

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

THE CRITICAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PENTATEUCH.

LANGUAGE AND STYLE.

BY THE REV. F. R. MONTGOMERY HITCHCOCK, D.D., formerly
Donnellan Lecturer in Trinity College, Dublin.

THE chief lines of argument followed by the Critics of the Pentateuch are three. The first is based on the language. They argue that "the language of the four great documents which make up the Pentateuch is so different that they must have been composed by different writers. The difference of language extends to a very large vocabulary, so that each of the documents requires its own lexicon. And the differences are not differences of synonym; they are differences representing different centuries in the historical development of the Hebrew language." So writes Professor C. A. Briggs of New York.¹ The second argument is based on style. The differences in style of the different documents of the Pentateuch (they declare) demand not only different authors, but authors living at widely different times. The third argument is based on the historical situation. The historical situation of the several documents is different (they say), and the institutions they describe belong to different periods of history. The "four documents" are J, E, P and D. The style of the first is said to resemble that of the prophets of Judah, the style of the second that of the prophets of Ephraim, the third the book of Ezekiel and the Chronicles, and the fourth that of Jeremiah.

These four documents are spoken of as if they were absolutely distinct, and were characterized by such striking differences that they must be quite early discerned. It seems rather strange, then, to find professors like Prof. Bacon and Dr. Driver at variance in their analysis of a short passage like Exodus i.-xi., which contains 284 verses, of which 214 are assigned to the combined document JE. The question now arises how many of these verses belong to J and how many to E. In thirty-two verses of these little more than one in every six these professors differed from each other and their own former analysis as to which was E and which was J. Dr. Driver

¹ *The Papal Commission and the Pentateuch* (Longmans, 1907).

remarked that "indeed stylistic criteria alone would not generally suffice to distinguish J and E."¹ Will it, then, distinguish P from J and E? Another point to be considered is that it requires a very minute and careful analysis to distinguish these four documents as they are said to have been arranged by the Critics. In Genesis 364 verses are assigned to P and 1,146 to JE. In Exodus 612 are P and 594 JE. In Leviticus 593 belong to P and 266 to earlier sources. In Numbers 995 are P and 288 JE. In Deuteronomy 10 are P, 41 JE, 908 are D. Such is Driver's analysis of the Pentateuch, which gives 2,574 verses to P, 2,069 to JE and 908 to D.

Surely the Critics are bound to give some reason for such a cumbersome and unique literary phenomenon. Unto what shall we liken this grotesque documentary mosaic? It seems to us just as if the drafter of the Petition of Rights in 1628 were to incorporate in his document the laws and histories of King Alfred, the provisions of Magna Charta, and the Articles of the Reformation! Would it not have been more reasonable for the priestly scribes of Ezra's day to have published J, E and P in separate books like the historical books and Deuteronomy itself, which is almost entirely one complete work according to the Critics? They could quite easily have secured the Mosaic authority, for (according to them) later compilations and legislation by assigning those alleged separate documents J, E and P directly to Moses. We are entitled to demand why and wherefore legislation which is alleged to belong to the latest stage is set in the very centre of the Pentateuch and followed by what is said by the critics to be earlier. Surely this order would imperil that legislation. It would be bound to be superseded by that which follows it in position and order. To make this clear the Critics distinguish "three codes" in the Pentateuch. In JE we have a simple code, found in Exodus xx. 24-xxiii., "the Book of the Covenant," relating to morals. In Deuteronomy we have a more advanced code. And in the latter portion of Exodus, in Leviticus and in Numbers we have the final stage of the elaborate ceremonial known as P. These codes will be examined in another place. Here it is sufficient to observe that the order in which they are arranged, the latest legislation being placed between the first and second codes, contravenes the universally recognized rule that more recent legislation is not printed before but after the previous legislation it supersedes. We

¹ *Literature of the Old Testament*, 7th Ed., p. 126.

can picture the confusion into which the English courts of law would be thrown if the laws of England were republished in a new form and order, the laws of George V being inserted between those of Anne and George I, many of the latter having been modified, altered or annulled by later legislation. This analogy is an exact parallel to which the Critics assume in this case.

