

Are not many men to-day accepting the new view traditionally, accepting it and proclaiming it not because examined and found true, but because it is supposed that great Hebraists competent to judge have decided the matter beyond dispute? As Andrew Lang has finely said "There are many who disbelieve in authority, but do believe in authorities."

For myself I always watch suspiciously a specialist with a theory.

But here the mighty hand of the specialist is raised and waves us ordinary ministers off the ground altogether. We are told that none can enter here but the specialist, the Hebraist, the critic. They would have us believe that these men by education and training have developed a kind of supernatural sense for discerning documents and tracing fragments of literature and that without this our judgments are vain.

I want to stand here with the rest of my brethren and refuse to be so majestically dismissed. We cannot, it is true, all be specialists in linguistics or in "stylistics." We have not time for this; but we may with moderate diligence learn enough to be able to appreciate the argument of the specialist. We may not be able to do what a Kuenen, a Wellhausen, or a Robertson Smith has done in linguistic and critical examination of Old Testament literature. To these men with their vast learning the work they have gone through has been most laborious, and the process of investigation tedious and painful. We may not be able even to follow them in all their minutiae. But now that the results of their great labours are before us, with moderate learning and good sense I claim we can estimate the value of these results; but further, and what is of more importance, with all the facts before us I think we can come to some conclusion as to the validity of their underlying hypothesis.

And further still, not only we Christian ministers, but the intelligent members of our churches must come to a conclusion on this theory, for, is it not evident, that whatever view prevails it must be one that will commend itself to the good judgment of all reflecting Christian people? The critics disclaim the judgment of the people on the work. I have indicated a sense in which they are right in this. But, if their Bible be one for specialists only to interpret, and not to be put into the hands of the common people, they take a leaf out of the Romanist's book in holding that the laity cannot read and interpret the Bible for themselves.

Now I would like to put my finger on the spot where I think a real danger lurks in Higher Criticism.

Truth should not be, and is not, in danger from the Higher Criticism that takes the literature of the Old Testament as it stands and submits it to a thorough-going literary analysis. This should and must serve the interests of truth, and we must never forget that the truth whatever it is will yield a better moral result than any lie or any error however sacred.

But there is danger to the truth when attempts are made to use this analysis as a basis for a purely naturalistic development of Bible history, with an apparent determination to stretch the facts of the Bible on the Procrustean bed of such a theory. It is wonderful how even the fairest of the men who hold this theory will say to us "It is perfectly clear" concerning some conclusion needful for their theory, when the clearness is not apparent, and will strike out a passage of Scripture as an interpolation with but little reason if it stands in the way of their theory.

It must be fully admitted that there are difficulties in the way of the usually accepted theory. There always have been some apparent objections. The critics have raised many more. These objections of the critics must be acknowledged and met as far as possible; such objections, for example, as the following:—the minute ritual in a desert legislation; the absence of any record of the observance of the Mosaic law from the entrance into Canaan to the times of the

earlier kings; the late date of a central place of worship; the anachronisms and contradictions which they point out in the Old Testament narratives, variations and peculiarities of style in books by the same reputed author.

But, whilst we acknowledge these difficulties, we think that the difficulties besetting the modern theory are very much greater. Some of these difficulties and inconsistencies I shall proceed to point out and state some reasons why the new theory should not be substituted for the old.

1st. We can press the naturalness and simplicity of the traditional view as against a view of the Scriptures that is complex and dominated by a theory, namely, the theory that the records were framed for the purpose of establishing a priestly code and consolidating priestly authority.

2nd. We want further light on the great literary phenomenon of their composition according to the critical theory,—some explanation of how such a vast mass of rewritten history and fabricated legislation could be crowded into the period of the exile. The ingenuity of the modern school of critics is unquestionably very great, but it is nothing to the ingenuity and marvellous inventiveness they ascribe to the school of Ezra.

