starting-point of such inquiries when he commenced by boldly maintaining that "on the authorship of the Books of the Old Testament, as on the completion of the Canon of the Old Testament, the Jews possess no *tradition* worthy of real credence or regard, but only vague and uncertain reminiscences, intermingled often with idle speculations" (p. xxvii.). It may, I think, fairly be regarded as evidence of a lack of impartiality in his investigations, that, in his first edition, in discussing this question, he made no mention whatever of the well-known statement of Josephus on the subject. Josephus states expressly that the Jews had the most fixed and trustworthy traditions on the matter; and it was hardly dealing with the question fairly to leave out of consideration entirely so positive and remarkable a testimony. In later editions Dr. Driver has introduced some observations on Josephus, and acknowledged that he "bears witness, probably, to an opinion more or less current at the time." We are justified in concluding, therefore, that, in his own mind, Dr. Driver attached no weight either to the testimony of the important Jewish writer whom he thus entirely disregarded, or to the "opinion more or less current" among learned Jews in the first century of our era. But it would seem that any sober historical criticism would start from the supposition that this belief is in possession of the ground, and should at least be given the benefit of the doubt.

There is one other presumption which Dr. Driver puts forward on which we are justified in making a strong remonstrance. While making every allowance for what he says in his preface as to the impossibility of his entering into polemical discussion, we have some reason, I think, for resenting the somewhat arrogant tone in which, after the manner of the German critics whose views he upholds, he magisterially pro-

nounces that the arguments of conservative critics are untenable. The tone of his language (p. xix.) to Mr. Girdlestone is somewhat unusual, and it is hardly fair to students to put aside the contention of an experienced scholar like Dr. Green, the chairman of the Old Testament Revision Company in America, with the mere remark (p. 26) that his explanation "does not satisfy the requirements of the case." But, in particular, there is one sentence in Dr. Driver's preface which it is important to meet with a strong contradiction. He says (p. xv.): "Nor can it be doubted that the same conclusions upon any neutral field of investigation would have been accepted without hesitation by all conversant with the subject; they are only opposed in the present instance by some theologians because they are supposed to conflict with the requirements of the Christian faith." Now, one instance to the contrary is more than sufficient. I mean the example of the late Dean Milman. He was eminently competent to form an opinion on the main points at issue; he was acquainted with the whole field of German learning on the subject, down to the time of Ewald in Germany and of Renan in France; and he says expressly, in treating of the date and authenticity of the Book of Deuteronomy, what, for my part, I could not say, that he "holds such questions to be entirely irrelevant to the truth of our religion" ("History of the Jews," 4th edition, 1866, p. 208). Yet what was his conclusion with respect to that crucial question? He unhesitatingly assigned Deuteronomy to Moses, who, he says (p. 207), "recapitulated and consolidated in one brief code, the Book of Deuteronomy, the whole Law, in some degree modified and adapted to the future circumstances of the republic." In a note he adds: "In assigning this antiquity to the Book of Deuteronomy, I run directly counter to almost the whole critical school; I have re-examined the question, I trust dispassionately (I hold such questions to be entirely irrelevant to the truth of our religion), and adhere to my conclusion." "Read the Book of Deuteronomy," he says, "and fairly estimate the difficulties which occur—and that there are difficulties I acknowledge—such as the appointment at this time of Ebal and Gerizim as the scene of the rehearsal of the law by Moses or a writer on the other side of Jordan (the prophetic power of Moses is excluded from such an argument), though one cannot suppose Moses or the Israelites at that time unacquainted with the main features, the general topography, of Cis-Jordanic Palestine. Then read it again, and endeavour to assign it to any other period in the Jewish annals, and judge whether difficulties do not accumulate twenty-fold. In this case, how would the signs of that period have inevitably appeared—anachronisms, a later

