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I.

THE MOSES OF THE CRITICS.

MOSES had gone up into the thick darkness, fire, and smoke, which covered the summit of Sinai. The people had waited in vain for his return. Days and weeks had passed, a month and more had elapsed, still there were no tidings from him, and no sign of his reappearance. "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him" (Ex. xxxii. 1). Their excited minds pictured him as hopelessly and forever gone; he would never be seen, nor heard from again. Thus in the imagination of the critics the Moses of the Bible has disappeared from view. And with loud acclaim they are chanting the praises of the mystic symbols E, J, D, P and R, which they have set up to fill the vacancy created by the removal of Israel's great leader. The advance of critical science has in their opinion entirely changed the aspect of affairs; and the history of that whole period must be reconstructed on a new and different basis. Let us briefly consider what the critics propose to substitute for the Moses that has been taken from us. The theme proposed is the Moses of the critics, or Moses as the critics represent him.

The Moses of the Bible is a clearly defined, conspicuous and commanding personage. Saved from threatened death in his infancy by an interposition of Providence, which secured for him a training at the court of Pharaoh without weaning his heart from his own

people, and then disciplined by his long abode in the desert, he was called of God to deliver Israel from the bondage of Egypt, to organize them as the covenant people of God and lead them on to Canaan, the land long before promised to their fathers. He accordingly established amongst them by divine direction ordinances of worship and laws for the regulation of individual life and public affairs, which are recorded in the books which bear his name. He thus fulfilled his commission as the divinely appointed and divinely guided legislator of Israel and founder of the religion of the Old Testament, being accredited as such by the most stupendous miracles in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at Sinai and throughout the abode in the wilderness.

This law was a schoolmaster to bring men unto Christ. It was a body of elementary symbolic ordinances for the time then present, representing, sealing and applying in visible and palpable forms the pardon of sin and communion with God, which were afterwards more fully unfolded, until at length the types and shadows were succeeded by the substantial realities of the Gospel. It is to Moses and the prophets that our Lord and His apostles make their appeal in confirmation of the divinity of their own commission. "Do not think," said Jesus to the Jews, "that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" The authority of Christ Himself stands or falls with that of Moses, upon which he here rests his own claims.

It is sometimes affirmed that the questions raised by Biblical critics are purely literary, and involve no serious theological consequences. What matters it who wrote Deuteronomy? or who wrote the Pentateuch? Of what account is it to us whether Moses wrote it, or a succession of writers were employed upon it? whether the laws which it contains were all given by Moses, or are in large part the product of a later age? It makes all the difference in the world whether the record respecting Moses and his work is historically true and credibly attested as such or not. The religion of Israel is not a body of abstract speculative truths, which may retain their validity, whether the Mosaic narratives are true or false. It is based on the facts there related, of God's selection of Israel and entering into covenant with them as His people, of His revealing Himself to them through Moses, giving them their institutions and laws, and accompanying these disclosures with the most signal manifestations of His presence and power. If this is a reliable record, and the facts are as there represented, the divine origin and authority of the religion of the Old Testament rests on an impregnable

basis. And the New Testament, which is built on this solid foundation, stands secure.

But on the other hand, if this record is not to be trusted, and the facts are not as they are represented, and the revelations which are alleged to have been made to Moses were not really made to him, and the institutions and laws which he is declared to have received from God were not so received, but were the growth of circumstances through long ages, then the Pentateuch is no longer the word of God, the religion of Israel is not based on an immediate divine revelation, but is a purely human product, however it may have been developed under a certain measure of divine superintendence; and Christ and His apostles have given their solemn attestation to that which proves to be altogether different from what it claims to be and from what they conceived it to be.

We most assuredly have no disposition to decry the science of Biblical criticism. Its province is to investigate the origin and structure of the books of the Bible; to ascertain when, and by whom, and under what circumstances, and for what purpose they were written, and to determine the nature of their contents. These are not only proper subjects of inquiry, but they are very important to a correct understanding and a right appreciation of the Bible as a whole and of its several parts. And we do not object to the higher criticism of the Pentateuch. It is not only entirely legitimate, but extremely serviceable if properly applied. We welcome the most thorough and searching inquiry into the authorship and the historical character of the Pentateuch. Such an inquiry fairly conducted can only result in establishing the truth of the record and the reality of its claims. What we do complain of is the unfriendly prepossessions, the false principles and the perverted methods, which infect much of what passes at present under the name of higher criticism, and have led to the most preposterous and destructive conclusions, until the very term "higher criticism" has become an offense to serious minds and suggestive of pernicious and deadly assaults upon the Christian faith. The purpose of the present article is not the detection of the fallacies in the reasoning of the dominant school of critics, nor the refutation of their positions, but simply the statement of their conclusions respecting the life and work of Moses.

And first, what are the sources of information concerning him, as they conceive them? The accounts contained in the Pentateuch are in their opinion quite misleading. This is not the opinion of unbelieving critics merely, who are avowed antagonists of supernatural religion, but of those as well who claim to be evangelical and orthodox, and yet have accepted advanced critical views. With

one accord they not only deny that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, but they hold that the Pentateuch, as we possess it, does not give a truthful and trustworthy record whether of the events of his life or of the laws and institutions which he ordained. The Pentateuch, it is alleged, is a composite production. It is not the work of any one writer, but is made up from four different documents, which the critics claim that they are able not only to recognize, but to reproduce. They profess to determine in regard to each section, paragraph, and even clause of the Pentateuch, from which of these documents it has been taken. And now by singling out the sections, paragraphs and clauses, which according to their hypothesis had a common origin, and arranging them continuously together, they can reconstitute these primary documents; and thus they find themselves in possession of the historical sources from which the Pentateuch itself was derived. These primary sources, as the critics conceive them, are designated for brevity by the letters J, E, D and P. J is the Jehovist, so called because he characteristically uses the term Jehovah in speaking of the true God. E is the Elohist, who employs the term Elohim, which is the Hebrew for God. D is the Deuteronomist, to whom together with his coadjutors the body of the Book of Deuteronomy is traced. P is the priestly writer, to whom the ritual law is assigned, and such portions of the history as are supposed to be cognate with it.

If the partition of the text of the Pentateuch on alleged grounds of diction and style into four so-called documents were all that was attempted by the critics, the question thus raised would indeed be a purely literary one to be determined by literary evidence, and it would leave the historical truth and divine authority, and even the Mosaic origin, of the Pentateuch unimpaired. The mere division of the Pentateuch into any number of parts, upon any principle whatever, or upon any lines whatever, cannot injure its truthfulness, or affect in any way the character of its contents. A division into so-called documents in itself considered would be as harmless as the current division into five separate books, and these into different chapters and verses. The Pentateuch would still remain in its integrity and in full validity upon any grouping possible of its contents. And Moses might still be its responsible editor, if any number of writers had been employed upon it under his direction, and the whole were issued with his approval and under his sanction.

The critical hypothesis, as it is currently maintained, sets itself in opposition to the truth, and by necessary consequence to the divinity of the Pentateuch, in two particulars:

1. A date is arbitrarily assigned to the documents so remote from the events recorded, as to make their testimony quite unreliable.

2. The documents are arbitrarily represented to be variant and conflicting; one or the other of them must consequently be in error; and it is only by balancing one over against the other that the real truth can be elicited from these discordant witnesses.

