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The Higher Criticism and the Hexateuch.

BY THE REV. W. R. LETT, B.A.

HIGHER CRITICISM is the fashion nowadays. Books and articles in encyclopedias almost assume that the results of the critics are unquestionable without offering us any very clear evidence at all, or even attempting to state fairly what may be said on the conservative side. The higher critics, indeed, are very much inclined to look on their opponents with a lofty scorn as prejudiced and old-fashioned. They will therefore consider that I am making a bold and ignorant assertion when I say that they are only leading people into a dense fog and finally into a quagmire!

However, I hope to show that this assertion is true largely from the admissions of the critics themselves. But of course in one article I cannot deal with the Hexateuch with anything like the fulness that it really deserves.

By way of preface I would point out one fault which the critics themselves ought to admit. They do not group their supposed results into one view so that the reader can properly estimate what it all comes to. Are they a little afraid to state their results too plainly, lest they should seem to a man of ordinary common-sense a little ridiculous? I hope to do this myself at the end of the paper as correctly as I can. If I am at all wrong, then the fog has affected me as well as other people.

Now Dr. Driver's "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament" is universally admitted to be the ablest and most learned exposition of the Higher Criticism in the English language. No one will question that he is a great scholar; it is his work therefore, so far as the Hexateuch is concerned, that I propose to discuss to-day.

Well, in the Hexateuch Dr. Driver says there are, in the first place, three documents: two nearly contemporaneous, called

JE ; another of the age of the Babylonish captivity, P. We will confine ourselves for the present to JE. E is supposed to have been composed in the northern kingdom of Israel, J in the southern. Then there is a compiler who united both documents together with some additions of his own who is called R, but I think he ought to be called R¹ to distinguish him from other redactors. In algebraical formulas this whole document may be called (JE) R.¹

Then a second compiler or redactor worked over the document (JE) R adding and correcting, so that we have at last a document which we may call {(JE) R¹}R².

When did J and E live? Three critics put E at 900-850 B.C., J at 850 or 830-800 B.C.—*i.e.*, E before J. Three other critics put J at 850-800 B.C., and E at 750 B.C.—*i.e.*, J before E. Why should the critics differ as to the date? Well, the argument, as far as I can understand it on p. 123 of Dr. Driver's work, is something like this: Wellhausen, because of anthropomorphisms in J, gives it an earlier date; but then there are passages in it which approximate to Deuteronomy, therefore they are by a compiler. Dillman denies the compiler in this case and says these very passages prove the later date of J. On the other hand, Dillman has difficulties for his own date in archaic elements: these he ascribes to another compiler, who uses a special source, perhaps the document E. Thus both critics make use of a compiler when they are in difficulties. What a very useful man the compiler must be, you will say. Yes, indeed, the critics could not get on at all without him. For every document in the Hexateuch has its anomalies, and these can only be explained by means of a compiler. Hence there are at least as many compilers as documents.

However, we want to know what is the real evidence for the existence of J and E. One argument which Dr. Driver advances is that in Gen. xx. 1-7, xxi. 6-31, xxii. 1-13, xl.-xlii., and xlv., the term "God" is used, whereas in chapters xviii., xix., and xii., 10-20, the term "Lord" is used. However, Gen. i. to ii. 4^a, v. 1-32, vi. 9-22, vii. 6, 18-21, etc., are supposed

to belong to the document P. But in these passages "God" is used throughout. Therefore if the argument from the use of "God" and "Lord" is worth anything, they ought to belong to E. In fact, Dr. Driver allows that P is still sometimes called the Elohist narrative. Why, then, is not P identical with E? Dr. Driver says that for the "variation in similar consecutive chapters no plausible explanation can be assigned but diversity of authorship." Did it ever occur to him that variety in the use of words might occur from the author loving a little variety? Would not the Professor be rather indignant if some future critic dealt with his sermons in the same way, and found there at least two documents as well as a compiler? But perhaps he has been very careful to guard against such a contingency!

At all events, the argument from the use of "God" and "Lord" proves nothing unless it does away with P altogether.

But let us come to Dr. Driver's admissions. On p. 14 he says: "In the details of the analysis of JE there is sometimes uncertainty owing to the criteria being indecisive, and capable consequently of divergent interpretation." This is rather a peculiar statement. Does it mean that when you look at Genesis cursorily and, as it were, from a distance, you seem to discern signs of different documents, but when you look more closely for these signs they vanish? I confess that this has been my own experience. Again, on p. 15 Dr. Driver says: "Chapter xv. [of Genesis] shows signs of composition, but the criteria are indecisive, and no generally accepted analysis has been effected." That is, we must assume that a particular passage in Genesis is composite, but the proof that it is so cannot be produced. Again, on p. 17, when discussing chapter xxxiv.: "Marks of P's style appear unmistakably in some parts. . . . But it is not impossible that P is here based upon elements derived from E." Was there ever such uncertainty?