tone of thought, of incident, of manners! Even on this special point, at what period would Ebal and Gerizim have been chosen as the two equal antagonistic centres of Jewish reverence and sanctity? If it is a fiction, it is certainly a most felicitous fiction. . . . What I contend for," he concludes, "is not the absolute, unaltered, unmodified integrity of the text, but what I may call the substantial antiquity." So, again, with respect to the Pentateuch, as a whole, he says in his valuable preface (p. xxvii.): "There are two theories between which range all the conclusions of what may be called the critical school: 1. That the Pentateuch in its present form is of very late date—the reign of Hezekiah, Josiah, Manasseh, or even subsequent to these. From what materials it was formed, and on the antiquity of those materials, opinions vary infinitely. 2. That the Pentateuch, even in its present form, is of very high antiquity, as high as the time of Moses; but that it has undergone many interpolations, some additions, and much modification, extending to the language, in successive ages. "If I am to choose," he concludes, "I am most decidedly for the second. For one passage which betrays a later writer or compiler, there are twenty which it seems, in my judgment, that no compiler at any of the designated periods could or would have imagined or invented, or even introduced. The whole is unquestionably ancient (I speak not of the authorship), only particular and separable passages being of later origin."

So, again, of the law as a whole he says (p. 130): "To what other period," than that of Moses, "can the Hebrew constitution be assigned? To that of the Judges?—a time of anarchy, warfare, or servitude! To that of the Kings? when the republic had undergone a total change! To any time after Jerusalem became a metropolis? when the holy city, the pride and glory of the nation, is not even alluded to in the whole law! After the building of the temple? when it is equally silent as to any settled and durable edifice! After the separation of the kingdoms? when the close bond of brotherhood had given place to implacable hostility! Under Hilkiah? under Ezra? when a great number of the statutes had become a dead letter!" All such suggestions he dismisses as impracticable. "I can have no doubt," he concludes, "that the statute-book of Moses, with all his particular enactments, still exists, and that it recites them in the same order, if it may be called order, in which they were promulgated."

These conclusions of so unprejudiced a scholar and so experienced a historian as Dean Milman are alone sufficient to rebut so wholesale a disparagement of all conservative criticism as has just been quoted from Dr. Driver; and they are of the greatest value in themselves. No man need fear the

reproach of theological prejudice, or of incapacity for the due appreciation of criticism, who is content to abide by the conclusions to which so great a historical scholar deliberately and maturely adhered; and few books better deserve fresh study in the present crisis of this controversy than the fourth and last edition of his "History of the Jews," from which I have been quoting.

But still it may be said that it is a rash thing for those who are not professed Hebrew scholars to set themselves in opposition to the combined authority of learned professors at Oxford and Cambridge and of most Hebrew scholars abroad. But on this point let it be remembered, in the first place, that it is not quite correct to speak, as is sometimes done, of this criticism as the "new criticism." It goes back, even in its present form, to about fifty years; and the scholars at Oxford and Cambridge who preceded the present younger race of professors were perfectly familiar with the main contentions of the critical school. Canon Cook, for instance, the editor of the "Speaker's Commentary," was perfectly and profoundly familiar with the whole course of German criticism, from the days when, as a young man, he attended Niebuhr's lectures at Bonn, to the time when he issued the last volume of his Commentary, only ten years ago. All that is really new is the more extreme form which the rationalistic theories have now generally assumed; but the main element in them—the division of the Pentateuch into distinct documents—was practically completed, and even the germs of the new theory itself were laid, in works published more than a generation ago. In the next place, it is to be remembered that there are very able Hebrew scholars who resist the new views. Not to mention living English scholars, it is enough to mention Dr. Green, already referred to, who is contending, step by step, in the American journal *Hebraica*, against what he calls "the Divisive hypothesis," and whose able little book on the Jewish feasts, published by Nisbet, attacks, and in my judgment defeats, the Wellhausen theory on a cardinal point, and affords a very convenient general view of the whole controversy. His previous volume also, on "Moses and the Prophets," is an able refutation of the views of the new school as represented by Dr. Robertson Smith. The late Dr. Edersheim, again, was one of the most learned and able of the Hebrew scholars of our day; and his Warburton Lectures, preached about ten years ago at Lincoln's Inn, offer a decided opposition to the new views. Confessedly, moreover, the question is not one of accuracies of Hebrew scholarship. It is admitted that you cannot at present decide the questions at issue as you might decide the date of an English book—by mere characteristics of language. The critics do not rely on such characteristics,

though it may be that in the future they will be found of more importance in the matter than is at present generally supposed, and of a tendency not now expected. But at present, at all events, the question turns on points of evidence open to general apprehension, on plain grounds of historical judgment and common-sense.

