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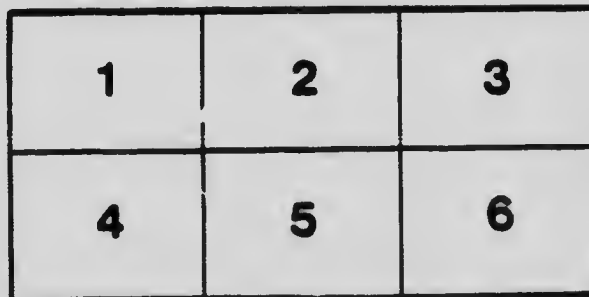
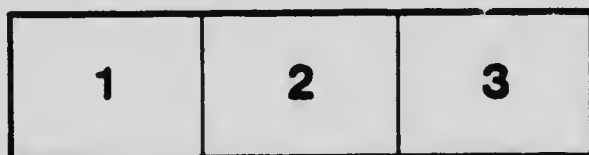
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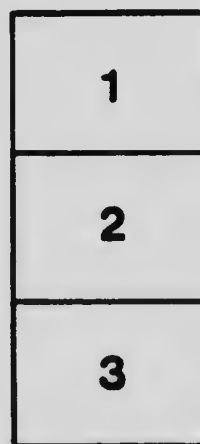
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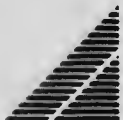
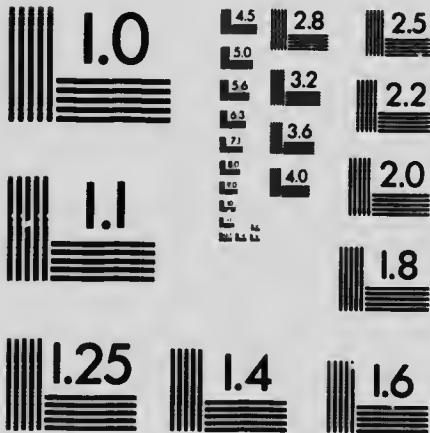
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**"MODERN CRITICISM AND THE
PREACHING OF THE OLD
TESTAMENT"**

**A BRIEF REVIEW OF THEORIES ADVOCATED IN PROFESSOR
GEORGE ADAM SMITH'S YALE LECTURES'**

BY THE

REV. E. H. DEWART, D.D.

TORONTO:

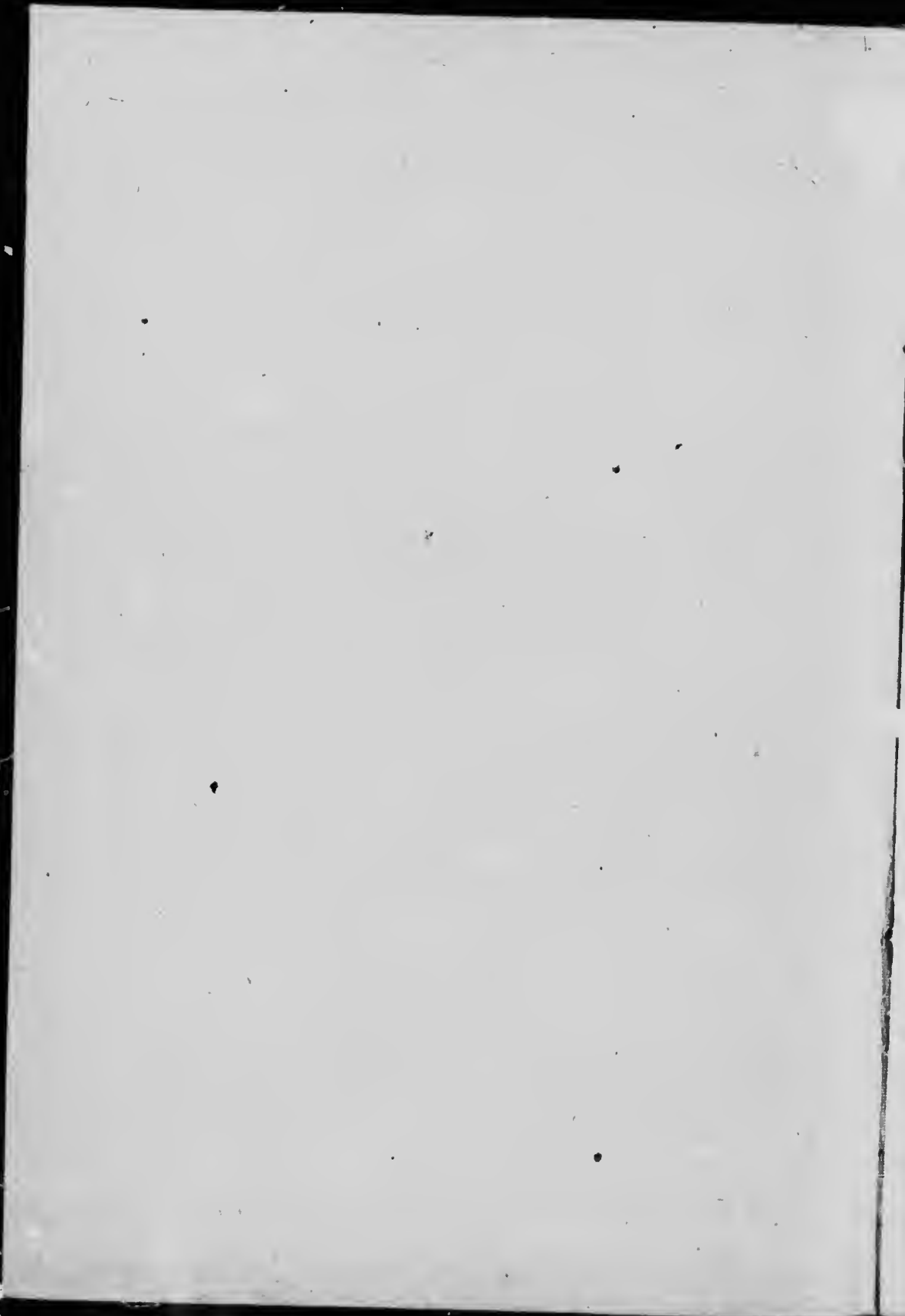
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ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS.

