

is defended. The former theory requires a redactor, and he may at least be credited with a little common sense. *Ex hypothesi*, the laws of Israel were revised. It is, we are told, a "codification of pre-existent usage." But in that case obsolete laws would be dropped out, and their place taken by the new regulations, just as in any ordinary legal hand-book or codification of existing laws. In collections of laws of extreme magnitude and complexity contradictions might be allowed to remain by an oversight. But no one will contend that the Pentateuch is a code of laws so numerous and intricate that contradictions would easily escape the redactor's eye. Granted that the Israelites were not trained in habits of critical research. But this is not a critical, but a practical question. Any one of ordinary common sense can tell when two regulations are distinctly opposed. And if the post-exilic priests felt themselves competent to undertake a thorough revision of the books of the law, we cannot doubt that they would also have imagined themselves competent to reconcile any contradictions in their first rough draft of the new code, the more especially as cases must almost certainly have arisen under it in less than six months after its promulgation in its present shape. Thus the difficulty of the supposed contradictions is not removed, nor even lessened, by supposing the Pentateuch to have grown gradually into its present shape. Nor, it may be added, do the extreme simplicity of the regulations point to a highly organized condition of society, but they rather seem to embody the main principles upon which the law should be administered when Israel was settled in Palestine.

The evidences of an early date contained in the Pentateuch as we now have it are beyond the limits imposed on us.¹ Mr. Bissell, Mr. Curtiss, and other writers have pointed

¹ Neither can we enter into the question whether the present form of the legal books (Leviticus and Deuteronomy excepted), interspersing as it does the legal enactments with snatches of narrative, does not lead to the conclusion that it was in the main composed at the time the events happened. Principal Cave, in a recent article, announces himself a convert to this theory. It would not necessarily preclude the insertion of some later laws. But it is altogether fatal to the