

546TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,
HELD IN THE ROOMS OF THE INSTITUTE ON THURSDAY,
JUNE 5TH, 1913, AT 4.30 P.M.

THE HON. TREASURER, MR. ARTHUR W. SUTTON, PRESIDED.

The Minutes of the preceding Meeting were read and signed.

The SECRETARY announced the election of three Associates :—

ASSOCIATE : The Rev. W. H. Saulez, M.A., B.D. ; Professor J. Logan Lobley, F.G.S. ; Mrs. Agnes H. Pelly.

The CHAIRMAN then called upon the Dean of Canterbury to read his paper.

*THE POSITION AND PRINCIPLES OF THE CRITICISM
OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.* By H. WACE, D.D.,
DEAN OF CANTERBURY.

THE criticism of the old Testament is at this moment in a very interesting situation, both in England and in Germany. As usual, the movement of German thought on the subject is ahead of that of England. The leading English scholars appear perfectly contented with what they have for some time designated the "assured results" of the criticism of the last half of the nineteenth century, and have created a new conservatism in the recognition, as a final achievement, of the documents into which the Pentateuch has been dissected out. At Oxford and Cambridge, manuals are published, like those of the Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, which treat the Jehovist, the Elohist, the Deuteronomist and the Priestly Code as settled realities, as much as the books of the Pentateuch themselves were to our fathers ; and Dr. McNeile in defending the critical theory of Deuteronomy against the able essay of Mr. Griffiths, lately published by the S.P.C.K., expresses a condescending regret that so "great and useful a Society" should have been betrayed into countenancing such a critical heresy. There are indeed some important exceptions among us to this attitude. Canon

Girdlestone continues to exhibit as quiet a confidence in the substantial truth of the traditional belief respecting the Old Testament as the critics do in their own hypotheses, and like them he for the most part reserves his fire. A Jewish barrister, Mr. Wiener, has, however, for some years been directing a vehement assault on the whole critical position, and has certainly made some important breaches in its defences. But until the last month or two the leaders of the critical school have maintained a self-satisfied silence, as though the question were finally settled. In Germany the case has been very different. A steady resistance has been maintained by some leading scholars to various parts of the critical theory. Klostermann, in particular, rejects the whole theory of the four sources, and regards the Pentateuch as having, as it were, crystallized by gradual accretion round an original Mosaic and Sinaitic law; and Koenig, while accepting the four sources in the main, assigns to parts of them a far more ancient and historic character than is allowed by the Wellhausen school. But still more radical attacks have been initiated during the last few years. Eerdmans has started an entirely new, and, it must be said, still more improbable, theory of an original polytheistic book; which was subsequently revised in a monotheistic sense. But more serious attacks have been directed by other scholars, especially by Johannes Dahse, against the groundwork of the documentary theory, and at length a leading English critic has thought it necessary to reply to him. In the last two numbers of the *Expositor*, for April and May, Dr. Skinner of Cambridge has replied fully to Dahse, and perhaps successfully, so far as the efficiency of Dahse's alternative theory is concerned; but he has to make admissions which appear seriously damaging to his own position. Well may it be said by Dr. Sellin, of Rostock, one of the leading members of the moderate critical school, in his recent *Introduction*: "It will be seen that we are passing through a period of ferment and transition, and in what follows we present our own view as only the hypothesis which appears to us as the best founded."

