

# THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.

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## I.

### JAMES McCOSH AS THINKER AND EDUCATOR.\*

#### I.—AS BELFAST PROFESSOR.

A SCOT, born in Ayrshire, on the banks of the "Bonnie Doon." of sturdy and God-fearing ancestry, who had played the man more than once in the struggle of the Covenanters against oppression—a scion of the great middle class of Scotland, made up so largely of cultivators of the land, who through the exercise of the proverbial thrift and intelligence of the "canny Scot" had forced an unwilling soil into fertility and had achieved easy circumstances—James McCosh inherited all the virtues of his class and ancestry. These formed the basis of his character, and held the secret of his unvarying success in the larger spheres in which he was destined to become an actor. Born of highly intelligent and conscientious parents, who possessed in full measure that tough moral fibre and that firm adherence to high ideals of religion and duty so characteristic of the Scotch, the parental traits entered as so much clean grit into the constitution of the boy and gave a pledge of the force he was to become in later years in his own and other lands. Young McCosh was fortunate in his home-life and training, thanks to a

\* The sources from which the materials used in the following article have been obtained are (1) *The Autobiography of James McCosh*, so ably and gracefully edited by William M. Sloane; (2) the works of McCosh, including books, pamphlets and addresses, a complete bibliography of which has been made out by Joseph H. Dulles, Librarian of the Princeton Theological Seminary, (3) and most important of all, a personal acquaintance ranging over twenty years, in which, as pupil and later as teacher in the department of Philosophy at Princeton, the writer had abundant opportunity to study McCosh's many-sided life.

## II.

### THE QUESTION OF THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOKS OF SCRIPTURE: A CRITICISM OF CURRENT VIEWS.

OF the three problems with which the Higher Criticism deals, one is that of Origin. Of the three principal phases of this problem, one is the question of authorship or personal origin. The primary purpose of this paper is to direct attention to the condition of opinion at present prevailing in reference to this question. It is hardly extreme to describe it as chaotic. Obviously, the existence of such a condition of things must be established prior to any inquiry into either its causes or its effects. Perhaps the simplest and fairest method of getting at what is the present state of opinion will be to hear from a number of representative men sufficient to assure ourselves that we are in no danger of a hasty generalization. It will be best also to rigidly separate our citations from our criticisms.

The first writer, then, who shall be permitted to declare his opinion is the Rev. R. Payne-Smith, Dean of Canterbury. The Dean is a conservative. Indeed, the paper from which his views are to be cited is nothing else than a vindication of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. In introducing his discussion, he says:

“The question of the authorship of the books of the Old Testament is usually one of secondary importance, until we reach the prophetic writings. Even of all the Old Testament Scriptures, we may say that as regards our faith little depends upon their human origin. For if they are what they claim to be, they are a message from God to our souls. Many of course deny this claim; it is, they say, a thing impossible. God never has and never could speak to man. But if he has spoken to man—and for believing this there are many valid reasons—no books have so manifest a claim to be His word as those of the Bible. Their human authorship, therefore, sinks into insignificance compared with the momentous question whether they are a revelation of God’s will to man. And it is worth observing that the writers themselves attached no value to the part which they had taken in the matter. There is no pride of authorship about them. They usually make no reference to themselves, but are solely occupied with the great message which they were commissioned to bear.”\*

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\**Living Papers*, Vol. III, Paper XV, p. 3. Fleming H. Revell Company.

So speaks the Dean. This, however, according to our plan, is not the place to analyze his statements or to estimate their significance. Indeed, for other reasons it would be out of place to do so, since the Dean himself is not done speaking to the matter under consideration. He has not got through with his introduction until we hear him say:

“Occasionally the matter” (*i.e.*, the question of the authorship of the books of the Old Testament) “has become one of large importance, because of the course of modern criticism. It is a question of great value in our days whether the Book of Isaiah is an anthology, made up of fragments culled from lost works composed by numerous writers, or the composition of one man. And so with the Pentateuch. Modern criticism has made the most of all the difficulties found in connection with a book of such extreme antiquity. It has used these difficulties to discredit the book, and even to tear it to pieces and assign the fragments to a host of nameless persons. But though Moses himself followed the same impersonal manner as was usual with all primitive writers, yet there is in Exod. xxiv. 4 the assertion that Moses wrote all the laws at that time given, and, as we think, in the Book of Deuteronomy words which ascribe to him the whole Pentateuch. If this interpretation be correct, it becomes no mere archaeological question as might be that of the authorship of the Books of Judges or of Samuel. The veracity of Holy Scripture is at stake; and besides this, the authorship of Moses, for which there is ample proof, gives a solid foundation for the genuineness of all the Old Testament Scriptures. If there be strong and abundant evidence for this conclusion, most of the remaining difficulties, debated so warmly, sink into minor importance.”\*

I have cited thus at length under the feeling that it was due to the Dean and desirable for the reader that the context should be given with sufficient fullness to insure the latter against misunderstanding and the former against being misunderstood.

Next, and more briefly, let us hear from the Rev. J. J. Lias, a scholarly rector of the Anglican Church. Like Dean Payne-Smith, Mr. Lias is a conservative. The passages to be cited are from his excellent but not very happily named little book, *Principles of Biblical Criticism*. Their special significance for us lies in the fact that the very object of Mr. Lias' book is to contravene the conclusion of that school of English critics represented by Drs. Driver and Cheyne. And yet we find him also, like the Dean of Canterbury, introducing his discussion of “The Genuineness of the Pentateuch” with these, under all the circumstances, remarkable words:

“We must also admit that Christians are in no way committed by their belief in Divine revelation to any particular theory of the origin or date of the books of the Old Testament in their present shape, but only to the general accuracy of their contents.”†

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\**Ibid.*, p. 6.

