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TATIAN'S DIATESSARON AND THE ANALYSIS OF THE PENTATEUCH.

A REPLY.

BY PROF. C. M. MEAD.

UNDER the above title Prof. Moore contributes an interesting and learned article in the last issue of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*. And, inasmuch as an expression used by me in the *New York Independent* (Nov. 7, 1889) furnishes, as one may say, the text for the discourse,¹ it is proper that I should allow myself a word of comment. The expression referred to is that "no example of such a 'crazy patchwork' can be found in all literature as the one alleged to have been discovered in the Pentateuch." This is answered in the article above mentioned by adducing Tatian's Diatessaron as an instance of "a patchwork crazier than the wildest dreams of the critics."

First of all, then, let me frankly acknowledge that apparently and formally the answer is pat and conclusive. Tatian's Harmony is a patchwork in many respects remarkably analogous to the supposed piecing together of documents in the form now presented by the Pentateuch. My remark, therefore, was too sweeping. I might have remembered Tatian's work; for, although not familiar with the details of his method as Prof. Moore has set them forth, I knew that as a matter of course the Diatessaron must have been a patchwork. I might have recalled to mind that I myself once undertook to construct a harmony of the four Evangelistic accounts of the last days of Christ, with the result that I pieced together verses or bits of verses from the different writers, and left out many verses altogether, very much as Tatian is described as having done with the Gospels in

¹ [The reference to Professor Mead's article was entirely incidental. My study of Tatian — part of a more extended investigation of the literary phenomena under discussion — was completed before the article named appeared. In a subsequent revision I introduced Professor Mead's metaphor of a 'crazy patchwork' because I took it to express in a word the difficulty many have in imagining a minute and intricate composition, to establish the possibility of which was the sole aim of my paper. — G. F. M.]

general. I might have bethought me, also, of West's Analysis of the Bible, which made a patchwork of the whole Bible, in that he arranged the contents of it topically, the result being very crazy indeed. Out of pure forgetfulness, therefore, of these familiar facts, to say nothing of such works as Robinson's Harmony of the Gospels, I made myself guilty of an affirmation which, to the extent above implied, can be easily shown to be inaccurate.

Let me make another explanation. In nothing that I have said have I meant to assert that the theory of the composite character of the Pentateuch is, as such, inadmissible. I am not insensible to the weight which belongs to the consensus of a large majority of those who have investigated the subject, and I freely concede the possibility of a composite work put together in the manner supposed. More than this, it can hardly be doubted that many indications in the text of the Pentateuch favor the conjecture that at least more than one man had to do in the production of it. This is pre-eminently true of the first three chapters. Although it cannot truly be said that Gen. ii. 4-iii. 24 presents an account of the creation parallel to that of chap. i., and although, in so far as they touch on the same topics, they cannot be said to contradict one another so as to necessitate the theory of double authorship, yet there is a difference in the general style and atmosphere of the description; while the difference in the divine names, though reasons for it may be conjectured, is so uniform and marked that it seems unlikely that one and the same writer would have suddenly thus varied his style, and his mode of presenting his conceptions. In the later chapters, also, there are many phenomena which favor the theory of plural authorship. Thus, to take a marked example, there are two lists of Esau's wives, Gen. xxvi. 34, 35, and xxxvi. 2, 3, which, apparently at least, contradict one another. Even though by two or three conjectures the apparent contradictions may be harmonized, still it does not seem probable that a single original writer would give two statements of the same thing, or, if he did, would give them in a seemingly irreconcilable form. But such evidence of pre-existing documents becomes less marked and convincing as one advances through Genesis and the following books.

Nor do I regard the denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch as contradicted by the Pentateuch itself, except as regards Deuteronomy and some minor parts of the other books. The critical partition might consist with the admission of the Mosaic authorship of

all that is expressly ascribed to Moses in the books in question. It is true that many of the critics attach no weight to these passages which imply that Moses wrote Deuteronomy, or the greater part of it; but those who do believe what these passages imply may yet believe in a critical partition.