We shall now discuss the argument based on style which the writers of the Higher Critical School have used in the treatment of the Pentateuch, and we hope to be able to show that they have employed in the case of the Old Testament canons of criticism which could not be applied with any prospect of success to any known literary works. They assume, as we have seen, the existence of "two narratives of the patriarchal and Mosaic ages, independent, yet largely resembling each other."¹ The older of these, called J, said to be the work of a writer in the Southern Kingdom, is dated about B.C. 850; E is the work of a writer in the Northern Kingdom about 750.²

What were the older sources of information used by these unknown writers J and E who "cast into a literary form the traditions respecting the beginning of a nation that were current among the people?"³ Dr. Driver gives a short and meagre list, consisting of a few lyrical poems, a prose account of a battle with Amalek, the ten commandments, and a few legal ordinances.⁴ Although we do not think it at all likely, that the Hebrews, who were acquainted with the use of writing for at least four centuries before, would be satisfied with this, we shall pass on to Dr. Driver's description of the literary style of J and E. Considering that, according to him, they were the first literary men among the Hebrews, it is a pity nothing is known of them in history. Nothing, in fact, outside the critical theory, is known of them at all. Driver dwells long and lovingly upon the difference of their styles, just after he had with but too apparent difficulty attempted to explain its evident similarity! He wrote:

"In J Abraham journeys through the district of Shechem and Bethel, and also visits Beersheba, but his principal residence

¹ Driver, *Introduction*, p. 116.

² So Wellhausen and Kuenen. Other Critics, Dillmann, Kittel, Riehm, regard E as the older.

³ Driver, *Introduction*, p. 117.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

appears to be Hebron, afterwards the great *Judaic* sanctuary ; in E he dwells chiefly in Beersheba (the sanctuary frequented by Ephraimites).¹ As compared with J, E frequently states more particulars ; he is best informed on Egyptian matters. . . . The allusions to the teraphim worship and polytheism of the Aramaean connexions of the patriarchs are all due to him, as well as, probably, the notices of Miriam, of Joshua as the minister of Moses, and of the rod in Moses' hand. The standpoint of E is the prophetic, though it is not brought so prominently forward as in J, and in general the narrative is more objective, less consciously tinged by ethical and theological reflections than that of J. . . . In his (E's) narrative of Joseph the *didactic* import of the history is brought out. J, if he dwells less than E upon concrete particulars, excels in the power of delineating life and character. His touch is singularly light. . . . In ease and grace his narratives are unsurpassed. . . . His dialogues especially are remarkable for the delicacy and truthfulness with which character and emotions find expression in them. Who can ever forget the pathos and supreme beauty of Judah's intercession. . . . The character of Moses is portrayed by him with singular attractiveness and force. In J, further, the prophetic element is conspicuously prominent. Indeed, his characteristic features may be said to be the fine vein of ethical and theological reflection which pervades his work throughout, and the manner in which his narrative, even more than that of E, becomes the vehicle of religious teaching. He deals with the problem of the origin of sin and evil in the world, and follows its growth. . . . And in order to illustrate the divine purpose of grace, as manifested in history, he introduces, at points fixed by tradition, "prophetic glances into the future," as he also loves to point to the character of nations or tribes as foreshadowed in their beginnings. . . . It is a peculiarity of J that his representations of the Deity are highly anthropomorphic. He represents Jehovah not only as expressing human resolutions and swayed by human emotions, but as performing sensible acts."

These are a few extracts from a long dissertation on the differences of style and treatment between E and J in Driver's *Introduction* (pp. 110-114, 4th Ed.). Would not an ordinary person infer that there was a very marked difference between J and E? Would

¹ *Driver, Introduction, p. 111.*

he not be surprised if he found that there was considerable uncertainty among the Critics as what is E and what is J in many places? "The resemblance," writes Dr. Moore, "in matter, form, and spirit is indeed so close that where, for any reason, the criterion of the Divine names fails us, it is often impossible to determine with confidence from which of the two sources, J or E, certain parts of the composite narrative are derived."¹ Driver himself admits "in the details of the analysis of JE there is sometimes uncertainty owing to the criteria being indecisive"; and he says, "the similarity of the narratives, such as it is, is sufficiently explained by the fact that their subject matter is (approximately) the same, and they both originated in the same general period of Israelitish literature" (109).

