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THE  
CHURCHMAN

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MAY, 1898.

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ART. I.—THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH.

No. XIV.

I HAVE once more to thank a friend for having pointed out that I have overlooked two passages in which the word *Shaddai* occurs in Genesis: the one is chap. xliii. 14, the other xlix. 25. Professor Driver recognises in the first of these a "trace of E." The latter has been "incorporated by J from an independent source."<sup>1</sup> My argument is not much affected by the omission. The majority of passages in which *Shaddai* occurs seem to indicate that it was an early name of God common to various Semitic tribes, or at least not necessarily confined to the Hebrews themselves. P tells us that it was the title by which God described Himself at the solemn moment when He made His covenant with Abraham, and marked the fact by the establishment of the rite of circumcision. I have already observed how P selects for the name of God employed on this important occasion one which does not appear to have been much used in the history of Israel, and that such a selection appears somewhat a strange one if his story is in any sense an invention of his own. On the other hand, little as the name was used, its appearance in J, in E, and in a song incorporated by J into his work from an independent source, is sufficient to prove that the name was at one time pretty widely known. That it should have been more widely known in early days, and have fallen into disuse when the name Jehovah had been specially assumed by God,<sup>2</sup> is not un-

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<sup>1</sup> "Introduction," pp. 15, 17.

<sup>2</sup> It is P, remember, in which this substitution of the Covenant Name of God under the Law for His Covenant Name before the Law is recorded in Exod. vi. 3. From this time the occurrence of the disused name is rare, in J, in E, and in *all* the other Old Testament writers. What explanation can be given of this remarkable fact?

likely. Which, then, is the more probable alternative, that in this narrative, ascribed to P, we have an authentic account, couched in the language usual before the time of the Mosaic Law, of God's original covenant with Abraham, or that P, in his narrative of the establishment of this covenant, written a thousand years after the time of Moses, has pitched upon, and laid particular stress on, a name of God which in his time had almost, if not entirely, gone out of use, if, indeed, it had ever been in general use among the Israelites at all after the days of Moses? The point is a fair one to raise. It ought not to be decided by mere assertion. There can be no doubt whatever that on the critical theory this particular choice by P of the name given to God at an important epoch in his history was at least a strange one, and that its selection here demands some explanation. Nor is this all. I omitted to state that P, in Gen. xxxv. 11 (*cf.* chap. xlviii. 3, 4), where he records God's renewal of His covenant with Jacob, *again* introduces God as calling Himself by this almost obsolete name, *Shaddai*. What possible reason could a post-exilic writer have had for disinterring it?

A point which strikes the careful reader of Gen. xv.-xxi. has been already noticed. It is the *unbroken continuity* of the whole narrative. First we have Abraham's lament that he had no heir, then the grant by Sarai of her maid to fill her place, then the birth of Ishmael, and Abraham's hope that the covenant would be fulfilled in him, then the promise to Sarah, and finally its fulfilment. The stories of the supposed various writers have been dovetailed on the critical hypothesis into a continuous and strikingly consistent narrative. Moreover, there are repeated references in both JE and P to God's covenant with Abraham, each reference adding a cumulative force to it by fresh and more solemn sanctions. First we have the promise before Abraham had reached Palestine (xii. 1, 2), then the promise after he had separated from Lot, then the renewal and confirmation of this promise by means of a solemn vision (xv. 5, 18), and then the enactment of an external sign of the covenant (xvii. 9-14). It is, moreover, clear that the cumulative force of these successive ratifications of the original covenant was due to no mere chance, but that it was the obvious intention of the historian to point it out. The fact is remarked by the writer of Ps. cv. (vers. 8-11). The cumulative force of these repetitions is altogether lost sight of if we regard the history as a combination of different accounts. Further, these continued repetitions have an ethical and spiritual significance, to which St. Paul has directed our attention in the Epistle to the Galatians. But this significance is altogether illusory unless the story is true.