Take a single point. According to the critics perhaps a score of writers, or more, were engaged in bring the Pentateuch and the histories into their present shape. How comes it then that writers, writing of times say 800 years in the past, make no mistakes in their descriptions of topography or of the habits and customs of the times of which they write? It is a literary miracle.

3rd. Again, as against their supposition of the non-literary character of the Mosaic age we go to Tell-el-Amarna and behold the bricks are there unto this day that tell us of the wonderful literary activity in Egypt before the Exodus. Indeed archaeology is arraying a logic of facts that will apparently tumble down very much of the fabric erected on critical intuition.

Not only was Egypt, the land from which the Israelites went out, a literary land, but there is abundant evidence to show that this was true of the land to which they went; that reading and writing were well known to the Canaanites; that Kirjath-Sepher, or Book Town, was no anachronism. It was therefore quite possible for Moses to have written, in the main, what was ascribed to him, and quite probable that he did have much more to do with the composition of the Pentateuch than even moderate critics contend for, and quite probable that the historic records date much farther back than critics at present allow.

It does not seem to me to be common sense to reduce the legislation of Moses to a few primal principles and a few covenant obligations. Moses is altogether too large a figure to be crushed into such a small space.

But we should have it clearly understood that we contend for the Mosaic legislation rather than for the Mosaic authorship. That authorship, however, in a form better defined will likely stand. These records have on them an honest face, and we want good proof if they are charged with fraud. The real point, however, to be determined is this: Is the history true?

4th. Again, we can bring the two theories together on common ground. We can test them as explanations of admitted facts, and ask which is the better? which is the more rational?

Now the critics admit Hosea and Amos to be genuine writings of their time—750 before Christ. At that time, too, they acknowledged the existence of the Covenant Code; the stories of Elijah and Elisha; the stories of the patriarchs; Judges and Samuel (less additions).

Now these writings as literature have to be accounted for. The critics, according to their theory, have to explain—and they have not done it—how a non-literary people became in an incredibly short time a literary people.

The writings of these prophets are remarkable productions of literature. The Book of Amos is, according to the verdict of the best critics, in choice Hebrew and in exquisite literary style. What explanation can be given—and at the same time give the writers fairplay—of the religious consciousness and of the literary attainments of these writers? Surely there must have been long antecedent literary culture and long religious development, else how could Amos so write? and for what readers?

There is nothing, moreover, in these earlier prophets to hint that they are the originators of a new religious ideal or of new religious customs.

Look at this little Book of Amos. In it you do not find any suggestion as of a new religion springing out of old traditions. His appeal is for the old religion against modern sins and new errors; an appeal to religious and moral ideas presumed to be already grounded in the minds of his readers (e.g., Is it not so, O house of Israel? ii. 11); an appeal to the fact of a line of prophets who had taught and protested in the past. Surely Amos knew where he got, and where Israel got, their religious ideas, knew better than any critics in the nineteenth century can tell him.

5th. I would like further light on a few things. I would like more light on the assumed fact that the religion of Israel for centuries continued to be as one of the other religions of the earth in a low, animistic ritual form, and then so rapidly developed into the pure ethical monotheism of the prophets. I would so like a little explanation of this subtle process by which semi-heathenish Israel absorbed heathenish material from the nations round about, and transmuted it into a higher spiritual religion.

I would like to know, further, how it comes that both Deuteronomy and the Levitical Code contain the laws that have reference to the desert life. If these laws existed, where were they kept during this long period? If they did not exist, how came they into codes written so long after?

I should like to know how it happens that the Deuteronomic Code which was, according to the critics, introduced to centralize worship at the temple, is so comparatively barren in ritual, the thing most needed in the temple service, whilst the Levitical Code drawn up during the exile when the temple lay in ruins is full to repletion with ritualistic details.

I should like much more light than they give us as to the source of the ceremonial and the ritual. I should like some explanation more clear and consistent than "the codification of a praxis," and "the programme of the priests."