Free criticism justified—The right to reject as sacred as the right to accept—Professor Smith's negative criticism cannot help preachers—He is in full agreement with the disintegrating Higher Critics—Their premises involve grave and dangerous conclusions—Our Lord's teaching wholly at variance with the negative criticism—A specific statement of unanswerably strong objections—An extraordinary way of fixing the indemnity or loss—Deems it no loss to count Bible history fictitious myths—Delitzsch on history—A grave mistake—"Paradise Lost"—Extreme views unfairly ascribed to conservative opponents—The real issues stated—Rationalist teaching not cancelled by eulogies of the Old Testament—Trend of Higher Criticism towards a denial of supernatural religion—Living examples—Views of Green and Rawlinson—Opinions of prominent divines on Professor Smith's views and illogical arguments.



“Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament.”*

ALL intelligent Christians admit the right and duty of free critical study of the Bible, however much they may differ as to the truth or effect of particular theories. In the examination of the modern theories about the books and parts of books of the Old Testament, the chief questions that demand a solution, in order to reach sound conclusions, are :

- (1) What are the attested relevant facts ?
- (2) Are the inferences drawn from these facts fair and logical conclusions ?
- (3) How would the acceptance of the theories of the negative “higher” criticism affect belief in the truth and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures ?

In seeking answers to these questions we should accept whatever is duly attested by adequate proof. The effect or consequences of what we believe about the Bible should also receive due consideration, as the results of our beliefs indicate their character. The right to accept what we believe to be true and duly proved must be firmly maintained ; but the right to reject what we believe to be false, or not supported by proper evidence, is equally sacred.

* The substance of this essay appeared in the *Homiletic Review* for February, 1902. It is republished, with important additions, by permission of the publishers of that magazine.

The exercise of this right should not be represented as a sign of opposition to freedom of thought or progress in religious knowledge. We may freely admit that modern critical study has shed much light upon the origin and times of the books of the Bible, which may cause a modification of some ideas formerly held; and yet we may be fully convinced that nearly all the speculative dissection, which tends to overthrow confidence in the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures, is built upon ingenious conjectures that are not justified by any proper proof.

Dr. - George Adam Smith's Yale Lectures, published under the title at the head of this article, have attracted a good deal of attention, as one of the latest and ablest apologies for the disintegrating higher criticism of the Old Testament. The book has been highly eulogized in some quarters, as if it were an irenic vindication of the Old Testament from the effects of all criticism which tended to depreciate its value and authority for Christian preachers. Of course, those who are already in sympathy with the lines of thought set forth in the work will be highly gratified with it; and those who have not studied the arguments for what we may call the Biblical view may be impressed by the eloquent and plausible advocacy of this gifted author. But we do not believe that unbiassed readers who are familiar with the literature of the subject will be likely to say that the views of the Old Testament, which are assumed throughout these lectures, are in harmony with what has been claimed for them by those who accept the theories advocated. Though delivered under the auspices of "The Lyman Beecher Lectureship on Preaching," it is very difficult to see how the acceptance of the views advocated can conduce to make preachers

more effective, unless, indeed, efforts to show that much of the Old Testament is fictitious and not trustworthy are adapted to produce this effect. The main object of the lecturer seems to be to allay the apprehensions and answer the objections of those who believe that the tendency of much modern Biblical criticism is to undermine belief in the veracity and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures; and to persuade such objectors that the "higher," or what, to avoid confusion, we may call the neo-criticism, has left enough of the Old Testament to supply materials for Christian preaching. The book is a clever but very one-sided effort to convince preachers and people that they may accept the theories of the disintegrating higher critics of the Bible, without loss or injury to Christian faith or to the religious value of the Old Testament. Without attempting to state in this article the reasons given by conservative Biblical scholars for questioning the arguments and rejecting many of the conclusions of this school of critics, we are compelled to say that in our judgment the contents of this volume fail to show that the current theories of the German critics may be accepted by Christian preachers without lessening their power and confidence in preaching the teachings of the Old Testament; or that the dissective criticism has "laid upon a sounder basis the proof of a real revelation in the Old Testament."