Nor does the traditional ascription of the authorship of the Pentateuch to Moses preclude us from raising the question whether others than Moses may have had a leading part in writing it. The tradition may have had its origin in a misconception of facts. Once current, it would of course be handed down, and all counter-opinions gradually crowded out. But if conclusive proof of its incorrectness can be found in the writings themselves, the proof must be accepted.

I admit then freely, not only the possibility, but the plausibility, of the critical hypothesis. As regards Genesis in particular, no one can object to the theory that Moses, or whoever left it in its present form, made use of pre-existing documents, provided there is adequate evidence of the use of such documents. And as regards the other books, it is not necessarily any disparagement of their worth and authority to suppose that after Moses himself had committed some things to writing others supplemented his work with a more detailed record of the history of the exodus and of what Moses had communicated in an oral form.

Let me further remark that, as I have said in my *Supernatural Revelation*, what I chiefly object to in the current critical theories is the tendency to make the Old Testament legislation and history largely a fictitious and fraudulent work. Against such a view there is a presumption so strong that something more than ingenious conjectures and combinations is needed in order to overthrow it. The theory of deliberate forgery and falsification is so repugnant to the probabilities of the case and to the Christian conception of the origin and import of the Old Testament books, that nothing but the most incontrovertible demonstration can be sufficient to establish it. Even apparent or real difficulties attending the opposite view are not sufficient to justify this one. And when from a purely critical point of view the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis is shown to create new difficulties, even if it seems to solve old ones, it is both the right and the duty of Christian men to regard it with distrust.

But, as I have said, the critical partition does not necessarily involve this extreme view. Why not, then, accept the "results" of criticism

as to the partition, even though one may reject the accompanying hypothesis of the extremists as to the fraudulent method by which the present Old Testament books are supposed to have been produced and introduced? This brings me back to the point from which I started out. And though different minds are differently affected by the same evidence, and though I have no objection to a theory of plural authorship in general, yet when we are asked to accept the minute dissection which is presented to us as the "scientific" result of critical insight, I must still say that, besides other objections to the dissection, "no example of *such* a crazy patchwork can be found in all literature" as the one here professedly discovered. Of course, any historian has to make use of pre-existing materials, oral or written. Generally he works them over in such a way that the phraseology and general style are his own; if he borrows the exact language of his sources, he indicates the fact by introducing it as a quotation. The author of the Pentateuch, we are told, "went to work in a different way." He is said to have "pieced together his sources in such a way as to make a continuous narrative," omitting narratives that were duplicated, and adding "those modifications of phrase or of fact which were necessary to fit and cement his fragments together," or sometimes "matter substantially from one of his sources which for some reason was impracticable in its original shape." In general, however, the compiler is supposed to have left the form of the documents so intact that they can be accurately detached from one another.

Now, in the first place, it must be said that the compiler is, in fact, supposed to have done much more than is here alleged. In numberless cases he is assumed to have changed the language of his documents for the sake of removing discrepancies. In many others, on the contrary, he is supposed to have so changed them as needlessly to obliterate a distinction which elsewhere he conscientiously preserves. Prof. Green, by his minute and patient examination of the partition hypothesis, has certainly earned the right to give as his conclusion concerning R: "We are told that in some places he carefully preserves minute fragments of his sources, though they are a superfluous repetition of what has already been more fully stated in the language of other documents, and yet elsewhere he freely omits large and essential portions of them. In some places he preserves unchanged what is represented to be plainly antagonistic, while in other places he is careful to smooth away discrepancies and to give a different turn

to variant passages by transpositions or by insertions of his own. He sometimes keeps his documents quite distinct in language and form; at others he effaces their peculiarities, or blends them inextricably together. All these offices must be assumed by turns in order to carry the hypothesis safely through; but whether such a bundle of contradictions was ever incarnate in any actually existing person, the only proof of his existence being that these contradictory things are alleged about him, every one may judge for himself" (*Hebraica*, VII. pp. 35, 36).

