

THE HIGHER CRITICISM AND THE MONUMENTS"

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(Conclusion)

In regard to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch the monuments afford only indirect evidence, but nevertheless evidence of very considerable weight. They show that Moses was in the best possible position to produce such a work and consequently that he probably did produce it. Living in the civilization of Egypt he would have at his disposal the vast literature of his own and preceding ages, and not only the literature of Egypt but of Babylonia and Palestine as well. This would give him all the material necessary to write such a narrative as is found in the Pentateuch, and on natural grounds material without which he could not have written it. At no subsequent period would an author be in such a favorable position for such a work. In the days of Ezra for instance, when, according to the Radical Critics much of this narrative was written, the vast literature of the past was largely buried in the ruins of extinct cities and nations. There is not the slightest likelihood that at that time a Jewish author in Jerusalem would have had at his disposal a large literature dealing with the era of Moses and preceding eras. And what was true of Ezra's time was in a measure true of the other periods in the national life. It is true that in every age there was tradition reaching back into the dim past, but tradition alone could never secure the accuracy in detail which is found in the record of the Pentateuch. It may be emphatically repeated, therefore, that at no period in Israel's history were the conditions so favorable for producing the historical part of the Pentateuch as in the days of Moses, and this to one who looks into the matter goes a considerable distance in showing that it was in its essential features produced then. Moses, however, was the most highly educated man of his day in sympathy with Israel. If then the narrative was written at that time it was doubtless written by Moses. But to establish the Mosaic authorship is to do much to establish the authenticity as well.

In regard to the legislative portion of the Pentateuch the question is not so much one of authenticity as of authorship. Everyone knows that the laws of the Pentateuch were at sometime or other constituted the laws regulating the civil, moral, and religious life of Israel. The matter in dispute is the authorship. Did Moses write these laws or were they written by a later hand? That is the question. Here also the evidence afforded by the monuments has more an indirect than a direct bearing. Nothing has been as yet discovered proving that Israel, as a matter of fact, enjoyed in those early times legislation such as the Mosaic, but much has been discovered that makes it highly probable that it did. The monuments, according to Dr. Sayce, have made it clear that there existed in Babylonia and in other lands long before the days of Moses an elaborate ceremonial system with its priests and high priests, with its holy days and holy seasons, with its burnt offerings, peace offerings, meal offerings and sin offerings. The high civilization attained, moreover, makes it quite certain that these nations had also a somewhat developed code of civil laws. This makes it almost certain that Israel too would have a somewhat elaborate ceremonial system and a somewhat comprehensive code of civil laws. Israel was for generations in close contact with the highest civilization of its day, was so indeed since the call of Abraham and before that event. This would develop among the people a condition religious, moral and civil, whose needs a rudimentary system of laws would not meet. But as we may be sure that when organized into a nation they were given a code, ceremonial, moral and civil, adapted to their condition, it is quite safe to conclude that that code was far from being rudimentary, was on the contrary quite elaborate.

One of the telling arguments of the Radical Critics against the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch legislation is that that legislation shows a higher civilization than existed in Israel in those days. This argument the monuments refute by showing that such civilization existed among the people under whose influence Israel grew up into a nation and so must have been found in Israel too. Moreover it is extremely improbable that a leader such as Moses was would have organized his people in a period of such civilization without giving a fuller code of laws than that with which the Radical Critics credit him.

In the light of what has been said therefore one might be pardoned for thinking that if the progress of discovery continues the speculations of the Radical Critics will soon cease to be a disturbing force in the world of theology. This does not mean that all the conclusions of these Critics will be abandoned. It does not mean for instance that the documentary theory in regard to the composition of the Pentateuch will then be abandoned. It does mean that the substantial authenticity of the narrative and the substantial Mosaic authorship of the legislation will be allowed. The question of documents has nothing to do with the authenticity of the record. The author may have made use of a number of documents or he may not have done so. His doing so or his not doing so would interfere neither with the authenticity of the narrative nor with its inspiration.

Another part of the work that is of special interest for this day is that which deals with the Books of the Chronicles. These books go far to uphold the traditional view of the Pentateuch. If first and second Chronicles are historic the conclusions of the Radical Critics are false, if the conclusions of the Radical Critics are true, first and second Chronicles cannot be historic. The Radical Critics virtually admit this regarding these books as the product of a later author bent to the task of proving the early origin of the Mosaic legislation. Sayce gives a number of instances in which the monuments confirm the narrative peculiar to the chronicler. In so doing he not only increases the evidence supporting the authenticity of Chronicles but also that supporting the authenticity of the Pentateuch.

There are those who persist in holding that the discoveries in the East have had no effect upon the conclusions of the Radical Critics. One finds it difficult to understand how thoughtful men can take such a position. The monuments have certainly provided evidence authenticating the narrative of the Pentateuch. Before the discovery of these monuments there was little evidence of such a kind beyond that afforded by Scripture itself, now there is a large quantity of external evidence quite independent of Scripture. How in the face of this one fact men say that the monuments have had no effect upon the conclusions of the Radical Critics *passes comprehension*. Then, too, as has been already stated these discoveries have met one of the strong arguments advanced by these Critics against the Mosaic authorship of the legislation in the Pentateuch when it was made clear that there was in the days of Moses a civilization quite as advanced as that implied in that legislation. It is quite true that the monuments have had no effect on the discussion in regard to the documents supposed to be discovered in the narrative. This, however, is a very unimportant matter. The great question is that of the authenticity, of the narrative and the authorship of the law. And in the answer to this question the monuments have had and will have a large effect.

HINTS FOR YOUNG MINISTERS.

A Minister, after attending a prominent church, and hearing a sermon upon a text which he himself several times preached from, and almost every Gospel preacher has expounded—a text containing the very marrow of the Gospel, went home refreshed, cheered, glad and grateful. There was not a new idea in the discourse, but it was listened to as closely, and with as much interest, as though he had known nothing about it. Why? Because it contained the truth of justification by faith—a basis truth upon which his salvation rested—a truth that leads to a blessed experience, and, hence, he found in its happy, clear and forcible presentation heart comfort and life-cheer. It was set forth with an earnestness and directness that could not but do good. A pastor of experience said—"That young man's ministry will be a success. Such pure Gospel, so faithfully and plainly expounded, will build up believers and save sinners." Let ministers stand by the truth as it is in Jesus. Let philosophy and metaphysics and aesthetics alone. Deal with souls: bring a Christ of redeeming power to them. Do not be afraid to preach a substitutory sacrifice—a Jesus upon the Cross for sinners. Especially let young preachers who are tempted to deal in pulpit pyrotechnics and go after the sensational, keep along the old track of the apostles, reformers, and evangelists in holding up a Christ crucified as the only hope of perishing, guilty men—*Philadelphian Presbyterian*.