J and E are reckoned the oldest and most reliable of these documents. Critics fluctuate in fixing their date between 900 and 750 B.C., that is to say from 100 to 250 years after the building of Solomon's temple, or from 600 to 750 years after the exodus from Egypt. Dr. Briggs tells us* that the Ephraimitic document E was written in the northern kingdom of Samaria; and the Judaic document J was written in the southern kingdom of Judah. These two kingdoms came into existence with the schism of Jeroboam, 500 years after the exodus; and if these documents were written in these kingdoms, they must have been later still. He fixes the date of J and E more definitely by saying that "these documents were not composed before the age of Elijah," † that is to say about six centuries after the exodus. Deuteronomy is referred to the reign of Josiah, or shortly before it, upwards of 800 years after the exodus. And P is put after the Babylonish exile, more than 1000 years after the exodus. For our knowledge of Moses and the events of his time we are thus alleged to be dependent upon sources removed upwards of five, eight and ten centuries from the events which they record, and which transmit to us the traditions that were circulating at these several dates. It is apparent that the credibility of the Mosaic history is thus seriously undermined. What confidence can be intelligently reposed in accounts which rest on no better basis than oral tradition through five, eight and ten centuries, particularly as the age of Moses was followed by periods of disorder and conflict, and contaminating contact with the former population of Canaan, and foreign oppression, which were peculiarly unfavorable to the accurate and safe transmission of national traditions.

Thus, Kuenen ‡ says: "Our faith in Israel's own accounts of her career is at once severely shaken by the discovery that by far the greater number of these accounts did not proceed from contemporaries, but were written very long after the events of which they treat. . . . The accounts . . . of the times of Moses . . . are separated by an interval of many centuries from the facts which they alone communicate to us. . . . On the most favorable supposition a period of more than five centuries intervenes between the event and the earliest account, while a very large majority of the

* *North American Review* for January, 1894, p. 69.

† *The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*, p. 150.

‡ *Religion of Israel*, i, p. 16.

narratives, and just those which are very important for our object, are at least two centuries younger."

It is still further alleged that these documents differ materially in their statements, and give divergent representations of what took place. They must therefore have followed variant traditions, which are in many respects, the critics tell us, irreconcilable with each other. The lack of agreement between the witnesses discredits their testimony yet more. And it raises the question whether they can even be depended upon where they do agree; for in such cases how can it be known whether these are really separate authorities confirming each other, or whether one may not have borrowed directly from the other and simply repeat its unsubstantiated statement? Thus Prof. Kittel, of Breslau, whom Prof. Francis Brown* describes as a "reverent critic," and a "profound believer in the supernatural" says:† "It is evident that neither the agreement of the sources in the principal points, nor the accompanying impression of credibility, can of itself be conclusive as to the historical character of the Mosaic history. For along with the agreement of our accounts there is in other points an undeniable divergence. And we can no longer determine, in how far accounts which agree with an earlier source, are given independently or in dependence upon this earlier source." The critical partition, by isolating passages from their proper connection, interpreting them at variance with their context, and making the part equal to the whole, brings forth discrepancies. And these discrepancies so produced are urged both as justifying the partition and as destroying the credit of narratives which, taken in their completeness, are self-consistent and have every appearance of truthfulness.

It is further claimed that the aim of these documents is not to present a simple record of facts as they actually took place, but that the history has been warped either unconsciously or designedly in order to make it the vehicle of inculcating religious ideas. It follows upon this conception of the case that the teachings of the Pentateuchal history are not lessons drawn from the actual experience of Israel and God's providential dealings with them, but this history is a fictitious embodiment of the religious thought of the people or of their spiritual guides. The doctrine is not deduced from the divinely guided history of Israel, but the record of the history has been moulded into accordance with the accepted doctrine. God did not in reality reveal Himself in the history in the manner there set forth, but Israel's notions of God have been incorporated into the history. This remodeling of the history into

* *Presbyterian Review* for 1889, p. 138.

† *Geschichte der Hebräer*, i, pp. 203, 204.

accordance with current religious thought, or with the most elevated forms of religious thought, and so transforming it into what has been euphemistically styled "idealized history," has been ascribed to a pious intention, but it is a falsification of history nevertheless. It is a substitution of legend for history. The forms of history are preserved, but its real substance and true intent are changed. Under such treatment the supernatural element so conspicuous in the Pentateuchal history, and which is woven into its whole texture, is at once frittered down from objective reality to subjective impression. The miraculous no longer betokens an immediate divine interference; it is the legendary exaggeration of the marvelous. Prophetic utterances are not the offspring of a foreknowledge of future events divinely imparted; the experience of later generations has simply been transferred back to an earlier time, and put into the mouth of one who lived long before the event. Dr. Briggs* does not hesitate to say: "If it were possible to resolve all the miracles of the Old Testament into extraordinary acts of divine Providence, using the forces and forms of nature in accordance with the laws of nature . . . still, I claim that nothing essential would be lost from the miracles of the Bible." And he adds in the same connection: "Christian men may construct their theories about the miracles of the Bible with entire freedom so long as they do not deny the reality of the events themselves, as recorded in Holy Scripture." This is precisely what the critics do in relation to the plagues of Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea and other miraculous facts; they admit the occurrence of the events, but strip them of all their supernatural features. And Dr. Driver, speaking of the writer of one of the so-called documents of the Pentateuch, says:† "It is probable that in many cases only particular elements of the representation were supplied to him by tradition; his representation, as a whole, seems to be the result of a systematizing process working upon these materials, and perhaps also seeking to give sensible expression to certain ideas or truths. . . . His aim seems to have been to present an ideal picture of the Mosaic age, constructed indeed upon a genuine traditional basis, but so conceived as to exemplify the principles by which an ideal theocracy should be regulated." And he adds in a note: "It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the representation of P included elements not in the ordinary sense of the term historical." In other words, the writer has given an ideal instead of a strictly historical representation of the Mosaic age. To the elements supplied by tradition he has added others from his own imagination in order to

* *Inaugural Address*, p. 37.

† *Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 120.

embody his religious conceptions, and make his story of that period conform to what he thinks it must or should have been.

Besides all this the Redactor or Redactors, who are supposed to have combined the documents into the Pentateuch, as we now possess it, have greatly increased the perplexity of the subject by their well-meant but mistaken attempts to remove discrepancies or correct imaginary errors. In so doing they have, as the critics affirm, obscured or perverted the real meaning of passages which they have retained, while they have omitted others which were very important for a correct understanding of the matters with which they deal. Thus Dr. Briggs says:* "There are historical mistakes in the Christian Scriptures . . . errors of historical events and persons, discrepancies and inconsistencies in the historians, which cannot be removed by any proper method of interpretation. . . . They used with fidelity the best sources of information accessible to them; ancient poems, popular traditions, legends and ballads, regal and family archives, codes of law and ancient narratives. . . . There is no evidence that the divine Spirit corrected their narratives either when they were lying uncomposed in their minds, or written in manuscripts.

"The higher criticism shows us the process by which the sacred books were produced, that the most of them were composed by unknown authors, that they have passed through the hands of a considerable number of unknown editors who have brought together the older material without removing discrepancies, inconsistencies and errors. In this process of editing, arranging, addition, subtraction, reconstruction and consolidation, extending through many centuries, what evidence have we that these unknown editors were kept free from error in all their work?"

This then is the situation imposed by the critical hypothesis, as held alike by the destructive critics and by those who regard themselves as evangelical critics. The Mosaic history is drawn from sources which date respectively five, eight and ten centuries after the exodus, and which represent the tradition prevalent at those several periods. The testimony of these sources is conflicting and has been colored to correspond with the religious ideas of the writers. They are also in a mutilated condition from the omissions, insertions, transpositions and alterations by the Redactors. Now in all honesty it must be asked, if such be the sources out of which the Mosaic history is constructed, what confidence can be reposed in it?