Now such a treatment of his materials on the part of R is not impossible. To be inconsistent, as well as to err, is human. But so long as we have no knowledge of the man except what is conjectured from this inconsistent conduct, it is certainly warrantable to say, at least, that his existence is "not proven." That the Pentateuch may be more or less composite is to be admitted. That in some cases traces of different documents can with considerable plausibility be pointed out, may also be admitted. But all this is vastly different from the allegation that R has left the documents so well-defined that we can dissect the whole structure into its component parts, and be able, besides, to detect minute additions and changes made by R himself.

Now in the article at first referred to we are told that, though the layman who knows nothing about Oriental literature may take my assertion for a self-evident fact, yet "literature furnishes examples enough of every procedure which criticism ascribes to the author of the Pentateuch." If my assertion was unwarrantably sweeping in one direction, this, I am sure, is equally so in the opposite direction. The implication is that there are numerous instances of just such a compilation as the assumed one of the Pentateuch. It would be more satisfactory if some of these instances were adduced, by name at least. But the essay is confined to the consideration of only one alleged parallel, namely Tatian's Diatessaron.

But even this falls considerably short of being so complete a parallel as is alleged. I rely on Prof. Moore's own statement of the methods of Tatian in making his Harmony. That the several Gospels are cut up and pieced together in a very elaborate way is clear enough. That Tatian should omit sections which are identical with others used is natural and intelligible. That there should be "the most complicated transpositions of verses, fragments of verses, and

single phrases" is also not strange. But we are told that "the author has added nothing which was not contained in his sources, and has changed them as little as possible. Yet he was frequently compelled, in order to make a passable connection or transition, to supply or omit an explicit subject, to substitute different particles of transition, and sometimes to make the connection in his own words." Thus in connecting Matthew's account of the nativity with Luke's he inserts the words "After this."

But what is there in all this analogous to the multitudes of verses which R is said to have "worked over" by inserting words which, for the purpose of making a connection between the different documents, were not at all needed? or to whole verses inserted by R on his own authority, or from unknown sources? or to his systematic change of "Jehovah" to "Jehovah Elohim" in Gen. ii. and iii.? or to his substitution of "Jehovah" for "Elohim," or *vice versa*, when nothing was to be gained by it but to throw confusion into the whole relation of the documents to one another? Tatian, we are told, often makes a joint "by taking a verse or a phrase quite out of its original connection, or by cutting through one of his sources in such a way as to make the last words serve as a transition to something different from what originally followed." But what is there in this analogous to R's frequent alleged transpositions of passages when no such necessity can be adduced? What is there in it corresponding to the numberless instances in which, in order to carry out the critical theory, it has to be assumed that the text has been tinkered by one editor after another, so that we read not only of one J and P, but of three or four? Surely it requires some straining of the imagination to find in Tatian's compilation "examples of *every* procedure which criticism ascribes to the author of the Pentateuch."

I might remark on the striking difference between the fate of the Gospels and of the earlier Hebrew writings as compared with the reconstruction of them. The Diatessaron, though for a while in one section of the church extensively and even almost exclusively used, was soon banished from even there, and at last was so thoroughly suppressed that for centuries it was as good as lost. R's work, however, though done by a man of whom nothing is known, seems at once to have extinguished all the original works out of which it was made up. The work was done, it is suggested, "after the rebuilding of Jerusalem," i.e. near or after 400 B.C. Therefore, after Ezra had

finished his work, and had given his sanction to the law as he had found it, the old books, which had survived the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity and had been indorsed by the authority of the great scribe, were completely supplanted by this patchwork substitute, and no faintest trace of them has since been found. The Samaritan Pentateuch and the LXX, though the latter indicates a variant state of the text of the books of Samuel and Jeremiah, exhibit no trace of such variety in that of the Pentateuch. Within a century, therefore, after the supposed recension was made, the older writings were completely lost.¹