†*Prin. Bib. Crit.*, p. 84.

A few pages farther on he repeats this statement, saying:

"It has been admitted that the date and authorship of the Pentateuch, as it has come down to us, is a matter of comparatively little importance. But it does not follow in the least that we can accept theories, for instance, like those of Dr. Driver. The question which to us is of vital importance is the historical accuracy of the contents of the narrative."\*

Again, the tone of the following is significant:

"Not only do many persons allow themselves to suppose that the controversy" (between the radical critics and their opponents) "only affects the date and authorship of the Mosaic books, etc."†

In the same vein is the following concession:

"The conclusion of sober reason on the question" (of the genuineness of the Pentateuch), "it may be confidently affirmed, will eventually be this, that while we know not precisely who wrote the Pentateuch, nor when, nor how it was written, it contains what must be regarded as in all essential respects an accurate historical record of the provisions of the law given by Moses, and of the circumstances under which the laws were promulgated."‡

To bring out fully the views of Mr. Lias, it will only be necessary to call attention to his position upon the question of the authorship of the prophetic books. This appears from the following words, with which he concludes his discussion of the theories of the radical criticism with reference to the authorship of the Book of Isaiah:

"There is, therefore, strong reason to suppose that if these magnificent prophecies" (viz., those in chaps. xl-lxvi) "had been by another hand" (than that of Isaiah), "the name of the author would have been handed down to posterity. The question is not, however, like that of the origin of the Pentateuch, a vital one."§

And now still another Anglican divine shall be permitted to speak. Unlike the first two heard from, however, he cannot be considered a conservative. Nor would it be fair, on the other hand, to call him a radical. Prof. A. F. Kirkpatrick, to whom reference is here had, may probably best be classed as a critic of the mediating or "progressive school." Much might be said in praise of his little book, *The Divine Library of the Old Testament*, which in this instance is to furnish us a statement of the Canon's views. Four out of the five lectures of which it is composed were delivered, we are told, "to a gathering of clergy and laity."|| In style

\**Prin. Bib. Crit.*, p. 87.

†*Ibid.*, p. 92.

‡*Ibid.*, p. 133.

§*Ibid.*, p. 74.

|| *Div. Libr. of the O. T.*, Pref. to 1st ed., p. v.

it is a model for those who have to present an intricate subject in popular form. Its tone is not only conciliatory, but gracious and persuasive. The reader must be prejudiced indeed who does not lay down the book impressed with Prof. Kirkpatrick's personal belief in and reverence for the Old Testament. But after all has been said that can be said in recognition of Prof. Kirkpatrick's amiable temper and personal piety, and in praise of the literary and other merits of his book, its purpose is to commend to popular approval and acceptance the conclusions reached by critics of the school of Driver in regard to the origin of the books of the Old Testament. This simple fact, taken in connection with the fact of his personal reverence for the Old Testament, is conclusive evidence that Prof. Kirkpatrick regards the question of the authorship of the books of the Old Testament in the same light as Dean Payne-Smith and Mr. Lias, or rather that he regards it as of even less moment than they. For to him the question of the authorship of the Pentateuch is of no more moment than that of Isaiah, nor that of Isaiah of more moment than that of any of the other books of the Old Testament. But we are not left to this kind of evidence. Seeking the causes for "the comparative neglect of the Old Testament" characteristic, it would seem, of those whom he is addressing, the Canon says:

"But in addition to these causes there is a third which is beginning to be widely operative. There is a vague suspicion floating about that the 'higher criticism' has raised a host of questions about the date and composition and character of the books of the Old Testament, which must be settled before we can use it with confidence. . . . Such an attitude is, as I have already shown, a desertion of the teaching and example of the New Testament."\*

Still more significant is the following:

"The Bible has been compared to a great church which it needed some fifteen centuries to build. . . . Now, if I may develop that figure, it is not essential for the ordinary spectator to know at what precise date each part of the church was built, still less from what quarry the stones were brought, or whether old materials from some earlier church were incorporated in parts of the buildings. He can learn the lessons of grandeur and beauty, of holiness and devotion which the whole building teaches, he can see how it reflects the mind and purpose of its architects, even without this detailed knowledge, though the knowledge may add to his intelligent wonder and appreciation, and is essential for the study of the history and development of architecture. And so surely it is with the Old Testament. It is important, with a view to the study of the history and development of the religion of Israel, to fix the relative dates of the writings contained in the Old Testament and the student must labor patiently at the task. But there is much, very much, that the Old Testament has to teach us which is independent of the questions of date and authorship."†

\**Div. Libr. of the O. T.*, p. 120.

†*Ibid.*, p. 122.

To make this statement of current views touching the matter of the authorship of the books of Scripture complete, it only remains to hear from some representative of a single branch of another school. The school referred to is that of the radical criticism. The branch of this school from which we are now to hear is composed of those who may fairly and without offense be described as radical critics of evangelical antecedents and predilections. For while their critical principles lay the axe to the very roots of the conservative tree, their personal predilections for certain important evangelical truths—predilections, in most instances, received by tradition from their fathers—distinguish them honorably from others of the same school who have no such inherited or acquired prejudices. Prof. C. A. Briggs shall speak for them. His attitude toward the question of authorship may be easily gathered from the following statements taken here and there from his writings. In *Whither* we find him saying:

“The Reformers found the essence of the authority of the Scriptures in the Scriptures themselves and not in any traditional theories about them. Hence they were not anxious about human authorship.”\*

The context will show that he uses the Scriptures here as a term designed to cover both Testaments, the New as well as the Old. In the same vein, in his speech made in answer to certain charges preferred against him before the Presbytery of New York, with a fervor not unnatural to his circumstances, but evidently not conducive to his own insight into the matter of which he was speaking, we hear him propound this rhetorical question:

“But is it true that an infallible rule of faith and practice can only come from these (those?) holy penmen whose names history has preserved to us?”†

In his Inaugural Address, treating of the authorship of the Scriptures—not of any particular portion of the Scriptures, and, of course, wholly unconscious that he was both missing and obscuring the main issue—he had already said:

“We desire to know whether the Bible came from God, and it is not of any great importance that we should know the names of those worthies chosen by God to mediate His revelation.”‡

The sweep and significance of these words will stand out more clearly in the light of the following statements with which Dr. Briggs had prefaced them:

\**Whither*, p. 87.