Those who have read the previous writings of Dr. George Adam Smith would expect these lectures to be clever, vigorous and scholarly. They will not be disappointed in this expectation. But even learning, ability and devoutness do not always confer judicial impartiality. At any rate, they do not save this work from being largely a partial advocacy of the theories of the

school whose critical creed the author has adopted. Notwithstanding all that is instructive and suggestive, and many notable deliverances in harmony with what may be called orthodox beliefs, the author assumes, as if they were truths that have passed the stage of requiring proof, the speculative theories about the Bible that are the "shibboleths" of the German, British and American disciples of the Wellhausen school of Biblical critics. In view of the critical tenets he accepts, it is hard to see how Dr. George Adam Smith can be regarded as a "defender of the faith" in the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament. He assumes, as if they were facts which no Bible student could deny, that in the early period of their history Jehovah was to the Israelites only such a tribal god as Chemosh was to Moab; that the acceptance by Judah in the time of Josiah of what these critics allege to have been Deuteronomy, as the divine law of their life (which *they* believed to be the law given by Moses), warrants us in taking it as canonical Scripture; that St. Paul and the other apostles of our Lord wrongly apply the Old Testament in a way that changes its original and true meaning; that a good deal of the history in these ancient Hebrew Scriptures is fictitious and not trustworthy; that the apostles had implicit confidence in erroneous ideas of the inspiration of the Old Testament which were held by the Jewish doctors of their time; that accounts in the Pentateuch are not to be taken as actual history, but as late "efforts to account for the geographical distribution of neighboring nations," with perhaps "a substratum of actual personal history"; that the belief in one supreme God was in Israel a late development—nay, more, that the religion of Israel remained "before the age of the great

prophets not only similar to, but in all respects above mentioned identical with, the general Semitic religion, which was not a monotheism, but a polytheism with an opportunity for monotheism at the heart." Everything that appears to favor these theories is readily accepted and made the most of; but anything that is against them is either ignored or explained away. The speculative theories of the evolution critics, which assign late dates and a number of imaginary authors and redactors for so much of the Old Testament, seem to be constantly taken for granted, as if they rested on a solid basis of historic facts. There is an underlying assumption of the truth of much on the same line that is not expressly avowed. No one would suppose from reading these lectures that most of these theories have been rejected by many eminent Hebrew scholars, after a thorough examination of the critical arguments by which they have been supported. Yet the evidence supplied by Amos, Hosea and Isaiah fully proves the truth of Prof. James Robertson's position, that "a sober and unprejudiced criticism shows that Israel at the dawn of its national existence had a very exalted conception of God and a high rule of duty, and that these things were neither borrowed from their neighbors nor excogitated by themselves." The ungarbled sacred writings plainly prove this, and the whole trend of the facts of recent discovery is to confirm this conclusion in contradiction of the late development hypothesis of the neo-criticism. In the *Expository Times* for September Professor Sayce, in a review of a recent work of Professor Hommel, states that in one of the relics of the theological ideas which prevailed in "Ur of the Chaldees" is a hymn strikingly monotheistic in its tone. "It might,

indeed, almost have been written by the monotheistic Abram." It is strange if the Akkadians, from whose country the Hebrew fathers came, and the Egyptians, in whose country the Israelites sojourned so long, had the knowledge of one supreme God, that it should be assumed it was hundreds of years later before the people who have led the religious thought of the world attained to such knowledge. But facts like these, that are at variance with the theories of Dr. Smith and his masters, must be thrust aside as if they were of no consequence, in order to make way for their negations. Yet Dillmann, the great German scholar, frankly declares, "that the entire work of Moses admits of no historical explanation except in the supposition of a preparatory, comparatively pure type of religion, *such as, according to Genesis, belonged to the fathers of Israel.*"

But passing over the weighty objections to the validity of the reasoning by which these theories have been supported, there is no good ground for denying that those who accept these views about the Old Testament are logically committed to the acceptance of conclusions, which can hardly fail to affect belief in the truth and authority of the sacred Scriptures, whether they deem it expedient to draw these conclusions or avow their acceptance of them or not. To accept the theories of this school of critics, as to the way in which different books were produced, is to accept premises from which it follows that the Old Testament has been largely written and compiled in a manner that is adapted to mislead its readers in respect to the actual state of things; because, according to the advanced critics, it presents an erroneous version of Israel's religious history and national life which the

authors must have known to be untrue. If, as the neo-criticism alleges, Deuteronomy was mainly a late composition, falsely ascribed to Moses and not known till the time of King Josiah; if the Tabernacle of the Congregation ascribed to Moses never existed except in the brain of some late scribe; if the Levitical ritual was a late product of the priests after the exile, designed to magnify their order; if monotheism was a late development after the time of the great prophets—then Ezra, or whoever were the authors or redactors of the Pentateuch, must have known these things. Yet both the contents of the books and the historic order which they present are plainly designed to convey the impression, that the actual order and condition of Israel's religious life were quite different from what Professor Smith and his critical authorities allege it to have been. No apologetic explanations, or calling doubtful doings by pleasant names, can conceal or justify the reprehensible character of the methods which the "higher" critics gratuitously attribute to Old Testament writers. A new standard of morals must be adopted before the deception, which is assumed to have been practised in a number of cases, can be reconciled with ordinary truthfulness, not to say divine inspiration.

Professor Smith advocates the right of the critical study of the Old Testament, as if all who do not accept the theories of his school were opposed to such study. He must know that this is not so. In this unnecessary contention our Lord's references to the Old Testament are repeatedly cited as if they justified and exemplified the radical critical treatment of the Hebrew Scriptures by this school of critics! It is difficult to see how our Lord's broader application and more spiritual interpretation of

