

ART. III.—THE AUTHORITY OF THE OLD TESTA-
MENT.—II.

I HAVE already pointed out the extremely unsatisfactory nature of the so-called proofs on which the recent criticism of the Old Testament is based, and which the Bishop of Ripon, in his Preface to the "Temple Bible," believes to have been established. He says, in p. 78, though without giving his grounds for the remark, "We may follow the critics" in their assertion that "the mass of the laws and ceremonies which meet us in the Pentateuch belong to a later date than Moses." We shall see in a moment what ground there is for accepting their unproved sayings.

The first ground on which we are asked to sit at the feet of the critics is that all "scholars" are "agreed" on the points which have been mentioned. As this fact is arrived at by the summary process of denying the title of "scholar" to everyone who does not "agree" with these conclusions, this argument is not very conclusive, save to those who have made up their mind beforehand to accept it. If, indeed, those who dispute the assertions of the disciples of Wellhausen were contented to denounce those assertions on the *a priori* ground that they are opposed to "the traditions of the elders" on these subjects, there might be some reason for setting aside all objections as the clamours of ignorant and prejudiced men. But as these conclusions have been carefully examined by competent persons, and have been pronounced not to be in harmony with the facts, it might, perhaps, be found better to read both sides before pronouncing for either.¹

is no other contemporary evidence whatever" (vol. i., p. 208). This conclusion was reached by coolly ignoring, not only the Acts of the Apostles, but also such older and undeniably Pauline writings as Rom. xv. 18, 19, 2 Cor. xii. 12, which sufficiently prove the antiquity of the "miraculous pretensions" of the Church. The whole testimony of the Epistles was, in fact, brushed aside thus: "It is clear from the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Thess. ii. 2, iii. 17, that his Epistles were falsified"; "spurious Epistles were long ascribed to him" (vol. ii., p. 169). It is instructive to remember that such was the mood of the German rationalists thirty years ago, and that this English embodiment of it was considered a masterpiece of scholarly criticism, and rapidly ran through six editions.

¹ As a matter of fact, scholars—even German scholars—are not agreed on the subject, nor is it quite honest to represent them as being so. Professor Dillmann, whose authority as a critic is not questioned by the disciples of Wellhausen, denies that the "Priestly Code" is post-exilic, and holds it to be the earliest of the Hebrew histories. Professor König, of Bonn, has written *Bibel und Babel* in reply to the *Babel und Bibel* of Professor Delitzsch the younger; and he contends that the Israelite early monotheistic narratives are not derived from the polytheistic Babylonian ones. And the S.P.C.K. has just published some remarks

But, we are further told, the leading Hebraists of the day have accepted the conclusions of the great Semitic scholar Wellhausen, and therefore the question is settled. Not quite, I venture to say in arrest of judgment. No doubt this is in many ways an age of progress, but I think that in some ways it is more difficult just now to obtain a full consideration of a question from all sides than it ever has been. At one time its novelty was a sufficient reason for rejecting a theory. That, of course, was not a fair way of treating a question. At the present moment novelty is very often almost the only recommendation a theory has. I could mention many instances of the manner in which, in these days, when a theory holds the field by reason of the pronouncements of a few leading scholars, it is considered heresy to dissent from it. Many men of more capacity than courage, though their better judgment would lead them to reject the prevalent opinion, dare not face the combination in its favour, but shrink from the contempt and something approaching to ostracism with which the dissenter is received. You can see, in the utterances of such men, the half-hearted manner in which the view which for the moment is popular is stated. It is not contradicted; indeed, in a vague sort of way, it is accepted. But those who read between the lines can see that the class of writers whom I have in my mind would abandon it if they dare. It is a mistake to suppose that investigators are independent in these days. They never were less so. In days past it was heresy to dispute any conviction traditionally held. In these times it is heresy to reject the latest fashion in Biblical criticism or theology. It holds the field without a rival for some ten or fifteen years. It is then replaced by another, equally novel, equally daring, and equally unsound.

But, at least, say those who have no time to go into the subject, "the experts are agreed." Is this so? *What* experts? Is a vast question of this kind to be settled by a handful of Hebrew and Arabic scholars and textual critics? Why, even Wellhausen has admitted that the linguistic argument is the weakest point in the investigation.¹ But the question is not merely a linguistic one; it is one of the widest description. It is a historical question. It is a literary question. It is a question which concerns the student of comparative religions. It is one which touches the origin of theism. It touches on a hundred other points, each of them

by Professor Kilbel, another distinguished Biblical critic, in which he rejects the criticism which all "scholars" are "agreed" to accept.

