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CHRIST AND THE TIME SPIRIT.

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It is recorded in the opening verses of the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, that when the Pharisees and Sadducees demanded a sign from Christ as a proof of his divine mission, our Lord replied, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." His enemies knew that Christ would refuse a sign, and hoped that his refusal would be taken by the common people as a tacit confession that he could not give it, hence would lead to his rejection. The demand for a sign was a question of a wicked and adulterous generation, a manifestation of the time spirit. The time spirit attached abnormal importance to signs and wonders as evidence of divine revelation. A refusal to gratify this unspiritual curiosity would be regarded as a confession of inability to account for his claims as Messiah.

The time spirit — the Germans call it the *Zeitgeist* — is the medium of thought through which Christianity is transmitted in a given age. As light partakes of the nature of the atmosphere through which it passes, so does the conception of Christianity depend somewhat upon the medium of thought which transmits it; and since this thought medium is a product of the life of the age, the time spirit is really the judgment of the age upon itself. In this case it was a wicked and adulterous generation seeking after a sign.

The spirit of our own time differs in one important particular from this. There is nothing of brutal rejection of Christ in it. Christ is admired and revered; Christian institutions are

CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF THE PENTATEUCH.¹

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THE theme of a doctor's thesis prepared by the writer was at first the significance of blood in the Bible; but soon the fixed limits of the thesis and the growth of the material under study reduced the theme to the significance of blood in the Old Testament, and finally to the significance of blood in the Pentateuch. Immediately it appeared that as interpreter I needed first to determine both the text and the origin of the writing to be interpreted.

For there are three branches of biblical criticism: textual criticism (less happily called lower criticism), which aims to determine the text of a writing as first written; genetic criticism (less happily called higher criticism), which aims to determine the origin of a writing, including author, time, occasion, integrity, etc.; and exegetical criticism, or interpretation, which aims to determine the meaning. Textual criticism must finish its work before genetic criticism or exegetical criticism can begin, and genetic criticism must finish its work before exegetical criticism can begin. For no answers made by genetic criticism or exegetical criticism should be used for determining the text except so far as such answers are obtained with text already determined; and no answer made by exegesis should be used for determining origin except so far as such answers are obtained either from compositions of already determined origin or independently of the question of origin. It follows that we were not ready to interpret the significance of blood in the Pentateuch until we first determined the text and the origin of the Pentateuch.

The text we could assume as determined, seeing that here

¹ Introductory to doctor's thesis on "The Significance of Blood in the Pentateuch."

textual critics are in most points agreed; but in the matter of origin it was far otherwise. For in this matter genetic critics are at present separable into two radically opposing parties. Before deciding what the interpreter must do, let us look at the two competing theories of the origin of the Pentateuch. One of them may be called *historicist*, because it accepts the historicity of the narratives — accepts them as true accounts of the facts. According to this theory, the events did occur when and where and as related; the narratives originated in close connection with the events, and were transmitted orally, or by writing, or by other available means of preservation, and through such translation as change in language required, until they came uncorrupted into the hands of the compiler or compilers of the record; and under competent hands the narratives were compiled into the permanent form which has come down to us. This strict historicity belongs even to the earlier stories of Genesis, which, therefore, did not originate with Moses, but with the agents in the events from Adam to Joseph; but the legislation in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy is throughout Mosaic, none of it originating later than Moses. The putting of this material into its present order might be ascribed to prophetic authority as late as Moses, or later; but the essence of this theory is the thorough historicity of the material throughout.

The other theory may be called *didacticist*, because it predicates a didactic aim of the entire composition, while denying in part its strict historicity. According to this theory, there are four elements in the narration: first, fact; second, legend, that is, narrative originating in fact, but gradually varying from it by addition, omission and change, in the telling and retelling of the stories; third, myth, that is narrative invented originally to explain facts and conceptions, and becoming gradually confounded with the legendary and historical; and fourth, prophetic invention, that is, such addition, omission and change as the prophetic compiler has made in adopting the histories and legends and myths of his people to their religious instruction — a prophet, in this broad sense, being a man with such profound ethical and religious insight that he can thus reshape this material and make it a means of conveying higher ethical and religious truth.