†*The Defense of Prof. Briggs before the Presbytery of New York.*, p. 121.

‡*The Authority of the Holy Scriptures: An Inaugural Address by Charles Augustus Briggs*, D.D., p. 33.

"The only authenticity we are concerned about in seeking for the divine authority of the Scriptures is *divine authenticity*" (*i.e.*, divine authorship), "and yet many theologians have insisted that we must prove that the Scriptures were written by or under the superintendence of prophets and apostles."\*

Again analysis and discussion must be reserved. Ambiguous as are some of the most important terms employed, the language quoted is sufficiently clear to give us Dr. Briggs' attitude toward the question of the authorship of the books of Scripture. Nothing would be easier than to multiply quotations of substantially the same import from other writers of note.† This, however, would be superfluous. The above statements are entirely sufficient to put us in possession of the present drift of opinion in reference to this question of the "human origin" of the Scripture writings.

Now with these statements before him the reader is asked to notice with what unanimity—a unanimity which, under all the circumstances, is surely singular enough—the conservatives, the "progressive" and the radical alike, agree to minimize and to belittle the importance of the question of the authorship of the books of the Bible. In their respective ways of presenting the matter, they do, to be sure, differ widely and most significantly each from the other. And yet the Dean of Canterbury, the most cautious and reserved of them all, says:

"Even of all the Old Testament Scriptures, we may say that as regards our faith little depends on their human origin."

Mr. Lias also, even while seeking to impress us with the momentous importance of the issues presented by the radical criticism, singles out this question of authorship and by the very terms that he employs depreciates both its relative and its absolute importance. He says:

"Not only do many persons allow themselves to suppose that the controversy" (between the radical critics and their opponents) "*only affects the date and authorship* of the Mosaic books," etc.‡

This leaves us to infer that if the contention of the radical criticism affected "only" "the date and authorship of the Mosaic books," Mr. Lias would regard it as much ado about nothing. And as for Prof. Kirkpatrick, the main object aimed at in his lectures was to allay popular alarm, caused by recent discussions upon

\**The Authority of The Holy Scriptures, etc.*, p. 32.

†See, for instance, C. H. H. Wright's *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 76; *The Expositor*, Second Series, Vol. V, pp. 401-403.

‡ Italics mine.

this very question of the date and authorship of certain of the books of Scripture. Dr. Briggs says roundly and boldly:

“The only authenticity” (*i.e.*, authorship) “we are concerned about in seeking the divine authority of the Scriptures is the divine authenticity” (*i.e.*, the divine authorship). “The Reformers,” he assures us, “were not anxious” about the “human authorship of the books of Scripture.”

In a word, I think that, after reading any one of these four writers, no one can fail to feel that, whatever the archæological and “critical” interests that may gather around the question of authorship, its practical bearings, if, indeed, it has any in other than exceptional cases, are for the ordinary Christian quite remote. It is to be feared that some such notion is only too widespread.

That this view can be rendered exceedingly plausible is evident from Prof. Kirkpatrick’s illustration. Why should the worshiper whose eyes are satisfied with the stately beauties of the temple permit his attention to be distracted by curious questions regarding the architects who framed it and the sources from which they took their material? Why should one who has the Word of God in his hands and whose soul is reveling in its beauties worry himself about “dates” and “the names of the worthies through whom God mediated” this precious revelation? Is not the anonymity of numerous books of the Old Testament evidence enough of itself that no special importance attaches to this question of authorship? It is unquestionably true that what we want to know regarding the Bible is whether God is its author—why, then, should certain theologians insist that it is necessary to show that “the Scriptures were written by or under the superintendence of prophets and apostles?” How are those, alike without learning and without leisure, to do this? Besides, if the “essence of the authority of the Scriptures is in the Scriptures themselves,” what need have we to be anxious about their “human authorship?”

This is all so very specious that it is hard for one to persuade himself that it is all utterly fallacious, especially when it comes to him with the endorsement of men of such diametrically opposite schools as that represented by Mr. Lias and Dean Payne-Smith on the one hand, and that represented by Dr. Briggs on the other.

And yet, with the passages cited above before him, he would be a rash or careless reader indeed who did not find in them what must give him pause before accepting the conclusion to which they all apparently converge.

For one thing; the most casual reading reveals the fact that the



consensus of opinion apparently obtaining among these four representative scholars is, after all, superficial, rather than real. First of all, it is noticeable that the Dean of Canterbury, Mr. Lias, and even Canon Kirkpatrick, speak of the books of the Old Testament, and of those alone. "Even of all the books of the Old Testament," says the first. "We admit," says Mr. Lias, "that Christians are in no way committed . . . to any particular theory of the origin and date of the books of the Old Testament." And so the alarm, to the allaying of which Canon Kirkpatrick addressed himself, has to do with "questions about the date, composition and character of the books of the Old Testament." So far as these gentlemen are concerned, then, it would be hasty to conclude that they would affirm that "the question of the authorship of the books" of the New Testament "is usually one of secondary importance"; or that "even of all the books of the New Testament" "Scriptures, we may say that as regards our faith little depends upon their human origin." Somehow, when it is the New Testament that is under consideration, Dean Payne-Smith's "For if they are what they claim to be, they are a message from God to our souls," etc., seems hardly to meet the case. But why not? Doubtless it is as true of the New Testament books as of the Old that "*if they are what they claim to be, they are a message from God to our souls.*" Still, if the Gospels, Acts and Epistles were second-century documents from authors of the same calibre and character as the supposititious J, E, D and P of the radical criticism, not a few of us would begin to ask, Are these books what they claim to be? *Can they be* a revelation from God? Why may not similar troublesome questions emerge in connection with the matter of the authorship of the books of the Old Testament? Canon Kirkpatrick tells us that a host of just such questions has arisen over them in connection with this very subject of their authorship. Indeed, it is to prove that the fears which express themselves in these questions are groundless that he writes. It is to quell them that he introduces his telling illustration of the temple.

