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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE
CHURCHMAN

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ART. I.—THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH.

No. XII.

I HAVE been asked why I call the criticism, the methods of which it is my object to call in question, *German* criticism, and I have been reminded that all German criticism is not of that type. I gladly admit the fact. Yet, so far as Germans follow the lines of the criticism of other nations, their criticism is not German, but cosmopolitan. But the particular criticism of which I speak had its origin in Germany so called, and is still more (P) closely identified with Germany than with any other country. I call it German criticism, not because all Germans adopt it, but because it is of German origin.

Perhaps the best way of making my readers understand the critical analysis of chapters xii.-xvi., in reference to the Priestly Code, to which my remarks chiefly apply, will be to transcribe the portions of the supposed priestly narrative contained in those chapters. It has already been stated that chap. xi. 10-27, 31, 32; xii. 4, 5, are said to be parts of that narrative. It brings "Abram" and Lot from Haran into Canaan, but, as we have seen, it makes no mention of the death of Lot's father Haran. "And they (*i.e.*, Abram and Lot) went forth," it continues (xii. 5), "to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came. And the land was not able to bear them that they might dwell together; for their substance was great (xiii. 6). And they separated themselves the one from the other; Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain (xiii. 11*b*, 12). And¹ Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no

¹ The translation "now" of A.V. is a liberty with the original, which is simply "and."

children (xvi. 1a). And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan,¹ and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife (xvi. 3). And Hagar bare Abram a son, and Abram called the name of his son which Hagar bare, Ishmael. And Abram was fourscore and six years old when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram" (xvi. 15, 16). This brief abstract is immediately followed by chap. xvii., which is *all* attributed to the priestly historian; so that, in the place of the scraps of P, so meagrely inserted in the previous chapters into a narrative derived, as we are told, from very various sources, we get a consecutive passage of twenty-nine verses which entirely belongs to P. It has not been made quite clear why P, who has hitherto been so unreasonably curt in his account of the Father of the Faithful, should now suddenly launch out into considerable detail. Were we to give P, as disentangled by the critics, entirely by itself, the effect would be seen to be a little *bizarre*.

To chap. xvii. we shall presently return. But let us first recall a few facts and restate one or two principles. The criticism of the matter of the Old Testament, we must bear in mind, is what is termed the Higher, as opposed to the criticism of the text, which is called the Lower Criticism. Now, the narrative of the Priestly Code, or P, was first supposed to be the earliest narrative, which, like the Saxon Chronicle, was a mere skeleton or framework, afterwards amplified into the fuller details we find in our present books. The later, or "literary" criticism, has "proved" that instead of being the earliest, the meagre narrative of the priestly writer is the latest of the sources of the Pentateuch as we now have it. But if the criticism of this volume is to be of a "High" order—in fact, if it is to be seriously regarded as "Higher Criticism" at all—it must be ready to solve the problems its own conclusions suggest. It is not sufficient to tell us on any point that it is so: the Higher Criticism must face the problems *why* and *how* it is so. And if critics of the Wellhausen school are unable to do this—and as yet they have not even attempted to do it—the genuine Higher Criticism must reject their attempts at it as of a very low order indeed. The question, then, that a genuine critic will ask, before

¹ The curiously summary manner in which this "Priestly narrative" (the critics tell us this is the whole of it) tells the history of the first ten years of Abraham's sojourn in Palestine, must strike everyone. Professor Driver's explanation is that "his aim is to give a *systematic* view, from a priestly standpoint, of the origin and chief institutions of the Jewish Israelitish theocracy. For this purpose, an *abstract* of the history is sufficient."

pronouncing a final conclusion to have been reached, is something of this kind. First of all, how came such a brief, unsatisfactory, dry, incomplete summary of Israelite history as the Priestly Code to have attracted any attention at all, in an age of inquiry and final selection of documents, when far superior histories were to be had? Surely the tendency of an age which was solicitous about the transmission of its history would have been to recur (1) to the best and (2) to the fullest and most picturesque statements of events, and not to trouble itself with dry summaries of a comparatively recent date. Next, the Priestly historian had presumably the histories of J and E, or at least the fused narrative of the two, before him. If so, (1) how do we know that his was an independent history at all, or that it was anything but an abbreviation of JE? and (2) if he did *not* abbreviate JE, or J and E, *why* did he not do so, and why did he follow other documents? Thirdly, why did the redactor, with the older and fuller narratives of J and E before him, suddenly leave them, and insert scraps of a slighter, a later, and a less trustworthy account?¹ These questions have been asked before, but I must continually remind my readers that no historic or literary criticism can really be of a high type which does not grapple in a satisfactory fashion with such difficulties as these. The question before us is the sources of the present books. It is absurd to pretend that those sources have been correctly indicated until we have defined, not only the contents, but the aims, the processes, and the position of their authors. Especially do we need some guide to the personality, the methods, and the objects of the post-exilic redactor. If the redactor's aim was identical with that of P, why did he run the risk of utterly spoiling P's "systematic view" by insertions from JE? If not, what *was* he aiming at?

