

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

challenged. . . . For the sake of argument—be it so ” (p. 458). We have still the citadel in the nine passages—the “ foundation-pillars ”—accepted by Schmiedel, which are “ proof conclusive for the existence of Jesus as a real historical personage ”! There are other sayings which have on them the incomparable stamp of originality. To this the matter is refined down. No wonder the essay ends with the ambiguous sentence: “ There is sometimes ground for the objection that to keep the divinity of Jesus within the limits of the purely human, while not denying that He is worthy of worship (Neumann), is to affirm too little or to affirm too much ” (p. 459).

II.

By HAROLD M. WIENER, M.A., LL.B.,

Lincoln's Inn, Barrister-at-law.

Those who may turn to the essay on “ The Present Stage of Old Testament Research,” by Mr. Stanley Arthur Cook, in the hope of finding an up-to-date and impartial presentation of the topic with which it deals, will be disappointed. The book appeared in October, 1909, but there is no reason to suppose that the essay was written in the same year. The internal evidence as to its date and composition would be satisfied by a hypothesis ascribing the original writing of the essay to the month of May, 1908, and postulating a subsequent “ redaction ” (presumably in proof) in or about the first half of November, 1908. With regard to impartiality, Eerdmans is never mentioned, although his book on Genesis appeared long before November, 1908; and Professor Sayce is spoken of (p. 67) as being “ no less opposed to methodical principles of criticism,” the subject of comparison being Professor Orr.

In a short notice it is not possible to deal exhaustively with all the points that might be criticized, and in this case it is certainly not necessary, for there is one great outstanding criticism that suggests itself at once. Let the following sentences

be considered, for they formulate the foundations of Mr. Cook's positions :

"Consequently the old Testament student has only two positions between which to choose—the one with and the other without the indispensable preliminary treatment of the literary problems ; the one critical, the other non-critical, separated by a long series of stages, to some of which we have referred" (p. 69).

"The Pentateuchal problems are those upon which conservative writers and professed critics are most diametrically opposed. Meanwhile a new movement has gradually come into existence which takes its stand upon external evidence, and demands that criticism should reconsider its attitude towards the five books of Moses in the light of modern knowledge. It appeals to the results of modern discovery in Palestine and the lands surrounding it, and in particular to the ancient civilization of Babylonia. . . . It is certain that the assured results of investigation cannot support all the antagonistic positions and contradictory tendencies of the present day. It is no less certain that here are the factors which will shape the Old Testament research of the future" (pp. 55, 56).

As against the view expressed in the first of these extracts, I hold that there is a *tertium quid* ; as against the view expressed in the second, I hold that there are other factors which will take their share in shaping the Old Testament research of the future.

1. Every schoolboy who has worked through a book by a Latin or Greek author knows that in the case of a writing that has for centuries been dependent on a manuscript text, errors and additions will have crept in that were absent from the original autograph. To deal with these there has come into existence the science of lower or textual criticism. This science is recognized and applied in the case of the classical literatures ; it is recognized and applied in the case of the New Testament ; it is recognized, but not applied, in the case of the Pentateuch. Accordingly, it has come about that the whole of modern higher critical work is built on a textual foundation that would not be tolerated in any other field of literary research. There exists a vast quantity of material in extant Hebrew variants and in the Ancient Versions which, when properly utilized, disposes of large portions of the higher critical case. Of course, in textual criticism, as in other sciences, sanity, sobriety, and judgment are essential ; and it is possible to have a textual

criticism which could not for a moment commend itself to any man of sense. But in writing of textual criticism, I mean such a textual criticism as shall be pursued with the necessary safeguards.¹

It may be well to drive home the importance of textual criticism by an illustration. For one hundred and fifty years the higher critics have declared that the use of the Divine appellations in Genesis afforded a secure clue for the partition of the book. As readers of the *CHURCHMAN* are aware,² the textual evidence now disposes of this view. Considerable interest attaches to the methods employed for dealing with that evidence. A number of notes on the subject have appeared in the *Expository Times* (May, July, September, 1909) under the title "The Name of God in Genesis," and anybody who will read these consecutively will see that the followers of Astruc are at a loss for a reply. The notes in the two last-named issues have had to go unanswered. No attempt has been made to challenge Professor Schlögl's statement (p. 563 of the September number) that it is "quite unscientific to determine the analysis of a source by the names of God." Dr. Driver—the recognized leader of the Wellhausenites in this country—has recently published a pamphlet entitled "Additions and Corrections in the Seventh Edition of the Book of Genesis." The preface is dated August 2, 1909. Is there any attempt to deal with the point either by way of answer or by way of modification? None whatever. Silence is his only weapon. In the circumstances it is the plain