¹ He may well say so, when a scholar such as Dillmann assigns an early origin to what, in Wellhausen's opinion, is the latest of the Hebrew historic documents.

of vast importance. What equipment, I should like to know, have *any* of the men whose writings have come to the front in this great inquiry for researches whose ramifications are so endless? Linguistic problems? Historical problems? Why, many of these men cannot read either the cuneiform script or the Egyptian hieroglyphics! And yet they have treated Babylonian scholars such as Sayce and Hommel with scorn. Historical research? Why, there is scarcely a historical scholar of note who has pronounced in their favour. Freeman, one of our greatest English historians, expressed his doubt of the soundness of their methods. Stubbs, even a saner and sounder historian still, declares that such methods would be laughed out of court by all genuine historical scholars. You may have observed what he is quoted in the *Times* of March 3, 1903, as saying of modern Biblical research. Dean Milman would have none of it. Sir George Cornwall Lewis, a great historical scholar, said that there was certainly progress in connection with similar German theories of Roman history, but it was "progress in a circle." Literary criticism! Is there any literary critic, save some eccentric Germans, who has attempted in the literature of any country but Judæa to produce a mosaic (in another sense) such as meets us in Rainbow Bibles and the like? or, having ventured to produce it, has dared to say that he had established his theories? In his work on Homer Sir R. Jebb says that though there have doubtless been additions to the original fabric of the Iliad, yet one could only indicate their larger features, and all attempts to pursue them into detail have proved failures. Professor Henry Morley laughs to scorn the German critic who would deal with the poems of Beowulf as Professor Driver would have us deal with the Books of Moses.¹ And the smile of contempt with which the literary world of England, Christian and sceptical, with Mr. Andrew Lang at its head, received the Rainbow and Polychrome Bibles on their appearance is a decisive verdict by real experts on the fitness of these gentlemen for the literary criticism of which they speak so confidently. We may be pretty sure that we shall see no more "Rainbow" or "Polychrome" Bibles published. They let rather too much of the light of day upon the "results" on which all "scholars" are agreed. The "results" stand a chance of being imposed on us by bold assertion. But they will never be so imposed unless the processes by which they are obtained remain in the background. The more we know of them, the less we shall like them. And yet the J and E and D and P theory, which the Bishop

See my "Principles of Biblical Criticism," Appendix C.

of Ripon tells us we may fairly endorse, entirely rests upon these literary curiosities, so unanimously rejected by the literary world. Nor are these one-sided theorists more fortunate in other directions. The Bishop of Ripon tells us on their authority (p. 69) that "Israel became a Monotheist people." But Professor Caldecott, in his recent able work on the "Philosophy of Religion," tells us that modern opinion is inclining to the view that the religion of primitive man was monotheistic. Other writers of eminence have said the same thing. Thus the monotheism of Israel may have been a reformation, not a discovery. Yet the Bishop of Ripon assumes the contrary. Are we to follow the experts only when they pronounce in one direction—only when they make their assertions with sufficient boldness or loudness? This may be convenient in the present day, when everyone is in a hurry. But it is neither a philosophical nor an impartial treatment of the subject. The comparatively new study of psychology has also something to do with the matter in hand—not the very peculiar process called "psychological criticism" by Professor Cheyne, but a consideration of the conditions of mind and soul essential to the reception and spread of a revelation or a religion, and the formation of moral and religious character in connection with it. Thus the problem of the history and character of David, intelligible enough on the traditional view of the Scripture history, becomes a well-nigh insoluble problem if we assume that Israel was in his day slowly emerging from the gross and sensual Semitic polytheism into monotheism, and that all the moral and religious light possessed by him was contained in the 20th to the 23rd chapters of Exodus inclusive.¹

I cannot but feel astonishment that the conclusions of the Wellhausen school have been so readily received by candid and intelligent men. For the merest tyro in historical investigation can see, if he stops to consider the matter, on what a slender basis of fact they rest. It is easy enough to reconstruct history in any shape we wish, provided we can strike out any passages in it which conflict with our theories. And that this is the way the theories are established any reader of Professor Driver's Introduction can see for himself. The Book of Joshua, for instance, represents Joshua as invading Palestine with the "Book of the Law" in his hands for