In ver. 7 we have a covenant made, not only with Abraham, but with *his seed after him*. This mention of a covenant, we are told, with the chosen people is a distinctive feature of the post-exilic priestly writer. Nevertheless, though this late priestly writer is the first to tell us of it, it was well known long before, as its mention by the "prophetic" writer of the "eighth or ninth century B.C.," in chap. xv. 18, xxvi. 24, and xxviii. 13 clearly shows. Here, once more, we find JE taking for granted centuries previously what modern criticism tells us was first made known by P. In other words, these passages, taken together, go a considerable way in the direction of establishing their unity of authorship. Then we have the expression "land of thy sojournings" here, in xxviii. 4, xxxvi. 7, and xxxvii. 1. In each case it is attributed to P. But, as we shall see when we get to xxxvii. 1, it is extremely problematical whether the division there can be sustained. If xxxvii. 1 does *not* belong to P, then once more the use of this expression indicates a common authorship of P and JE. Again, in vers. 7, 8 we have the expressions, "Be a God unto thee;" "I will be their God." This, as we find in Exod. vi. 7, 8, and xxix. 45, is a characteristic expression of P. But we find the words in Deut. xxix. 13, and the idea in Deut. vii. 6, xiv. 2, xxvi. 18. Now, if there be any conclusion of modern criticism supposed to be more satisfactorily established than any other, it is the fact that the religious teaching of Deuteronomy is *based on JE*. Yet here we find the Deuteronomist emphasizing a *characteristic feature of P!* Is there a mistake here? Is xvii. 7, 8 to be assigned to JE? Or does the Deuteronomist draw his religious conceptions from P as well as JE? In the latter case P is anterior to Deuteronomy after all. In either case the conclusions of the critics will have been shown to need serious revision. We may further briefly advert to the fact that in order to support the theory that the story of the covenant of circumcision is invented by P, the critics are driven to the shifts to which they usually resort when they are in a "tight place." Chap. xxi. 1 to "had said" belong, we are informed, to J; the rest of the verse, *save the word "Jehovah,"*<sup>1</sup> *which is the work of the redactor,* is taken from P. Ver. 2 down to "old age" is taken from J. Thence the passage down to the end of ver. 5 is from P. As usual, no proof of these statements is given, at least in Wellhausen's treatise on the composition of the Hexateuch. Some proof, however, is surely necessary. Wellhausen does not even refer to the passage, except to say that in xxi. 1 Jehovah (which "Jehovah?"—the

<sup>1</sup> P, it is to be remembered, is an *Elohist*.

word occurs twice in the verse) betrays the hand of a stranger. Is it not a little too much to ask us to accept such statements as these as the conclusions of modern science without giving some reason why we should do so? Then, again, we have here the word יולד (is born) in the Niphal (ver. 17), though that (see Gen. iv. 17) is a characteristic of JE.<sup>1</sup>

In ver. 12 the word לדורותיכם (in your generations) occurs. In every place where this phrase occurs it is assigned to P. But it is only fair to say that if all the criticism of the Old Testament dealt as fairly and rationally with the facts as that which relates to this particular word, I would never have said a syllable against it. That special chapters where special words and peculiarities of style occur, and when there is no special reason for the introduction of any new words or terms of expression, may have been written by a different author from the rest of the narrative, is, of course, by no means improbable. One of my complaints, however, against those who have accepted the modern criticism is that they have assumed, first, that what I have just mentioned is its *leading* principle, which it is not, and next, that the reasonableness of this leading principle is disputed by traditionalists. Nothing of the sort. Were all the criticism of the kind involved in the treatment of this particular expression, I for one would never have raised a voice against it. The expression in question never occurs except in passages of considerable length and close coherence—passages, moreover, in which not it only, but several of the words supposed to be characteristic of P, occur. No reasonable person would deny that features such as these in a Hebrew narrative might justify a candid observer in concluding that the passage in question might (not *must*) have been by a different hand. It is only when it is found that the theory of authorship suggested can only be established by such violent measures as the treatment of chap. xxi. 1-5, which has just been noticed; by the purely conjectural severance elsewhere of verses and halves of verses in a continuous narrative, as, for instance, where ver. 29 alone is assigned to P in Gen. xix., and where, in the passage xxv. 21—xxvii. 45, xxv. 26*b*, and xxvi. 34, 35 are similarly severed from the rest, with other cases like these, that the arbitrariness and doubtfulness of the conclusions become apparent. And it must once more be repeated that *probability* and *proof*,