According to Driver, "J and E were combined together into a single whole at a relatively early period of the history of Israel (approximately in the eighth century)."² This was done by a prophet of Judah who "conceived the plan of compiling a comprehensive history of the traditions of his people" after the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C."³ The unlikelihood of a prophet of Judah incorporating with the history of his own tribe the records of the Northern tribes with whom Judah had been at war for two centuries, and in certain places giving preference to E over his own record J is overlooked. The still greater unlikelihood of his being able to weave together two different records, one with an "Ephraimite tinge" and the other written from the standpoint of Judah, in so subtle a manner that the most subtle-minded of critics are unable to distinguish which is which in considerable portions of Exodus and Numbers,⁴ is not even considered.

The greatest unlikelihood of all is that such a complicated document should obtain such authority within one short century; that Deuteronomy—according to the Critics a new work discovered about 621 while some repairs were being carried on in the Temple—should be so completely founded upon it that it could be described

¹ Art. "Genesis," *Enc. Bibl.*

² *Introduction*, p. 116, but in his *Exodus*, p. xi., he says: "Probably in the . . . early part of the seventh century B.C."

³ *Enc. Brit.* Ed. xi., Vol. III., p. 851.

⁴ Driver says of JE's narrative in Exod. xix., xxiv., xxxii.—xxxiv.: "Much has been written upon it; but though it displays plain marks of composition it fails to supply the criteria requisite for distributing it in detail between the narrators."—*Introduction*, p. 39. He says the same thing of Num. xi. and Num. xxiii.—xxiv. (*Ibid.*, pp. 57–62).

as the "Book of the Law" and the "Book of the Covenant" in 2 Kings xxii. and xxiii.; and that Driver could say: "The laws of JE, viz. Exodus xx.-xxiii. and the kindred section xiii. 3-16, form the foundation of the Deuteronomic legislation";¹ and yet for all this dependence on JE that legislation should, according to the Critics, repeal their law respecting sacrifice, limiting the latter to one central sanctuary and abolishing local shrines.

To explain the concluding reference more clearly. In Exodus xx. 24, it said, "In every place where I shall record My name (or 'cause My name to be remembered') I shall come to thee and bless thee." In Deuteronomy xii. 5, there is one central sanctuary, viz. "the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there, even unto His *habitation*"² shall ye seek." But why is this place not named? If this book first appeared in Manasseh's reign, why did it not mention Jerusalem, where the Temple had been standing for three centuries? Why was it left possible for the Samaritans to claim that the place was Gerizim? And "if the progress of religion demanded the unconditional abolition of the local shrines,"³ why does Deuteronomy nowhere mention even in condemnation these high places? Is not this the answer, that the central sanctuary had not then been selected? But when the tabernacle was at Shiloh, was not Shiloh the central shrine, the habitation or tabernacle of God which man sought? It would appear that the law of Deuteronomy was known even then.⁴ Was not the ark itself a symbol of the unity of worship intended? It is mentioned in Deuteronomy. The theory of the Critics regarding JE and Deuteronomy is bristling with improbabilities.

To pass on now to P, the priestly narrative, Driver says: "The literary style of P is strongly marked. If JE—and especially J—be free, flowing and picturesque, P is stereotyped, measured and prosaic." The narrative, both as a whole and in its several parts, is articulated systematically. The beginning and close of

¹ *Introduction*, p. 75.

² The word *shekhen* only here in sense of habitation is a kindred word to *mishkan* tabernacle (Exod. xxv. 9), being derived from the same verb *shakhan* (שָׁכַח) to dwell.

³ Driver, *Introduction*, p. 93.

⁴ The unorthodox would not obey this law of the central shrine. Their disobedience does not prove the non-existence of the law, but their own unorthodoxy.

an enumeration are regularly marked by stated formulæ. The descriptions of P are methodical and precise." ¹ We have to remember that there is not one P, but at least three P's, and that J and E have had many redactors, so that it is not like comparing the styles of Spenser and Shakespeare, but rather comparing the style of one composite work—say a hymnal—with a similar collection made four centuries previous. We also note frequently in the same writer occasions when he prefers a "free, flowing, and picturesque" mode of speech, and occasions when he prefers a "stereotyped, precise and formal" style.