Once more, on p. 116 Dr. Driver says he always "rises from the study of JE with the conviction that it *is* composite." Why?

"It is no doubt possible," the Professor answers, "that some scholars have sought to analyze JE with too great minuteness, but the admission of this fact does not neutralize inferences drawn from broader and more obvious marks of composition." But I reply, this discussion *does* neutralize the argument from broader and more obvious marks. You talk about obvious marks of composition, and I bring you to book at a particular verse or sentence—ask, "Is it by J or E?" If you cannot answer decidedly then all your criteria are uncertain. They utterly fail when applied practically to any given passage. In fact, Dr. Driver almost admits this, for on p. 126 he writes: "Space forbids here an examination of the styles of J and E. Careful and instructive synopsis will be found in Holzinger. They have much in common; indeed, stylistic criteria alone would not generally suffice to distinguish J and E, though when the distinction has been effected *by other means*, slight differences of style appear to disclose themselves." I have certainly very much wondered what the Professor intends by "other means." At any rate, he practically confesses that the stylistic criteria prove nothing, and that therefore a great deal of his book is useless. But possibly by "other means" he intends internal contradictions and inconsistencies, of which he certainly tries to make a great deal as signs of different documents. One attempt of this kind I hope to deal with further on.

For myself, I think that these inconsistencies and contradictions are imaginary and can be solved by more careful and prayerful study of the text. But this I would say: "How is it that the redactors and compilers when they were editing and combining the various documents did not remove these contradictions which, if they are real, are certainly very glaring? Yet how can there be any real contradictions in two documents which "have much in common"? The Professor often refers us to the German critics. A sample of the sort of help we shall receive from them is found in a note on p. 14: "The Book of Genesis has been published [in German] in a convenient form, with the different sources distinguished typographically by

Kautzch and Socin. Great pains have been bestowed on this work, but the details, so far as the lines of demarcation between J and E and the parts assigned to the redactors are concerned, can in many cases not claim more than a *relative* probability,¹ as the editors themselves allow." "Relative probability!" That is all the critics can offer us! Are we not therefore in a fog?

But here we meet again that useful creature the redactor. He is the fairy Puck of the higher critics. One critic traces his hand in one verse, because it suits his idea of the length and date of supposed documents; another denies his existence for the same reason. The compiler acts in the most capricious way, as all fairy Pucks ought to do. Sometimes he puts a bit of P into E; sometimes he incorporates long sections of a document intact; sometimes he fuses parallel accounts into a single narrative; sometimes he sees contradictions and tries to smooth them away; sometimes he leaves them as they are. In fact, he is a most troublesome fairy, because the critics are not always certain whether they have caught him—he sometimes seems to appear, and then vanishes away in the fog to the great disappointment of the critics. Nevertheless, in spite of his troublesome habits, the redactor or compiler is a very useful fairy, because if anyone objects "Here is an expression which does not suit your theory," you can always answer, "Ah! that is the work of a redactor."

We all know that Gen. ii. and iii. has "Lord God," while Gen. i. used "God" alone; this fact tells apparently against chapters ii. and iii. being by a different author from chapter i., because, whoever he was, he knew the word "God." Oh, well, of course a redactor of JE added "God" to "Lord," and so the objection is answered!

You may ask, How many redactors are there altogether? Well, it is rather difficult to discover. I do not wish to exaggerate, but after a careful examination of Dr. Driver's work I do not think there were less than six at work on the Hexateuch—viz., the two (?) final redactors of the Pentateuch, the com-

¹ The italics are the Professor's own.

piler of JE, the compiler who joined JE and P together, the two compilers of H, Lev. xvii. to xxvi., the compiler of Num. xvi. and xvii. But I admit that I am a little in a fog as to their number. Possibly the Professor might enlighten us upon the subject.

Now you would like me to go on to the third document, P, in the Hexateuch. In it there are two strata—but I spare you!

Let us proceed to Deuteronomy. "The structure of Deuteronomy," says Dr. Driver, "is relatively simple." But do not be deceived, good reader, this must be one of the Professor's little jokes! "The main part of the book," he says, "is pervaded throughout by a single purpose, and bears the mark of a single writer who has taken for the basis of his discourses partly the narratives and laws of JE as they exist in the previous books of the Pentateuch, partly laws derived from other sources. Towards the end of the book, the same author or writer imbued with the same spirit has incorporated extracts from other sources. One of the final redactors of the Pentateuch has brought the whole thus constituted into relation with the literary framework of the Hexateuch by excerpts from P."