It must be added that a still more strenuous opposition to the current theory is being maintained by able American scholars. Dr. Green, of Princeton, who was Chairman of the American Company of Revisers of the Old Testament, was to the last a resolute opponent of the whole "divisive hypothesis"; and his example is being followed by Dr. G. F. Wright and his co-editors in the valuable American Quarterly, the *Bibliotheca Sacra*. This journal has given Mr. Wiener a constant welcome,

and his attacks on the current theory have been appearing quarter after quarter in its pages. Dr. Skinner complains of Mr. Wiener's vehemence, of his "superheated invective"; and it must be owned that his tone has been sometimes unfortunate. But one consideration must be borne in mind in this respect, which Dr. Skinner and his colleagues do not seem adequately to appreciate. Mr. Wiener is not solely, nor perhaps primarily, concerned with a mere critical controversy. It is no wonder if he feels and writes with the vehemence of one who is contending *pro aris et focis*. It is surprising that the modern critics should not realize that the theory they are asserting is absolutely destructive of the whole Jewish religion. I believe myself that it is also incompatible with the logical defence of the Christian religion, though this consequence is denied by its adherents. But the Jewish religion is absolutely dependent on the belief that the Torah was given by God to Moses; and if it could be established by criticism that the great mass of it, at all events, was not given to Moses at all, the very basis of Jewish worship, Jewish law, and Jewish life would be destroyed. I have always wondered that Jewish authorities have not been more prominent in resisting theories so destructive of their position. The late Chief Rabbi, indeed, Dr. Adler, was good enough to send me a work by Dr. Hoffmann of Berlin, entitled *Instanzen*, against the Wellhausen hypothesis, and it contains arguments of the greatest weight, which I have never seen adequately answered. But it would be natural that Jews alone could adequately apprehend the force or weakness of criticisms of their laws and institutions, and Mr. Wiener's observations have certainly exposed grave mistakes on the part of critics in their discussion of the laws in the Pentateuch. Some vehemence on this subject is neither unnatural nor altogether unbecoming in an earnest Jew, and Dr. Skinner and his friends would show good feeling if they treated Mr. Wiener with more consideration.

Another powerful opposition to the critical hypothesis has lately been opened in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* by two articles in the January and April numbers entitled "A Layman's View of the Critical Theory," in which it is urged that the whole theory is inconsistent with Oriental methods of thought and literature. I will refer to this argument at a later point. But I would first draw attention to the arguments which have at length elicited some reply in England on behalf of the critical theories. Their most recent and fullest statement is to be found in the work just published by Dahse, a German Pastor, entitled *Textkritische Materialien zur Hexateuchfrage*. Ten

years previously Dahse published an article entitled "Textual and Critical Objections in Reference to the Starting Point of the Present Pentateuchal Criticism," and since then he has pursued the same line of inquiry with a thoroughness and a masterly scholarship which are acknowledged by Dr. Skinner, as well as by his German critics. The cardinal point of his criticism had been indicated already by Klostermann and Lepsius, and by the much lamented English scholar Redpath, and it has been recently acknowledged by Wellhausen to constitute "a sore point" in his theory. It consists in the simple, and it must be added, astonishing, fact that the theory has been worked out on the basis of a Hebrew text which had not been critically examined. It starts from Astruc's observation that varying designations of God—Elohim, Jehovah or Jahve, and the two combined, are used in the Pentateuch; and the inference was drawn that two documents had been combined, one by a writer who preferred the term Jehovah, the other by one who preferred the name Elohim, and this usage was deemed so characteristic that the one writer has always been called by the critics the Jehovist and the other the Elohist. Sometimes the two divine names were combined, and sometimes there appeared exceptions to the general usage in each document; and to meet these exceptions it was assumed that there must have been a third person concerned in the process, who combined the documents and edited them, and who is generally styled the Redactor. It is also alleged that the documents thus generally distinguished from each other by the use of the divine names are marked by other uniform characteristics, in matters of style and vocabulary. But the primary criterion for the division was at first, and has continued to be, the use of the divine names; and Dr. Wildeboer, one of the most eminent critics, is quoted by Dr. Troelstra—in his valuable tract on *The Name of God in the Pentateuch*, lately published by the S.P.C.K.—as saying that the employment of distinct words or expressions furnishes an altogether insufficient ground for the theory of sources, and "that one has then only a firm foundation when, in the history of the period before the revelation to Moses, the author uses for the name of God, Jahve or Elohim."