We now proceed to the history of Moses, as the critics find it in

* "The Truthfulness of Holy Scripture," *The World's Parliament of Religions*, Vol. i, p. 652.

the various documents. Some extreme critics discover discrepancies in the narratives of his infancy and his flight from Egypt; but these are too frivolous to deserve mention. A more serious divergence, upon which all insist,* is that according to J and E the Lord first revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush in the desert of Sinai, where he was tending the flocks of his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. He was then and there commissioned to be the deliverer of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, and charged to go and make this known to the people; upon his hesitating to do this because of his inability to speak well his brother was associated with him (Ex. iii, iv). P gives (chaps. vi, vii) quite a different version of this transaction. He knows nothing of Moses ever having resided in Midian, or fed flocks at Sinai, or seen a vision of the Lord at the burning bush. He explicitly states that it was in Egypt that God revealed Himself to Moses, commissioned him to deliver Israel, bade him make this known to the people, and on his manifesting reluctance to speak associated his brother Aaron with him.

E and P state that it was upon this occasion that God first made Himself known as Jehovah; but according to J this name Jehovah had been in use from the days of Enosh the son of Seth, and was freely employed by the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom P expressly says it was unknown.

In J Moses expresses the apprehension that the people will not believe his message nor admit his claim that the Lord had appeared to him; and the Lord in consequence gives him several miraculous signs to accredit him to them; his rod turned to a serpent and then reconverted to a rod, his hand made leprous and healed again, and water poured upon the land becoming blood.

E and P represent the matter quite differently. E knows of no miraculous signs exhibited to Moses, which he was to repeat in the presence of the people, but only speaks (iv. 17) of a rod being given to him, which he was to take with him and with which he was to perform miracles. In one of J's signs, it is true, a rod is spoken of, but that rod was the object upon which the miracle was wrought, converting it into a serpent; whereas the rod of which E speaks was the agent in working miracles, it was clothed with miraculous virtue, the supernatural change being effected not in the rod itself, but in other things by lifting the rod or smiting with it, which is a totally different conception of the nature of the rod and of the use to which it was to be put. It would seem indeed from Ex. vii. 15, that the same rod was used in both these ways, since Moses is there told to take the rod which was turned to a serpent in his hand in order to smite the water of the river with it and so

* So Dr. Briggs, *The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*, p. 165.

turn it into blood. But the critics tell us that this verse has been interpolated by the Redactor, who has attempted in this unwarranted manner to harmonize these widely separate conceptions of the rod, and so reconcile J and E, when in point of fact they are hopelessly at variance. In E the rod is simply and invariably an instrument with which to work miracles. In J it is never used for this purpose; he only narrates that on one occasion it was itself changed to a serpent.

Indeed the critics make this a criterion, by which to distinguish J from E. If a miracle is wrought by Moses by means of his rod, this determines the narrative to be from E. If it is wrought immediately by Jehovah without the intervention of Moses' rod, then it is by J. Upon this principle they partition the text between these documents; every passage in which the rod of Moses occurs is straightway for that reason assigned to E; every passage in which Jehovah acts independently of Moses' rod is assigned to J. And when the partition is complete, they bid us observe how uniformly E makes mention of the rod of Moses, while J never refers to it at all; whereas this is simply the result of the partition, which they have themselves made.

P agrees with J in speaking of a rod changed to a serpent; but he differs entirely in his statement of the place, and the circumstances, and the design of the miracle. According to J it occurred in the desert of Sinai in connection with the vision at the burning bush, and was a sign there given to Moses, which he was to repeat in the presence of the people to accredit him before them. But P (vii. 9-12) transfers it to the court of Pharaoh, and makes it the first of a series of signs wrought at the demand of the king, who summoned his magicians to exhibit their skill and engage in a contest with Moses. Aaron's rod was metamorphosed into a serpent; the magicians do the same with their rods, but Aaron came off superior, since his rod devoured theirs.

In Ex. iv. 18, Moses asks and obtains leave from his father-in-law, Jethro, to return to Egypt; in ver. 19 Jehovah bids him to return. And this is made a ground for parceling these verses between different documents, since they assign quite different reasons for the act of Moses.

J relates (iv. 20) that Moses took his wife and sons with him in his return to Egypt. E says, on the contrary (xviii. 2-5), that Jethro brought them to Moses after the exodus, when he visited him at Mount Sinai. It is therefore inferred that they must have remained with Jethro, and could not have gone with Moses to Egypt. To be sure xviii. 2 expressly says that Moses had sent her back; but this, we are told, is an interpolation by the Redactor,

who thus endeavors to remove what the critics insist is an evident contradiction.

There is also a disagreement between J and P as to the manner in which the message of Moses was received by the people. J says (iv. 31) that the people believed; but P (vi. 9, 12), that they would not hearken unto him.

It thus appears that the documents are at variance in respect to the circumstances of the divine call of Moses to be the deliverer of Israel. It is affirmed on the one hand that the Lord appeared to him in the desert of Sinai in a burning bush, and there commissioned him; on the other that the commission was given to him in Egypt without any vision or burning bush. It is affirmed on the one hand that the divine name Jehovah was then revealed for the first time; on the other that this name had been known and used from the earliest ages of mankind. It is affirmed by one that three several miraculous signs were given to Moses then and there by which to accredit him before the people; by another that no signs were given him, but a miraculous rod was placed in his hand; and by still another that the sign of a rod changed to a serpent was not given to Moses in the desert, nor by him exhibited to the people, but that it was wrought in the presence of Pharaoh and simulated by his magicians. It is affirmed by one that Moses returned from Midian to Egypt, after having of his own motion sought permission of Jethro; by another that he did so at the bidding of Jehovah. It is affirmed by one that he took his wife and sons along with him into Egypt; by another that he left them behind with Jethro.

In this conflict of testimony what are we to believe? Especially when we remember that the witnesses are from five to ten centuries removed from the events which they narrate. The only thing established would be that it was currently believed at those late periods that Moses had been called of God to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage; but there were the most divergent representations in regard to the place where this call was given to him and its attendant circumstances.

It should be observed here that all this alleged variance is created by the critics themselves; and none of it exists in the sacred narrative as it lies before every reader of the Mosaic history. The narrative is split up into parts, and each of these parts is reckoned a separate and independent account of the whole matter. And then by the fallacy of making the part equal to the whole, or one part equal to another part which is quite distinct, seeming discrepancies are produced. The Lord appeared to Moses at the burning bush in the desert of Sinai, and summoned him to be the deliverer of his people. But when his interference on their behalf only had the

effect of leading Pharaoh to double their tasks, the Lord spake to him once again in Egypt, pledging Himself to release Israel from bondage. These are not, as the critics allege, discrepant accounts of the same thing; they are separate revelations made on distinct occasions. That signs should be given him to accredit him before the people, and one of these should likewise be wrought afterwards in the presence of the king, and that in addition Moses should be directed to use his rod in the mighty works which he was to perform, that the people gladly believed his message at first, but when the only result appeared to be to aggravate their burdens they subsequently became incredulous, that Moses took his wife with him to Egypt in the first instance, and afterwards thought it more prudent to send her back to her father till Israel should be set free, there is in all this surely no real inconsistency. The narrative bears the appearance of truth and reality in every one of its particulars. It is only the violent treatment, to which it is subjected by the critics, that causes even the semblance of discordance. Their maxim is divide and conquer. The sacred narrative is parceled between separate documents; these documents are made to contradict each other; and so their statements are distrusted.