But, in the third place, it may be useful to remember that the only point in which the critics may be said to be fairly agreed—the existence of different sources for the Pentateuch—is one which in no way involves a decision as to the date of those documents. I have looked with especial care into the arguments of recent critics on this point, and the grounds which they allege are such as are open entirely to common judgment, and are wholly indecisive. Dr. Driver, for instance, says (p. 117) with respect to the "Prophetical Narrative," J E, that "The *terminus a quo* is more difficult to fix with confidence; in fact, conclusive criteria fail us. We can only argue upon grounds of probability derived from our view of the progress of the art of writing, or of literary composition, or of the rise and growth of the prophetic tone and feeling in ancient Israel, or of the period at which the traditions contained in the narratives might have taken shape, or of the probability that they would have been written down before the impetus given to culture by the monarchy had taken effect, and similar considerations, for estimating most of which, though plausible arguments, on one side or the other, may be advanced, a standard on which we can confidently rely scarcely admits of being fixed. Nor does the language of J and E bring us to any more definite conclusion. Both belong to the golden age of Hebrew literature. They resemble the best parts of Judges and Samuel (much of which cannot be greatly later than David's own time); but whether they are actually earlier or later than these, the language and style do not enable us to say. . . . All things considered, a date in the early centuries of the monarchy would seem not to be unsuitable, both for J and for E; but it must remain an open question whether both may not in reality be earlier." Even assuming, therefore, the existence of the alleged documents, the critics can allege no conclusive criteria to show that they are not of very early date.

It seems, indeed, very difficult to believe that the elaborate literary process assumed by Dr. Driver and the Continental school of critics is a possible one. To produce such an elaborate mosaic as they represent the Pentateuch to be—with half-verses pieced in amidst a variety of documents—would be a difficult task even at the present day, with the aid of modern paste and scissors. But to suppose that in these days a writer or compiler sat with half a dozen documents before

him, and took a bit from one and a bit from another, seems to me hardly conceivable. Moreover, the necessities of the hypothesis seem to lead to as many difficulties, if not absurdities, as the old Ptolemaic hypothesis of "cycle and epicycle, orb in orb," in relation to the heavenly bodies. One illustration may suffice. Within the last few weeks a very convenient introduction to the Old Testament, from the point of view of the rationalistic school, has been published by Dr. Cornill, of Königsberg, in a standard series of theological handbooks, and has been welcomed by the chief journals of that school as an able and trustworthy account of the present state of the new criticism; and I would beg you to notice what it says respecting that document P, which Dr. Driver tells us is so clearly to be distinguished from the rest. Dr. Cornill, too, says (p. 56) that "P is sharply and clearly distinguishable from all other sources. In most cases there can be scarcely any serious doubt of what belongs to it. Style and mode of expression, language and idea, are everywhere so much the same that we receive the impression of a complete unity." "But," he goes on, "upon more accurate observation, it would appear that what we have to deal with is only a unity of spirit, not a literary unity. It is precisely the history of the origin of P which is most peculiarly complicated. The penetrating investigations of Wellhausen and Kuenen have shown that on the basis of old priestly records (called P₁ by Kuenen) a larger and connected priestly document, partly of narrative and partly of legislative contents, was composed, which forms the kernel and skeleton of P, and may be called P₂. Around this kernel later additions have then gathered and grown, partly supplementing P₂, and partly correcting it; and for these later and latest portions I would propose," says Dr. Cornill, "the general designation of P_x; since the division into P₃, P₄, P₅, etc., is scarcely practicable." I venture to think that when we have got to P_x, this Ptolemaic literary theory must be breaking down under its own complexity, and is reduced by its own necessities to an absurdity. At all events, when we reach such a point we may safely say, with Dean Milman (p. xxiii.), "that the Hebrew records, especially the books of Moses, may have been compiled from various documents, and it may be at an uncertain time, all this is assuredly a legitimate subject of inquiry. There may be some certain discernible marks and signs of difference in age and authorship. But that any critical microscope, in the nineteenth century, can be so exquisite and so powerful as to dissect the whole with perfect nicety, to decompose it, and assign each separate paragraph to its special origin in three, four or five, or more independent documents, each of which has contributed its

part, this seems to me a task which no mastery of the Hebrew language, with all its kindred tongues, no discernment, however fine and discriminating, can achieve." "There seems to me," he says elsewhere (p. 132), "a fatal fallacy in the ground-work of much of the argument of the critical school. Their minute inferences, and conclusions drawn from slight premises, seem to presuppose an integrity and perfect accuracy in the existing text, not in itself probable, and certainly utterly inconsistent with the general principles of their criticism. They are in this respect, in this alone, almost at one with the most rigid adherent of verbal inspiration."