¹ See Professor König, *Bibel und Babel*, p. 49. He points out that the moral tendency of a religion is illustrated, not by what men do, but by *whether they are blamed* for what they do or not. He further instances the case of Tamar, described as unheard of in Israel, as a proof of the wide distinction between Jewish and general Semitic morality.

counsel and for guidance. Not so, says Professor Driver. He had nothing of the kind. That statement is an addition of the Deuteronomist. The Book of Judges is not to be accepted as a veracious narrative. The "Deuteronomic compiler," says the Professor, has "taken a series of independent narratives," and "arranged them in a framework," "exhibiting a theory of the occasion and nature of the work which the Judges were called upon to undertake." In plain English, every statement in the Book of Judges which conflicts with the J, E, D, and P theory is to be struck out. If the Books of Kings inveigh consistently throughout against the worship at the "high places," this is a misstatement which we owe to the "compiler."¹ Once more the history is to be mutilated in order to support Professor Driver's theory. The account of Solomon's reign, with its establishment of the Temple as the permanent centre of the religious life of Israel, is found to be also plainly to a great extent the work of a later hand, to whom once more the account of Jeroboam's institution of the worship of the golden calves must be attributed. Thus the way in which the fact that worship at the central sanctuary was not prescribed till the reign of Josiah is established is by simply striking out every passage which asserts that it *was* so prescribed. The witness of the prophets, too, to the fact that Israelite institutions are due in the main to Moses is explained away, or its meaning is strained by the most extraordinary *tours de force*. Is this legitimate criticism, or is it license of the gravest kind, to which no serious historian would think of resorting for a moment? Nor is there the slightest attempt to explain how these "workings over" and "settings" of the "compiler"—deliberate falsifications as they appear to me to be—came to be accepted by the Jews as veracious history. The history of other countries, as handed down by them, is regarded as an approximation to the truth, as correct in all its main features. In the case of the Jews alone, the most important of all, and the most entirely under Divine guidance, is the history they have handed down not only not an approximation to the truth, but, in all its main features, a direct contradiction of it. In other histories, too, the assertions of critics are usually supported by evidence. In Jewish history there is not a shred of direct evidence either for the existence or date of the Jehovist, the Elohist, the Deuteronomist, the author or compiler of the "Priestly Code," or for any compilation at any period of their various works. And when we read of the conflicts of Jeremiah with the king,

¹ Professor König denies this point-blank (*Bibel und Babel*, p. 12), yet "the critics are agreed"!

the courtiers, and the false prophets, we find that it is he who appeals consistently throughout to the ancient history of his country, and they whom he convicts as having departed from it. Were the Jews of his day as ignorant of the history of their country as this criticism supposes them to have been?

I have had to compress most closely all I have said. I could have said a good deal more did time only permit. I could point out how a vast deal of the critical structure raised with such care and pains is based on the denial of prophecy and miracle, and how the theory of evolution is assumed by the Bishop of Ripon, as well as others, to exclude all possibility of intervention from on high—a proposition neither true in history nor science.

I might say a good deal about the place of oral tradition in matters of history. Thus, I myself heard from my father, who had received it from *his* father, an account of the Gordon riots of 1784, agreeing with the description of them I had read, and what seemed to me exaggerated and improbable in the written accounts was confirmed to me by oral testimony. I have children of ten and eleven years old to-day to whom I have handed down that testimony. I once had an interview with an old man who was at the Battle of Trafalgar, and he gave me an account of the battle which agreed verbally with the statement of histories he had never read. Can one suppose for a moment that when the "Book of the Law" was found in the Temple in the reign of Josiah, that monarch had not plenty of oral testimony at hand as to the nature of the religious institutions of Judah in the days of his great-grandfather?