We have seen how the critics deal with the call of Moses. When he proceeds to the execution of his task, they find additional discrepancies between the documents. P gives a prominence to Aaron, and E to the elders of Israel, which they do not have in the other documents. In JE Moses simply asks Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to go a three-days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to Jehovah; in P he demands their unconditional release. The different accounts disagree as to the manner in which the plagues were wrought. According to P they follow upon the stretching forth of Aaron's rod; according to E they were induced by the stretching forth of the rod or hand of Moses; according to J they were produced without human instrumentality by the sole and immediate agency of Jehovah. They differ also as to the number of the plagues and what the plagues were. And R has added to the confusion in at least two instances by reporting as distinct and separate plagues, what Dr. Briggs* and other critics assure us are only variant accounts of one and the same. Dr. Dillmann, one of the most eminent of European Old Testament scholars and critics, and a chief antagonist of Wellhausen, expresses himself on this subject in the following manner:† "As the original core of the matter we may assume that the land and people of Egypt were visited in the time preceding the enfranchisement of Israel by all sorts of

* *The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*, p. 78.

† *Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus*, p. 66.

repulsive natural occurrences, which the Israelites ascribed to the agency of their God, and by which their leaders, Moses and Aaron, sought to prove to the Egyptian court the supremacy of their God over the king and the gods of Egypt. But it must be confessed that in Israelitish tradition these occurrences had long been exaggerated into the miraculous. And when once the whole had been transported into the realm of God's unbounded omnipotence, R could have no scruple in arranging the plagues severally found in his sources into a series of nine successive plagues, and thus sketching in an artistic picture in colors to shine forever the treasures of might which God controls for the help of His people, and the overthrow of those who resist His will; also the slow and long suffering but sure and effective dealing of God with His enemies, and the progress of evil in man until at last he becomes perfectly hardened."

The narrative in Exodus does indeed draw such a picture as Dr. Dillmann describes. Is this simply an ideal picture, which Israelitish fancy has dressed up in order to fill out its conception of the goodness and severity of God, which is based indeed on some undefined natural occurrences, but all its miraculous features are to be discarded as legendary or fictitious? Or is it a true and faithful record of what God actually did by His mighty hand and outstretched arm on behalf of His oppressed people? In the latter case it is a revelation of what God truly is; and it demonstrates that Moses was indeed God's accredited messenger and that Israel was His chosen people, and that the revelations made through Moses and the institutions founded by him were indeed from God. And thus the divinity of the religion of the Old Testament has the unmistakable attestation of God Himself, and rests upon an immovable objective basis. But if this picture is one which Israelitish imagination has drawn, it is a purely subjective conception, and is to be judged as any other fancy picture which men may draw. It has no authority over our faith; and it has no value to us except as representing the belief of a generation remote from the events described, when these had been distorted into forms quite different from the reality.

Wellhausen finds a conflict between the documents in respect to the observance of the passover. In P, which is held to be the latest and least reliable, the passover is said to have been instituted prior to the exodus, the blood of the paschal lamb being sprinkled on the doorposts and lintels of the houses of the Israelites to protect the inmates from the destroying angel on his errand of death throughout the land of Egypt. But J and E contain no such account. On the contrary they speak not of a feast before the

exodus, but of the exodus as prior to the feast and for the sake of the feast. Leave was asked to go three days in the wilderness in order to observe a feast to the Lord. But in the course of time the order was reversed. It came to be supposed that the observance of the feast was with a view to the exodus, instead of the exodus with a view to the feast. The annual sacrifice of first-born cattle gave rise to the story that the first-born children of the Egyptians had been swept off by a plague in order to facilitate the departure of the Israelites, and that the passover was in commemoration of this imaginary event. So easy is it for a critic to pervert and nullify the plain statements of the history by partitioning the documents at his pleasure, and then giving loose reins to his imagination.

According to Dr. Dillmann there are, including the song of Moses in Ex. xv, four distinct and divergent accounts of the passage of the Red Sea, all of which nevertheless agree in the statement that Israel was in great peril from the Egyptian army, which had overtaken them by the sea, but escaped unharmed while the Egyptians were drowned. All of them are tinged with the miraculous, but in different degrees. The simplest story is that of the song, if its poetical description be not understood in a grossly literal sense. It records the destruction of the Egyptian host, but not a dry passage of Israel. The water was driven back by the wind, then the wind changed and the water returned, submerging the host of Pharaoh. There were simply natural causes under divine direction. The miracle consisted in the rescue of the people from extreme danger without any agency of their own. In J, as in the song, a strong east wind divided the sea. But in E it was divided by the lifting of Moses' rod, and in P by the stretching out of Moses' hand, so that the waters stood like perpendicular walls on either side, until by the same instrumentality they were closed again. In E the angel of God and in J the pillar of cloud and fire keep the Egyptians from approaching the children of Israel, retarding their advance and throwing them into confusion, till overcome by terror they flee, but are met by the reflux flood and not one of them escapes. A remarkable providence, in which there was nothing strictly supernatural, is thus gradually overlaid with legendary features by the traditions of later ages. In treating of "the story of the crossing of the Red Sea," Dr. Briggs* calls attention to "the historical nucleus and the varied poetical embellishments," and says that while it is a difficult task for the Sunday-school teacher and scholar to undertake to distinguish between them, it will have the advantage of enabling "the scholar to distin-

* *The North American Review*, for January, 1894, p. 73.

guish between the real and the ideal in Biblical history." The critical partition affords an easy method, as will be seen from this and other examples, of separating a narrative into portions which may be variously dealt with, the critic accepting what he pleases and rejecting the rest.

After the passage of the Red Sea Israel proceeded by successive stages to Mount Sinai, where the law was given. Here Wellhausen startles us by his discovery that Israel never was at Sinai at all, and that no law was ever given there. He tells us* that there is perceptible in JE "a form of tradition according to which Israel after the passage of the Red Sea marched directly to Kadesh without first making an excursion to Sinai." "Israel came at once from the exodus to Kadesh" on the southern border of Canaan; and there Israel remained during the forty years of their abode in the desert. It was at Kadesh, not Sinai, that the law was given; only the legislation there was not an act once for all, but lasted forty years and consisted in the administration of justice at the sanctuary, which Moses began, and the priests and judges continued after him. This conception of Moses' legislation as mainly consisting of judicial decisions rather than of statutory enactments is shared by Dr. Driver,† who says of Ex. xviii, the same passage to which Wellhausen here appeals: "The chapter is one of great historical interest: it exhibits to us a picture of *Moses legislating*. Disputes arise among the people; the contending parties come to Moses to have them settled; he adjudicates between them; and his judgments are termed 'the statutes and decisions (*Toroth*) of God' (ver. 16). It was the historic function of the priests to *give decisions (Toroth)* upon cases submitted to them, in matters both of civil right and ceremonial observance; and here Moses himself appears discharging the same function, and so laying the foundation of Hebrew law." This belongs to a notion of the work of Moses, which effaces completely the great body of the laws attributed to him, and merges his function as a legislator in that of a judge deciding causes brought before him for adjudication. While Dr. Driver does not agree with Wellhausen in eliminating Mount Sinai from Israel's history, he is in accord with him in reducing Moses' work of legislation to a minimum. In like manner Dr. Dillmann‡ maintains that Moses wrote nothing; he was a great leader and legislator, who delivered his statutes orally, who reformed the worship and elevated the manners of the people, and purified their religious ideas and their conceptions of God and of His service, and organ-

* *Prolegomena*, p. 363.

† *Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 28.

‡ *Jahrbücher für Deutsche Theologie*, iii, p. 432.

ized them as the people of God, but gave them no written book of laws.

