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Recent Continental Criticism of the Higher Critics.

BY THE REV. W. ST. CLAIR TISDALL, D.D.

1. Dr. Troelstra : "De Naam Gods in den Pentateuch," 1912.
2. Dr. Troelstra : "Organische Eenheid van het Oude Testament," 1912.
3. Dahse : "Is a Revolution in Pentateuchal Criticism at Hand?" (*Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, September, 1912).
4. Professor Eerdmans : "Alttestamentliche Studien," 1908-1912 (four parts already published).
5. Professor Van Hoonacker : "Sacerdoce Lévitique," 1899.
6. Professor Dr. Edouard Friedrich König : "Geschichte der Alttestamentischen Religion," 1912.
7. Professor Dr. Edouard Friedrich König : "The History of the Religion of Israel and its Newer Representation" (a series of articles now appearing in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*).
8. Möller : "Wider den Bann der Quellenscheidung," 1912.
9. P. Volz : "Mose, ein Beitrag zur Untersuchung über die Ursprünge der israelitischen Religion," 1907.

WE and reverence for everything German in Biblical and theological matters are still so prevalent in certain learned circles in England, that it would doubtless be in vain, at the present time, to expect the callow, the credulous, and the cocksure, to have courage enough as yet to investigate for themselves the foundations of the Higher Criticism. They find it far safer and easier to accept assertions than to test them. Thucydides has well said : Οὕτως ἀταλαίπωρος τοῖς πολλοῖς ἡ ζήτησις τῆς ἀληθείας, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἐτοῖμα μᾶλλον τρέπονται. But it is surely not too much to ask more thoughtful and earnest men to consider how very striking and remarkable a "counter-revolution" against the supremacy of the Wellhausen domination is now in progress upon the Continent, and more especially in Germany and Holland. A study of even a few of these books, with which we now proceed to deal, will convince our readers that there is such a movement, and that it must be reckoned with.

At one time it was computed that it took about thirty years for any rash German theory to become naturalized in England and in America, and, in fact, that only when such a theory was already on the wane in the land of its birth did people in England adopt it as the latest great discovery of the age, the magnificent

outcome of the deepest modern scholarship and thought. Things move more quickly now. Not only the *choregoi* of the Higher Critical tragic drama, but also their numerous enthusiastic (even if uncritical) disciples, very soon import nowadays the "very latest thing out" in German critical fashions, if, at least, these coincide with the Wellhausen hypotheses, or even outrun the latter in "subjective" theorizing. Unfortunately these men are far less prompt in informing the English public of the change that is so steadily coming over the spirit of the critics' dream in Germany itself, and in other Continental lands. This is possibly part of the "conspiracy of silence" which has been so noticeable of late years in this country, and which has led to the almost total "boycotting" of the views of those who are not Higher Critics. It is difficult to find a magazine courageous and impartial enough to admit an article written from any but the Graf-Wellhausen standpoint. But already, even in England, we seem to hear less (except from the lips of the half-educated) than we used to do about the "assured results" of the Higher Criticism. "J" and "E" are now, some ingenious critics tell us, intended to stand for "Judaite" and "Ephraimite," and no longer for "Jahvist" and "Elohist," as they did before Professor Schlögl, Mr. Harold Wiener, and Dr. Eerdmans had said their say on this crucial point. Such a *volte face* is itself significant of much. "There is a tide in the affairs of men," and it is hardly too much to say that in matters of Higher Criticism the tide is turning, or has turned, in a decidedly conservative direction. We shall doubtless find in the near future many a stranded hulk where we now see a fine stout vessel in all its pride of bunting. But in this country, as has already occurred in some cases in Germany, we may trust that fuller light will be vouchsafed to enable many such to avoid the quicksands which threaten destruction, and with brighter hopes to sail the ocean of certainty and truth.

Kuenen was at one time all supreme at Leyden as a theologian. His views had very great influence upon many students

in Germany, England, and America, as well as in Holland. But, as in the case of Baur at Tübingen, it has come to pass that Kuenen's critical dogmata no longer hold unchallenged sway in his old University.

Dr. Troelstra's lectures, "On the Organic Unity of the Old Testament,"¹ were delivered there recently at the invitation of the University authorities; and both in these, and in his "The Name of God in the Pentateuch,"² he wholly repudiates Kuenen's critical views. He shows that the Higher Criticism does injustice to the Old Testament, "because it approaches the Scripture with a pre-established opinion which is antagonistic to what the Scripture itself declares concerning the Books of the Old Covenant." Kuenen himself confesses this when he writes: "Either we must put aside as worthless our dearly purchased scientific method, or for ever cease to recognize any New Testament authority within the domain of Old Testament exegesis." This is plain speaking with a vengeance! Dr. Troelstra has no hesitation in denying that the Higher Critical method can in any true sense be styled "criticism" at all. He shows how distinctly Wildeboer and others admit that the Source-theory cannot be supported satisfactorily upon linguistic grounds, and that its only firm (?) foundation is acknowledged to be the distinction in the use of the Divine appellations "Jahweh" and "Ēlōhīm." He then proves how uncertain the Massoretic text is in the employment of these words, how more than doubtful it is that Exod. vi. 3 really means that the name "Jahweh" was first revealed to Moses (especially since Gen. iv. 26 is by the critics ascribed to the same "source" as Exod. vi. 3), and says: "If we start from Exod. vi. 3, a document must be evolved from Gen. i. to Exod. v. that employs exclusively the name 'Ēl Shaddai' to designate the Supreme Being. *But this cannot be done*, if it were only for this reason that 'Ēl Shaddai'

¹ An English translation of the first of them appears in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for July, 1912.

² An English version, by Canon E. McClure, has been just published by the S.P.C.K., with an able preface by the translator.

is employed only six times in this portion of the Holy Scriptures." The critics have built upon the sand, inasmuch as they have rashly and most uncritically accepted as the basis of their arguments the present Massoretic text of the "Hexateuch," instead of testing it by the approved methods of textual criticism. But Textual Criticism, with the help of the LXX and other old versions, shows how unsafe this conduct is. Instead of ascribing a late origin to the Pentateuch, Dr. Troelstra says: "There are certainly passages in the Pentateuch which are manifestly derived from a time anterior to Moses, even from a period prior to Abraham."

In his article "Is a Revolution in Pentateuchal Criticism at Hand?"¹ Dahse (as Professor Sayce observes in his preface to the English translation), by his very questions, implies an affirmative answer. Dahse admits that in Germany the Source theory still continues to be regarded "as a certain result of science," but he shows what serious assaults have been made on it of late, and how it has failed to repel them. In 1903 Johannes Lepsius wrote of it: "Within ten years not one stone shall be left upon another of the proud structure of this hypothesis." Textual criticism is the solvent which is now being so effectively employed. As a result, Dahse declares that "no investigator who employs the oldest texts would dare to make use of the names of God as a means for determining the sources of the documents" (P, E, J, *et hoc genus omne*). As to the value of the different use of the names "Jacob" and "Israel" as a mark of the distinction between the "sources," Dahse shows that we are justified by the contradictions among the critics themselves "in depriving it absolutely of any significance for the criticism of sources." Hence he concludes: "If 'Yahveh' and 'Ēlōhīm,' 'Jacob' and 'Israel,' are valueless for Source-division, if the narrative of the Deluge can be proved to be a unity, if the other show-pieces of the modern literary critics are probably in like case . . . then the only refuge left for the modern documentary

¹ Translated under this title by Canon E. McClure, and published by the S.P.C.K., with preface by Professor Sayce.

theory is the linguistic differences of the sources." He gives good reason to hold that the steady shrinking of the number of these differences is a proof that they cannot stand the strain thus imposed upon them. Hence he holds that the time has now come for another hypothesis to supplant that of the Higher Critics, preferring this to a futile attempt "to support with unstable pillars a building cracking in all its joints."

The publication of the first part of Eerdmans' "Old Testament Studies," "Die Komposition der Genesis," caused no little surprise to Higher Critics in this country, and attempts were made to "explain" his defection from their ranks. His position was made clear by his own statement in the Preface: "I renounce the Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen critical school, and altogether oppose the so-called Newer Documentary Hypothesis." As a pupil of Kuenen, he at one time held that Genesis was made up J, E, and P. For many years, however, doubts on this point troubled him, until at last he found the theory untenable, principally because examination showed him that the main foundation of the hypothesis was unsound. "The Divine names 'Ēlohīm' and 'Jahveh' are no reliable guides in critical analysis." (Eerdmans' fancy that the use of the former word implied early polytheism is fully refuted by König, and so we need not dwell upon it.) He carefully, and even minutely, examines the "Priestly document" in Genesis, first giving the Higher Critical "results" in reference to this "source" and then refuting them in detail. For instance, whereas P is generally asserted to belong to the post-Exilic period, Eerdmans, calling attention to the fact that Gen. x. (part of P) omits all mention of the *Persians*, says: "It seems impossible that a writer of the Exilic or post-Exilic time should pass over a nation which at that time was to Israel the one which mattered most." Again, he remarks that surely the Jews then in Babylon must have known that, in Exilic times, the people of Elam were no longer Semites, and hence that Gen. x. 22 "cannot proceed from the post-Exilic period, as the P theory affirms." This appeal to common sense on a critic's part should not go unnoticed. Eerd-

mans quotes Wellhausen's dictum that the whole of literary criticism is "baseless and invalid" (*bodenlos und nichtig*) if Gen. xxvi. 34, 35, and xxviii. 8, 9, are not from another source than Gen. xxxvi. 1-5, 9-19. Having shown that in this last chapter verses 6-8 cannot be separated from those which precede and those which follow, Eerdmans concludes: "Thereby one bestows the deathblow on the P theory." He denies Wellhausen's view that the language of the so-called P document proves its post-Exilic origin. The examination of the J and E sections of Genesis is pursued in the same careful manner, and the existence of these "sources" is denied. "The idea that one can understand the composition of Genesis by means of the names of God has been proved erroneous. As often as one tries it, one is on a false track."

In "Die Vorgeschichte Israels," having shown how completely Ed. Meyer, Wellhausen, Winckler, Völter, Jensen, and others, contradict one another, Eerdmans establishes three theses: (1) The Patriarchs are not originally gods; (2) the stories of the Patriarchs are not mythological tales; (3) the stories of the Patriarchs are not reflections of the ethnological relations and cultus-tendencies of the kingly period.

Borrowing the expression from Winckler himself, Eerdmans wonders whether the Astral theory of the former has nothing in it of the "brain-cobwebs of the studies" (*Hirngespinnste der Studierstuben*). We fear that these "brain-cobwebs" are much in evidence at the present day, and "we thank thee, Winckler, for teaching us that word." Dealing with Ed. Stucken's "Astral Myths of the Hebrews," our author instances its absurdity by quoting Stucken's statement that the seizure of Sarah by Pharaoh (and Abimelech) is a reminiscence of the Babylonian myth of Istar's descent into the underworld, and says: "According to this method every account of a journey refers to Istar's descent into the underworld, provided it contains any reference to a lady." Similarly, of Völter's arguments in "Ägypten und die Bibel," he remarks: "In this way one can prove anything." That is precisely what many of us have felt in reading such

lucubrations. P. Jensen's arguments in "Das Gilgamesch-Epos in der Weltliteratur" are shown to consist largely of the use of the magic word "thus" to fill up missing links in the chain of reasoning, supplemented with "mihi constat."

Eerdmans certainly shows wonderful keenness and ability in sweeping away other men's *Hirngespinnste*. He is less successful in attempting to keep his own intact when others wield the besom of destruction.

In dealing with the Book of Exodus, Eerdmans points out that Hammurabi's code disproves the Higher Critical theory that the "Book of the Covenant" must be late because of its high morality. Regarding the asserted Exilic or post-Exilic origin of Leviticus, he gives good reason to conclude that it "consists of almost wholly pre-Exilic laws."

Professor Van Hoonacker, of Louvain, will not detain us long, though his book is decidedly of value. He shows that the so-called Jehovist group of laws recognizes the principle of the one Sanctuary (*cf.* Exod. xxiii. 14-19, xxxiv. 24), which has been denied. He also distinguishes between the horned altar and the lay-altar, the confusion of which with one another led the Higher Critics to their theory of the *late* introduction of the "one Sanctuary" rule. He quotes with approval Fries's statement as to "the insufficiency of the Ariadne's thread which guides the Grafian criticism through the labyrinth of Old Testament study." Van Hoonacker declares that the theory (Wellhausen's and Nöldeke's) that Melchizedek is a "personification" is absurd. In opposition to Wellhausen's contention that the High Priesthood was unknown before the Exile, he shows that there is good reason for the contrary opinion. As among the Babylonians and Assyrians priest-kings had preceded royalty—as in Saba the *makrabs*, and among the Minæans the *kabîrs*, are found in very early times—it is quite in accordance with Semitic custom and analogy that in Israel also the priesthood should exist before the rise of kingship.

Professor König, who, among other distinctions, enjoys that of being a "Geheimer Konsistorialrat," will require an answer

at the hands of the Higher Critics, if they can give it. It is true that he admits the existence of E and J, but he insists that these "sources" must be far earlier than the critics now think. He puts E "in the time of the Judges," and J about David's time, but says that the Decalogue and the "Book of the Covenant [Exod. xx. 22 to xxiii. 33] cannot be placed in any more probable time than that of Moses." Marti's statement that J's and E's narratives "can lay no claim to historical value" because of their supposed late date, is characterized as "mere assertion." König observes that the discovery of Hammurabi's code robs "of the last remnants of its probability" the oft-repeated but unproved declaration that the Hebrews, even in Moses' time, were "an illiterate horde." He adds: "How unnatural an assertion would one therefore be making, did one wish to affirm even that Abraham had no knowledge of the art of writing!" since he came from South Babylonia. Dealing with the mention of punishment about to befall Levi (in Gen. xlix. 5-7), he holds that this passage "cannot be derived from the post-Mosaic period," because Levi was then a tribe consecrated to God's service, and he says that to ascribe such texts as this to a late period, and to fancy that they were fabricated for the purpose of falsifying history, is, in his opinion, a piece of "uncritical arbitrariness."

König protests strongly against the popular practice of confounding the true religion of Israel with the corrupt "Volks-religion," saying that this confusion runs through Stade's description of the religion of Israel "like a red thread." He condemns Marti, Wellhausen, Ottley, and Cheyne, as guilty of the same error. The idea that, after settling in Canaan, or even in Manasseh's time, the Hebrews borrowed from Babylon the narratives contained in the earlier chapters of Genesis, "by no means rests upon a secure foundation." It is refreshing, after a long course of Higher Critical study, to find a scholar of Professor König's eminence writing common sense. For instance, after discussing the unproved assertion of Stade and others that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are merely local gods

transmogrified, he declares that, "in the old Hebrew sources there are a hundred proofs against, but not one in support of," this fancy. The theory of the original fetishism from which Israel's religion (according to Stade, Piepenbring, Marti, Kautzsch, Gunkel, Ottley, Astley) was evolved is shown to be destitute of foundation. Winckler's theory that Abraham's migration was due to his attachment to the worship of the moon, and his opposition to the rising tide of popularity in favour of Merodach, is declared to be entirely opposed to the distinct statements of J and E. König quotes Cornill's conclusion that Abraham is "a strongly historical personage," and Wilke's and W. Lotz's demolition of the hypothesis that the Patriarchs are myths, or "personifications" of tribes. He declares that the "Book of the Covenant" is, "on philological and especially on religio - historical [*kultusgeschichtliche*] "grounds, shown to belong to the earliest stage of Hebrew literature." Throughout his book he refutes the theory (of Robertson, Smith, and others) that the genuine national faith of Israel was at first, and in reality, much the same as that of the Canaanites.

In his article in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* the Professor shows how uncritical and unscientific are the grounds on which the Higher Critical version of the history of Israel rests. Wellhausen admits that his own conclusions are very nearly identical with Vatke's ideas on the subject. Now, Vatke's views on this point were avowedly not taken from the Biblical documents, but from the Hegelian system of philosophy. Vatke "did not try to find the history in its sources, but to evolve it out of philosophical discussions." Hence "Vatke proved that he did not know the real method of historical research." How would the history of England read, and what would be its practical value, were it to be rewritten in this way, with calm and contemptuous and utterly unscientific rejection of the statements made in our oldest historical documents? In opposition to the religion which Vatke, Wellhausen, B. Stade, Marti, Kautzsch, and others, have invented for the Patriarchs out of their own inner

consciousness, König holds that he himself has "proved by critical examination of all the newer statements about the religious conditions in the time of the Patriarchs, that the Bible is absolutely correct in calling their religion the first degree [stage] of the true religion of Israel." He casually points out that, contrary to what is often asserted, "competent Old Testament critics *do* actually exist outside the Wellhausen school, and in spite of it." He concludes "that the Patriarchs really existed, and that their religion was a power which could not have been derived from the historical circumstances of their time."

The space at our disposal will not allow us to do full justice to the thoughtful and scholarly work of Möller, but it deserves careful study. An earlier book of his has been rendered into English under the title "Are the Critics Right?" Originally an adherent of Wellhausen, further study has forced upon him the conviction of the baselessness of the Higher Critical theory. He writes thus: "After my studies, which now reach back for much more than a decade, I am strongly under the impression that it is more correct to inquire what single passages are *not* from Moses than timorously to give back to him a broken fragment here and there, and then, perhaps, consider oneself a special friend of the Bible." He shows that the Higher Criticism cannot logically continue much longer to uphold its "assured results." It must either go farther, and break up its "sources," J, E, P, etc., into more fragments, thereby applying to itself the *reductio ad absurdum* method (which, indeed, it has already done in Isaiah), thus turning the documentary hypothesis into "the fragmentary hypothesis," and leaving us nothing but a mass of broken pieces devoid of all unity, or it must grant that its division of the "Hexateuch," on the ground of the employment of the Divine names and the supposed recurrence of "doublets," is untenable. In either case this theory breaks down.

Though Völz is still to a great degree an adherent of Wellhausen, yet he very severely criticizes the views of that school in regard to Moses' position as a religious teacher. He attacks their imaginary sketch of the supposed pre-Mosaic religion of

Israel, and declares that Stade is quite wrong in describing what Genesis says on the subject as full of errors and contradictions.

The accidental circumstance that Mr. Harold Wiener has written in English instead of in German prevents us from adding a review of his valuable books ("Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism," "Studies in Biblical Law") to those already dealt with. We must, however, note how admirably he has shown up "the great illusion" which has led Wellhausen, Robertson, Smith, Carpenter, and others, to confound lay-altars of earth or unhewn stones with the one House and its brazen altar with horns. "Hence an artificial history of stages marked respectively by 'a multiplicity of sanctuaries' and 'a single sanctuary' has been constructed on the basis of laws and narratives, which in reality recognize one House and many altars."

Seeing what severe blows are now being dealt by German and Dutch (to say nothing of English, Scotch, and American) scholarship at the very bases of the Higher Criticism, we who have never "bowed the knee unto Baal" may well rejoice. Nor are we devoid of hope that many of the "Sidonians" (*ut ita loquar*) themselves may in time find a worthier object of worship, a nobler and more spiritual faith.