But if it is noticeable that three out of four of these scholars, when they affirm that the question of "human origin" is of "secondary importance," refer only to the books of the Old Testament, it is no less to be noted that Dr. Briggs attaches no such limitation to his statement. For him the question of "human origin" is of "secondary importance," not only in the case of the books of the Old Testament but in that of the New as well. He chides those theo-

logians who insist that it is a matter of consequence to prove that the books of the New Testament were written by or under the superintendence of apostles, equally with those who lay stress upon proving that the books of the Old Testament were written by or under the superintendence of prophets.

Here, then, is ground for pause. With whom shall we go? With Dean Payne-Smith, Mr. Lias and Canon Kirkpatrick, or with Dr. Briggs? Suppose we are ready to say that the question of the authorship of the Pentateuch is not a matter "of any great importance," are we ready to say the same of the Pauline epistles? That is Van Manen's verdict, and no doubt Van Manen is a pious and reverent scholar. Why, then, has Chicago University cried, "Fie upon him!" Is there to be one doctrine on this subject for the Old Testament and another for the New? If so, why so? At any rate, if one wishes to know where the army is moving he has only to keep in touch with the head of the column: and he who fears the splitting butt of the wedge may well beware of admitting its thin edge.

But it is further to be noted that even those of our scholars who confine their doctrine of the "secondary importance" of the question of authorship to the books of the Old Testament are not as well agreed among themselves as might be expected. Canon Kirkpatrick's illustration of the temple is intended to cover the whole ground—Pentateuch and Prophets as well as the historical books. For him the authorship of the Pentateuch is as truly a "mere archæological question as might be that of the authorship of the Books of Judges or of Samuel."

Not so, however, with Mr. Lias. He is prepared, it is true, to make concessions, if necessary, in regard not only to Judges and Samuel, but also as to the prophets. That Isaiah, for instance, should prove to be an "anthology" would not greatly disturb him. But when it comes to the Pentateuch, he regards the question of its origin as "a vital one." Here, however, Dean Payne-Smith in his turn dissents. Not only does he assure us that "the veracity of the Bible is at stake" in connection with the question of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch; not only does he regard erroneous views upon this question as possibly imperiling "the genuineness of all the Old Testament Scriptures," but he declares that "it is a question of great value in our days whether the Book of Isaiah is an anthology, made up of fragments culled from lost works composed by numerous writers, or the composition of one man."

So that again we find that there is ground for pause before yield-

ing a too facile assent to the proposition that "as regards our faith little depends upon the human origin" of the books, even of the Old Testament. According to Mr. Lias, the question of the "human origin" of the Pentateuch is a "vital one." According to Dean Payne-Smith, nothing less than "the veracity of the Bible" is staked upon it. This looks serious enough.

It begins to be evident that there is confusion of thought and looseness of statement somewhere. For while these scholars all agree in minimizing and belittling the importance of this matter of authorship in the general, no sooner do they begin to be specific than the gravest disagreements emerge.

Before seeking for the causes of this confusion, it will be well for us to dwell in somewhat more of detail upon the evidences and the extent of it.

Take, for instance, the statement of the Dean of Canterbury. No sooner does one, so to speak, scratch its surface than antimonies and contradictions appear. He starts by assuring us that "the question of the authorship of the books of the Old Testament is usually one of secondary importance, until we reach the prophetic writings." This is cautious language, to be sure. It prepares us to expect that even in the case of the non-prophetic books cases may arise when the question of their authorship will demand serious attention. Growing bolder, however, the Dean immediately adds: "Even of all the Old Testament Scriptures, we may say that as regards our faith little depends on their human origin." And yet he has not gone three full pages before he informs us that "occasionally the matter" "of the authorship of these Old Testament books has become one of large importance, because of the course of modern criticism." Suppose now we ask: What has "modern criticism" done to invest this matter of the authorship of the books of the Old Testament with this new and large importance? The only answer that we can possibly give is: It has raised a question as to the authorship of the Pentateuch, Isaiah and other Old Testament books; treated it as a real question and as an open question; answered it differently from the way in which Dean Payne-Smith and others before and since have felt bound to answer it. What more than this has the most revolutionary of modern radicals done? But as soon as "modern criticism" dissents from the view that Moses wrote the Pentateuch and Isaiah the whole of the book bearing his name, the Dean declares that it is imperiling the very "foundation" of the "genuineness of all the Old Testament Scriptures," and, more than this, is impugning "the veracity of the Bible" as a whole.

And I think he is clearly right in these last positions. But, if so, he just as clearly nodded when he permitted himself to say that "the question of the authorship of the books of the Old Testament is usually one of secondary importance, until we reach the prophetic writings." If such is the case it is so only because "usually" the question is not raised. For as soon as the question is seriously debated the Dean is seriously concerned that the answer to it be what he correctly regards as the proper answer.