Now the surprising fact brought to light by the present situation is that the critics have to confess that the Massoretic Hebrew text, on the basis of which these observations and deductions were made, had been assumed to be trustworthy for the purpose, although the text of the Septuagint offers so many variations from the Massoretic text in the use of the

divine names, as to render its value questionable for the purpose of distinguishing the Jehovistic and Elohistie sources. Even Dr. Skinner admits (*Expositor* for April, p. 291) that "there are obvious reasons why an attitude of defensive silence cannot be indefinitely prolonged. We must frankly acknowledge that the trustworthiness of the Hebrew text in its transmission of the divine names calls for more thorough investigation than it has yet received at the hand of scholars." He adds that "whether the impulse to that investigation comes from one side of the controversy or the other is, or ought to be, a matter of indifference; provided the question is raised in a judicial and scholarly manner, it is right and proper that it should be examined. It may be a regrettable circumstance that the initiative has been left to opponents of the critical position; but they at least need not complain if the advantage of the attack has fallen to them." It ought, indeed, to be regarded by the critics as a matter for regret that this initiative has been left to their opponents. They have been building theories on the basis of the now questioned text for a generation, and it was surely their own first business to be sure that their foundation was a solid one. We now have the confession that the critical theories of a century past have been built up on a basis which, in a vital point, has never been critically examined. The whole construction started from the use of the divine names in the Hebrew text, and it never occurred to the leading critics to inquire whether that text, as we now have it, represented the original correctly in this point. It was perfectly well known that other parts of the Old Testament, especially the Psalms, afford instances of an Elohistie revision of Jehovistic texts; or in other words that for some reason, not now clear, the name of Elohim was substituted for Jehovah in transcription, if not in redaction. Yet no member of the dominant critical school thought of asking whether the Elohistie and Jehovistic variations in the Pentateuch might not be due to some similar cause, instead of to the existence of distinct documents or authors. I cannot but say it seems to me an omission which goes very far to discredit the method and spirit of the whole critical process. It looks like an eminent example of the formation of a hasty hypothesis on an incomplete observation of the facts, and a tardy and reluctant attention to the new facts when it could no longer be avoided. It would seem that the critics have been as sure of their theories as the Ptolemaic astronomers were of their "Cycles and Epicycles," and did not think it worth while to look more closely into any circumstances alleged to be inconsistent with them.

But the importance of the textual facts now forced on our attention can be no longer disguised. Dr. Dahse's own theory, indeed, for accounting for the varying use of the divine names, will evidently require much further discussion. His suggestion is that in the portions, or as we should say, the lessons, into which the whole law was divided for the purpose of public reading, one of the divine names was given a predominance, so that the names Elohim and Jehovah would mark, not different documents, but different lessons. Those lessons differed in the Septuagint and in the Hebrew, and it is suggested that the variation of names in the Septuagint was determined by the older division into the so-called Sedarim, and the variations in the Massoretic text by the later division into Paraschahs. This theory is powerfully criticised by Dr. Skinner, and as it is not thought tenable even by Mr. Wiener, who devotes a friendly article to Dahse's work in the January number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, it would seem that in this respect Dahse has not yet made out his special view. But his theory to account for the facts is one thing, and the facts themselves, which he has brought to light, are another; and that these remain of great importance is illustrated by another important contribution to the discussion which must now be mentioned.