<sup>1</sup> Driver, "Introduction," p. 13. This chapter has also the verbal adjective יולד to represent "is born." It also occurs in the supposed independent author of Gen. xiv. 14. This word occurs elsewhere in Lev. xii. 11; Jer. ii. 14; and in JE, Numb. xiii. 22, of the children of Anak. The Masorites point ver. 28 as though it were there also. But there is no Yod in the text.

though cognate words, are most assuredly not synonymous. Our next point is ver. 14. The words "break (הפר) My covenant" seem to me here, I confess, to have been the original of such passages as Deut. xxxi. 16, 20. Of course I may be wrong, but if we were to follow the example of the subjective critics, I have only to make the assertion, and any person who approved of my sentiments on the point would be entitled to say that I had "proved" that assertion, and if he could get a dozen or so of writers to support him, might declare that "the critics were agreed." In Wellhausen's work on the composition of the Hexateuch even such a step as this is very frequently regarded as quite unnecessary. The conclusion is quietly assumed. But let us follow the history of the expression. It occurs first, on the modern critical theory, in Judges ii. 2, which Professor Driver<sup>1</sup> tells us contains "fragments of an old account of the conquest of Canaan." Next it occurs in Isa. xxiv. 5. Then we find it in the passage of Deuteronomy mentioned above. Then it occurs with some amount of frequency in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Last of all, it appears here, in the post-exilic account of the institution of the covenant itself. I am, be it observed, taking the critical, not the traditional, view of the relative dates of these books or parts of books. Of course we know that "the critics are agreed," and that from their verdict there is no appeal. But, were we living in an age of liberty of thought, were a little liberty of conscience permitted in the place of the Vaticanist *régime* the critics have established, perhaps some rebellious Protestants might possibly be found inclined to the belief that it were infinitely more probable that Gen. xvii. is, after all, the older narrative, and that the other writers who use the expression in question were making an allusion to the awful sanction under which the rite of circumcision was originally established. And when we further find that in ver. 13 the covenant is spoken of as "everlasting," and that Isaiah in the passage just cited uses the phrase, "They have broken (הפרו) the everlasting covenant," the inference would seem irresistible, did the strong hand of authority permit us to make it, that Isaiah was well acquainted with, and was referring to, the passage in Gen. xvii., even though criticism claims to have established the fact that it was not written till three hundred years after his death. It may safely be asserted that when criticism has been carried a little farther, when it has recovered from the

<sup>1</sup> "Introduction," p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xxiv. would naturally belong to the *first* Isaiah. But possibly the Polychrome Bible, which I have not seen, may attribute parts of the first Isaiah to the second. Isaiah bids fair to resemble the Pentateuch in its susceptibility to "polychrome" treatment.

present wave of disintegrationism under which all liberty of opinion and a good deal of reason and common-sense is submerged, it will be once more acknowledged that in Gen. xvii. we have the original history of the establishment of circumcision as the sign of the covenant with Abraham, and that the other passages which have just been quoted are subsequent allusions to it.