The case is not different with Mr. Lias. As soon as we begin to compare his statements one with another we discover grave incongruities. He tells us "that Christians are in no way committed by their belief in divine revelation to any particular theory of the origin or date of the books of the Old Testament in their present shape." The distinction implied here is, of course, just and obvious enough. But it is unavailing and misleading. For Mr. Lias himself tells us that the question "of the origin of the Pentateuch is a vital one." If, now, he refers to the "origin of the Pentateuch" in its present form, clearly he has contradicted himself. Let us suppose, however, that the reference is to the origin of Pentateuch in some form no longer known. If the character and qualifications of the author of this unknown original are vital to its value, are not the character and qualifications of him who gave it its present form equally vital to its value in its present form? What other guarantee have we that we are getting the real ideas of the original. Mr. Lias has convicted himself here by his own illustration. Having just said: "It has been admitted that the date and authorship of the Pentateuch, as it has come down to us, is a matter of comparatively little moment," he at once proceeds to disprove the correctness of so much of this proposition as relates to authorship by saying:

"We accept as accurate a book like Prof. Freeman's *History of the Norman Conquest*, though written eight centuries after the events recorded, because we know that he had access to contemporary authorities, and that he has treated them fairly."\*

It appears, then, that Mr. Freeman's character and qualifications are what warrant us in accepting with confidence a history written long after the events of which it treats. If this be so, then the question of "the authorship of the Penetatch, as it has come down to us," can hardly be reckoned "a matter of comparativley little moment." For just as clearly as in the case of Mr. Freeman's *History of the Norman Conquest*, the authorship of the Pentateuch,

\*L. c., p. 87.

as it has come down to us, conditions "the historical accuracy of the contents of the narrative" as it has come down to us. But, as Mr. Lias clearly perceives, "the historical accuracy of the contents of the narrative" in "the Pentateuch, as it has come down to us," is "of vital importance" to us. Mr. Lias, therefore, illustrates the justice of one of his own observations, viz.:

"The late Dr. Pusey used very frequently to remark that English people were very prone to make admissions without seeing how far they would lead them."\*

How stands the case with Canon Kirkpatrick? His architectural illustration is very plausible. Does it evidence really lucid and coherent thinking upon this matter of authorship? Let the reader turn back to it and re-read it, that it may be fresh before his mind.† The implications of the illustration constitute at once its strength and its weakness. In effect Canon Kirkpatrick says: The Church is here to speak for itself. Centuries of use witness to its stability and safety. The grandeur and beauty thrust themselves upon the eye of the beholder. Why bother ourselves, then, about "quarries" and "architects"? Does our sense of beauty and security wait upon the names of the men who planned and framed such a structure, or upon a personal visit to the places from which they got their material? Certainly not. But Canon Kirkpatrick is very much mistaken if he supposes that all this proves that the question of "quarries" and "architects" is of no practical importance to the user of the "great Church." Indeed, it seems to me that in affirming what he does of the "great Church," Canon Kirkpatrick has unwittingly affirmed a great deal more than he himself has any idea of as to its architects and the quarries from which they had their material. Or do men gather architectural figs from architectural thistles? Buildings of grandeur, beauty and stability are not produced by bunglers who built without plummet or line, and used wood, hay and stubble as their material.

Moreover, Canon Kirkpatrick's personal reverence for the Old Testament has blinded him to the real issue with which he has undertaken to deal. To adhere to his own figure, a question has been raised as to the character and competence of the architects who planned and framed his "great Church" and also as to the value and quality of the material they employed. Now unquestionably it is true that, even under these circumstances, we may appeal to the building itself and to its history for a refutation of the

\**Prin. Bib. Crit.*, p. 87.

†*Vide*, sup., p. 365.

aspersion thus cast upon its long-dead architects and their long-closed quarries. But we can hardly admit the soft impeachment brought against the architects and the sources of their material without sooner or later bringing the building into ill-repute. In other words, you may, if you please, reason from the safety, grandeur and beauty of the building to the worth and quality of the material of which it is composed, and also to the competence and skill of the architects who framed it. Or, reversing the process, we may reason from the value and quality of the material and the competence and skill of the architects to the safety, grandeur and beauty of the "great Church." But no subtlety of analysis can dissever the relation that exists between material and producer, on the one hand, and product on the other. Certainly it is impossible to prove that the material used was base and worthless, and the architects who planned and framed the building were bunglers, without leading thoughtful people to beware of the "great Church." Hence it is only when there *is no question raised* about authorship that the question of authorship can be made to seem to be one of no great importance.

But, all such considerations aside, Canon Kirkpatrick, like the Dean of Canterbury and Mr. Lias, is a swift witness against himself. For the blotter had hardly dried the ink with which he penned his illustration until he writes:

"It is important, with a view to the study of the history and development of the religion of Israel, to fix the relative dates of the writings contained in the Old Testament."

But what function, one may ask, has the Old Testament that is of more supreme practical importance than just this of putting us in possession of a correct conception of the origin and character of "the religion of Israel?" The "religion of Israel" is nothing less than the root from which our religion sprang. If the question of the temporal origin (*i.e.*, the date) of the several books of the Old Testament is important in order to a just estimate of the "religion of Israel," much more is the question of the personal origin of these books a matter of the gravest practical importance.

And now we come to Dr. Briggs. He has gone farthest of all in disparaging the importance of the question of authorship. And yet in his book, *The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*, we find him saying:

"The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch vindicates its credibility. It strengthens its historical credibility (1) by showing that we have four parallel narratives, instead of the single narrative of the traditional theory; and (2)

by tracing these narratives to their sources in the more ancient documents buried in them.”\*

If, then, the “historical credibility of the Hexateuch” be a matter of practical importance, Dr. Briggs is witness to the fact that the question of the unitary or multiple authorship of this so-called “Hexateuch” is of equal practical importance.†

How can it be otherwise? The greater or less “historical credibility of the Hexateuch” turns, according to Dr. Briggs, upon this matter of its authorship. So, then, neither does Dr. Briggs agree with himself; but after he has belittled the question of the “human origin” of the Scriptures, he turns around, and in the passage quoted makes the credibility of the “Hexateuch” hinge to a greater or less degree upon the question of its single or its multiple authorship. He also, therefore, joins the others in contradicting himself.