I have already referred to Dr. Sellin, Professor at Rostock, who holds an important position among the moderate critics of Germany. I have mentioned his very useful *Introduction to the Old Testament*, published in 1910, and he has now undertaken the editorship of an important Commentary on the Old Testament, of which the first volume, on Genesis, by Dr. Procksch, has just appeared. Dr. Sellin is an adherent of the hypothesis of the four sources, but with much modification in detail. There is consequently much interest in a long review by him of Dahse's new book, which appears in the February number of the valuable German monthly review, the *Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*. He, too, after a careful discussion of Dahse's special hypothesis, does not consider it tenable; and he also maintains that, even if it were, it would not involve the overthrow of the dominant hypothesis of the four sources. His arguments on these points are similar to those of Dr. Skinner in the *Expositor*, and seem forcible. He considers that the positive result of Dahse's two first discussions, except for some weighty observations on particular points, is simply that, for the future, the criticism of the Pentateuch must exert greater caution in the use of the criterion afforded for the division of documents by the use of the divine names, or of the names of Jacob and Israel. But he

goes on to say that in his opinion Dahse has laid the germs of a very important development of criticism in reference to the so-called P. source. Dr. Sellin says the suggestion "is as novel as it is striking, and may lead to a transformation of the prevalent conception of the Priestly document; it points in the direction of our finding in P. not a single independent document, but a glossing, and, indeed, liturgical, modification of the old documents." This glossing or liturgical editing may be ascribed to Ezra, and he may, in his revision, have introduced into the old text other ancient records which seemed to him of importance, such, for instance, as the opening account of the creation. P. would thus be revealed as Ezra, to whom tradition has always attributed a final revision of the law, and its arrangement for liturgical use.

But though Dr. Sellin thus rejects the suggestion that the new criticism represented by Dahse involves the shattering of the "four-source theory," he goes on to make admissions on the subject which seem to go far in that direction. "I do not mean," he adds, "to say that no such overthrow of the theory can follow. I should be the last who would venture to maintain that the results now dominant in Pentateuchal criticism are assured. Is it possible, in fact, to speak of assured results in reference to the time when the Jahvist or Elohist arose, so long as one group of able investigators hold the Jahvist to be the earliest, and another hold the Elohist? or, in reference to the place of their origin, so long as one independent inquirer like Smend, in his recent book on the Hexateuch, holds the Elohist to be of Judaic origin, in opposition to the majority who hold him to be of North Israelitish origin? or again when it is in dispute whether J.E. and the rest are to be regarded as individuals, or as whole schools, so that the four great sources have to be again broken up into several strata; and again whether they are independent literary personalities or mere compilers? As long as such questions, and many similar ones, are answered by one man in one way and by another in another, it is obviously mere nonsense to speak of assured results." That is the judgment, be it observed, not of an English conservative critic, but of a leading German Professor, who himself still upholds, in the main, the dominant hypothesis. "The one thing," he adds, "which for me personally remains settled is, that a fourfold main course of tradition extends from Genesis i to Joshua xxiv, and further . . . through the historic and legislative literature, and that its historical order and development finds its best expression in the scale J.E.D.P." Yet after this personal declaration of his adherence to the

hypothesis thus stated, he immediately proceeds to the following significant observations: "But nearly all that we have further to say about the substance, the origin and the date of these entities is in perpetual flux. The naïve confidence with which the School of Wellhausen"—in England, let us say, as well as in Germany—"assigned them to definite historical periods' of Israel, and then regarded them as new products of those periods, has no doubt received a heavy blow through the literary and historical mode of treatment of Gunkel and others. And men such as Kittel, Merx, König, Eerdmans, Gressman, and so on, have, like ourselves, successfully maintained of late, that the materials of all these sources are for the most part indefinitely older than the conceptions of the sources themselves, and that consequently even a younger document may, in some circumstances, have preserved historical and legislative traditions better than an older one."

These are the words of an eminent German Professor, published in an important German journal in February of this year, while the Professors and Scholars of Oxford and Cambridge, especially the younger ones, are still talking of the "assured results" of Old Testament criticism.

