



THE BOOK TABLE

THE HIGHER CRITICISM OF THE PENTATEUCH; and THE UNITY OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS. Two Volumes. By William Henry Green, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature in Princeton Theological Seminary. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1895.

These two volumes are both octavos, and have the same general appearance, but the first named has only 184, while the second has 583 pages. The surprise at finding that the volume which covers the most ground is much the smaller of the two is removed on examination, when it is found that although limited to a single book, the larger is a detailed study. The first named is really a bundle of popular papers, several, if not all, of which have previously appeared substantially as given here, and is rather perfunctory in style; but the second is a thorough and scholarly piece of work, and comparatively fresh, although it embodies much which appeared several years ago in a memorable discussion between President W. R. Harper and Dr. Green in "Hebraica," as the preface properly states. It was the opinion of that able theologian, Lewis French Stearns, whose early death is still deeply lamented, and who followed the discussion with intelligent interest and impartiality, that Dr. Green got the better of his antagonist. The pair were not evenly matched. Dr. Green is a veteran and a man of cool, cautious judgment. Conservatism is part of his being. He views the Bible with the awe which the pious Hebrew felt in the presence of the Holy of Holies. He cannot understand how the literary treatment of the Bible is consistent with reverence, or with a belief in it as the Word of God. To him the men who are "hallowing criticism" neither hallow criticism nor have any criticism to hallow. They have the ear, or rather, the eye of the public, for they are lively and acute. Yet he knows as well as they do that the public may read, but does not heed them, and really keeps on neglecting the Old Testament while professing the most profound reverence for the "Old Bible."

In "The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch" Dr. Green proposes to show "as briefly and compactly as possible that the faith of all past ages in respect to the Pentateuch has not been mistaken." The "divisive hypotheses," *i. e.*, the documentary and development theories, "are shown to be radically unbiblical. They are hostile alike to the truth of the Pentateuch and to the supernatural revelation which it contains." In "The Unity of the Book of Genesis," Dr. Green, by a detailed examination of the Book of Genesis, section by section, aims to prove that the book "is not a compilation from different documents, but is the continuous work of a single writer."

It is a pity that prejudice rules in the Biblical world. But it does. Those who favor the old view will read these volumes, especially the second, with great pleasure, and perhaps even with more or less gratitude to God for having permitted Dr. Green to defend the old paths with so much vigor. But those who favor the view that the Pentateuch was almost anything else than Mosaic will "snort" more or less loudly over these pages.

But whatever may be the converting and restraining influence of these volumes there

can be no denial of their skill and cogency. Dr. Green speaks simply, clearly, and sincerely. That he knows Hebrew and has mastered the vast literature in his department is granted even by his sharpest critics. He is, moreover, honest in the opinion he advances. He is no hireling who noisily defends the side which pays best.

Considering these volumes as literary productions, they are of unequal value. The first is not important, except to beginners in Old Testament introduction. It deals with matters which are almost wearisomely familiar. Successive chapters on "The Old Testament and its Structure," "The Plan and Contents of the Pentateuch," "Moses the Author of the Pentateuch," "The Unity of the Pentateuch," "Genuineness of the Laws," "The Bearing of the Divisive Criticism on the Credibility of the Pentateuch and on Supernatural Religion," treated in the rather heavy and sombre style of the Princeton Hebraist, are not lively reading. But the second is the book which has been needed for some time. The newer critical school claims that the redactor gives two discrepant accounts of the creation and badly mixes the stories of the deluge and makes any number of little errors. They will probably not be impressed by Dr. Green's exposition which denies that there is any foundation for this claim. Yet it safe to say that the overwhelming majority of the communicants of all denominations will be pleased to hear that Dr. Green, having subjected the Book of Genesis to an exhaustive study, still stoutly maintains that the discrepancies and errors are of the critics' making. The mistakes of Moses are not a circumstance to the mistakes of the critics.

Three remarks may be allowed one who is a member of the jury to whose decision the Masters of Criticism make their appeal:

1. Dr. Green is too severe and sweeping in implying that all who favor the newer views are friendly to a minimizing of the supernatural. There is no necessary connection between these views and infidelity. The charge that there is, only alienates the class of really orthodox men among us whom he desires to win over to his side.

2. The attempt to make out the age of documents, especially one like the Hexateuch, on literary and linguistic grounds, is extremely risky. Within certain narrow limits it may be successful, but as far as the Hexateuch is concerned, those limits are much overstepped. The partition of verses, the separation of alleged documents, the decision of the proper order of contents, this is time-consuming occupation for persons of leisure and Hebrew learning, and it is very little more. But the advocates of the newer critical views claim that their assertions as to the age of the Old Testament documents do not depend mainly on literary and linguistic grounds, but on the internal evidence of the books—the manners and customs and especially the *ideas* they witness to. Yet it may be questioned whether this basis is much firmer. There is a great temptation to read into a book what you want to find in it.

3. The so-called canons of literary criticism which have been weapons in the hand of mighty men to slay the giant delusions of the past in regard to the authorship of the Hexateuch and other portions of the Old Testament, are now applied to the New Testament. Baur left to us four Pauline epistles intact, but Steck leaves none. In a few years there will not be a single book of the Bible which has not been shown to be a composition of different ages and tendencies from those traditionally assigned to it.

But let the discussion go on. A truce to the

cry "heresy." What are we most anxious about, the old statements or the TRUTH? Who is the better Christian, he who declines to listen to any one who presents novelties in Biblical criticism, or he who has an open mind? "But they are destroying the Bible." Let "them" destroy it. *A Bible which can be destroyed is no revelation of God.* The day when it is *proved* that we have followed "cunningly devised fables" that no Voice spoke from heaven; that no Son of God ever trod the earth; that the Law was not given on Sinai and grace and truth did not come by Jesus Christ; that the Old Testament in its oldest portions is a thing of stupid redactions and dubious literary methods; that it embodies myths and legends and lies; that its later portions are not much better, being anonymous or pseudonymous chance remnants of an extensive literature; that the New Testament is the resultant of many forces, the basin of many streams of tendency—Essenic mysticism, Pharisaic formalism, Sadducean skepticism, Gnostic speculation—into which, however, flowed a rill of simple truth; that God, if there be a God, never spoke to the soul of man, if he have a soul; that we must stumble on as best we may in the darkness of error, until we close our eyes in the eternal sleep—the day when these things are *proved* will be a high day, a day of days, a day to be celebrated because upon it the TRUTH was unveiled. Honest men do not want to tread the "old paths" if Truth never treads them. They do not want the "old Gospel" if Truth did not utter it. They desire passionately to know the truth that as the sons of God they may be free.