But this only by the way. However natural it may seem that the Diatessaron should have failed to supplant the Gospels, and however strange it may seem that R's work should have had an opposite fate, it must be admitted that such a turn of things was just possible. And if it was actual, then the Diatessaron is analogous in origin and form to the Pentateuch. But in order to substantiate the affirmation that literature furnishes an abundance of examples of every procedure which criticism ascribes to the author of the Pentateuch, we must be pointed to other instances like the Diatessaron, where we have not only the patchwork, but also the original works out of which it was made. Where are the instances? It would serve no purpose to refer to other cases *supposed* to be like the *supposed* one of the Pentateuch. The correctness of one hypothesis cannot be established by making another. We must be able to compare the redaction with the original sources before we can accept the affirmation in question. It might be imagined that tacit reference was had to such works as the Sibylline Oracles, the Ascension of Isaiah, and other apocryphal books which with great plausibility are argued to be composite works. But even if they are, they are only instances of one writing supplemented by later writers who have written something kindred which has been foisted in upon the original work. This is nothing like R's supposed work of weaving together several independent works into one.

But the article under consideration not only intimates that any one acquainted with Oriental literature knows of examples enough of such productions as the Pentateuch is supposed to be, it also mentions one

² Wellhausen supposes that the law which Ezra (444 B.C.) presented and commended to the people was the patchwork itself. This seems certainly more plausible than the supposition above considered. I am inclined to suspect that Prof. Moore may have meant to write "after the rebuilding of the temple," instead of "after the rebuilding of Jerusalem."

work by name — Ibn Hisham's *Life of Mohammed*, which is twice spoken of, and is apparently given as an example of work similar to what the critics ascribe to R.³ But what is this work? It is a *Life of Mohammed* by Mohammed Ibn Ishak, revised by Abd el-Malik Ibn Hisham, and dating in its present form from the first half of the ninth century. The work is thus described by Prof. Weil, who has translated it into German: "We do not possess the original writings of the author, but only the revision of them by Ibn Hisham, who died in the year 213 of the Hegira; but the former are preserved not only as to their main import, but even in their literal form; for the ancient Arabian collectors of traditions regarded it as of great importance to transmit unchanged to posterity the words of eye-witnesses, or of the first narrators to whom the facts were related by the eye-witnesses. When Ibn Hisham makes additions (which are mostly explanations, amplifications, or divergent traditions), he gives them as such; and he is equally careful to state when he omits anything from the original, and always gives his reasons for it — either because what is omitted has too little to do with the life of Mohammed, or because it verges on indecency, as is often the case with some of the verses in satirical poetry."

Here, then, is a work which consists largely of reports and traditions carefully reproduced and labelled. But where variant reports of the same event are given they are given separately, and the source of all the reports is particularly stated. No attempt is made to dovetail them together; and, moreover, what the redactor adds to the original, or changes in it, is indicated with the greatest punctiliousness. It surely requires an Oriental imagination to find in this procedure an analogue of the supposed work of R, which is represented to have consisted in an effort to weave together various histories into one web, no intimation being made that the sources are multiplex or discordant, nor that there is such a being as the Redactor who is responsible for the form of the book.

It is no removal of this objection when Prof. Moore reminds us that, as the historical literature of the Old Testament is generally anonymous, the Redactor did not know the authorship of his sources, and therefore could not indicate them. True; but he could have indicated that his sources, though anonymous, were various, and he could have kept them separate and distinguishable if he had wished

³ [But see *Journal*, Vol. IX. p. 205, l. 4, 5.]

to do so. But it is said, in the case of Ibn Hisham's *Life of Mohammed*, and Tatian's *Diatessaron*, the sources are named "because the whole weight rests on their names"; in the case of the *Pentateuch* we are to infer that, since the names were not known, there was no need of indicating even that the sources were various. Very well; then, in that case, there was also no need of so carefully preserving the exact phraseology of the sources — no need of mechanically dovetailing sections and verses and bits of verses and phrases together, detaching them from their connection, and making such a painfully elaborate patchwork, when he could just as well have digested his sources and put the result into his own form and language.