After puzzling over such an exhibition of "incessant flux," it is refreshing to turn to the articles already referred to in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January and April, by "A Layman," in which the whole theory is challenged on the broad ground of its total inconsistency with Oriental habits. He describes with much learning the examples afforded by other sacred literatures in the East, and then proceeds (p. 214)—

"It must now be clear that twentieth-century methods of procedure, such as are in use among the scholars of the West, are no criterion whatever by which to test those employed in another era by scholars of the East, and that the first thing to be done is to get an Oriental view point. This is simply imperative if any reliable results are to be obtained in the study of ancient documents, especially of such documents as those embodied in the Pentateuch. To assume that this work can be the outcome of the parasitical methods now in vogue in many quarters, is to be guilty of a most remarkable lack of historical, not to say literary, perspective. To do so ignores, in a manner that has long excited my own wonder, the plain characteristics of all Oriental peoples, including even those of the modern Jews. Excitable and capricious they may be, and in some things unstable or fickle, but when it comes to the fundamentals of their national life, they are as

adamant. The same thing holds good of their attitude to their sacred writings. The text is fixed and inflexible. Whatever is done in the way of destroying it, must be done by methods of interpretation that undermine its force. In this, Talmudic methods still prevail as they have for centuries. But what bearing do all these things have on the critical theory, which is the real object aimed at in this series of papers? A very important one, for all Orientals, without exception, appear to preserve every particle of their religious writings with the most painstaking care and devotion. Were the Hebrews an exception to this rule? Were they less careful to preserve the exact form of the original documents? Do their descendants indicate in any way that they were? Do they not, on the contrary, show the same persistent conservatism with regard to their religious rites, and especially with regard to the written 'Word'?"

These observations seem to me to go to the heart of the matter, and the further papers of this Layman must be awaited with great interest. I am persuaded that his observations on the tenacity with which Oriental people, and particularly the Jews, adhere to their traditions, point to one principle which is alone decisive in its condemnation of the critical hypothesis as it at present stands. It is of its very essence that it asserts that the account of the development of the Jewish religion, which the Old Testament naturally conveys, and was obviously meant to convey, is a false one. It assumes that the Jewish national consciousness was deliberately and successfully falsified, and that what the Jews have always believed to be the beginning of their religious life was really the end of it. I believe that this is both incredible and impossible, and I am, therefore, confident that no critical "results" which involve it can be "assured," even if they were a hundred times more "assured" than Dr. Sellin shows them to be. The course of current German criticism, as illustrated in the publications I have been considering, shows, I think, that in both Germany and America a revolution of thought on this subject is in progress. We may safely, meanwhile, possess our souls in patience.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN before the lecture said: The Dean of Canterbury needs no introduction to a Victoria Institute audience, or indeed to any other audience in the country. He reads widely, keeping abreast of the times and examining both sides in these critical

controversies ; hence we shall have an impartial statement of the case, which cannot but be edifying and helpful to the scholars of our day.

After the paper had been read, the CHAIRMAN said :—

The lecturer has, in spite of the fact that he holds his own views very firmly, put before us both sides fully and fairly. One thing in the paper has appealed very strongly to me, the passage (p. 235) which shows that if the Higher Critical position were maintained it would be absolutely destructive of the whole position of the Jewish religion.

Although we can never be afraid to follow in whatever direction Truth may lead us, yet we are bound for our own sake and for the sake of others to be perfectly satisfied that it is the Truth we are following ; and it will, I think, help us if we keep our eyes and ears open, so as to be conscious of the goal towards which modern theories may lead us, as by so doing we may be the better able to judge of the correctness of these views.

The Victoria Institute can never be otherwise than grateful to those who, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, devote time, intelligence, and skill to the critical examination of the Word of God, for that Word, and that Word only, gives us any assured and certain hope of the life to come.

Dr. THIRTLE said : When concluding his paper with the remark that, having regard to the turn of affairs in Germany and America, we may well “possess our souls in patience,” the Dean speaks a word of timely encouragement, but he does more : by implication, he justifies the course pursued by those who—himself among them, we are glad to know—refused to follow the lead of scholars who were in a hurry to adopt theories which, at length, have been “found wanting.” To-day, assuredly, we may find comfort in the fact that, though Germany did much to advance the destructive views, yet, with a praiseworthy devotion to scientific inquiry, some of her scholars are now to the fore with suggestions that may be distinctly constructive in their results.