Wellhausen undertakes to account for the prominence given to Sinai in Israelitish tradition, though none of the transactions recorded of it actually took place there. This he does in the following manner: he tells us that "the true and ancient significance of Sinai is quite independent of the giving of the law. It was the seat of the deity, the sacred mountain, doubtless not only for Israel, but generally for all Hebrew and Kainite tribes of the vicinage. The priesthood of Moses was derived from the priesthood there; there Jehovah appeared to him in the bush; thence He sent him to Egypt. Jehovah continued to dwell there in the estimation of the Israelites long after they had settled in Palestine. In the song of Deborah he came from Sinai. In Deut. xxxiii, the Israelites did not go to Jehovah at Sinai, but He came to them from Sinai to Kadesh. It came, however, to be thought more fitting to let the Israelites go to Jehovah. The first form of the tradition was that they appeared at Sinai before Jehovah's face to worship and offer to Him (Ex. iii. 18), and in departing received the ark as a substitute for Jehovah, who continued to dwell on the mountain (Ex. xxxiii). By a still further step Sinai was made the scene of the solemn initiation of the relation between Jehovah and Israel. By a poetic necessity this was converted into a dramatic act upon a lofty stage. What in the older tradition had proceeded in a slow and quiet way, filled up the entire period of Moses, and began just as it continued ever after, was now for solemnity and spectacular effect condensed into a splendid initiative. It then became necessary to characterize the covenant between Jehovah and Israel in some positive way, that is to say for Jehovah to announce the basis and conditions of it to the people, and make known its fundamental laws. And thus the legislative material found entrance into the historical representation."

The basis for this extraordinary representation is found in the so-called parallel narratives, of which the critics make such extensive use. It is claimed that variant accounts of the same transaction have in numerous instances been mistaken by R for distinct events, and recorded as such. Now Wellhausen insists, and other critics agree with him in this, that the narratives which precede the arrival at Sinai are simply duplicates of those which follow [the departure from Sinai. There is general critical consent that the appointment of judges to relieve Moses (Ex. xviii) is a duplicate account of the selection of elders to assist him (Num. xi); that the gift of manna and quails in Ex. xvi is identical with that recorded in Num. xi; and that the bringing water from the rock at

Rephidim in the wilderness of Sin (Ex. xvii) is only another version of that recorded as having taken place at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin (Num. xx), and to this Dr. Briggs* gives his assent. But if these incidents on the way to Sinai are only imaginary reproductions of events which properly belong on the way to Kadesh, then, Wellhausen argues, the visit to Sinai is itself imaginary, and the only thing of which we have proof is that Israel went from the Red Sea to Kadesh. Preposterous as his conclusion is, it is no more so than the premises from which it is drawn. Yet critics, who shrink from the former, thoughtlessly play into his hands by admitting the latter.

Most critics, however, agree that Israel came to Sinai and there received the law. But they profess themselves greatly perplexed in their endeavors to ascertain what took place at Sinai and what law was given there. They complain of the irreconcilable divergence of the documents, of the serious displacements and of the extensive lacunæ, and that R in his attempt to harmonize the documents has put them together in a manner that is altogether misleading, and has so obscured their real sense that it is well-nigh impossible to ascertain the actual course of events. The critics have themselves to thank for all the trouble that they here find; it arises wholly from their partition of the text. The statements of the sacred record are quite plain and self-consistent throughout, and he who follows them has no difficulty in ascertaining either what was done or what laws were enacted. But when the critics undertake to slice this indivisible record into distinct documents, and then make each of these documents stand for a separate and independent account of the whole matter, of course they find it impossible to make these documents agree.

The laws given at Sinai are parceled by them in the following manner: They assign to E the Ten Commandments in Ex. xx, and the judgments embraced in Ex. xxi-xxiii, which are entitled the book of the covenant; † to J (Ex. xxxiv. 10-26) the covenant as renewed after the sin of the golden calf; to P the entire ritual law

* *The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*, p. 79.

† Kuenen limits the Sinaitic legislation still more (*Hex.*, p. 258, *sqq.*). He is of the opinion that in the original narrative of JE no laws were given at Sinai but the Ten Commandments; the book of the covenant (Ex. xxi-xxiii) and the words of the covenant (Ex. xxxiv. 10-26) were in that document assigned not to Sinai but to the plains of Moab, and they have been transposed to their present position by R in order to give place to the Deuteronomic law, which "is really a new edition of the book of the covenant, though very greatly amplified and modified." Dr. Briggs also identifies Deuteronomy with the book of the covenant (*Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*, p. 157), thus nullifying not the legislation at Sinai, but that in the plains of Moab.

or Priest code, embracing the detailed directions given to Moses during the forty days spent on Mount Sinai (Ex. xxv-xxx), the construction and erection of the tabernacle (Ex. xxxv-xl), the laws in Leviticus and the first ten chapters of Numbers. Each document has thus a separate portion of the legislation attributed to it. And now, if each of these separate portions taken singly is made to stand for the entire body of the legislation at Sinai, what can there be but discord? And if one is deemed reliable and another not, the discredited portion will be set aside as non-Mosaic. The process is simple, but the fallacy is obvious. This is the way in which the critics uniformly deal with the Mosaic legislation. As according to the current hypothesis E is separated from the events at Sinai by an interval of from five to seven centuries, while P is at ten centuries' remove from them, their hand is given with some hesitation to E, while P is waved aside entirely. Thus the whole ceremonial law, save a few undefined germs, is summarily shoved overboard; and whatever Mosaic statutes can be recovered, must be sought within the limits of E, with which J substantially agrees, though this document is confessed to be here in a very mutilated condition.

Thus Dr. Driver (*Lit. O. T.*, p. 45): "It is reasonable to suppose that the teaching of Moses on these subjects (*i. e.*, civil ordinances and ceremonial observances) is preserved in its least modified form in the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant." Observe what this implies. We are referred to the few elementary statutes in four chapters of Exodus, preliminary to the formal ratification of the covenant between God and Israel, for our knowledge of Moses' teaching in its least modified form; while all the institutions and statutes which followed the ratification of that covenant, which grew out of it, were based upon it, and unfolded in detail the privileges and the obligations involved in that covenant relation, are swept away as non-Mosaic. And this notwithstanding the fact that these ordinances, which the critics thus summarily remand to a period long posterior to the Mosaic age, are uniformly prefaced: "And the Lord spake to Moses, saying." And the subscription to chap. xxvi of Leviticus declares of the entire antecedent portion of the book: "These are the statutes and judgments and laws which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses." And the closing supplemental chapter (Lev. xxvii) has a subscription of like import: "These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai."

When Dr. Driver remarks (p. 34) that in the book of the covenant "religious institutions are still in a simple undeveloped stage," and (p. 144) that in P they "bear the marks of a more advanced

stage of ceremonial observance," and would have us infer from this that ages of development must have intervened between these two bodies of law, the obvious and sufficient answer is found in the character and design of each respectively. The former consisted of a few simple statutes, to which the people were required to promise obedience as the condition antecedent to the formation of the covenant between God and Israel. The latter gives full and developed expression to the blessings which would accrue to Israel and the duties incumbent upon them as flowing from this covenant relation; and this in the forms of a symbolic ceremonial. The development is not the growth of long periods. It is merely the unfolding of the true conception of the covenant in a series of object lessons before the eyes of the people. Dr. Driver tells us (p. 146) that the later elements in P were still referred to Moses; which is equivalent to saying that what the Scriptures declare expressly was spoken by God to Moses was not spoken to him at all. The laws, which as a whole and in each separate part are affirmed to have been given by the hand of Moses, may upon this theory contain some particulars which emanated from him; but the vast proportion of these laws, and the system into which they are wrought, and the principles of which they are the expression (p. 144), belong to a much later age, and are the gradual growth of post-Mosaic and even post-Solomonic usages.