the Mosaic laws can be made to give any warrant for the wholesale disintegration and denial of the Mosaic authority of these writings, which have been practised by the evolutional critics. Christ's fulfilment of the law and introduction of the more glorious Gospel dispensation supply no justification of the guesswork and negative theories of these "higher" critics. Their theorizing receives no countenance from the Master's teaching or example. On the contrary His constant recognition of the historic truth and divine authority of "the Law and the Prophets" stands in clear contradictory contrast to the negations and fanciful reconstructions of the neo-criticism. The epistle to the Hebrews, which deals with the passing away of the typical Mosaic ritual and the incoming of the Christian dispensation, has not a word on the line of the negative criticism. That parts of the Mosaic laws were typical and temporary is surely not equivalent to their being spurious. It is utterly unjustifiable to allege that the criticism which denies the authenticity of so much of the Old Testament lies "along the lines indicated by Christ and His apostles," and "takes its charter from Christ Himself." Dr. J. E. H. Thomson, of Stirling, Scotland, forcibly says: "Christ assumes legislative authority over the Law, to alter it or abrogate it in portions, which His followers cannot assume without something like blasphemy. . . . In order to maintain that our Lord was in any sense the precursor of the modern critic Professor Smith must bring forward some passage in which our Lord discusses the authorship of some portion of the Old Testament and decides against tradition. But not only does he not do anything of the kind, but he cannot do so." To say that Christ and His apostles

taught on the lines of modern "higher" critics is a statement that one does not care to characterize. They were not critics; but even if one admitted that they were, it would not help Professor Smith; for their methods and conclusions are entirely at variance with those of the critics, in support of whom he so unjustifiably appeals to their example. The efforts of certain "higher" critics to explain away the force of Christ's references to Moses and the prophets, by their theory of the "Kenosis," contradict this unwarrantable claim of Professor Smith. They would not have tried to do this had they not felt that their theory required it to be done.

Professor Smith's admission that modern criticism "has been forced to abandon some positions which it had previously occupied with confidence, and upon innumerable details still exhibits among its supporters difference of opinion," would lead one to expect less of dogmatic assertion and unproved assumptions than we meet in these lectures on questions that are still strongly disputed, and some of which cannot be settled for want of the necessary data. The learning and ability of such writers as Perowne, Douglas, Zahn, Bissel, Green, Rupprecht, Edersheim, Hommel, and others, who have shown the baselessness of the idea that Deuteronomy was a late fabrication, might have prevented this author from asserting with such off-hand positiveness that the "singularity"—on which this rationalist theory is based—is "so conspicuous, even to the tyro in Hebrew, that the absence of an earlier discovery of it now seems astonishing."

The claim that the critical conclusions which the author upholds mainly depend on "historical evidence furnished by the Old Testament itself" is quite characteristic. But

if historic evidence is testimony that attests the truth of historic facts, the strained inferences that are adopted to meet the requirements of a preconceived theory of the evolution of these Scriptures are not "historic evidence." The term "historical" has no charm that protects every theory which claims this character from adverse criticism or refutation. A recent writer has truly said: "Historical interpretation involves all the errors, all the pitfalls, all the prejudices, and all the possibilities of misinformation and misrepresentation that lie in the nature of fallible humanity." The historical method is, however, no exclusive possession of the rationalist critics, as they seem to assume. The replies of able and scholarly thinkers, who have vindicated the claims of the Bible against the destructive guesswork of the school to which Professor Smith belongs, are much better entitled to the credit of being based on "historic evidence furnished by the Old Testament itself" than the speculative hypotheses for which this distinction is so confidently claimed; for the conservative view is the Bible view, but the dissecting critics substitute *an imaginary, fictitious history* for "the Old Testament itself."

In a similar manner it is claimed that the objections to the critical theories have been examined and found to be "baseless." Yet we are confident that a large proportion of those who have read the arguments on both sides of the subject will hold that the objections have not been fully and fairly stated or satisfactorily answered by Professor Smith or any writer of his school. Some of these objections are as follows:

That the Bible account of the history and religion of

Israel is more consistent and probable than the fanciful reconstruction which has been substituted for it.

That the theories of these critics are largely based upon unverified conjectures.

That in dissecting and adjusting the Old Testament, to make it accord with a preconceived theory, the "higher" critics use unscientific and unwarrantable methods.

That the many contradictory differences of leading "higher" critics discredit their methods and their conclusions as to dates and authors.

That these negative theories are not simply literary questions for scholars, but matters that affect faith in the truth and authority of Scripture.

That ruling out the testimony of Jesus and His apostles to the historic truth and divine authority of the Old Testament tends to overthrow faith in the infallibility of our Lord's teaching and in the authority of the New Testament.

That the main reasons for assigning late dates and imaginary authors to the Pentateuch and other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures—viz., (1) the alleged silence of historians and prophets concerning the Mosaic laws, and (2) the assumed illiteracy and polytheism of Israel in these early times—are contrary to attested facts of Scripture and archeology.

These objections refer to matters of fact. They have not been "found to be baseless." On the contrary they have been verified by "historical evidence furnished by the Old Testament itself," presented by able Biblical critics, who reject the evolution theory, as applied to the Bible by the neo-criticism, not because they are opposed to higher or lower criticism, but because they are con-

vinced it is *not justified by facts*. But it seems to be one of the canons of this critical school to treat the ablest scholars who do not agree with them as of no account. Is this a "scientific" method? Or is it adopted because it is easier to ignore than to answer the arguments of conservative Biblical critics? The practice of assuming that "the results of modern criticism" can mean only a definite unity of opinion, which all scholars accept, is unjustifiable. In view of the existing diversity of conflicting opinions, we need to know what critics and what criticism a writer means, when he speaks of the results of modern criticism. Many of these writers appeal to the critics whose theories they have accepted, as if there were no others in existence but these.