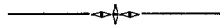
I might again appeal to recent controversy to show that the very methods, the soundness of which are admitted by various writers not very closely acquainted with the subject, in the case of the Old Testament, are rejected by them in the case of the New. Just one word on this point. Professor Sanday has recently expressed publicly his regret at the utterances of Canon Henson on the Virgin birth of Christ. I cannot help expressing my regret that Canon Sanday has in the past thrown the ægis of his authority over Old Testament critics who claim a right to strike out of the Hebrew records any statement of facts which conflicts with the conclusions they desire to establish. He has now found that the same methods which he has declined to condemn when applied to the Old Testament are applied to the New. And he is forced now—all too late, as it seems to me—to raise his voice against such a mode of dealing with the Word of God. I should also like just to allude to a declaration I have seen in a recent review by Professor W. B. Smith that "Romans

is visibly, in every chapter, not an original unit, but a compilation of pre-existent materials." It "exhibits on every page the most indubitable marks of redaction." There is in it "a diversity of style without parallel in any original work." Here we have the methods of the "Rainbow" and "Polychrome" Bible over again. There is no proof whatever of these statements. It is so because Professor Smith says it is so. And it is precisely the same with the fourfold division of the Pentateuch which the Bishop of Ripon recommends us to accept. It is so because Wellhausen and Professor Driver say it is so. But, I repeat, it is no proof to point out certain difficulties in the narrative as it stands, and then to proceed to strike out from that narrative everything which prevents you from contradicting it. We have at least a right to ask the Bishop of Ripon to tell us what distinction there is between the reasoning of Professor Driver and of Professor Smith. Time, alas! forbids me to enter fully into these questions, as interesting and important as any on which I have been able to touch.

I am sorry that the recent wave of scepticism has swept over so many of those whose position would entitle them to be leaders of religious thought. I do not go so far as to accuse them of being sceptics. But I *do* accuse them of giving too easy credence to statements, and of being too ready to admit principles, which tend to undermine the authority of Holy Writ. The question practically comes to this: Is revelation objective or subjective? In other words, Did God speak authoritatively to man, or did man, by his own care and pains and research, discover the Divine Voice in writings which have come down to him? In the violence of a reaction from the tendency to exaggerate the extent, and misunderstand the nature of miracles and the supernatural, and to deny the presence of a human element in Scripture, a school of thinkers at the Universities and elsewhere is at present inclined to go too far in the other direction. I have no hesitation in saying that the indisposition of the laity to attend church is very largely due to the excess of freedom with which for some years the Scriptures have been treated. People have been taught to disbelieve their authority, and, naturally, they have drawn the inference that there can be but little in the religion the statements of whose sacred writings are worthy of so little credence. But though the ancient landmarks are invisible, because the floods of the critical spirit are everywhere hiding them from view, I have little fear for the future. In matters connected with the soul men crave for authority, not argument. If they are thirsting for the water of life, they will prefer the old Bible to the new criticism. The instinct of

the community at large will continue to supply the corrective to the violence of a stream which has burst its bounds. There must be authority somewhere in religion, or there is no such thing as revelation. Man's reason is too contracted, too undisciplined, to reach the depths of the Infinite. The human conscience seeks to hear the voice of God speaking in unmistakable accents to mankind. The present gross exaggeration of the function of criticism in relation to Divine truth will, like other human systems, "have its day and cease to be." But the Church of God as a whole will never lose sight of the fundamental fact that when God has thought fit to speak man must listen and adore. Human reason may seek to interpret His utterances, it may endeavour to comprehend the conditions under which they were made, but it must not question the authority of the utterances themselves. The whole Bible as it stands, from Genesis to Revelation, plainly states that God revealed Himself to mankind in a certain order and in a certain way. It is not open to us, as members of the Christian Church, to contest this statement. If human ingenuity finds difficulties in it, we may be sure that those difficulties will be ultimately resolved. As St. Peter tells us, when God speaks "man is not entitled to put his own value on the utterance. For from no human will did His Voice proceed, but men borne along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."¹

J. J. LIAS.



ART. IV.—THE INCARNATION BY VIRGIN BIRTH ONLY.

IF Jesus had been the son of Joseph and Mary, He would have been, like all others who have been born of two human parents, a person. But the Word, Who was in the beginning, and was with God, and was God, was also a person. Hence, if the Word could have become incarnate in the son of Joseph, there would have been a junction of two distinct persons in one body, each a distinct *ego*, each self-conscious. The Son of God could not have been the son of Joseph; the son of Joseph could not have been the Son of God. The conversation between our Lord and the blind man whom He had healed would have been impossible. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He said. The man answered: "And

¹ 2 Pet. i. 20, 21 : πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς, ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται. Οὐ γὰρ θελήματι ἀνθρώπου ἤνέχθη ποτέ προφητεία, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ Πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ Θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι.