

INTRODUCTION

The author of the following treatise is descended from the French Huguenots. The original name of the family was Vossé, and his ancestors were among the refugees who emigrated to Holland after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. He received his literary training in the gymnasium at Amsterdam; and after completing his theological course at the Seminary of the Reformed Church of Holland, at Grand Rapids, Mich., of which his father is a professor, he spent two additional years at Princeton Seminary. This treatise was prepared as a thesis in competition for the Hebrew fellowship in the latter institution, which was awarded to him; and he is now pursuing his studies at the University of Berlin.

The subject discussed is the Mosaic origin of the laws of the Pentateuch. This is the point about which the critical battle is raging at present. The literary partition of the Pentateuch, which at one time stood in the fore-front of the fray, is now on all hands regarded as a side issue, of whose results the critics of the most recent school of Graf, Kuenen, and Wellhausen still seek to avail themselves, but upon which they do not mainly rest their cause. This part of the question is taken up and disposed of at the outset. The position maintained is perfectly tenable, though it has not heretofore been pressed as it deserves. The divisibility of Genesis, or, as the critics phrase it, the literary analysis of that book, does not in the slightest degree affect the question of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, or of the laws which the Pentateuch contains. And unless it be pressed to the extent of finding mutually inconsistent narratives in Genesis, and thus impugning the truth of the record and the trustworthiness of the history, the hypothesis is one of purely literary interest, and of no theological consequence. It is only the endeavor to carry the divisive hypothesis through the subsequent books of the Pentateuch, that imperils the ascription of the legislation to Moses, as well as of the volume in which the legislation is found. If Chronicles and Kings could be compiled from antecedent authentic records without prejudice to their canonicity, the same is obviously true of Genesis, the latest limit of whose history is almost three centuries prior to the birth of Moses.

But, if the same analysis is applicable to the books from Exodus onward, the aspect of the case is materially changed. It is indeed conceivable that Moses might have employed different amanuenses to record different classes of laws, and that the literary form of the laws might thus vary to some extent in consequence. But if the later books of the Pentateuch, containing the life and the legislation of Moses, have been compiled from distinct documents in the sense maintained by the advocates of this hypothesis, it is difficult to imagine that Moses could have had any thing to do with the compilation. Accordingly, waiving all discussion as to the applicability of the hypothesis to Genesis, its right is challenged to proceed beyond Exod. 6:3, where God revealed himself to Moses as Jehovah, and this henceforth becomes the predominant name of the Most High; and the barrenness of the unsupported linguistic argument for any division beyond that point is shown.

It would have been better, perhaps, to put the line of demarcation at the opening of the Book of Exodus. For the alternation of divine names is not only of no help to the critics in Exod. 1:1-6:3, but is a source of constant perplexity, which they escape only by conspicuously disregarding it. It did not belong to the subject treated in this volume, to deal with the partition of the historical sections of Exodus. But I think that no one can carefully examine the division of Exod. 1-11, as wrought out by Wellhausen, or by others who attempt a similar nice discrimination, without feeling at every step that the attempt to carry the partition through is a signal failure. The perplexity of the scheme

rendered necessary by the rigorous application of critical rules is almost beyond belief. The critical sundering not only rends apart the most intimately connected paragraphs, but throws out isolated clauses and words *ad libitum*, upon the mere *dictum* of the operator, and to save the consistency of the hypothesis. It is simply and evidently a determined forcing through of a foregone conclusion in spite of every consideration that stands in the way.

Pushing the linguistic and literary argument aside, as destitute of any real force in application to this portion of the Pentateuch, the discussion proceeds to grapple with the problems arising out of the constitution and character of the laws themselves, and of the several Codes in which they are found. This is the chosen field of the latest phase of criticism, and it is from this quarter that the materials are drawn for its most formidable assaults upon the authenticity of the Pentateuch and the Mosaic origin of its laws. The issue involved is not merely that of the authorship of a given production, nor whether particular institutions took their rise in one century or in another. It is a question of the veracity of the sacred volume from first to last. The question is fundamentally that between rationalism and supernatural religion. Did the institutions of the Old Testament, and by legitimate and necessary sequence those of the New Testament also, proceed from the revelation of God? or are they the natural outgrowth of the national life of Israel?

The writer of this treatise has decided convictions upon this fundamental matter, and these underlie and shape his whole treatment of the subject. They determine his point of view, but they do not supersede a thorough and candid investigation. On the contrary, they impel to a frank and honest examination of the whole ground of debate: they lead to the patient consideration of every objection that is raised, and every difficulty that is started, in the confident assurance that all the phenomena of the case must find their solution in harmony with what is true and right.

Since the argument is throughout conducted in opposition to the latest critical school, with the purpose of wresting their weapons from their hands, it is necessarily limited to the region within which these critics themselves move, and to considerations whose validity must be conceded even from the stand-point which they occupy. Nothing is gained in controversy with them by adducing testimonies whose genuineness is in question, whose historical character is impugned, or which lie outside of the field which they recognize as the legitimate territory of debate. Hence, no argument is here drawn from the authority of the New Testament, in defense of the Mosaic origin or authorship of the laws of the Pentateuch. And, in the Old Testament, every thing is left out of the account, which, on the critical hypothesis, is judged irrelevant, or which is susceptible of an interpretation consistent with its claims. These may confirm the faith of those who accept the current view of Scripture and of the Mosaic writings, but are not suited to convince or to confute opposers.

It will be found that the discussion contained in this little volume is neither narrow nor superficial. It is the fruit of extensive reading and careful reflection. It is not a summary of results hastily gathered from compendiums at second-hand, but it is drawn from the direct study of original sources. The views of the leading critics are concisely stated on the various points raised in the controversy, substantially as they present them themselves. These are uniformly treated with eminent candor and fairness, while at the same time their weakness and fallacy are skillfully exposed. The book makes no pretensions to be an exhaustive exhibition of the subject. It will not, of course, prove a substitute for more elaborate and extended works; though, to those who are entering upon the study, it will be an admirable introduction to them. And for such as wish to gain a general knowledge of the present

state of critical questions concerning the Pentateuch, the range of the discussion, and the arguments employed on each side, I do not know where a more satisfactory exhibition can be found, of what intelligent readers would wish to learn, in so small a compass.

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