The weak and strained arguments which Dr. Smith uses, on points tending to discredit the trustworthiness of Scripture, are unpleasantly numerous and reveal a strong partisan bent. But he never fails in confident assertion. His statement "that modern criticism has won its war against the traditional theories"; and that "it only remains to fix the amount of the indemnity," suggests some practical questions. Whose "modern criticism" does he mean? Is it the anti-supernatural criticism of Kuenen and Wellhausen? Is the "indemnity" to be fixed by the partial dissecting critics? So Professor Smith seems to think; for he undertakes to settle the question himself. This he does in a very one-sided and unsatisfactory manner. He alleges that the greatest Christian preachers did not linger on the cardinal facts of Israel's national history. So, of course, the loss of the history is not a serious one. The personal elements of character portrayed in the Bible furnished the chief materials for the preacher; but these

being fictitious does not lessen their ethical value. The early chapters of Genesis he declares are not an account of actual events ; but "their ethical value to the preacher is beyond all question." What a comfort it must be to the Christian preacher to hear on such high authority, that the man who wrote the third chapter of Genesis "was the acute and faithful reader of his own heart"! It is a strange confounding of things which differ, to hold that the preacher who thinks it lessens the homiletic value of these Scriptures to believe they are unhistoric fictions, and not what on the face of them they purport to be, shuts himself out from preaching on the parables of Christ, which are lessons by the infallible Teacher Himself. Yet Dr. Smith gives a good deal of this kind of logic in these lectures.

That it may be seen that we have not misrepresented the lecturer, we will quote the summing up of his decision on the "indemnity." He says: "Such is the case for the narratives of the patriarchs. On the present evidence it is impossible to be sure of more than that they contain a substratum of actual personal history. But who wants to be sure of more? Who needs to be sure of more? If there be a preacher who thinks that the priceless value of these narratives to his work depends on the belief that they are all literal history, let him hold that belief if he can, and confidently so use them. Or if he cannot believe that Genesis is literal history, and yet thinks it must needs be, in order to be used as God's Word, let him seek his texts elsewhere: his field is wide and inexhaustible." Genesis is not the only history he reduces to legendary fiction. But he reads into these fanciful riches of ethics and religion, to make up for or cover over his denial of

their historic truth. It would have been well if Professor Smith had pondered and given due weight to the words of the eminent Prof. Franz Delitzsch: "The writing of history with a tendency or free invention of historical facts would be contrary to that veracity which is the first of all the requirements to be made of a historian."

In assuming that it is of no importance whether we regard Genesis as fact or fiction, Dr. Smith overlooks the organic unity of Bible history. These early records are foundation stones, on which later prophets and historians have built: and which such preachers as Paul and Stephen, and Peter and the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, used in their teaching as facts which illustrate God's dealings and man's duty.

It is difficult to imagine how any unbiassed students of the Bible can regard the substitution of the conjectured history of these critics for the Biblical account of the Hebrew writers as a means of giving greater certitude and spiritual effectiveness to the religious teaching of the Old Testament. The chief use Christian teachers have made of the Old Testament has been to draw practical lessons from the recorded lives of its characters, to trace the overruling providence of God in the history of the Hebrew people, and to expound and enforce the great truths relating to faith and duty which were revealed to the prophets. But if the biography is believed to be to a great extent fictitious, how can it yield obligatory reasons for right conduct? If the history is largely doubtful and untrue, how can things which never have happened be used by the preacher to illustrate the government of God? If revelation is understood in a vague sense, that does not really recognize the divine authorship of its

precepts and doctrines, this eliminates the main ground of the Christian preacher for preaching the teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures as truths that possess divine authority for the consciences of those to whom he preaches.

The lessons of duty taught by true history and biography derive their value and obligation from being drawn from events and experiences that have actually taken place under the order of God's moral government. We infer that similar character and conduct will be followed by similar results. The same inference cannot be drawn from imaginary things which never happened. But in the Pentateuch we have what purports to be a history of God's dealing with His ancient people, and of times and occasions on which He made revelations of His will concerning them. The late Prof. Franz Delitzsch truly says: "The essential truth of what is here narrated and the truth of Christianity stand in the closest mutual relation." To say that we may deny that there were such events, occasions or revelations as are recorded; without suffering any loss of faith in the value, inspiration and divine authority of the books which contain these records, is an extraordinary assumption. Yet Professor Smith boldly says: "This absence of history from the chapters, this fact that their framework is woven from the raw material of myth and legend, cannot discredit the profound moral and religious truths with which they are charged, any more than the cosmogony of his time, which Milton employs, impairs by one whit our spiritual indebtedness to 'Paradise Lost.'" This reference to the grand poetic fiction of Milton is rather unfortunate. No one supposes "Paradise Lost" to be a true history, presenting facts that yield lessons for the conduct of life, or regards its teachings

as possessing divine authority. Neither Milton nor his admirers ever made any such claim for his work. Our "spiritual indebtedness" to the teaching of the Old Testament is something wholly different from our literary indebtedness to Milton's "Paradise Lost." The illustration proves nothing, except Professor Smith's lax and low conception of Holy Scripture.

If some theologians have held a literal theory of verbal inspiration, the equal divinity of all parts of Scripture, the denial of any development in the religion of Israel, or quoted the severe laws and cruel deeds of Old-Testament times to justify unchristian conduct, this does nothing to prove the truth of the conjectured hypotheses of the reconstructing critics, in support of which these things are cited. Christian scholars who reject the rationalist theories about the Bible are not shut up to those views. The most effective replies to the neo-critics have been presented by writers who have vindicated and practised free Biblical criticism; but not in defence of these ideas. The reference to these extreme ideas is too much like attributing to opponents weak and questionable views that they would disavow, and which are not the real issues.