Our next argument will be one drawn from considerations of style. We have already been made acquainted with the *dictum*, delivered *ex cathedra*, that a priest's style is always "formal and wearisome,"<sup>1</sup> and have bowed to the decision, it is to be hoped, with due humility. Yet the old Adam of scepticism, even in this age of touching humility and obedience, will sometimes disquiet us a little. There is a singular likeness in style and tone between Gen. xvii. 17, and Gen. xviii. 12; but, as duty bids us, we resolutely suppress the rising doubt. Gen. xvii. 17, 18, is "formal and wearisome; it is the style of a priest." Gen. xviii. 12 is picturesque and lively, as is natural with a prophet. If there be any similarity between the passages, P has of course (I wonder why he did not do so oftener) borrowed his liveliness from JE; that is, Gen. xvii. 17 is copied from Gen. xviii. 12. There is, it is true, as we have seen, another lively passage in Gen. xvii. 18, which P has not borrowed from JE. We are, of course, forbidden to indulge the heretical thought that Gen. xvii. may after all be by the same author as the rest of the narrative, or at least as Gen. xviii. We must therefore satisfy our conscience with the theory that in the striking and somewhat impassioned and perhaps also somewhat "anthropomorphic" passage, "And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before Thee," the priestly writer forgot his priesthood for a moment, and the obligation it imposed on him to be "formal and wearisome," and allowed himself for once in a way to write like other people. There is also another great similarity between the promises that Ishmael shall become a great nation in Gen. xvi. 10, xvii. 20, and xxi. 18, and it may be observed that in the latter passage JE repeats not his own words in chap. xvi. 10, but those of P in xvii. 20. However, as the defenders of the critics have lately boasted, they are very "difficult to refute." It is, indeed, extremely difficult to refute assertions, especially when those assertions, if questioned, are immediately bolstered up by other assertions, and when every fact which seems to look in a contrary direction is promptly set aside. It would be "difficult to refute" the assertion that the sun is a mass of incandescent

<sup>1</sup> CHURCHMAN for March, 1898, p. 293.

green cheese, especially if the evidence of the spectroscope and the solar prominences were set down to ignorant hallucination. And so here. If there be a strong likeness between Gen. xvii. 20 (P), and Gen. xxi. 18 (JE), the presumption in favour of unity of authorship is easily set aside. P is here quoting JE. It is not merely "difficult," it is impossible, "to refute" such an assertion. And so the critic boldly bestrides his patchwork, and challenges the miserable traditionalists to come on. If the latter venture to make a remark with which it is in the least degree difficult to deal, the weapon of lofty and contemptuous silence is unsheathed, and is brandished in his face. What use can there be in answering a person who is impervious to the force of a critical "proof"? It is, of course, impossible to argue with a man who refuses to take any notice of your arguments. So there is nothing for it but to submit. If a "formal and wearisome" passage is found, it belongs to P, and there is an end of it. If P deviates into liveliness sometimes, he is copying JE, as every enlightened critic can plainly see, and if any person fail to see it, words are thrown away upon him. So, again, if there be any resemblances in style between these different authors, JE and P, whose style is so markedly divergent, it is as clear as the sun at noonday that here the later has copied the earlier. And if we stumble across a "formal and wearisome" passage in JE, why, "formal and wearisome" passages occur in all authors, at times, as everybody knows. It is impossible for anyone to avoid it altogether. If we should go so far as to ask why, on this principle, which is indisputably true, the "formal and wearisome" passages in the Pentateuch may not be due to the author but to the subject, and may after all not be so incompatible with unity of authorship as has been supposed; the trained investigator turns aside with disgust from such wretched special pleading, and informs the ignorant quibbler that he is but "beating the air" in attempting to re-open questions which have long ago been settled by competent authority. It is, indeed, *very* "difficult to refute" critics who conduct their inquiries in such a fashion as this.

It may, however, be necessary to observe once more that I do not dispute the statement that the author or compiler of the Pentateuch used documents. Recent archæological research has conclusively proved that, at least in the earlier portion of his history, he has done so, and what he has done in the early chapters of Genesis, he may have done, and probably has done, elsewhere. The genealogies, too, as I shall hope to show further on, whether they are supposed to be extracted from JE or P, betray special features of their own. They, therefore, are almost certainly by another hand or