If, on the one hand, the radical thought of the Fatherland leads to the acceptance of hurried conclusions, such as tell against the credibility of the Bible, so also, on the other hand, that same radical thought yields a ready criticism in demolition of theories that turn out to be faulty. Adapting the familiar line of Juvenal we may

ask: "Who will criticise the critics themselves?" and we may confidently reply that in Germany the Germans will do so.

We do well, with the Dean, to recognize the valuable work of Mr. Harold Wiener in our own country, and of other contributors to the *Bibliotheca Sacra* in America. The general thesis worked out by Mr. Wiener was, to my knowledge, discussed in private twenty-five years ago, by individual scholars; but Mr. Wiener has had the honour and distinction of carrying the work through with an enthusiasm which should command Christian satisfaction as well as Jewish admiration. But so far that work has not received the recognition that is its due. As for the positions taken up by "A. Layman," to which the Dean has also called attention, though not quite new, they are of profound importance, and will doubtless lead to far-reaching results when they come to their own.

To the excellent work done by these scholars may be added that of Dr. Melvin Grove Kyle, of Philadelphia, whose volume published last year, with the title *The Deciding Voice of the Monuments in Biblical Criticism* (issued in this country by the S.P.C.K.), deserves high commendation. The title of the book is a proposition which some of us think will abundantly vindicate itself in due time. Dr. Kyle shows that, while investigations among the dust of bygone ages have accredited the Scriptures, so also such investigations have, in important particulars, discredited the method of criticism to which the Scriptures have been subjected in recent times. His work, moreover, justifies the expectation of still greater results in the same direction as the outcome of continued exploration in the lands of the unchanging East.

The late Dr. Emil Reich spoke of "the Bankruptcy of Criticism." That bankruptcy, as Dr. Kyle shows, only waits on the further product of archæological research. For this we may well be thankful; and at the moment, moreover, we must be thankful to the Dean for the very helpful way in which he has drawn attention to the actual progress of constructive thought in its bearing upon the Old Testament Scriptures.

The Rev. Canon GIRDLESTONE said: I feel more and more that in reading the Bible we ought to do so with Jewish eyes, not only the Old Testament but also the New. We should try to imagine ourselves Jews, with their history behind us: the Gospels, the Acts, and the Letters would then speak to us with much greater power. In relation to to-day's subject I should like to draw attention to one of

the Jewish characteristics, viz. : their stubbornness, or, as the Bible puts it, their stiff-neckedness. This may be a great blessing if the cause is right, and certainly is so when applied to their respect for and guardianship of the sacred writings. The Jews went all over the great Roman empire carrying their Bible with them and showing great strength of character and deep conviction as to the sacred books. No doubt, they travelled primarily for commercial purposes, but everywhere they went they took their religious traditions and set up their synagogues. This was one of the great Providential preparations for Christianity. The Bible was to Israel the Book of Authority, not to be altered at will. It is too much regarded as "literature" by the critics to-day; they ignore the authoritative character with which it is stamped all through. Think of Stephen's speech, or St. Paul's at Antioch, and notice the Divine purpose running through. The full force of this we often miss because we are not Jews.

Let me add a word about the various characters in which the Hebrew Scriptures were written. Since the discovery of the stone containing Khammurabi's laws, we have a specimen of the oldest character known in the time of Abraham; this was followed by the cuneiform in Moses' time, as illustrated by the Tell el-Amarna tablets. See on this subject the late Colonel Conder's *First Bible*. This was followed by the old Hebrew or Phœnician, and subsequently by the later or square Hebrew. The Sacred Writings, in the course of these long and changing periods, would have to be transliterated, leaving much room for variations, modern words being sometimes substituted for ancient, and so on. You can test this by comparing the books of the Chronicles with the earlier books of Samuel and Kings. Several newer words take the place of older, and, of course, there are changes in spelling.