What we have to decide is, not whether we should tolerate and practise thorough criticism of the Bible—not "whether out of this reconstructed Old Testament we can get materials for sermons"—not whether every historic statement is absolutely inerrant—not whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch with his own hand—not whether some of the books are based on pre-existing documents—not whether there was a development in the religion of Israel. Whatever may have been thought on these points in the past, they are not the Hougomonts or Malakoffs in this war.

The vital issue is beyond question the truth, trust-worthiness and authority of the religious history and teaching of the Old Testament. It is such questions as, whether the Old Testament was to a great extent artfully made up of fictitious history and accounts of divine revelations which never took place—whether the Hebrews had the knowledge of the or living and true God, which their sacred writings represent them to have had—whether Deuteronomy is an authentic history of Mosaic times, as on the face of it it purports to be, or a late fabrication—whether the conception of the Old Testament, and especially of Messianic prediction and veritable fulfilment, held and taught by our Lord and His apostles, is the true doctrine or a mistaken Jewish belief. It would be very strange if what a preacher believed in regard to such questions did not seriously influence the character of his preaching on the lessons and teaching of the Old Testament.

It is not the amount of the materials for preaching which advanced critics have left that concerns us, but their assaults on the truth and authority of Scripture. How can those who accept the negation of so much of the Biblical records continue to teach the Protestant belief in "the divine Inspiration, Authority and Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures"? Does the deceptive and misleading way in which it is alleged several of these books were manufactured reasonably accord with the moral and spiritual influence of the Old Testament in the world? Are Christian preachers dependent on the permission of partisan critics as to how much of the Bible they may accept and teach? Can theologians accept the scheme of anti-supernatural German critics and build on it without serious peril of sinking to the same level as their masters? Is the

common practice of these critics, of rejecting as interpolations whatever in Scripture is against their scheme, scientific or justifiable criticism? Can the Bible accounts of the giving of divine precepts and promises be discarded as fictitious, without affecting faith in the truth of the interwoven teaching? Is it no objection to a critical hypothesis that it contradicts tried beliefs that have been the stay and inspiration of Christian hearts and a power in Christianity through the ages? As the neo-criticism mainly consists in denials of the authenticity of parts of the Old Testament and conjectures about "sources," in what way can the acceptance of these negations give greater power to the preaching of Old-Testament teaching? Such a claim is not justified by facts. That the Hebrew prophets were "preachers of righteousness," whose messages were specially adapted to the condition of the people of their day, and that history sheds light on their teaching are certainly no discovery of "higher" critics. The recognition of this fact by the Christian Church has been in perfect harmony with St. Paul's declaration, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

It is true, the existence of the Old Testament is explained in these lectures on the supposition that "there was an authentic revelation of the one true God." But the inference or admission of this author that the influence of a personal God in Hebrew history "is its most natural and scientific explanation," is a very insufficient reason for a preacher to enforce the teaching of the Book as a divine message possessing authority and obligation for all men. We freely admit that the estimate of the Old Testament

which was held and taught by our Lord and His apostles is fairly stated by Professor Smith, and given as a reason for what our idea of these Scriptures should be. But the value of this is virtually cancelled by the fact that the views of the origin and make-up of these books and the falsehood of much of the history they contain, which are assumed by the author and the Biblical critics upon whose conclusions he builds, are at variance with the plain import of the references of our Lord and the New-Testament writers to the Old Testament. What one of his reviewers calls his "tacit assertion that the prophets did not in any true sense predict," is an example of this variance. According to Professor Smith when the prophet foretells the future "he does so, not through any magic vision of the future, but by inference from the religious principles with which God has inspired him, and by application of these to the political circumstances and probabilities of his own time." As Dr. Thomson, of Stirling, justly says: "The prophet is thus merely one who by natural sagacity sees what is coming." The words "magic vision" are disparaging words, used to designate the belief of those who hold the scriptural idea of prophetic prediction, which he seems to have outgrown. No amount of rhetorical eulogy of the Old Testament can make up for the rejection of the truth, that the prophets "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." In the Old Testament, which Professor Smith at times appears to honor so much, Jehovah Himself appeals to His revelations of future events to the prophets, in vindication of His claim to the worship and obedience of the people to whom the message of the prophets was addressed. It is of the predictions of the prophet that Jehovah says: "I have declared the former things from

the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass" (Isa. 48: 3). It is not human "inferences" that are meant by the words: "There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Josh. 21: 45).

The eulogistic things which Prof. G. A. Smith and other writers who have indorsed the neo-criticism say respecting the religious value of the Old Testament are true, because their negative theories are NOT true and because things they deny ARE true. No man can evade the consequences of his avowed beliefs by expressing his approval of a contradictory view. Every man must be held responsible for the logical consequence of the premises he accepts. Theologians who are supposed to be conservative and orthodox, while they build upon the main premises of the rationalist critics, are more likely to undermine faith in the truth and authority of the Scriptures than the open rejecters of supernatural religion. Professor Smith illustrates this.

Due credit should be given to men like Canon Driver and Professor Smith for avoiding the irreverent dogmatism of Wellhausen and Cornill, and for their earnest and no doubt sincere efforts to harmonize the results of the neo-criticism with Christian reverence for the Old Testament. But all their efforts must fail. They can find no permanent footing on the slippery incline, where they are trying to stand. Their accepted premises must compel them to follow their Rationalist leaders on the "down grade."

