

## "THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL."

In this fascinating book Professor Cornill has shown us some of the results of the Higher Criticism as applied to the Old Testament Scriptures. Professor Cornill leaves us in no doubt as to his position. He follows the lead of Wellhausen, Stade and Graf in his criticism of the Old Testament. Modestly disclaiming any original work himself, Professor Cornill merely professes to be a worker in the fields opened up by these men. Accordingly, the Professor accepts fully the Documentary Theory as applied to the composition of the Old Testament Scriptures, and especially of the Pentateuch.

The Book of Isaiah is divided into two, the Deutero-Isaiah being a prophet who lived during the exile. The Book of Daniel was written during the period of Greek domination. The Pentateuch, with the exception of Deuteronomy and the Historical Books, we owe to the patriotism and the literary activity of the exile. It was in this period of their nation's disgrace that the patriotic and religious spirits among the Jews brooded over the glories of their past history, recalling traditions regarding the deeds of their heroes until these traditions slowly assumed literary form, and the Old Testament as we now have it began to appear. The author finds a brilliant analogy between this period and the disastrous years in the history of his own Fatherland when Prussia was under the iron heel of France, and when the patriotic spirits of the nation dwelt upon the glorious traditions of their history.

Professor Cornill regards the traditions of Israel concerning its ancient history on the whole as historical, while at the same time he does not believe that the historical books assumed written form till a period much later than their traditional dates. Here are the professor's words:—"And now I must make an admission to you, which it is hard for me to make, but which is my fullest scientific conviction, based upon the most cogent grounds, that in the sense in which the historian speaks of "knowing", we know absolutely nothing about Moses. All original records are missing; we have not received a line, not even a word, from Moses himself, or from any of his contemporaries; even the celebrated Ten Commandments are not from him, but, as can be proved, were written in the first half of the seventh century between 700 and 650 B.C. The oldest accounts we have of Moses are five hundred years later than his time."

The professor goes on to show why, in face of this belief, he still regards the teaching of Moses as historical. This he does by the supposition that, on no other theory, can we explain the religion of Israel with its rich contents before the prophets had given that religion a wholly new impulse. This indirect proof Professor Cornill thinks is thoroughly satisfactory; and he regards it as proved that Moses was an historical personage who was the means of revealing to Israel the love of Jehovah and His willingness to guide His people Israel.

As we have said, this is a very fascinating book. The style is easy, flowery and at times brilliant. Indeed we are surprised to find the thoughts of a German theologian appear in such a graceful dress. Either Professor Cornill must, in this regard be a striking exception to the run of German writers, or his translator must be a man of great literary taste who has performed his task with unwonted skill. In reading the book we are constantly reminded of the works of Professor George Adam Smith. We might almost fancy that we held in our hand Professor Smith's latest work on the Minor Prophets. There is the same easy style, the same brilliancy, the same tenderness, the same accurate scholarship, the same attitude towards prophecy, although Professor Cornill is a more advanced "higher critic" than his fellow-worker in Scotland.

At the same time Professor Cornill's book breathes a deep religious feeling and reverence for things divine. It is indeed true that he is exceedingly free in criticising the inspired writers and the actions of Israel's heroes. He gives very different rates of value to the different books, and thinks that the judgments of the compilers of the historical books regarding the national heroes must in many cases be reversed.

Yet, withal, the book shows on the part of the professor tender religious feeling and deep love for God. It is evident that the professor is a man of emotional temperament. The book of Jonah, he tells us he has read a

hundred times, and never without tears such a picture does it give of the divine love and compassion. We can easily imagine such a man to be the idol of his students, combining as he does personal magnetism with strict scholarship and emotional life.

So if we cannot shut our eyes to the defects of the book. It professes to be scientific. Yet, at every page, we are compelled to question the science to which appeal is made. The professor appears to regard the Old Testament in the same way that the naturalist regards the detached bones of some long extinct form of animal life. And he proceeds with unwearied patience and skill to fit bone to bone, and to cover the whole with sinew and flesh, till he has reconstructed as he thinks, the actual form of the past. To the spiritual eye the Old Testament does not consist of detached bones disinterred by the naturalist, but is a living unity full of spiritual life. And, indeed, recent science is moving away from the direction of Professor Cornill's theories. The Archæologist, the Geographer, the Numismatist have declared against him. Sayce and Paole have declared themselves strongly in favour of the authenticity of the Pentateuch. Sayce and Lenomant uphold the authenticity of Daniel. The Hebraist also has not always been satisfied with the theories of the "higher critic." Professor Robertson of Scotland and Professor Greer of America defend the traditional view regarding the composition of the Old Testament; and their arguments have still to be answered. At every point their science questions the accuracy of Professor Cornill's position, and it is not unlikely that, in the coming years it will be completely discredited.

At the same time, this is, in many respects, a very useful book. If studied with prudence it will shed much light upon various books of scripture; it shows in succinct form what the theory of the "higher critic" really is, while above all it shows that there was a divine purpose and a divine revelation in the religion of the people of Israel; accomplishing its perfect work amid all the sinfulness of their environment and of their own unbelief and hardness of heart.

## MINISTERIAL UNREST.

In the last issue of the *New York Observer* there appeared an article, under the above heading, by W. N. Page of Leavenworth, Kan., which it appears to me would apply with greater or less directness to some of the Canadian congregations. Mr. Page says:

"The pulpit of one of the largest churches in this State has been vacant for some months. Many letters have come to the writer from those asking to be recommended to the church as candidates for the pastorate. Finally, on behalf of one who seemed specially worthy—and importunate, the recommendation was written. The letter of the clerk of the session in response bears this sentence: 'We are astounded at the signs of unrest among our Presbyterian pastors. Over forty applications have been received already from all over the land, and more are coming every day.'

"I am aware that this subject has been discussed many times in our papers, yet the problem is still unsolved, and the last word has by no means been spoken or written. The clerk of that session need not be astounded, for his church is but undergoing the usual experience of all fairly well-to-do vacant pulpits. Something is plainly wrong. Whose is the fault? Generally we blame the ministerial brethren for it all. Possibly the church needs a word of warning. The effect of these wholesale applications is certainly bad for churches so vigorously courted by the restless brethren.

"The church referred to above should have had a pastor months ago; and probably would have had if the seekers had let her alone. But she has become critical, uncertain, and divided in her wishes over her embarrassment of riches. Meanwhile, divisions are not being healed; some of her members are drifting away to other denominations; no aggressive work is being done, and her finances are getting in a bad way. And the strife goes on. Man after man has his friends who are urging him as just the one above all others. But a majority cannot be gotten for any one, and the church is vacant, indeed.

Some plain words should be spoken, and some work should be done by some authority in the church somewhere. This condition of affairs reveals a disregard of covenant vows most saddening. In the forty

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