Much has been made by the critics of the variations in the Divine names. But they have been recently collated with more regard to such changes of language and spelling as are here referred to, with the result that the theories based on them are largely undermined. "As you were" is the call of to-day. We must go back and begin again. Exploration and fuller investigation have brought us to a truer position than we occupied thirty or forty years ago.

The Rev. A. IRVING, D.Sc., B.A., remarked that the paper dealt with the position and principles of the High Criticism, and was

a serious caution against the assumed security of the position of the Higher Critics. In dealing with the *position* of the Higher Criticism the paper left little more to be said in the present state of our knowledge, but the speaker desired to offer a few critical remarks on the *principles* from the point of view of a student of Science. The "assured results" of the critics were often assured only by a certain consensus of opinion among a certain set of scholars. But scholarship can be, and often is, unscientific. In the last resort it turns often upon negative evidence, and involves the fallacy of measuring what may be by what the learned know or think that they know. The method is unscientific, because it proceeds merely by deductive reasoning from certain accepted conclusions. Geometry is a deductive science (as John Stuart Mill pointed out years ago), but its deductions are based on *axioms* which are truths attested by universal experience. The logical vice of the Higher Criticism consists in assuming that certain generalizations have the value of truths *universal*; and, what is worse, the critics often fail to perceive that, while their "assured results are based on such assumptions, derived to a large extent from negative reasoning, the advance of knowledge, from the sidelights of such sciences as archæology and anthropology, is constantly smashing such empirically constructed theories by the solid logic of facts newly brought to light.

In science, real workers have learned to be cautious in basing conclusions on such empirical generalizations, for example, as Lyell's Uniformitarian dogma in geology. Increased light thrown upon the infinitely complex operation of natural law, with the advance of scientific discovery, leads to the result that old working-hypotheses are frequently breaking down, as inadequate to the enlarged intellectual perspective of the serious student. The pity is that the lack of such a spirit of *willingness to unlearn* in the light of fuller knowledge, and the lack too often of a spirit of reverence in the intellectual attitude towards those things which, in the spiritual sphere, have come to us attested by the traditional experience of a hundred generations of mankind, as they cluster round the feet of the God-Man, can so warp the judgment as to bring the critic sometimes perilously near sinning against intellectual veracity, when in the face of new evidence, he refuses to see the necessity for reconsidering his "assured results" in the light of the bare logic of facts. How some of these "assured results" fare when a more scientific spirit

and method of inquiry are brought to bear upon them, was very well illustrated in the paper on the Samaritan Pentateuch read by Dr. Munro a few weeks ago before the Victoria Institute.

Mr. T. B. BISHOP expressed the hope that the Council could see their way to send a copy of this paper to the students of the country.

Mr. LESLIE asked what was the lecturer's own opinion in regard to the attack on the Massoretic text; and the Rev. J. J. B. COLES asked his opinion on Dr. Ginsburg's views as to the text of the Old Testament.

Professor LANGHORNE ORCHARD, M.A., B.Sc., said: This age in which we live has good points—every age has its good points—but it may go down to history as an age of degradation—degradation in politics, degradation in science, degradation in Scripture-criticism. The present paper has directed our attention to this last. Our hearty thanks are tendered to the able author, the eminent divine, the competent and careful scholar, for bringing before us this interesting review, succinct yet comprehensive, of the present position and principles of the criticism of the Old Testament.

The position is (I think) clearly indicated in pages 237 and 241. The neo-criticism of to-day is on the horns of a dilemma. We are reminded of the fact (well-known to scholars) that the Hebrews, like other Orientals, were most conservative of their Scripture text and its account of the development of their religion. The critics must either accept the fact of this conservatism or they must deny it. If they accept it, their assault upon the Old Testament collapses—*cadit questio*. If they deny it, they are convicted of most unscholarly carelessness, as is shown in p. 237, in building theories upon the basis of a Massoretic Hebrew text without first critically investigating the trustworthiness of that text. They are thus in either case impaled by the dilemma.