The main argument of the Critics is that difference of style, vocabulary and diction proves difference of authorship. All our letters are not written in the same style or language: those we send to our sons at school giving them good advice, and those we write to the Income Tax Officer. A man's style varies, and his language varies according to subject, time and circumstances. The Critics appeal to long lists of words they have compiled as masses of incontrovertible facts, to prove that J is J and E is E, and P is P, and D is D. Now we can test this argument in a very simple way. Take the four great Epistles of St. Paul, Romans, Galatians, First and Second Corinthians—all written in the same year. There are forty-five words alone beginning with *alpha*, which occur more than once in Corinthians and Galatians, and do not occur at all in Romans. And there are seventeen words beginning with *alpha* which occur more than once in Romans and not once in Corinthians and Galatians, while most of the words found in all the four epistles are those in common use. According to the argument which the Higher Critics employ in the case of J, E, P and D, the writer of Galatians did not write Romans! As for the argument for style, we may take Milton's works. Lycidas is an elegy written after the earlier style of Virgil in his *Bucolics*, and Paradise Lost, a splendid epic, written somewhat in the style of the *Æneid*. Both works cannot have been by the same author. Take also the two parts of Faust, which are entirely different in language, style and ideas, and both were written by Goethe.

But according to the Higher Critics that is *impossible*. We can multiply instances so as to bring in every living and dead author, and by this very method used to disintegrate the scriptures we can

¹ *Introduction*, p. 122.

prove that Sir Walter Scott did not write his "Lay," nor Shakespeare his Sonnets, nor Driver his *Introduction*.

We have only to take up any historical work with notes. The text is always in a different style from the notes. Does this prove difference of authorship? It would also seem that Driver's own method of first making a broad general statement, and then entering into more minute detail in a succeeding paragraph, in his *Introduction to Old Testament Literature* furnishes a complete refutation of his theory. His ordinary type sections are in the flowing and rhetorical style; his small type sections are in the condensed and prosaic style. In his ordinary type sections he uses sesquipedalian and classical words which are not found in the small type sections. In the former he works out his own conclusions. [†]In the latter he simply states the conclusions of others. In short, the differences in style, treatment and vocabulary between the two kinds of sections which follow each other systematically are so marked that Driver himself would be bound to conclude from his own canons of criticism that they were by different hands, and that the work of two independent writers had been combined by a later editor, just as JE were combined first by one editor, and then united to D by another, and afterwards with P by another. And yet we know this conclusion in the case of Driver's *Introduction* is absurd; therefore, we are entitled to argue that the canon of criterion from which this conclusion follows must be false. And when it so signally fails in the case of a recent work well-known to be a unity, can it be applied to works of so remote an origin with any prospect of success? Must not this argument based on style fall to the ground when it leads to such extraordinary conclusions in the case of a known work? Can we expect it to reveal the origin and composition of the Pentateuch?

Furthermore, the claim of the Higher Critics that they are able to apportion a certain portion of a chapter on Genesis or Exodus to the Elohist writer, and the next portion to the Jahvist, or P may be discounted by the difficulty we experience in correctly assigning the portions of any composite document, say the King's Speech, or of the novels of Besant and Rice to its own special author. In fact, we might take any graphic narrative in Shakespeare or Virgil and apportion it plausibly to different sources. An American writer, H. W. Magoun, takes at random Conington's rendering of

Virgil's *Æneid*, I. 723 ff.: "When the banquet's first lull was come, and the board removed, then they set up the huge bowls and wreathed the wine. A din rings to the roof—the voice rolls through those spacious halls; lamps hang from the gilded ceiling burning brightly, and flambeau fires put out the night. Then the Queen called for a cup, heavy with jewels and gold, and filled it with unmixed wine, the same which had been used by Belus and every king from Belus downwards, was filled. Then silence was commanded through the hall." This he shows yields two parallel accounts, analysing it after the principles of the Critics.¹

A.

"When the banquet's first lull was come, they wreathed the wine. A din rings to the roof; lamps hang from the gilded ceiling burning brightly. Then the Queen called for a cup and filled it with unmixed wine. Then silence was commanded through the hall."

B.

"When the board was removed, then they set up the huge bowls. The voice rolls through those spacious halls; and flambeau fires put out the night. Heavy with jewels a cup which had been used by Belus and every king from Belus was filled."

