

with it. It is evolutionary in principle, and, it cannot well be denied, revolutionary in its results. It holds that the Hexateuch is a growth of many centuries, from the more or less mythical period of Moses to the Babylonian exile. Its three codes of laws belong to different epochs of Israelitish history, the earliest of them not arising until hundreds of years after the time of Moses and the Exodus. Its narrative matter, properly distributed, goes mostly with the laws, as a multitude of anachronisms, contradictions, and efforts at editorial adjustment show. In short, the Hexateuch is a compilation from three different works—subordinating a minor distinction—themselves much modified from their original form, and belonging to wholly different authors and widely different periods. A redactor united them together as they now appear, being guided by the principle of preserving, as far as possible, each intact within the limits of verisimilitude, but without intending, apparently, to vouch for the historicity of anything. Most of the references to Moses, the wilderness, and utterances of Jehovah are mere literary accommodations. The only safe guide in seeking for the facts underlying and mixed up with numerous misstatements and anachronisms is the principle of historical criticism as it is applied in the examination of other ancient books.

Such, in briefest outline, are the two sharply antagonistic theories now confronting each other. Until disproved and displaced, however, the former holds the field. The burden of proof rests plainly on the adherents of the later one. This should be clearly understood. There is a widespread effort to give a contrary impression. The new theory has won for itself so numerous a following, especially in Germany, that the claim of superiority and of victory is already made for it. But that by no means follows. It is a question to be settled by convincing arguments rather than by votes. It is not to be forgotten that German scholars have taken positions with as bold a front before, which they have found themselves unable to defend. The history of similar movements shows the value of caution and deliberation. Even a far less radical change of attitude toward the Scriptures than that now demanded should only be made for the most satisfactory reasons.

Moreover, by what prerogative do scholars assume thus to settle offhand, as it were, and behind the backs of the Christian people of these several lands, a question which so vitally concerns them? A cardinal principle of Protestantism is, that the Bible is a book for the people. It has no merely esoteric problems, whether critical or practical. Certainly these, which so directly involve the value and authority of the Scriptures, are not of that sort. If the new theory can be properly defended at all, the line of defence can be made plain to ordinary minds; to the sensible and devout men and women of our churches as well as their spiritual leaders. Such an effort has never yet been successfully made.

Still further, the final test by which one theory or the other will find acceptance will be that it best accounts for *all the facts*. The theory