¹ It is proper to add another remark. The textual criticism of the Pentateuch must depend mainly, first on the evidence of the Bible itself (as in cases where Deuteronomy may be called as a witness to the text of the earlier books), and secondly on the evidence of men like Aquila and Origen, Jerome and Onkelos, the renderers of Septuagint and Peshitto. It follows that such textual criticism can never affect religion, for one and all of the witnesses to be examined were either sincere Jews or sincere Christians, and it is therefore safe to say that the Bible as *they* knew it will never prove subversive of *our* religion. I have thought it right to make this remark because, in dealing with matters of scholarship that in any way affect theology, it might be feared that some fresh discovery might have an untoward influence on religion. I believe this to be quite impossible in the case of sane textual criticism.

² *Ante*, April, 1909, pp. 281 *et seq.*

duty of conservatives to do everything in their power to compel the Wellhausenites to break that silence, to answer the notes in the July and September numbers of the *Expository Times* if they can, or to modify their theories if they cannot, and to cause every critic and every disciple of a critic to know that the method pursued for the last century and a half has now been seen to be "quite unscientific."¹

A word of warning may not be out of place. Higher critical editions, etc., habitually quote variants from a number of sources, and give the impression that textual criticism has been systematically used. This is not so. As a rule, the reference to the authorities has been quite occasional. It is never anything like exhaustive. In matters of textual criticism our higher critics are devotees of the sporadic.

Our first principle, therefore, must be that a scientific text is the first desideratum for scholarly work, and that in so far as any higher critical theory rests on textual corruption it is entirely valueless.

2. A second main principle must be that technical work can only be done by those who possess adequate technical knowledge and training. This operates in more than one way. It operates as against the critics by showing that the supposed antinomies are due, not to anything in the texts, but to the limitations of the critics. It operates against the pan-Babylonians by showing that their theories, again, are due to defective equipment, for a man does not become, *e.g.*, a competent jurist merely by reading the code of Hammurabi and a few contracts. It operates against the critics, again, by producing solid internal and external evidence of the authenticity of the Mosaic laws. I have so often given illustrations that none are here necessary.²

¹ A number of other instances of the use of textual criticism will be found in my "Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism." I have recently been working at the story of Joseph, and have been interested and pleased to find that the textual evidence there disposes of the whole of the higher critical case. The results appear in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January and April, 1910.

² See especially the articles "Law in Old Testament," "Crime," "Homicide," "Family," "Firstlings," in Murray's "Illustrated Bible Dictionary," together with the literature there cited. An examination of

3. One great fallacy underlying the critical case requires special notice. Buffon said in a celebrated epigram: "Le style c'est l'homme même." It is now recognized that that is not true of classical antiquity. "Style," says Norden, "was in antiquity not the man himself, but a garment that he could change at will." To some extent this is true even of our own day. The style of Macaulay in the Indian Penal Code bears no resemblance to the style of his poetical works, and both are markedly different from the style of the essays and the history.¹ There can be no doubt, on the statements of the Pentateuch itself, that different portions were intended primarily for different purposes, and, in the first instance, different audiences. Deuteronomy, we know, was intended for public reading to the people, and the bulk of it was originally delivered as a series of speeches. On the other hand, we are told of other portions of the Law that they were to be taught by the priests, while it is tolerably clear that the so-called "Book of the Covenant" was intended for memorizing. In these circumstances, it cannot reasonably be held that differences of style necessarily imply differences of authorship, and it becomes unnecessary to apply to the Pentateuch a line of reasoning that has been abandoned elsewhere.

In a word, I hold the answer to Mr. Cook's essay to be: "First ascertain by a scientific use of all the available materials what the true text of the Pentateuch is; next apply to it the best available knowledge of the day, wielded by the best available skill, and you will then find that the questions of authorship, to which you attach so much weight, have either disappeared or else shrunk into insignificance, while your theories of history and religion will have ceased to exist."

"The First Three Chapters of Wellhausen's Prolegomena" will be found in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for October, 1909, and is reprinted in volume form with the "Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism," (*Elliot Stock*).

¹ See further the *Princeton Theological Review* for October, 1907, pp. 605-630.