Dr. Driver and the critics generally do not content themselves with maintaining that the ritual law considered as a whole must be regarded as a post-Mosaic development; they assert the same specifically of particular portions of this law. Thus they are in open variance with the inspired record in respect to the sacred tabernacle.* This is most elaborately described in Ex. xxv, *sqq.*, the specifications being given even down to the most subordinate particulars with the minuteness of an architect, and the process of its construction being detailed with equal minuteness and exactness of repetition (Ex. xxxvi, *sqq.*), the measurements of the whole and of each of the apartments and of each individual item used in the building being accurately stated, and the materials for the frame and the coverings and the veil and the hangings down to the loops and taches and tentpins and cords and the decorations and the articles of furniture. All this elaborate detail is communicated with the view that this structure might be in every part designed of God, and made after the pattern shown to Moses in the mount. But the critics would have us believe that the whole is the mere product of the fancy of a later age, and is simply a proof that P was of a calculating and idealizing turn, and that his imagination disported itself after this dreary

* This is more fully discussed in the last January number of this REVIEW.

and wearisome fashion. And this though it is expressly affirmed of each separate part that it was made in precise accordance with the divine directions; the names of the master workmen who built it are given; the day on which it was erected and dedicated is specified; and not only is Moses' approval of the work particularly spoken of, but the divine approbation was manifested by filling it with the divine glory. And further mention is made of the arrangements for its transportation, as Israel journeyed from place to place, the parties charged with its removal, the number of oxen and of wagons employed in carrying it, and the names of the princes by whom these were presented to the congregation. All this, which is seriously related as historical fact, and in regard to a matter so sacred, is held to be an absolute fiction, the sheer invention of a dreamy writer. We are told in Num. ii, that the tabernacle stood in the centre of the camp, and the disposition of the several tribes about it is particularly specified, the whole forming a hollow square, with three tribes on each of its four sides. This is again declared to be a pure piece of fancy on the part of P, who had a taste for regularity, and thus conceived a sort of geometrical representation of the religious idea, that God had taken up His abode in Israel.

The critics are also in open and avowed collision with the inspired record in respect to the priesthood. They assert* that priestly rights were not limited to the family of Aaron until after the Babylonish exile, but were enjoyed by the Levites generally until that time. And yet we are expressly told (Ex. xxviii, xxix, Lev. viii, ix), that Aaron and his sons were made priests by divine direction, while the Levites generally were appointed to subordinate functions at the sanctuary (Num. iii, iv, xviii); and that this led to the rebellion of Korah and other Levites, who, dissatisfied with the inferior positions assigned to them, aspired to the priesthood (Num. xvi. 8-11). Their awful overthrow is recorded, and the priesthood of Aaron received a fresh divine sanction from his rod that budded, which was thenceforward kept in the sanctuary as a perpetual reminder of the event.

The critics deny that the law restricting sacrifice to a central sanctuary (Deut. xii, Lev. xvii) was in existence before the time of Josiah, notwithstanding the recorded fact that all Israel in the time of Joshua resisted the erection of another altar than that at the sanctuary as an act of rebellion against Jehovah (Josh. xxii. 10, *sqq.*).

The critics declare that the sin-offering and the annual day of atonement are postexilic, though the laws ordaining them are ex-

* Driver, *Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 132.

PLICITLY said to have been given to Moses at Mount Sinai, and mention is made of the actual offering of the former (Lev. x. 16-19), and of the institution of the latter (Lev. xvi. 1, *sqq.*), at the time that Nadab and Abihu met their death for offering strange fire before the Lord.

HUMAN sacrifices are peremptorily forbidden in laws given by God to Moses (Lev. xviii. 21, xx. 2; Deut. xii. 31, xviii. 10), as abominable to the Most High, as punishable with death, and as one of the iniquities for which the Canaanites were to be punished, and for which the Israelites would be similarly punished, if they were guilty of it. It is the same lesson which Abraham was taught when the angel restrained his hand, and a ram was shown him to be offered in place of Isaac. And yet Dr. Briggs* allows himself to use the following most extraordinary language :

“There is indeed no prohibition of the offering up of children in the earliest codes of the Hexateuch. The prohibition was first made in the Deuteronomic code, and originated somewhat late in the history of Israel. The early Hebrews shared with the Canaanites and other neighboring nations in the practice of offering up their children in the flame to God. From the point of view of sacrifice nothing could be more acceptable than the best beloved son, except the offerer himself. . . . The offering up of children and of domestic animals and grains was all a preparing discipline. The training was true and faithful for the time. But it was provisional and temporal, to be displaced by that which is complete and eternal. These were the forms in which it was necessary to clothe the divine law of sacrifice in its earlier stages of revelation.”

Equally astounding is the language which he uses respecting those figurative expressions in the Mosaic writings and in the Bible generally, in which the attributes of God are set forth in human forms to render them more intelligible. These are sundered by critical partition from the passages in which the spirituality and supreme exaltation of God are most fully set forth, a literalism of interpretation is imposed upon them of which neither the writer nor his readers ever dreamed, and wholly unwarranted conclusions are thence drawn that they indicate low and imperfect apprehensions of the divine nature. This utterly unjustifiable procedure involves the same lack of appreciation of the proper meaning of language, as though one were to contend that the branch springing from the roots of Jesse (Isa. xi. 1) was in the intention of the prophet a literal stick of wood. Dr. Briggs† says :

“It is true that there are at times representations of vindictiveness in God, a jealousy of other gods, a cruel disregard of human suffering and human life, an occasional vacillation and change of purpose, the passion of anger and arbitrary preferences, which betray the inadequacy of ancient Israel to understand their

* *The World's Parliament of Religions*, i, p. 656.

† *Ibid.*, p. 659.

God, and the errancy of their conceptions and representations. But we all know that the true God does not accord with these representations. We may call them anthropomorphisms or anthropopathisms, but whatever we may name them, they are errant representations. They do not, however, mar the grandeur of the true God as we see Him in the Old Testament. The truthfulness of the teaching of the doctrine of God is not destroyed by occasional inaccuracies of the teachers."

It is no merely literary question then which this style of criticism raises. It is not simply whether the Pentateuch was written by one author or another, while its historic truth and its divine authority remain unaffected. The truth and evidence of the entire Mosaic history are at stake. And with this stands or falls the reality of God's revelation to Moses and the divine origin of the Old Testament. And this again is not only vouched for and testified to by our divine Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles, but upon this the Lord Jesus bases His own claims. Moses wrote of Him. The predictions uttered and recorded by Moses speak of Christ. The types of which both the Pentateuchal history and the Mosaic institutions are full point to Christ. But if the predictions are not genuine, and the history is untrue, and the institutions were not ordained of God, but are simply the record of priestly usage, what becomes of the witness which they bear to Christ? And must not the religion of the Old Testament sink in our esteem from a religion directly revealed of God to one which is the outgrowth of the Israelitish mind and heart, under an uplifting influence from above, it may be, but still proceeding from man, not from God? It is then based not on positive truth authoritatively communicated from God to man, but on the aspirations and reflections, the yearnings and longings and spiritual struggles of devout and holy men seeking after God, with such divine guidance and inward illumination as good men in every age may enjoy, but that is all. There is no direct revelation, no infallible inspiration, no immediate and positive disclosure of the mind and will of God.

The religion of the Bible is not merely one of abstract doctrines respecting God. It does not consist merely in monotheism, nor in right notions of the being and perfections of God as abstract truths. Nor does it consist merely in devout emotions and aspirations towards the Divine Being. But both its doctrines and its practical piety are based on positive disclosures which God has made of Himself in His dealings with men and His communications to them. It is a historical religion based on palpable outstanding facts, in which God has manifested Himself, and by which He has put Himself in living relation to men. Appeal is throughout made to the mighty deeds and the great wonders wrought by His uplifted hand and His outstretched arm in evidence that it is the almighty God, who has

acted and spoken and revealed Himself, and no mere human imaginings. To discredit these Biblical statements is to discredit the Biblical revelation. And this is what is done throughout the entire Mosaic period, not by Kuenen and Wellhausen and Stade and Cornill merely, who are avowed unbelievers in a supernatural revelation, but by those likewise who claim to be evangelical critics.