But we are not yet at the end of the confusion that characterizes current opinion upon this question. This appears again and very strikingly when we are at the pains to bring to clear statement the assumptions, sometimes contradictory and sometimes bizarre, which underlie the position under review. For instance, we find Mr. Lias saying:

“The truth is that the Scriptures are received as inspired not upon the authority of the Church, but on the authority of Christ. . . . As regards the Old Testament, Christ has repeatedly set His seal to the contents of the Jewish Canon as embodying a true account of God’s revelations to the Jews. As regards the New, its authority is derived from the fact that it contains either authentic records of the words of Christ, written by men who had access to sources whence they could obtain satisfactory information, or an account of His doctrine by men commissioned to proclaim it to the world.”‡

And in substantial agreement with this Canon Kirkpatrick declares:

“And when we pass from the consideration of the history of Israel and the revelation made to Israel to the consideration of the documents in which the history of Israel and that revelation are recorded, we cannot but accept them on the same authority” (viz., that “of our Lord and His Apostles”), “as possessing a Divine Element, as being, to use our own ordinary word, inspired.”§

Obviously these statements give us the assumptions that underlie and determine the view, as held by these two writers, that the question of authorship in the case of the books of the Old Testament is one of little practical importance. They are three. Both these writers assume—and, as I believe, correctly enough—that Christ

\* *Higher Crit. of the Hex.*, p. 6.

† In saying this, I do not, of course, endorse the very remarkable logic of the passage cited.

‡ *Prin. Bib. Crit.*, p. 22.

§ *Div. Libr. O. T.*, p. viii.

and His apostles knew and endorsed the canon of the Old Testament as we have it to-day. They also assume that this endorsement of the books of the Old Testament settles the question that they are "a message from God to our souls," or, "to use our ordinary word," that they are "inspired"—and that, let it be observed, *apart from all questions as to their "human origin."* They assume, finally, that in view of this endorsement by Christ and His apostles, "as regards our faith, little depends upon the human origin" of the books of the Old Testament. But even the fact that these last two assumptions are certainly plausible, and seem greatly to honor Christ and His apostles, ought not to hide from our eyes the fact that they are rationally untenable. Let one reflect for a moment upon what is involved in the assumption that the endorsement even of Christ is sufficient to validate the claims of a book to be a message from God to our souls, *apart from all questions as to its "human origin."* Let us suppose, for example, that Dr. George F. Moore has given us a true account of the "human origin" of the Book of Judges, would we be honoring Christ by regarding Him as capable of endorsing the puerilities, anachronisms, and questionable morals of such a book as "a message from God to our souls?" Would His endorsement eradicate the indelible stigma fixed upon the book by its "human author," and by him made a part of its very fibre? Christ's endorsement has no magic virtue. It would not change the Koran into "a message from God to our soul." And if that which Canon Cheyne tells us about Deuteronomy, Paul Haupt about Canticles, Dr. Driver about Chronicles and Daniel, Prof. George Adam Smith about the prophets of the Persian period were only true, were only the last word of scholarship about these books, Christ's endorsement would avail as little for them as it would for the Koran. That there is confusion of thought behind this assumption is palpable. It lies in overlooking the fact that in endorsing the books of the Old Testament as "a message from God to our souls," what Christ really endorses is the commission and the competence of their respective human "authors" to draw up and deliver such a message. It is unthinkable that one should endorse a history, for instance, without endorsing the candor and information of its "human author," or that he should endorse a prophecy without endorsing the official status of its "human author." But these questions of character, qualification and official position are the very core of the question of authorship.

The assumption that because Christ and His apostles have endorsed the books of the Old Testament as "a message from God to



our souls," therefore "as regards our faith, little depends upon their human origin," is equally an evidence of mental confusion. The fact is that certain positions in reference to the "human origin" and "human authorship" of the books of the Old Testament will in spite of the endorsement of Christ not only jeopardize "our faith" in them as "a message from God to our souls," but because of the endorsement they have received from Christ must jeopardize "our faith" in Christ Himself. Why should we hide our eyes to the fact that in making Christ sponsor for the Old Testament we make Him responsible for these writings in such a sense that, if they are proven by "criticism" to be marred by incongruities, grave and palpable historical inaccuracies, and a lack of what would now be considered correct ethical standards and moral perceptions, we make Christ responsible for these also. If with full knowledge of the many astonishing peculiarities of method and matter which "modern criticism" flatters itself that it has discovered in these writings, Christ gave them His unqualified endorsement "as a message from God to our souls," then the problem with which we are confronted is grave indeed. If, on the other hand, Christ's endorsement of the Old Testament was based upon His ignorance of the phenomena, literary, historical and moral, which "modern scientific scholarship" professes to have discovered in them, then the case is no better, but, if possible, worse. For the questions will press for an answer. Had he known what that which calls itself "modern criticism" professes to know concerning these books, would He, could He have endorsed them as he did? But could he, on the other hand, have failed to endorse them without denying Himself? At any rate, such ignorance, if it existed, cannot be overlooked in making up an estimate of Christ's character and claims.