The trend of the German criticism *on which they both build* is unquestionably toward a denial of the supernatural. If we accept theories about the Bible which deny the truth of its records of God's dealings with Israel,

and the displays of His power on their behalf, we thereby reject the testimony on which our faith in its supernatural manifestations rests, and open the gates for the inflow of the dogmas of antichristian disbelief. It is significant that nearly all the negations of the dissective criticism have an adverse relation to God's interference in human affairs, or to the revelation of His will. The early volumes of the new "Encyclopedia Biblica" furnish practical evidence that writers who have been held up as safe and moderate critics deny or ignore central verities of Christianity, and advocate views which divest Christ of the attributes which make Him an unerring Teacher and all-sufficient Saviour. It can hardly be questioned that those who boldly carry out their naturalistic evolution hypothesis to a rejection of the supernatural are really more logical and consistent than those who, like Professor Smith and Canon Driver, are endeavoring to hold and harmonize incompatible conceptions of the Bible. It is wisely and pertinently remarked by that eminent Hebrew scholar, the late Prof. W. H. Green, of Princeton :

"They who have been themselves thoroughly grounded in the Christian faith, may, by a happy inconsistency, hold fast their old convictions while admitting principles, methods and conclusions that are logically at war with them. But who can be surprised if others shall with stricter logic carry what has thus been commended to them to its legitimate issue?"

The questionable character of the methods of this school of critics is fitly set forth by Canon Rawlinson in these words :

"Unless we accept the historical books as delivering to us in the main a faithful and trustworthy account of the people, and of the vicissitudes through which they passed,

we must confess ourselves to be absolutely without any knowledge at all of the national history for nearly a thousand years after the Exodus. To construct for ourselves a different history from this out of our own theories of what is likely to have taken place, or by the use of an eclectic process, which consists in accepting as much as we like and rejecting as much as we do not like of the extant narrative, is to substitute fancy for fact, idealism for reality, a mere imaginary picture of the past times for an authenticated account of them."

There is a widespread disposition to regard any writer, who has won distinction in any department of thought, as an oracle, that it is an evidence of superiority to approve, and a sign of undue conservatism to question or oppose. This is a practice that reflects no special credit on those who adopt it. It has been well said, that "the errors of great thinkers are scarcely less instructive than their achievements." Cardinal Newman and Herbert Spencer are vastly more learned and gifted than I. Yet I am confident that I have good reasons for not accepting either the theology or the philosophy which they represent. Dr. G. A. Smith is a learned and gifted writer. But I could easily select from this book numerous illustrations which would clearly show that he reaches many of his conclusions by a very lame kind of logic. I have simply sought to show that, in spite of all the glowing things he has said about the ethical value of the Old Testament, he and others have committed themselves to essentially rationalist theories, which tend to undermine faith in the truth and authority of the Holy Scriptures, to a degree that must weaken the hand and heart of any preacher who accepts these views. The assumption that the adoption of this negative criticism would help Christian preachers to preach

the truths of Old Testament teaching more effectively, is too preposterous to require any serious refutation.

OPINIONS OF LIVING BIBLICAL SCHOLARS.

To show that I am not at all peculiar in my estimate of this book, as expressed in the foregoing pages, I will add a few quotations from able and learned ministers of Prof. G. A. Smith's own church, taken from criticisms which have come to hand since writing my article for the *Homiletic Review*.

The venerable Dr. John McEwan, of Edinburgh, in his thoughtful and forcible little book, "The Bible and the Critics," gives a section on "Outstanding Features of the Book," which is very suggestive. We can only give a few points in a very condensed form. Some of these are: The extraordinary confidence of the writer as to the conclusions to which he has come, while not deigning any notice of the strongest arguments against them—The grave conclusions which he accepts on very meagre evidence—The way the Bible is regarded as only a human production—The treatment of the Old Testament in a way that ignores the vital connection between the Old and New Testaments—The unparalleled claim that God has bequeathed to His Church, and apparently, specially to the critics, the right to deal with the records of Scripture as Christ and His apostles dealt, and had a right to deal, with some portions thereof. Of this claim Dr. McEwan says: "His exposition in each case can be demonstrated as wrong and ill-founded. In each case and in all combined it can be proved, and has been proved, a pure misrepresentation of the real meaning both of our Lord and His apostles." Dr. McEwan trenchantly reviews the objectionable conclusions in the

lectures, and their bearing against the integrity of Scripture. So serious does he deem his errors, that he asks: "If the views of Professor Smith, as formulated in his book, are to be left uncondemned and are to be allowed to continue to be taught to our students, will the Church, in such a case, not be held in the sight of God and man responsible for such teaching?"

Dr. J. E. H. Thomson, of Stirling, is a well-known author. His pamphlet reviewing Professor Smith's book, displays keen insight and a mastery of modern Old Testament criticism. He lays bare the partial statements and illogical arguments of the Professor's book in an effective and scholarly manner. He observes that Dr. Smith "gives a history of recent criticism, with the latent argument that what so many distinguished men maintain must be true. He says nothing, however, of the means by which this unanimity of testimony has been secured. As far as in them lies the critical school burkes all replies." After quoting an extract from Professor Osgood, on the serious contradictions of the higher critics, Dr. Thomson says: "I for one would go further, and charge them with laying down principles, which they use only when it suits them, of regarding certain sources of information as authoritative, or the reverse, as they are for or against the theories they wish to support." "This witness is true." The proof is abundant. Space will not allow us to reproduce Dr. Thomson's effective criticism of Professor Smith's deliverances on particular portions of Scripture. On the denial by this school of critics of prediction in any true sense, Dr. Thomson has some forcible remarks. Referring to Isaiah's prediction about the Assyrians, he maintains that

no amount of spiritual insight could account for such a prediction. He says :