It is notorious that the long succession of distinguished scholars, by whom the divisive hypothesis has been elaborated in its application to the Pentateuch, have been unbelievers in an immediate supernatural revelation. And they have not hesitated to avow their want of faith in the reality of prophetic foresight and of miraculous powers. The ready method, by which these have been set aside, is by dexterous feats of criticism. Revelations of truth and duty are brought down to such a period in the history as may fit in with some imagined naturalistic scheme of development. Predictions which have been too accurately fulfilled to be explained away as vague anticipations, shrewd calculations, or lucky guesses, must, as they claim, have been uttered or at least committed to writing after the event. Miracles cannot have been recorded by eye witnesses or contemporaries, but are regarded as legendary exaggerations of events, that are entirely explicable from natural causes. It is therefore assumed that they necessarily imply a sufficient interval between the occurrence and the written narrative to account for the growth of the story. A hypothesis wrought out on the basis of these principles, which are throughout covertly assumed, and the critical phenomena most ingeniously adjusted into conformity with them, can lead to no other result than that with reference to which it was shaped from the beginning. While the discussion seemingly turns on words and phrases and the supposed peculiarities of individual writers, the bent of the whole thing is to rivet the conclusion, which the framers of the hypothesis have tacitly though steadily contemplated, a conclusion irrefragable on their philosophical principles, viz., that the supernatural must be eliminated from the Scriptures. And hence the hypothesis is at this time one of the most potent weapons in the hands of unbelief. Supernatural facts, which stand unshaken in the Mosaic records like granite mountains, impregnable to all other methods of attack, dissolve like wax in the critics' crucible.

Real discoveries are not of course to be discredited because of false principles that are entertained by the discoverers, or wrong motives that may have influenced them. If unbelievers in divine inspiration by their learned investigations can assist us in the elucidation or more correct appreciation of the sacred writings in any respect, we welcome their aid with all our hearts. But all is not

gold that glitters. And there can be no impropriety in subjecting novelties to careful scrutiny, before we adopt conclusions at war with our most cherished convictions and with what we hold to be well-established truths. The apostle's maxim applies here, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." The recent acceptance of this hypothesis by men of high standing in evangelical circles does not rob it of the pernicious tendencies inwrought in its whole texture, and will not prevent the full development of these tendencies, if it shall ever gain prevalence among us.

One very momentous consequence of the adoption of this hypothesis is palpable upon its surface. It nullifies at once the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and substitutes anonymous documents, of late age, in an imperfect state of preservation, which have been woven together and to some extent modified by an anonymous Redactor. It is at once obvious what a vast diminution hence results in the external guarantee of the truth of the record. If Moses himself committed to writing the events in which he bore so conspicuous a part, and the laws and institutions enacted by him, and this product of Moses' own pen has been preserved to us in the Pentateuch, we have a voucher of the very first order of the accuracy of the narrative in every particular, proceeding as it does not only from a contemporary and eye witness cognizant of every detail, but from the leader and legislator whose genius shaped all that he records, and who was more than any other interested in its true and faithful transmission.

It would be a relief if these anonymous sources were themselves the work of contemporaries and participants in the events recorded. If, as Delitzsch assumed when he first suffered himself to be captivated by the hypothesis, Eleazar or Joshua or men of like stamp with them were the authors of the documents, and these were put together in the age immediately succeeding that of Moses, it might seem as though this would afford abundant assurance of the truth of their statements. But who is to assure us that Eleazar or any of his compeers had a hand in these records? If we abandon the Mosaic authorship, which is so explicitly and repeatedly certified by the earliest tradition that we are able to summon, we are out upon the open sea with nothing to direct our course. Nothing can disprove its composition by Moses which does not disprove its origin in the Mosaic age. All thought of its proceeding from the pen of contemporaries must then be abandoned. We go blindly groping along the centuries in quest of authors. The documents may be attributed to Samuel, or to Nathan, or other distinguished men in earlier or in later times. But all is unwarranted conjecture; there is no firm lodgment anywhere. The notion that the authors

of these so-called documents, or the Redactor who compiled the Pentateuch from them, can be identified in the absence of any ancient testimony pointing to another than Moses is utterly groundless.

Even the age to which the documents are to be referred has been vehemently contested, and in the opinion of some is yet unsettled. The Psalms of David are entitled to be heard on this subject. But the critics who discredit the authorship of Moses discredit likewise that of David, and either allow no Psalms whatever to be from his pen, or so few that his voice is silenced entirely. The prophets of the eighth century B.C., Hosea and his contemporaries, supply the first body of evidence, that the critics admit to be unimpeachable. Here then they are obliged to call a halt. The allusions to the contents of the Pentateuch in the oldest books of the prophets are so numerous and explicit that they cannot be disregarded. It must be acknowledged that one or more of the Pentateuchal documents must have been in existence before their time.

It may be said that things are not necessarily as we would like to have them. Desirable as it might be that the history of the Mosaic age should be authenticated by the pen of Moses himself, yet if this has not been done, it cannot be helped, and we must be content with such records as we have. But when we consider the supreme importance of the age of Moses in the religion of Israel, and the fundamental character of the revelations then made, is it supposable that the Lord who brought them out of Egypt by so mighty a hand conducted them through the wilderness, framed their institutions, and gave them such marvelous tokens of His presence and such immediate communications of His will, should have taken no pains to have this faithfully recorded for the instruction and guidance of future generations of His people? The proof should be very clear and cogent before we assent to such a disparaging conclusion.

But if the authors of the several documents were infallibly inspired, and if the Redactor were likewise divinely guarded from error, would we not then have a perfectly trustworthy record, as much so though it were produced in a comparatively late age, as if it had been contemporaneous with the events themselves? This fond fancy is dispelled the moment we come to examine the actual working of the hypothesis, as this has been abundantly illustrated in preceding pages. It is constructed on the assumption not merely of the fallibility but the falsity of the documents, whose accounts are represented to be not merely divergent but contradictory; upon the assumption likewise of the incompetency or bad faith of the Redactor, who either misunderstands his authorities or willfully perverts them, ascribing to them a meaning foreign to their original

and proper intent. The Pentateuch is thus held to be based upon conflicting narratives, written several centuries after the occurrences which they profess to relate, and embodying the diverse traditions which had meanwhile grown up respecting them. These the Redactor has undertaken to harmonize by a rearrangement and by additions of his own, that obscure and alter the original meaning, when in point of fact they were, so the critics affirm, mutually inconsistent. The Pentateuch, therefore, on its face yields a very incorrect representation of what actually took place in the time to which it relates. The only way to reach the real facts is to undo the work of the Redactor, eliminate his misleading additions, and restore as far as possible the documents to the condition in which they were before he meddled with them. This will put us in possession of three discordant traditions, which had arisen in the course of centuries respecting the events in question. The comparison of these traditions will yield a modicum of truth upon the subject, and the rest must be left to conjecture.

And this, be it remembered, is a part of the canon of Scripture, the part in fact which lies at the foundation of the whole; that Scripture, which according to our blessed Lord cannot be broken, and which according to the apostle Paul is given by inspiration of God. Is it surprising that they who accept this hypothesis insist that the current doctrine of Scripture and of divine revelation requires revision?