hands than that of the author, and many of them were probably later insertions. What I dispute is that the asserted division of the four first books of the Pentateuch between JE and P has been established. I contend that the question has in truth never been fairly discussed at all. The history of the present "conclusions of scientific research" is briefly this: Hupfeld was the first to perceive that the old J and E theory could not be sustained. He proved, not in the critical sense of that much-abused word, but by real and rational arguments, that there is far less difference between J and E than between some parts of E and other parts of E. He proceeded to assign the parts which were less like J to an earlier Elohist, and those which were more like J to a later Elohist. As we have already seen, the relation of these two Elohist to each other in the order of time has been inverted since Hupfeld's time. But there has been no real and thorough reopening of the whole question by those who have so inverted it. Where Hupfeld's analysis has been found to involve the critic in difficulty, it has been corrected. Further amendments have been made on the hypothesis that Deuteronomy is based on JE. It is possible that still further adjustments may yet have to be made in order to evade the force of objections such as have been urged in these papers. But the whole critical theory, be it once more remarked, *is based on assumptions which have not been, and cannot be proved*, and its acceptance is due, first of all to the taste of the time, which greedily runs after novelties, and next to the difficulties involved in the Old Testament history, for which it offers a welcome and specious solution. But I repeat that there *has never yet been a fair and impartial investigation* of the critical problem presented by the Pentateuch on the ordinary principles of historical and literary research accepted when dealing with the history and literature of other peoples. Until research is conducted on such principles, and on such principles only, we have a right to persist in rejecting the results supposed to have been attained.

I cannot conclude without adverting to some recent criticisms in the *Times* and *Standard* which show the conclusions to which English people are likely to arrive on the discoveries of the German school when its methods and results are fairly before the public. At present, all that the public, which has no time to study the matter, knows, is, that sundry German critics are supposed to have demonstrated that the Bible was compiled from documents, and that these documents have been proved to have been of a considerably later age than has been supposed. This is, of course, an extremely reasonable proposition, and were this all for which

the critics in question have been contending, I, for one, as I have already said, should not have troubled myself to put pen to paper to controvert them. But, happily, the invention of the "Polychrome Bible" has let the British public into the secret of the methods by which the critics have arrived at the result that Jewish religious history, as it has come down to us, is Jewish religious history turned upside down. Especially has it let daylight into the "cocksureness" of the modern professor, German or English. And so the average Englishman is beginning to have his doubts, no longer of his Old Testament, but of the infallibility of its critics instead. The *Times*, a little while ago, insinuated that the conclusions of modern criticism required a good deal of faith to support them. And now the *Standard* follows suit. In a recent review of the "Polychrome Bible" it says, "Is such certainty as the method of this edition requires likely ever to be attained?" And then, after indicating the difficulties which would attend on such a method of research if applied to English literature, it significantly adds, "Hence we doubt whether the distribution of the books of the Old Testament to which we have referred will command universal assent, and we shall not be surprised if some of them are superseded even before the series of volumes in the Polychrome Bible is completed."<sup>1</sup> Thus, the "Polychrome Bible" is likely, with its rainbow tints, to be a great public benefit. "I thank thee, Hebrew" critic, "for teaching me that" way of making it clear what you are driving at. The critical school may continue to ignore all critics who do not accept their axioms and postulates. They may, and undoubtedly will, represent the utterances of the reviewers in the *Times* and *Standard* as the utterances of the British Philistine. But those utterances will be found to be the ultimate verdict of English common-sense.<sup>2</sup>

J. J. LIAS.

<sup>1</sup> The *Standard* writer is a little exercised by the substitution of JHVH for the less accurate Jehovah, and after the manner of the British Philistine, asks how this remarkable combination of consonants is to be pronounced if the book be read aloud!

<sup>2</sup> In my last paper I referred to the fact that it is the post-exilic P which relates the change of name of Abram and Sarai, and gave evidence to show that this change was already known in the "eighth or ninth century B.C." I might have adduced Josh. xxiv., assigned by Professor Driver to E, and 1 Kings xviii. 36, supposed to be by a North Israelitish hand, and "in the best style of Hebrew historical narrative." Both these are supposed anterior to P, and both "know nothing" of the name Abram. Is P, then, romancing in Gen. xvii., or is he following some authentic narrative? It is to be hoped that some day criticism will be able to give us some account of this authentic document.