Next, the Priestly narrative, if, as is pretended, we have the

¹ It is true that the redactor is credited with a desire to suppress all Israelite history but that which bore on the unique relations between Jehovah and the Jews. But if this were also P's design, why was it carried out in so unattractive a fashion? Professor Driver's explanation of this difficulty has been given. The institution of circumcision (ch. xvii.) may be, as Professor Driver contends, an "important epoch." But surely it could have been emphasized far better in P's usual style than by all the unnecessary biographical detail in that chapter. And why are important sacrificial details, illustrating Abraham's piety and the form of its expression, ascribed to JE rather than P? See, for instance, ch. xv. 9-18. At least, Professor Driver's theory in no way explains the redactor's insertion of scraps from P into the midst of another narrative. No doubt such insertions are frequent among historians when they find an interesting or picturesque detail in one of their sources which is absent from another. But our redactor's insertions are without either rhyme or reason.

whole of it, must have been a very extraordinary document, as far as form is concerned. If my readers will turn to what we are told is the narrative of P, as I have given it above, he will find the remarkable assertion that the *land of Canaan was not large enough to maintain Abram and Lot!* As the statement stands in our present narrative, it is intelligible enough, for the word "land" refers to the particular part of Canaan in which Abram and Lot attempted to settle. But in the previous verse of P (xii. 5), as well as in that which follows (xiii. 12), the word is used of the "land" of Canaan. And therefore in chap. xiii. 6 it must have the same meaning, unless we have not *the whole* of P here, which is contrary to the hypothesis. Besides, Abraham is said in chap. xiii. 12 to have selected the land of Canaan and Lot to have departed from it. Obviously, from the narrative of P as it stands, the land of Canaan was too small to contain Abraham and Lot.¹ Here, then, once more, we have a statement which is perfectly natural and rational in its present context, but which becomes absolute nonsense when detached from it in accordance with the views of critics of the German school. Then the statement that "Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children," is rather oddly tacked on to the preceding verse, which tells us where Lot sojourned. The narrative here is singularly bald and abrupt, when compared with chaps. xvi. 15—xvii. 27, the whole of which is ascribed to P, but which displays no such abruptness and lack of form and finish as that which has been transcribed above. A competent literary critic, when comparing the account I have extracted from P with chaps. xvi. 15—xvii. 27, would have no hesitation, from the difference in style, in asserting the two to be by altogether different hands. There is nothing in common between the quaint, jerky fragment I have given above and the free and flowing, and in parts² striking and picturesque account in chap. xvii. I do not despair of seeing the German school compelled to assign some parts at least of Gen. xvii. to JE. But whether destiny will drive them to this surrender or not, there is certainly a greater divergence in style between different parts of P than between that author and the rest of the Pentateuch.

We proceed to remark that the extract from P in chap. xvi. 1 is in close connection with the rest of this section (chaps. xv.-xxi.), which relates to Abram's childlessness, the giving of Hagar to him as a wife by Sarai, and the subsequent promise and birth of Isaac.³ A rational critic might see some

¹ If Abraham's possessions and his servants were so many, as this implies, why should he have been unable, by the way, to defeat the five kings?

² See vers. 17-19.

³ Chapters xviii.-xx. are a separate episode.

traces of literary art in the introduction of the subject in chap. xv. with Abram's lament that he is childless, and Eliezer of Damascus his only heir. If the analysis of the modern critical school is correct, we are indebted to the redactor for this dramatic and skilful use of his authorities. It is not quite in accordance with all we are told of him. But then the inconsistencies of the narrative are fully paralleled by the inconsistencies of the critics and the far greater inconsistencies of the results they have achieved. So we shall perhaps ultimately find that the redactor, though a mere compiler (who sometimes, however, re-wrote his authorities), was, in spite of his lapses and general clumsiness, an author of the most finished dramatic type. We may further observe that the narrative of chap. xv., though it is most exquisitely and picturesquely told, is the most comical mosaic ever seen in print. According to Kautzsch and Socin, verses 1-3 are from JE as fused, ver. 4 from J, ver. 5 from E, ver. 6 from J, verses 7, 8 by the redactor himself, verses 9-11 from J, verses 12-16 by the redactor, verses 17, 18 from J, and verses 19-21 by the redactor again, though these last verses are of a kind which are generally ascribed to P. The preternatural ingenuity which has faultlessly unravelled this extraordinary tangle of extracts is of course beyond all praise. And, once more, we have the redactor in an altogether new character. We have hitherto seen him, sometimes in his miraculously acute, and sometimes in his normally clumsy and inconsequent vein. Here, however, we have him posing before us as the incomparable artist who can so arrange the various minute pieces of his mosaic as to produce the most striking literary effects.