Still another set of statements from Mr. Lias and Prof. Kirkpatrick reveals the confusion in which they, and those who with them minimize the importance of the question of the "human authorship" of the books of Scripture are wont to involve themselves. Thus the former, in the very breath after that in which he admits that the date and authorship of the Pentateuch, as it has come down to us, is a matter of comparatively little importance, adds:

"The question which to us is of vital importance is the historical accuracy of the contents of the narrative. But for this, on Prof. Driver's theory, we have no guarantee whatever. We accept as accurate a book like Prof. Freeman's *History of the Norman Conquest*, though written eight centuries after the events recorded, because we know that he had access to contemporary au-

thorities, and that he treated them fairly. But in Prof. Driver's theory of Hebrew history there are no contemporary authorities to consult, and what authorities there are have been subjected to a thorough revision by men dominated by a preconceived idea."\*

The discriminating reader perceives at once that both the illustration here used and the charge brought against Dr. Driver derive all their force from the fact that date and authorship condition the "historical accuracy," and this in turn conditions the inspiration of the Pentateuch and, for the same reasons, that of all the other historical books of the Old Testament.

And Canon Kirkpatrick also, after quelling the fears of the "ordinary Christian" by his "great Church" illustration, finds it useful to add, in another connection, that there

"are no cogent reasons for referring the compilation of the Books of Samuel to a late date;"†

and to assure his readers that

"the primary authorities for large parts of the histories in the Books of Samuel and Kings were the narratives of contemporary prophets."‡

All of which shows, of course, that, despite their admissions and their illustrations to the contrary, these writers themselves have not been able wholly to suppress their consciousness of the fundamental and paramount importance of the "human origin" of the books of Scripture.

With what is implied in the above statements of Mr. Lias and Canon Kirkpatrick as to the relation between "date and authorship" and "historical accuracy" on the one hand, and between "historical accuracy" and "inspiration" on the other, before his mind, let the reader note the assumptions underlying the following remarkable statement of Dr. Briggs:

"We desire to know whether the Bible is from God, and"—that is, and so, or consequently—"it is not of any great importance that we should know the names of those worthies chosen by God to mediate His revelation."§

At first blush, this seems to be rather singular reasoning. It is about as if the Cabinet at Washington, having before them a document purporting to be from the Court of St. James, should dismiss the question of the credentials of the person presenting the document with the sapient remark: We desire to know whether this document comes to us from the British Crown, and consequently

\*L. c., p. 87.

†*Div. Libr. O. T.*, p. 15.

‡*Ibid.*, p. 14.

§*Inaugural Address*, sup., p. 365.

it is not of any great importance that we should know by whom the document is signed or examine the credentials of the person by whom it has been presented. For even though it may not be the only way of deciding the question as to whether the document is from the British Crown, it must be admitted by all that, as it is the most usual, so it is also a most natural, simple and effective way of settling it. But the reason for Dr. Briggs' position and the assumptions underlying it come to light clearly enough when we turn to a passage already cited from *Whither?* It reads:

"The question of the authorship of the Bible is whether God is its author: whether it is inspired. This cannot be determined by the Higher Criticism in any way, for the Higher Criticism has only to do with human authorship and has nothing to do with divine authorship, which is determined on different principles."\*

Now will the reader please note, not merely the implications of this language, but its explicit and emphatic statements? Dr. Briggs does not deny that the Bible is inspired. The question here before him is as to the function of the Higher Criticism in determining, or in helping to determine, the question of the inspiration of its several books. He tells us what the Higher Criticism can do. He tells us with equal clearness what it cannot do. He tells us that it can settle the question of the human authorship of the books of Scripture, either positively, or negatively, or approximately. He tells us that it cannot settle the question of their inspiration. Not content with this, he is careful to add that it cannot determine the question of their inspiration "in any way" —that is, either directly or indirectly, positively or negatively. Further still, he is at pains to tell us why the Higher Criticism is impotent to deal with the matter of the inspiration of the books of Scripture. It is because it "has *only* to do with human authorship and *has nothing to do* with divine authorship." That is to say, these two questions, namely, the question of the inspiration of the books of Scripture and the question of their human authorship, are so little related the one to the other, or, possibly I should say, are so totally dissociated the one from the other, that no inquiries or conclusions anent the latter can be expected to throw any light upon the former, which, he tells us, "is determined on different principles."

The sum of the whole matter, then, is briefly this: Dr. Briggs believes that the Bible is inspired. He thinks that he can establish its inspiration. "The principle" by which he determines that of

\**Whither?* p. 89.

two books, both claiming inspiration, one is and one is not inspired, he does not here unfold. But he does with perfect distinctness deny that there is any argument from the human authorship of a writing to its inspiration. Of those who argue the inspiration of Scripture from the authorship of its several books he says:

“These theologians seem altogether unconscious of the circle of reasoning they are making. They prove the authority of the Bible from the authority of its authors. But what do we know of the authors apart from the Bible itself?”\* †

This is not the place to expose the fallacy of Dr. Briggs' logic. We should not fail, however, to note that we now have before us one of the assumptions underlying and conditioning Dr. Briggs' estimate of the small importance of the question of authorship. It is this: The questions of authorship and of inspiration are not only distinct from each other, but are absolutely independent, the one from the other, so much so that no amount of light upon the former throws any light upon the latter.

To say the least, this is a somewhat startling assumption. Whatever higher origin they may claim, the books of Scripture are unquestionably human productions. Doubtless, therefore, they proceeded from human authors. But if these writings are indeed from God, it can only be because their human authors were commissioned by God to produce them. If so, it will be found that any acceptance of them as inspired must be based either upon the evidence or upon the assumption that they proceeded from men thus commissioned of God. Having proved a divine commission for the authors of these books, we would have proved a divine origin for the books themselves. And whatever renders it impossible to prove such a commission for their authors renders it equally impossible to accept the books themselves as of divine origin.