6th. I look at the great outstanding facts in the sacred writings, the nation's testimony to its earlier history; the ethical monotheism throughout; the place of Moses and his legislation; the prophets in their work and national import, and I ask, can the critic deal honestly with the literature and do historical justice to these?

For my part I think they fail sadly here. I take then the admitted facts of history, and I find the theory of the Biblical writers fits into its general trend naturally; the modern theory does not. I take abiding effects that must be accounted for. The Biblical theory accounts for them; the modern does not.

I take the Jew with the Talmud and his traditions. The Bible theory accounts for him; the modern does not.

I take the New Testament, Christ and His teachings, the apostles and their teachings, the Biblical theory harmonizes with them; the modern does not.

Now with all these, to me, apparently insuperable objections, and others I have not time to mention, I see no other course than to reject the new theory until it shows far better reasons than it has shown for displacing the old.

But rejecting the theory does not preclude us from assimilating much of the light critics have thrown upon the Bible.

We may feel that if the laws are not by Moses, the history ascribing them to him is a fraud; but, if the laws are by Moses, we may allow revisions and emendations, and still have veritable history. Bishop Ellcott's view will cover the ground and give a line of explanation that will meet many of the difficulties. "The historical books as we have them bear unmistakable marks of the work of having passed through the hands, not only of early compilers, but of later editors and revisors, numerous notes, archaeological and explanatory, some obviously of an earlier and some of a later date, being found in all the books, but particularly in the more ancient."

It will be a long time yet before the last word is spoken on the details of this subject. In the meantime let us be sure of this, that criticism cannot destroy the abiding Word of God. The power of God has been in and with His Word in the past. That power is very manifest in the present day, and will continue to the end. If new facts are brought to light, let us honestly receive them and wisely adjust our view of the Bible to the facts.

At present there is considerable chaos reigning in Old Testament criticism, and the critics, whose process is too largely subjective, are asking us to build too much on their intuition, an intuition which in the nature of the case is changeable. We may rest assured that that view of the Bible will finally be adopted which is historically true.

This modern view is not propagated by those who hate the Word, but by many who at least profess to revere it. Still the religious element has been left hitherto too much in the background by the critics. I fear that criticism is too scientifically cold. We wait for some man of large erudition in full sympathy with the great throbbing heart of the Bible, and living in the stream of a warm Christian life, to tell us the real meaning and value of this great movement.

In the meantime it is affecting everything with which the Bible is specially identified, and in what remains of this lecture, I shall proceed to indicate how it has affected (1) the Doctrine of Inspiration, (2) Theology, (3) Comparative Religion.

THE LATE DR. McCOSH VISITING BRECHIN.

Some time after the present warder came to Brechin there came to his door a gentleman who asked admittance to the Abbey. "I was once minister here," said the stranger, "and would like to revive some of my old memories." The warder accompanied him into the church and the stranger slowly ascended the pulpit stairs. He bent forward as if scanning the faces of a congregation. He was manifestly deep in thought, and there seemed to sweep across his mind much that had passed away since last, as parish minister of the Church of Scotland, he had stood within these walls. The friends of other days were there. All the peculiarly sacred associations of this house of God, hoary with antiquity and venerable with honours, seemed to well up in his heart as once before they had done when he had, in obedience to duty, wrenched himself from them for ever. Sinking back into the pulpit he burst into a flood of tears. The warder quietly stole away, and the minister—was alone. The stranger was Dr. McCosh, of Princeton, revisiting, for the first time since the fatal '43, his dearly loved Pre-Disruption Church and home.

Here is an actual leaf from the experience of a teacher of civil government in the Boston public schools. In a written examination to the question, "How are the Senators elected?" the answer was, "They are elected from bath-houses." On inquiry as to what suggested such an answer, the teacher found that in the precinct where the pupil lived caucuses were held in a bath-house.—*Lowell Courier.*