I proceed to a more detailed analysis of the language of P in chap. xvi. And we may first remark how the passages assigned to JE and P respectively *fit into* each other.¹ For the first words of the passage assigned to JE, "and *she* had a handmaid," requires some antecedent passage very similar to 1a (P). It is not, therefore, particularly clear, since *no part* of chap. xv. is supposed to be taken from P, why the redactor resorted to him here, when he must have had something precisely equivalent in the author whom he was previously and afterwards copying. We may also note in the original the way in which the words "maid" and "Egyptian" occur in the narratives ascribed to *both* authors, thus stamping them as being by the same, not by different, hands. We may also observe how naturally ver. 3 follows on ver. 2. Further, it may be noticed how the invariable expression in Genesis is "she

¹ Vers. 1a, 3, 15a and 16 are here assigned to P.

conceived and bare a son."¹ But in ver. 15 (P) Hagar is simply said to "bear" a son. Her conception is only mentioned in JE, another indication that JE and P are by the same hand. Again מלדת ("from bearing," ver. 2, JE) is an obvious continuation of the idea suggested by לרה' ("she bare," ver. 1, P). Another indication of unity of authorship. We may further remark that, although, according to JE, Hagar conceives, yet JE "knows nothing" of any birth in consequence. And if P tells us that the son who was born was called Ishmael, JE again knows nothing of that name. In chap. xxi. 9 (JE) the boy is simply "the son of Hagar the Egyptian." If anyone should think all this solemn trifling, we would assure him that we are in no wise bettering the instruction of our German or Germanizing preceptors in the matter of hair-splitting and wire-drawing, as a glance at Wellhausen on the composition of the Hexateuch or Professor Driver's "Introduction" will prove. Further, in chap. xxi. 9 (JE) we have, as anyone may see who compares it with chap. xvi. 15, a distinct quotation from P, which was written 400 years later. For JE never states that a son was born to Hagar at all, but in xxi. 9 assumes the statement already copied from P. And had it suited the destructive critics, we might further have heard a good deal about the silence of the subsequent narrative (chaps. xviii.-xx.) extracted from JE (with the exception of xxi. 9, which, of course, might as easily have been inserted from P as other passages are supposed to have been) about Hagar and her son. Neither of them is mentioned in chap. xviii., where Hagar might have been expected to have been in attendance on her mistress. But the keenness of the critics in building pyramids on their apex is apt occasionally to slumber. *Neque semper arcum tendit Apollo.* It is a pity, for otherwise we might arrive at sundry other interesting and ingenious, if not quite certain, details concerning the sources of the Pentateuch and their several contents. Another point which should not escape us is that P, which, as we have been told,² devotes itself exclusively to the promises to Israel, is as explicit about God's promises to Ishmael and their fulfilment (xvii. 20, xxv. 12) as is JE, a document, as we are led to suppose, of a far less exclusive character and tone (xvi. 10, xxi. 13-18). Of chap. xvii., the whole of which is attributed to P, I will speak in a subsequent paper.

¹ See Gen. iv. 1; xxi. 2; xxv. 22; xxix. 32, 33, 34, 35; xxx. 5, 7, 17, 19, 23. In ch. xxx. 10, 12, 21, however, Zilpah and Leah are said to "bear" children without the previous "conceived." But these passages are from JE!

² Driver, "Introduction," p. 121.

A lay friend, who has given much attention to these subjects, tells me of some points of great importance on which, in my last paper, I failed to touch. The first, and it is most weighty, is that the form Amraphel¹ for Khammurabi must have been taken from some cuneiform script *contemporary with Khammurabi*, for *only at that time* were the two forms Ammu and Khammu used side by side.² Next, the script itself must have been written *after the time of Khammurabi's successful revolt against Kudur-lagamar*. This, and this only, can explain the placing Amraphel first in the narrative of Gen. xiv., although it expressly mentions the suzerainty of the latter. The third is that the name *Ur Casdim* was only applied to Ur during "the time of the Khammurabi dynasty and of Abraham himself."³ Fourthly, when dealing with Paddan-Aram, I have passed over rather too lightly the fact that the region was not called Paddan-Aram until *after the days of Abraham*; so that the use of the word Paddan-Aram is *not* characteristic of JE, but simply a proof that the history of Abraham and Jacob, as it has come down to us, is derived from contemporaneous sources. The theory of some recent analytical critics that the post-exilic forgers of the Abrahamic history endeavoured to give local and historical colouring to their accounts by studying the Babylonian tablets of the period,⁴ shows how hardly archæological research is pressing on the subjective school. Besides, how could the Jewish and Israelite writers of "the eighth and ninth century B.C." employ themselves in hunting up the cuneiform inscriptions? For "Paddan-Aram" has been "proved" to be a characteristic of JE!

J. J. LIAS.

¹ Ammu-rapaltu.

² Hommel, "Ancient Hebrew Tradition," p. 193.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 213. It will be remembered (see No. 218, p. 58) that Ur Casdim is supposed by the latest subjective criticism to belong exclusively to the post-exilic author and redactor.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 162. How extraordinarily clever and incapable at one and the same time were these remarkable historians!