Now on Dr. Driver's own showing is the structure of Deuteronomy so simple? He seems to think there are two writers in the book. Well, let us call the first writer Y. Y made use of JE and "other sources." How many sources? These must plainly be denoted by X. The second writer we will call Z, so that the whole structure of Deuteronomy may be denoted thus: Y + JE + X + Z + JE + X all edited by R' + P, R' being one of the final redactors of the Pentateuch, which final redactor Dr. Driver does not tell us—apparently there were at least two. Well, this structure of Deuteronomy may be very wonderful, but is it "relatively simple"? "Oh, but," perhaps the Professor will say, "X is not an unknown quantity." Turn on to the next page (p. 72): "Certain parts of D, while displaying the general D¹ style connect imperfectly with the context or present differences of representation [this last sentence seems a little foggy], which make it probable that they are the work of a later Deuteronomic hand (or hands)." Mark the word!

How many hands? Dr. Driver denotes "the hand" or "hands" by D². Therefore D², because "hands" is vague and indeterminate, may be fairly denoted by X. The structure of Deuteronomy is thus made up from an unknown number of sources, and yet it is "relatively simple"!

The book of Joshua does not call for much notice here because it is supposed to be made up from the same documents as the Pentateuch. By all means let us get out of the fog and tumble into the quagmire!

You have heard even to weariness of these different documents. Let us try to simplify matters by trying to compare JE and P. P, you say, has a different style from JE. But, my dear man, you also say that JE is made up of two authors. Is P unlike J or unlike E? On your own showing the criteria for distinguishing J from E are indecisive, except by the mysterious "other means." Therefore in any given passage of JE you cannot distinguish P from J or E because you do not know which is which! You fall deeper and deeper into the quagmire when you assert that P itself has two strata in it. It is quite possible that while you think you are comparing P with J, you are really comparing one of the strata of P with some part of E and his redactor, because the criteria are indecisive! Thus the very foundations of the higher criticism are shaky since the critics themselves admit that they are not certain which is which of the earliest documents J and E.

However, let us suppose that JE is one document and P another. We will take Gen. i. to ii. 4^a (the first part of verse 4) to be by P, Gen. ii. 4^b to iii. 9 to be by E, or thirty-four verses in each passage, and compare them together. This will be a fair test. Dr. Driver says that JE is anthropomorphic: "The actions of God are described with some fulness of detail instead of speaking, saying, creating, He fashions, breathes, plants, places, builds, etc." Well, let us make out a full list of all the so-called anthropomorphic or picturesque expressions in each passage. It is not fair to pick out a few from one passage and shut your eyes to the picturesque expressions in the other.

GEN. i. to ii. 4.

Ver. 2, spirit or breath.
 moved, literally brooded
 over.
 Ver. 3, covered over like a bird.
 Ver. 4, saw.
 Ver. 10, called to.
 Ver. 22, blessed.
 Ver. 26, Let us make.
 Image and likeness of God.
 Chap. ii., ver. 1, Ended.
 Ver. 2, rested.

GEN. ii. 4^a to iii. 9.

Ver. 7, formed.
 breathed.
 Ver. 8, planted.
 Ver. 15, put.
 Ver. 18, said.
 Ver. 19, brought to see.
 Ver. 21, closed up.
 Chap. iii., ver. 8, walking.
 Ver. 9, called.

Not only have the two passages practically the same number of anthropomorphisms, but every description of God's actions in Gen. i. to ii. 4^a is anthropomorphic, and could not help being so.

Where, then, is the difference of style? Dr. Driver's next test is, that P is "circumstantial, formal, and precise: a subject is developed systematically, and completeness of detail even at the cost of some repetition is regularly observed. Sentences are cast in the same mould, and particular formulæ are constantly repeated." Apparently the Professor has some grudge against P, because he repeats this accusation several times on pp. 8, 12, and 129. JE is his favourite—"he is free, flowing, and picturesque." Well, I have read Gen. i., etc., in the original carefully, and I cannot help thinking that the passage about the creation of man is quite as free flowing as any of the two following chapters. But is JE quite free from the peculiarity of repetition? Once more let us make out an impartial list on both sides.

P.

And it was evening, etc. (vers. 5, 8,
 13, 19, 23).
 And it was so (vers. 7, 9, 11, 24).
 Living soul (v. 19, 20).

JE.

Living soul (ver. 7, 9).
 Every beast of the field and every
 fowl of the air.
 To all cattle and to all fowls of the
 air, and to every beast of the field
 (vers. 19, 20).
 The whole land of Havilah where
 there is gold, and the gold of that
 land is good (vers. 11, 12).

P.

J.E.

Whatsoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof. Adam gave names, etc. (vers. 19, 20).

The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed (ver. 8).

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (ver. 15).

Here I submit there is no real difference as to recurring phrases between P and J.E.

Then as to P being circumstantial, formal, precise. Is not J.E. circumstantial, formal, and precise in his account of the planting of the Garden of Eden, and of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and of the tree of life, and the river that flowed through the garden dividing afterwards into four heads, and the lands they flowed through, and the creation of woman? Is not all this, I ask, circumstantial, formal, and precise?