"We stand at the end of nineteen Christian centuries ; our spiritual enlightenment has been increased, our spiritual insight deepened by all these centuries ; yet no believer, however eminent for piety, nowadays can pretend to be able to assert a knowledge of the Divine plan. How could one—without special revelation—attain this in regard to such a limited matter as the deliverance of Jerusalem in the days of Hezekiah ? It seems an impossible supposition—one that only could be made in the eager desire to escape, as far as possible, the miraculous. . . . The crowning argument against the position held by Professor Smith and others that the prophet did not foretell is that Christianity is to a great extent founded on the belief that prophecy was fulfilled in Christ. Our Lord appealed to Moses and the prophets as twin evidence with His miracles of His mission. The apostles equally appealed to the prophets, as along with the resurrection, proving their Lord's Messiahship. If the critical school are right, then the apostles have been found false witnesses for Christ ; at least, it seems so to the ordinary reader."

The natural tendency and effect of this teaching on the rising ministry of the churches is well illustrated by the following remarks :

"As the professors teach them, so the theological students believe, who become in due course preachers and ministers. Will the sense of the Church not be modified into accordance with what the members of the Church hear Sunday after Sunday ? To show that this is no groundless fear, I shall state what a clerical brother told me. He was worshipping in one of our churches in Perthshire. A young man occupied the pulpit, and took for his text, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' The young man began his sermon by saying, 'The genius of the Hebrew nation was personifica-

tion. Whenever the Hebrew wished to inculcate a duty or a virtue, he created for himself an individual whose history was an example of the performance of this duty or the possession of this virtue. Hence, to inculcate faith in God, the Hebrews devised the character and history of Abraham, or words to this purport; so with a few sentences Abraham was reduced to a myth."

We have heard of things not unlike this a good deal nearer home than Scotland.

Dr. John Smith, of Edinburgh, has during the past winter delivered a course of weekly lectures on "The Integrity of Scripture: Plain Reasons for Rejecting the Higher Criticism." These lectures have been published in *The Life of Faith*. They evince a clear and strong grasp of the current issues raised by the higher critics of our day. Dr. John Smith regards the work of the school of critics to which Professor G. A. Smith belongs as "the most elaborate effort ever made to eliminate miracle and the direct action of supernatural forces from the Old Testament." His lectures are not a formal reply to the Professor, but they deal effectively with the negative criticism on which he builds. This lecturer strongly maintains that the methods, theories and assumptions of this school of theologians respecting the Old Testament, are not in accord with the facts of the spiritual influence of the Bible in the world, the history of the Christian faith, and the experience of God's children in the past. He says: "Where the higher critics, in our judgment, have gone astray is, in supposing against tradition and the strongest internal evidence, that, with whatever differences, Jewish sacred history followed the same course of natural development; and in applying methods suitable enough in dealing with common human fact and

the growth of legend, to a totally different situation, the incoming of a true revelation of God, and its creative influence on the life and institutions of the people." These remarks touch the core of the question. When Professor G. A. Smith's book was first published, Dr. John Smith, in an acute and forcible letter in the *British Weekly*, frankly said :

"I believe that Dr. George Adam Smith, and those whom he represents, are forcing upon the British Churches the gravest issue that any of them has had to face in living memory. His criticism may or may not be well founded, but it strikes at the unity of revelation, it annihilates the first creative step in that revelation, and discredits the judgment of Paul, which was that of all the apostles and their Lord."

In the same letter Dr. Smith, referring to the Professor's book, uses these weighty and suggestive words :

"The thing which has astonished me most in his bright and clever book is what I have failed to find there, any discussion, or even mention, of the bearing of this criticism on the Protestant doctrine of the authority of Scripture. That lay abrupt and inevitable in his way. For the question is not whether out of this reconstructed Old Testament we can get materials for sermons. As authorized teachers of the Churches, we believe that we have a revelation from God of His sovereign purpose of mercy to mankind. In this modern day, jealous to irrationality of every assertion of authority, we assert this stupendous claim, commanding all men everywhere to repent. And that claim has been vindicated on two grounds : the ceaseless creation of living Christians, and the broad base in history on which revelation rests. Whatever undermines that historic base, then, weakens revelation, and takes something from the authority with which we can speak in the name of God to men."

Are such forcible and scriptural deliverances as these, by able, learned and godly divines, life-long students of the Old Testament, to be flippantly contemned, on the ground that they are the ideas of "Traditionalists"?

Dr. John McEwan, whom I have quoted above, pertinently says:

"Tradition is a good word when rightly applied. When employed by our Lord it was rightly applied, for it was applied to men who 'made void the word of God by their tradition.' I think it might fairly be used in the case of many of the critical school who, not intentionally but truly, are making the word of Christ and His apostles void through their so-called historical criticism of the Old Testament. . . . But when the word *Traditionalist* is applied to men, whose principle has been from the dawn of spiritual life in early youth, on through manhood to mature age, to test every statement, by whomsoever made, bearing on Scripture, by the Scriptures alone—such a designation is nothing short of a gross insult."

It is not the right of free biblical criticism that is questioned; but the building on conjectural theories, where attested truths are required. I disclaim being "a timid alarmist." But I venture to say, that religious teachers, who know the degree in which professors in church colleges in Europe and America are drifting toward Rationalist naturalism, and yet do not realize that we are passing through a very grave crisis, have failed to grasp the significance of the facts, and in effect are saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace."*

*The chief objections to the theories of the rationalistic higher criticism and their tendency are pretty fully discussed in my little volume, "The Bible under Higher Criticism," published by William Briggs, Toronto.—E. H. D.

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