The form of the didacticist theory now generally accepted

among didacticists may be briefly stated as follows: In the Northern Kingdom, not later than 750 B. C., say in the reign of Jeroboam II., when Elijah and Elisha and Jehu had done their work, there grew up a document, from which were afterward taken parts of Genesis as far back as Abraham, parts of the first half of Exodus, fragments of the other Pentateuchal books, and parts of books following the Pentateuch. This document, with its author or authors, is called E, because it originated in Ephraim, and especially because, up to the Exodus stories of Jehovah's appearance to Moses, it does not use the name Jehovah, but Elohim. At the same time, or probably earlier, there grew up in the Southern Kingdom, or Judah, another document, called J, which used Jehovah from the first. From this document were afterwards taken parts of Genesis as far back as Gen. ii., parts of the first half of Exodus and of books following the Pentateuch, as well as fragments in the rest of the Pentateuch. Even the theology of these documents was not a pure monotheism, but a higher monolatry. Somewhere between their origin (which was before the middle of the eighth century) and the middle of the seventh century, these two documents were united, with modifications, into one document, which we may call JE. Meanwhile the great sermonic prophets like Amos and Hosea and Isaiah have lived, and have left their works behind them. Toward the end of the seventh century, in the reign of Josiah, the Jeremiah school of prophets publish a new document, legislative in content, but on the face of it Mosaic in origin. This document we may call D, as being mainly what we now have in Deuteronomy. This document centralized worship in Jerusalem, and put this centralized and approved worship into the hands of a selected hereditary priesthood, thus effecting the reconciliation and union of prophets and priests. The new prophetic-priestly school, gradually becoming more and more priestly, wrought out a rigid and elaborate ritual, working upon it through and after the Exile, and bringing it to completion in the fifth century under Ezra; so that by 400 B. C. we have what we may call the P document, which means parts of Genesis and of the first half of Exodus, together with the most of the second half of Exodus and the most of Leviticus and Numbers, that is the Levitical ritual.

It is not necessary to believe that P was ever written out as

a separate document, but it may rather be supposed that P was first published in its present connection. In other words, the priestly school of Ezra set their own legislative material in a narrative frame-work, combining some other material with JE to make the narrative down to the middle of Exodus, and fitting on D. They thus produced a continuous narrative from Genesis through Deuteronomy, with imbedded legislation, and published the whole as the law of Moses.

By this combination of the P material with JE and D, the P school require their material to be interpreted as in this connection, that is, as between JE and D, as lying, not at the end of the development of the ritual worship, but in the midst of that development, as growing out of JE and growing into D. And they likewise require JE and D to be interpreted as the organic parts of one development; and to this end *they have so modified JE and D as to make them convey P doctrines*. Hence, the Pentateuch as it now stands was intended by its P authors to be interpreted as throughout historical. This didactic aim of P is realized only as interpreters assume, not the didacticist theory, but the historicist theory, of the origin of the Pentateuch.

A striking application of this principle of interpretation may be given at Ex. vi. 3, which in our common version is rendered, "And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them." The last clause should be translated, "And by my name Jehovah was I not known to them?" making it a strong assertion that he was known to the patriarchs by the name Jehovah. P must have intended the sentence to be thus understood; for only as thus understood does the sentence leave P in harmony with himself, and the whole Pentateuchal history seemingly consistent. It need not be more than pointed out that the Hebrew of this sentence naturally and easily receives this interpretation.

From this review of the two theories of the origin of the Pentateuch we are able to lay down a law for interpretation, and a conclusion for genetic criticism. The law for interpretation is, that the Pentateuch and every part of it is to be interpreted on the historicist theory of its origin. Even if any part of J or E retained by P would have meant differently in the place and connection of its occurrence in J or E from what it does mean in its P place and connection, yet we cannot now

recover its place and connection in J or E, but must interpret it as where P has placed it.

But it is the conclusion for genetic criticism that especially concerns us in this paper. This conclusion is as follows: If the didacticist theory of the origin of the Pentateuch is true, this can never be made to appear from the Pentateuch itself; for the P redaction has succeeded in producing out of the composite materials a seemingly historical unity.

It must be kept in mind that the didacticist theory claims that J and E became one continuous document several centuries before the Pentateuch was published, and during these centuries was copied, read and understood as being one document, not as the fusion of two documents; that this JE was one document to the P authors themselves; that JE and D became gradually fused with P elements; that this P material gradually grew; that therefore the Pentateuch grew into its present shape; that it grew into its present shape under successive generations of priests; that the first *publishers* of our Pentateuch, about 400 B. C., if they did not themselves believe it to be a literary unity and genuine, expected its readers to so accept it; and that, as a matter of fact, the conscious and unconscious efforts that produced the Pentateuch out of JE and D and P, aiming to obliterate the lines of cleavage between them, so well succeeded as completely to deceive the first readers and all other readers for centuries. The P authors therefore succeeded in destroying the evidence by which they could be convicted of conglomeration.

For not only did they suppress utterly the existence of the documents out of which the didacticist would have the Pentateuch composed, but they also so far conformed the documents to one another, made them so much alike and so harmonious, that the Jewish readers and students of them from the first on saw no signs of this unlikeness of the component elements. It remained for investigators more than two thousand years afterwards, without any external evidence and against all external evidence, to detect the internal heterogeneity.

Concerning this Pentateuchal analysis, I came to the same conclusion as concerning the analysis of the fourteen verses in Eccle. iii. 9-22. When a brilliant detective of distant differences claimed that he found seven distinct authors in those fourteen verses, though he could not name one of them, I said thus, "If it were so, neither you nor any one else could ascertain it now."