Should it be replied that R so proceeded because it was the fashion of his time to manufacture books by the crazy-patchwork method, I can only reply that that is just the thing that still needs proof. I know of no evidence that ancient historians, Oriental or classical, were in the habit of constructing history in this style. When the historian Josephus wrote his history of the Jews he certainly drew chiefly from the Jewish Scriptures; but he as certainly used them freely, and is as far as possible from having followed the example of the supposed Redactor of the *Pentateuch*. The work of Tatian was of an entirely exceptional sort, and no more indicates what was customary in this respect than my youthful attempt to harmonize the Gospels proved that historians then generally operated in the same way. And the work of Ibn Hisham, as we have seen, is no parallel to the supposed work of R. I must, therefore, still ask for the proof that there was any such custom as that of the patchwork style of literature, or even that there are "examples enough" of all that the critics find in the alleged compilation of the *Pentateuch*.

The upshot then after all, is that the analysis of the *Pentateuch* must stand on its own bottom. Of course, even though there were no other examples of such a patchwork as the critics make it out to be, that would not prove their analysis to be false, provided their proofs are stringent. But the failure to find parallel specimens of work does make it all the more imperative that the proofs in this case be such as to bear the test of the keenest scrutiny.

It is beside my present aim to criticise the arguments by which the *Pentateuch* analysis is sustained. I can only say that I still see no sufficient reason to abandon the judgment that the arguments, however weighty or specious, are yet not free from numerous weaknesses

which, considering the somewhat extraordinary nature of the thing to be proved, may well make a cautious reasoner hesitate before he accepts the conclusion. Prof. Green's critique of the partition hypothesis in the *Hebraica*, however inconclusive it may seem to those who are committed to the hypothesis, must make it indisputable to those who have an open mind that its advocates have been forced to resort to the most arbitrary conjectures and violent combinations in order to carry out the theory; that they have, to say the least, inordinately exaggerated the argument from variety in style; that, having fixed on certain general features as characteristic of the several authors, they then take the questionable method of chiselling short sections, verses, parts of verses, and even single words or phrases, out of their connection, because they conflict with the general criteria which have been set up; and that, when the facts cannot otherwise be reconciled with the hypothesis, the hypothetical Redactor is made to do all sorts of service of the most self-contradictory sort, betraying an intellect of the most confused order.

Now this painstaking examination of the partition hypothesis, displaying on every page the most intimate acquaintance with its history and essence, and meeting its assumptions simply by critical arguments, and showing conclusively that at the best it is a mere hypothesis, not proved and incapable of being proved, encumbered with difficulties and improbabilities at every step — this examination will probably be read by few, and answered by none, except by the convenient method of alleging that the question has been settled by the consensus of critics, and that a man who holds to any other view is a "traditionalist," a prejudiced bigot, unable to keep step with the onward march of science. Scholars who are inclined to protest against the critical hypothesis will be warned not to risk their reputation by venturing to question the established "results" of critical research. Hundreds of unlearned men, who have to pick up all they know of the matter at third or fourth hand, will talk as if they knew more about it than Prof. Green and all like-minded scholars. And so all remonstrances against the extravagances, self-contradictions, and dangerous tendencies of the critical theories are likely to be put down, not so much by arguments, as by a sort of intellectual bulldozing even on the part of the very men who make themselves the special champions of "freedom" in theological research.

Let there be the freest research; but let it be remembered that the

onus probandi rests on the side of those who would overthrow the traditional view, and that there is no proof of the new view so long as, in undertaking to solve old problems, it creates new if not greater ones. Arguments respecting the history and origin of an ancient writing derived merely from a critical inspection of its contents are of a precarious sort. One trustworthy historical attestation is worth more than the "insight" of a dozen critics with reference to such a matter. Especially should it be remembered that Oriental works cannot be judged by an Occidental standard. Real or apparent want of logical arrangement and orderly sequence is in them no proof of composite authorship. The Psalms and prophetic writings about whose unity there has been no serious doubt, might yet, if one were so disposed, be easily convicted of illogical order, and decomposed into a variety of fragments. And it would not be difficult to do the same with the New Testament books, even with those which have been regarded as most certainly from a single author. Nor would modern and Occidental works be safe from dissolution when sharply viewed by a critic who scents plurality of authorship wherever the movement of thought and form of expression are not what he regards as natural and normal. That sort of critical acumen can easily become a mania before which nothing is secure. It is a question whether in many modern critics the passion has not already reached this extreme.