The extent to which the Mosaic history crumbles away under such treatment, as has been illustrated above, varies with different critics. To Kuenen and Wellhausen it is utterly untrustworthy. Others recoil from such unsparing demolition, and allow more or less to stand unchallenged. But this difference of result is due to the subjective state of the critic himself, not to any clear and intelligible ground in the nature of the case. The whole process is vicious. The claim is preposterous that a consistent and continuous narrative may be rent apart *ad libitum*, and meanings assigned to isolated portions, which the words might admit if viewed independently, but which are impossible in the connection. Yet this lies for the most part at the basis of the divisive criticism, determines generally the line of fracture, and imparts to the whole subject nearly all of its interest and importance in the view of its adherents. Even if the partition hypothesis were well founded and the documents, of which the critics speak so confidently, had a real and separate existence, the Redactor who had them before him in their original completeness was much more competent to judge of their true meaning than modern critics, who by their own confession possess them only in a fragmentary and mutilated condition, and so

blended together that it is extremely difficult and often quite impossible to disentangle them with certainty and accuracy. Under these circumstances to deal with the Pentateuch in its present form in a manner which implies either mistake or misrepresentation on the part of the Redactor is gratuitous and inadmissible unless on the clearest and most unmistakable evidence.

It is nevertheless a fundamental assumption in the literary partition of the Pentateuch, that the Redactor has misunderstood or misrepresented his sources; that narratives, which were but varying accounts of the same thing, were supposed by him to relate to distinct occurrences, and he has treated them as such, wrongly assigning them to different occasions and perhaps different persons; that he has combined his sources in such a way as to give a wrong coloring to their contents, so that they make a false impression and convey a meaning quite different from that which properly belonged to them in their original connection. And the chief value and interest of the critic is thought to be the new light which he brings into the narrative and the altered meaning which he discovers by undoing the work of the Redactor, who is supposed to have cut away much precious material from his documents that is now irrecoverably lost, and to have modified even the mutilated remnant which he has handed down to us. Unless this be so, what is gained by the partition? If everything means just what it did before, what good has been accomplished? If, on the other hand, the meaning has been altered, the question returns, Which is right and which is the better entitled to our confidence, the Redactor who had ample means of knowing what he was doing, or the modern critic who relies upon his conjectures for his facts?

A yet more serious aspect of this literary partition is that there is no limit to it. If the door be opened even on a crack to admit it, all is at the mercy of what there is no means of controlling; and nothing can prevent the door being flung as wide open as the hinges will allow. The appetite for division and subdivision grows by every concession made to quiet it. The analysis of Wellhausen, of Dillmann, of Juelicher, and of Stade shows that we have not yet reached the beginning of the end. Fresh seams are constantly discovered in what critics themselves have previously regarded as indivisible; fresh errors and mistakes are discovered in the narrative that were never suspected before; and the whole becomes the plaything of the critic's fancy. The advocates of literary partition among us at present may stand on comparatively conservative ground* under the influence of their own past training and of cher-

* Dr. Cheyne (*Founders of Old Testament Criticism*, pp. 252, *sqq.*) makes some significant statements respecting the methods adopted by himself and others to

ished principles, which they are unwilling to abandon. But what is to hinder their followers, who are not similarly anchored, from pursuing this partition to its legitimate consequences? It is the first step that costs. And the initial step in this partition is the admission of the untrustworthiness of the sacred record as it now stands, and the necessity of transposition, alteration and reconstruction in order to reach the real truth. After this initial admission has been made, everything further is but a question of degrees. The Scripture is no longer reliable in its present form. The inspiration of its writers has been surrendered. We have lost our infallible guide. And distrust may be carried to any length that the inward disposition of the operator inclines him to indulge it. In yielding the principle everything has been conceded that is involved in it and follows from it. The avalanche cannot be arrested midway in its descent.

The Pentateuch in its unity and integrity is impregnable to hostile assaults. But accept the partition of it which the critics offer, and this will inevitably carry with it the false principles on which it is based, and which are wrought into its entire texture from first to last. From a homogeneous, self-consistent record, the books of Moses are thus converted into mutually conflicting documents of unknown origin, pieced together in a manner to obscure their true original sense by an unknown Redactor. If this is conceded, the truth and inspiration of this portion of Holy Scripture are not worth a rush. The scheme of partition, upon which with unessential modifications critics are now substantially agreed, is what is meant at present by the literary analysis of the Pentateuch. This is what the advocates of that analysis are everywhere understood to accept. This is what is maintained and defended in every volume and treatise written in its interest. This it is which is commended to learners and inquirers on the subject. This is what every voice lifted in its favor must be understood to affirm, unless there is an

introduce the conclusions of the higher criticism gradually and without giving offense, viz., by putting forward in the first instance those results which "are most easily assimilated by thinking laymen," and "*adapting* Old Testament criticism and exegesis to the prejudices of orthodox students. . . . As late as ten or twelve years ago this was sorely needed. But now we have got beyond this." He charges Dr. Driver with "excessive caution" in his *Literature of the Old Testament*; with being "free in his criticism up to a certain point, but then he suddenly stops short." His "book is to a certain extent a compromise," in which Biblical criticism is "pared down for apologetic reasons;" and which "assumes that though the traditional theory of the origin and the historic value of the Old Testament books has been overthrown, yet we must in our reconstruction keep as close to the old theory or system as we can." Dr. Cheyne reminds his more timid associates that "the time for even a partly apologetic criticism or exegesis is almost over;" and he calls upon them to exercise a "*fearless* criticism," and boldly avow what they really hold.

open and positive renunciation of the fundamental principles of this divisive criticism, which so directly antagonize the inspired verity of the Pentateuch in the form in which it has been handed down to us.

If these principles are discarded and the different portions of the Pentateuch are suffered to supplement and explain each other and to harmonize together, as the author of it in its present form intended that they should, the discussion of its literary features and the comparison of the diction and style and conception presented in its different portions would be altogether harmless. This could by no possibility lead to any such partition, as critics now claim, who make these literary phenomena merely the starting point for boundless conjectures and vagaries. Refuse to give loose rein to wild and profitless conjectures born of caprice, if not of skepticism and unbelief, and the fullest consideration of the literary phenomena of the Pentateuch will not alter its meaning in any part; and that factitious attraction which now attaches to the novelties of the higher criticism will completely disappear.

In spite of all that has here been exhibited, it has been affirmed* that "the analysis of the Hexateuch into several distinct original documents is a purely literary question in which no article of faith is involved;" and students are referred to "the completed works of Wellhausen, Reuss, Kuenen, and Dillmann" to study it for themselves. It is sufficient to say that if these distinguished scholars understand the nature and effect of their own hypothesis, it is in the view of each one of them inconsistent with the historic truth of the Pentateuch. The wholesale acceptance of the results of German unbelieving criticism in respect both to the Pentateuch and the rest of the Old Testament by professedly evangelical men is as perilous as it is novel.

The question of the hour is, What shall be done with this bag of dynamite, which has been placed on board of the vessel? Its advocates claim that it is an inoffensive carpet bag, and that there is no harm in suffering it to remain where it is. Meanwhile the fuse is slowly burning. And the practical question for all the passengers is, Shall the vessel be abandoned, and each consult as best he may for his own individual safety, or shall the dangerous package be flung overboard? Shall the staunch old doctrine that the Bible is the infallible Word of God be renounced, and the effort be made to save whatever it is possible to rescue from the wreck, or shall the hypothesis of the literary partition of the Pentateuch be sunk in the depths of the sea?

PRINCETON.

WILLIAM HENRY GREEN.

* Dr. Briggs in the *Presbyterian Review* for 1887, p. 340.