Dr. Driver's next argument is that we have in Gen. ii. 4^a, etc., an account of a different order in the appearance of life from that in Gen. i. to ii. 4. This argument has been trumped up again and again, and to me it seems rather absurd. Dr. Driver, on p. 8, wishes us to take Gen. i. 4^a, etc., as giving an exact succession of life—viz., (1) man, (2) vegetables, (3) animals, (4) woman; very well, if we must keep to the literally exact account of the succession of events at all, we must keep to it thoroughly. Thus: Before any plant or herb of the field was formed man was created. Poor Adam! he wandered about in a desert, having nothing to eat! Then God planted a garden and put him in it where were all kinds of trees, pleasant to the eyes and good for food, but he was not given leave to eat anything—that permission came later on. As for the rest of the earth nothing grew on it; it was uninhabited. Apparently because Adam had wandered out of the garden, God placed him in there again, and this time gave him permission to eat of the fruits of

the garden, and also gave him a commandment which He did not certainly give him before, not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Then God promised a helpmeet for Adam, and formed all cattle and fowl of the air and brought them to Adam to be named; but unless they all were created in the garden and remained in it, there was nothing for them to eat outside, for no vegetables were created except those in the garden. Last of all God formed the woman. Now that such could have been the meaning of the author of Gen. ii. is, of course, absurd, but I contend that if it is to be taken as a literal account of successive events at all, this must be the author's meaning.

Literally understood, Adam was twice placed in the garden and only given leave to eat the second time. If you allow that verses 15 to 17 are explanatory of verses 7 to 9, then the whole argument for a contradiction between the two chapters breaks down. Indeed, the natural explanation of the chapter is that, as verses 15 to 17 are explanatory of verses 7 to 9, so the whole of chapter ii. 4, etc., is an enlargement of chapter i. 26-31.

However, Dr. Driver is compelled to interpret Gen. ii. 4 literally as he denies the existence in Hebrew of a pluperfect. But here I am afraid I must accuse the Professor of arguing in a circle. One line of defence of the unity of Gen. i. and ii. is that "formed" means "had formed." This he tells us peremptorily in a note is contrary to idiom and refers us to his "Hebrew tenses." On p. 88 of that work he writes: "Some of these apparent instances (of a pluperfect) have arisen doubtless from the manner in which the Hebrew historical books were evidently constructed, distinct sections often written by different hands being joined together without regard to formal unity."

That is, assume that there is no pluperfect, and you can explain away an argument against the composition of Genesis, and assume the composition of Genesis, and you can explain away an apparent instance of a pluperfect! Is this logic?

Now, I humbly submit that the evidence, fairly and impartially considered, is in favour of the unity of authorship

of chapters i., ii., and iii. Anthropomorphic expressions and recurring phrases occur quite as much in one chapter as in the other. The second chapter cannot be explained at all properly by itself; it seems to demand a chapter before it, and by the same author. I would not be afraid to follow out this subject, and to prove the unity of the whole of Genesis passage by passage. Professor Green has already done this once, and perhaps it would be rather hard to do so satisfactorily, as the critics vary so much about the length of their documents. Still, I must keep my promise of giving you as accurately as I can the construction of the Hexateuch according to Dr. Driver. In algebraical formula it is this:

$$[(J + E)R^1 + P^1 + P^2] R^2 + H(R^1 + R^p) + PR^3 \\ + \{(Y + JE + X) + (Z + JE + X)\} R^4 + P.]$$

I admit that I may have made out too many redactors and documents. I should certainly be obliged if Dr. Driver would tell us how many there are. Perhaps he will kindly revise this formula.

Now, what is the aim of all this Higher Criticism? The German critics have an avowed object. They want to establish, by breaking up the Hexateuch into fragments, that it was composed long after the events they record, and so are only legends, myths, and traditions of which you cannot tell how much is true and how much is false. Therefore the Hexateuch is not inspired. The English critics accept the premises, but try to escape the conclusion. But they are surely in an illogical position. To assert that the God of truth could inspire and approve of a collection of myths, legends, and traditions, partly true and partly false, seems to be almost a contradiction in terms. I have tried to be impartial, but I must confess that the more I study Dr. Driver's book and compare it with the Bible, the more convinced I have become of the absurdity of the conclusions of the Higher critics. They are fond of telling us about the practical agreement of all competent scholars as to

their results. Well, they all agree the Pentateuch was not written by Moses. Nobody will deny that. But when you ask them, Who *did* write it? When was it written? you will find that hardly more than two or three agree together. Dr. Driver's own work shows this. They almost confess that, as to any positive results, they are in a fog and uncertainty. It is absurd, therefore, for them to say that they agree amongst themselves, for most emphatically they do *not*.