This, however, is not the only startling assumption that underlies Dr. Briggs' position as to the comparative unimportance of the question of authorship. As already noticed, we find him saying:

“The Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch indicates its credibility. It strengthens the historical credibility (1) by showing that we have four parallel narratives, instead of the single narrative of the traditional theory; (2) by tracing these narratives to their sources in the more ancient documents buried in them.” †

We have here, as the reader perceives, a comparison between the

\**Inaugural*, p. 32.

†*Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch*, p. 6.

traditional view of the authorship of what is called the "Hexateuch" and the view proposed by the radical criticism. The proposition boldly maintained is that the view of the authorship of this portion of Scripture proposed by the radical criticism tends to produce greater confidence in its historical credibility than the view hitherto current in the Church, and here called "the traditional" view. The latter view, briefly stated, for the Pentateuch is, that it was written by one Moses, a man specially called, qualified, and commissioned by God to lead Israel out of Egypt into Canaan; a man, moreover, who was himself an eye-witness of the events and principal actor in the transactions which he records, and the very channel through whom God was pleased to communicate the laws contained in the Pentateuch; a man, finally, whose character and competence as a witness are certified to us by numerous writers of the Old Testament, by the apostles and by Christ Himself. Such, in brief, is what Dr. Briggs calls the "traditional theory."

The theory of the radical criticism, on the other hand, is that the primary sources of the material embodied in what we call the Pentateuch are traditions, for the most part, if not wholly, oral traditions; not only so, but inconsistent and conflicting, not to say contradictory traditions. These traditions were first reduced to writing some five or six hundred years after the occurrence of the events to which they relate. The divergent traditions thus gathered up and repeatedly edited to meet the personal or partisan ends of four "schools" of writers, whose work drew itself out over as many centuries, were put into the shape in which we now have them by a writer living after the exile. These writers all and several are nameless—a truly surprising fact—but *not unknown*. It is true that neither the writers of the Old Testament nor those of the New have aught to say of them. Christ bears no witness to them because, *ex hypothesi*, He was in ignorance of their existence and of their work. But for all this they are known—by their fruits. For me to attempt to describe them would have too much the appearance of caricature. For a portrait of them and for a portrayal of their methods and of its results, the reader is referred to the pages of Dr. George F. Moore's *Commentary on Judges* or to Dr. Driver's and Cheyne's well-meant and much-needed, but ethically most surprising defense of the "Deuteronomist" from the suspicion and moral opprobrium to which they have exposed him.

Now, as stated above, Dr. Briggs affirms that of these two theo-

ries the latter furnishes a stronger ground for confidence in the historical credibility of the present Pentateuch than the former. If so, then it can only be upon the assumption that in the case of these particular writings there is no connection—shall I say?—certainly no such connections as obtains in the case of other writings, between historical credibility and authorship. For, upon every principle usually relied upon to test the historical credibility of a writing, other things being equal, of two documents, one from a contemporary and one written four hundred years after the event, that document is more trustworthy which proceeds from the contemporary and because it has proceeded from a contemporary. On the other hand, the “historical credibility” of pseudonymous writings by writers living long after the events, writing not to reveal but to conceal the real sequence and significance of events and institutions, is usually regarded as *nil*.

Here at last we appear to have reached a limit beyond which it is impossible for confusion itself to be or to become more confounded. If there is no connection between authorship and “historical credibility,” then indeed the Dean of Canterbury, Mr. Lias and Canon Kirkpatrick are justified in uniting with Dr. Briggs to minimize and to belittle the importance of the question of the “human origin” of the books of Scripture. But perhaps there can be no more convincing refutation of their position than to show, as I have shown, that it has for its ultimate and only logical basis the astonishing assumption that there is no necessary connection between authorship and historical credibility, nor any between historical credibility and inspiration.

It only remains to try, if we can, to put our finger upon the causes of this disastrous confusion. I do not think that they are obscure, or far to seek.

For one thing, it is evident that not one of the four scholars whose statements we have been considering has thought it worth while to consider the question of authorship on its own merits. Canon Kirkpatrick and Dr. Briggs write as apologists of what they would call “critical freedom.” They are both committed to “critical” positions that make it absolutely essential to their peace of mind as evangelicals that they should not see what is involved in “critical” assaults upon long-accepted views of the date and authorship of the books of the Old Testament. The Dean of Canterbury and Mr. Lias are dominated apparently by a desire to appear as liberal and as up-to-date as possible.

But more influential than this is the failure of all these gentlemen

to see that *the question of authorship, as to its essence, is not a question as to the author's name.* This leads them to misinterpret the significance of the anonymity of certain Old Testament books. They all show that they construe this phenomenon as evidence of the at least relative unimportance of the matter of authorship. This can be shown to be an error.

Finally, and most influential of all as a source of the confusion at present prevailing in reference to this always and vitally important matter of authorship, is the notion that to show that there are other, and, for "ordinary Christians," more available ways of proving that the books of Scripture are "a message from God to our souls," is to show that that question of the "human origin" of these writings is, "as regards our faith, a matter of at best but secondary importance." That there are ways of proving the inspiration and authority of Scripture which for the "ordinary Christian" are more direct and not less satisfactory than by dealing directly with the often intricate and delicate question of authorship, I freely admit. But let the reader note the word *directly*. It furnishes the key to the difficulty. For when I accept the Old Testament on Christ's endorsement I am simply shifting the determination of the character, qualifications and commission of the authors of its several books from my shoulders to His. I do not, however, try thus to sever the indissoluble connection between root and fruit, between fountain and stream, between begetter and begotten. I can reason from either to the other: but I cannot reason away, or think away, or believe away the connection between them. Let it not be forgotten, then, that those who, playing upon our reverence for our adorable Redeemer, seek to thrust upon Him and upon us through Him the productions of the literary, intellectual and moral non-descripts of the radical criticism are only adding insult to their injury; betraying Him, and requiring us to stultify ourselves. Let them stultify themselves. It cannot last long.

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