But on this whole question of the division of the Pentateuch into different sources, there is one observation on which great stress may, I think, with advantage be laid. It is that we are on wholly different grounds when dealing with the Book of Genesis and with the subsequent books. The whole of the history in the Book of Genesis is long anterior to Moses; but the history from the Book of Exodus onwards is contemporary with him. Now, nothing would be more in conformity with the example of other books of the Bible, such as the latter books of Jewish history or the preface to St. Luke's Gospel, than that for the history before his own time Moses should have used ancient documents, under the guidance of what the lamented Dr. Liddon in one of his last sermons called "the inspiration of selection." There can, accordingly, be no doubt that in the Book of Genesis we have literary monuments of far-distant ages, as imperishable as the bricks and other stone monuments of ancient Assyria now in the British Museum. But when we come to the time of Moses himself, we are confronted with the fact that he is expressly stated to have written parts of the Pentateuch; and if the controversy be confined to these later books, we shall be on much surer ground in defending his authorship, his substantial authorship, of the rest. Even here, what can be more probable than that priestly hands wrote parts of the books under his direction, and that consequently variations of style may be detected from point to point. But any of the other theories seems to involve nothing less than deliberate fraud, and, as Dean Milman says, substitutes twenty difficulties for one which is presented by the old belief.

I cannot trespass further on your time; but I trust that these considerations afford good ground for believing that the issue of the present attack on the substantial unity, authenticity and authority of the Pentateuch will meet the same fate as that of the Tübingen School on the New Testament. The critics who are now so confident show conspicuous marks of prejudice and of a lack of common-sense; while on the other side we

have the unanimous tradition of the most tenacious nation on the face of the earth, and of the uniform conviction of the Christian Church down to the present century. There is thus no reason at present for so much as presuming to touch those questions which lie within the very citadel of the Christian faith, respecting the authority of our Lord and that of His Apostles. When, if ever, the belief of centuries has been clearly overthrown, we might then be compelled, with deep and painful anxiety, to approach such inquiries. But for the present we are fully justified in maintaining that the old faith respecting the Jewish Scriptures is in possession of the ground, and that the plain natural interpretation of our Lord's language respecting them corresponds to the soundest conclusions of critical learning.

HENRY WACE.



ART. II.—CLERICAL LIFE IN IRELAND.

IT is not more than some sixty years since a clergyman and an officer fought a duel on the island of Innisfallen, in Killarney Lakes. The clergyman had given unintentional offence to the man of war, one of the garrison of the Castle of Ross. A challenge followed. The parties met on the lonely island. The officer fired his pistol first, and without effect, whereon the clergyman fired his pistol in the air, advanced and shook hands, and the affair was happily over.

The same "Parson D.," a well-known Kerry rector, happened to be in Dublin when the famous duel was arranged between O'Connell, who was a native of the same county, and D'Esterre. The parson was a young man then, and failing to obtain a seat in the coach which plied between Dublin and the Curragh, where the duel was to be fought, he travelled the whole way standing on the step of the coach-door, and was in time to see the fatal shot fired which slew D'Esterre. His emotion was so great at the sight of the spectacle that he flung his hat in the air, shouting, "Hurrah for the Kerry man!"

Curious stories are told of the same "Parson D." He is said once to have borrowed a congregation of the Roman priest to meet the Bishop of the diocese, who had come to preach in his church. The two clergymen were on good terms, too good, indeed, for the Church clergyman had allowed many of his flock to stray to the Roman fold u rebuked. Both were great hunting men, and the priest did not wish to spoil sport, so when a message came from the Protestant rector that the Bishop was coming, and he wished to show him a good congre-