The learned author has pointed out that among the critics themselves exist discrepancies quite as pronounced as any which they profess to discover in Holy Writ. This is a hopeful sign, for when those who appear to aim at depriving us of our inheritance fall out among themselves, probability is strengthened that we shall continue to hold our own. That this is a matter of vital importance to us is evident, for the Scriptures by the Spirit of Truth supply us with our spiritual food. Scripture criticism is not necessarily bad.

There are critics and critics. We shall agree with the author when, referring to the neglect to examine into the correctness of the Hebrew text, shown by one class of critics, he says:—"I cannot but say it seems to me an omission which goes very far to discredit the method and spirit of the whole critical process. It looks like an eminent example of the formation of a hasty hypothesis on an incomplete observation of the facts, and a tardy and reluctant attention to the new facts when it could no longer be avoided. It would seem that the critics have been as sure of their theories as the Ptolemaic astronomers were of their 'cycles and epicycles,' and did not think it worth while to look more closely into any circumstances alleged to be inconsistent with them."

In a house built upon such foundations we refuse to make our intellectual home.

The Rev. H. J. R. MARSTON wrote:—

I am sorry indeed that I cannot be at the Victoria Institute meeting to-morrow to hear the Dean.

I have just read the uncorrected proof of his paper.

I beg you to read my thanks as a tribute to the erudition and lucidity of his treatment of a very interesting and rather difficult matter.

My own reading of the Septuagint has more than once suggested to me that arguments based on the names of God in the Greek text must lead to different conclusions from the use in the Authorized Version, which I take to follow the Hebrew.

The most potent fact of all alleged by the Dean is no doubt that at the end of his paper, namely, that we cannot believe that the Israelite nation has been altogether duped by literary forgers, who long before the theory of religious evolution was known, reconstructed the Old Testament in a sense favourable to that theory.

Mr. JOHN SCHWARTZ, Jun., wrote:—

Our author's rebuke of the naïve confidence with which matters not capable of definite proof, and therefore only pious opinions, are held, is well merited by the scholars to whom he refers. It is a weakness of human nature which they share with the strictly orthodox who are still more dogmatic on more doubtful matters.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

The DEAN said in substance : As to the Masoretic text, enough has been established to show that the critics have been rash in their use of it. The matter requires much further investigation, and this, happily, is being vigorously carried forward in Germany. I hope I shall not be regarded as an opponent of criticism, only of wrong criticism. Much criticism is faulty in head, not in heart.

I am obliged to Dr. Thirtle for his very kind remarks. Our best friends to-day are the Germans themselves. The old Tubingen theory, originally opposed by Lightfoot and Westcott, was long ago demolished in Germany itself, and a sound and conservative criticism of the New Testament has been established by Zahn and his colleagues. I have a great admiration of German scholars, but I think they are rather rash. They are most honest and bold and they will ultimately get right. Theories will often "work" for a time, but often new facts arise showing their inapplicability ; the theory has then to be given up, and some more successful one put in its place. This was the case with the Ptolemaic system for years ; it prevailed until the Reformation, even Lord Bacon was misled by it ; but it worked, eclipses were predicted by it, though it was wrong all the time. So German critical theories work for a time, perhaps 50 years, until further inquiry produces facts throwing new light on the problem.

A good example of this was the change of view as to the early use of writing in Old Testament times. When Bishop Harold Browne wrote his Introduction to the Pentateuch in the *Speaker's Commentary*, he had to argue the question whether writing was in use in the time of Moses. But every scholar has now in his possession an elaborate code of laws, comparable in some respects to those of the Pentateuch, which was formulated and inscribed on stone by a contemporary of Abraham.

In conclusion, the Dean thanked the meeting for their attention and the kind vote of thanks which they had passed.