Here we have two authors, A and B. Their idiosyncracies can be discerned at a glance. One is fond of wine—unmixed wine, the other is evidently a teetotaler; as his cup is probably filled with water. A belongs to a later age; for he describes lamps hanging from gilded ceiling; whereas B only knows of torches. There is a serious discrepancy also between the narratives, as A speaks only of a queen, and B states that the country has always been governed by kings. The later redactor has pieced together the two narratives just as the redactor JE put together the two narratives J and E in the Pentateuch. But it is plain that, like J and E, A and B did not supply the same sources of information! What would Virgil think of such an analysis of his lines? He would surely treat it with a bland smile of contempt. The fact that this principle of analysis can be applied indiscriminately to any long description or speech reduces it to an absurdity.

"THE HEXATEUCH."

The question of style involves not only the Pentateuch but the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua, which six books the Critics prefer to call the Hexateuch, for they regard Joshua as the work

¹ A layman's view of the critical theory. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July, 1913, p. 383.

of the same authors and editors. Dr. Driver says : ¹ " Its contents and still more its literary structure, show that it is intimately acquainted with the Pentateuch, and describes the final stage in the history of the ' Origines ' of the Hebrew nation." The Higher Critics have united books which Jewish critics kept separate for reasons we know nothing of. The latter counted Joshua among the " former prophets." They described the Pentateuch as the *Torah* or Law. The Septuagint translators began their work with the Pentateuch. Josephus says the first five books were the books of Moses. The Samaritan Bible, which contains the first five books, does not contain Joshua. Ecclesiasticus (not later than 130 B.C.) speaks of the " Law, the Prophets and the Writings." St. Paul appeals to the Laws of Moses and the Prophets (Acts xxviii. 23). In St. Luke xxiv. 44, Our Lord refers to the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. And there is no external proof to show that Joshua was ever included in the Law. The Critics, however, are not discomposed by external evidence. The evidence they build on is altogether internal, and not only that, but internal in their eyes, not necessarily in the eyes of others. Driver was nothing if not dogmatic on this subject. " The book of Joshua," he writes, " is not severed from the following books and connected with the Pentateuch, for the purposes of satisfying the exigencies of a theory, but because this view of the book is required by the facts" (p. 158).

Let us now hear the facts.

(1) It is " especially in the P sections," he said, that Joshua differs from the following books. Now in the first half of the book (chaps. i.-xii.) he only assigned 11½ verses to P; of the second half (chaps. xiii.-xxiv.) P constitutes 225 verses out of 306, rather more than two-thirds. Chaps. xxiii.-xxiv. have no P. This means that in the narrative portion there is no P, but in the chapters which deal with topographical descriptions and statistical details P is predominant, statistics being always a strong feature of P. But considering what these statistics relate to—the divisions of the land among the tribes—we are not surprised at their being different from what follows. There was no necessity to rehearse these divisions. There was no need to bring out a second Domesday Book in the reign of Richard I. No argument of any kind can be built upon the differences of these chapters from Judges, Samuel and Kings.

¹ *Introduction*, p. 103.

The subject-matter was enough to make them so. Are we to believe that these statistics were drawn up by the priests of the Exile 900 years afterwards? The very fact that these statistics are not given in Kings is a proof that they had been already given.

(2) Well, then, is P in Joshua homogeneous with the P of the Pentateuch? Apparently not. Driver gave a list of fifty words and phrases characteristic of P. Of these only eighteen are found in Joshua, and eight of the eighteen in chap. xxii. 9-34, the story of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half Manasseh, regarding which he said, "the phraseology is in the main that of P"; but he felt compelled to admit the alternative that "the whole is the work of a distinct writer, whose phraseology is in part that of P, but not entirely."¹ In this, the principal and almost only narrative portion in the P section of Joshua, this P is not homogeneous with the P of the Pentateuch.

(3) We now come to the JE portions of Joshua. This is not the same JE of the Pentateuch either. Driver spoke of "the compiler of JE (or a kindred hand) utilizing older materials,"² or "other independent sources,"³ which may not have been J or E at all.

(4) Finally, to come to D. He is not D at all, but D₂, and "may be termed the 'Deuteronomic editor'" because he was "strongly imbued with the spirit of Deuteronomy."⁴ D₂ is not "primarily interested" in "historical matter," but his aim is "to illustrate and emphasize the zeal shown by Joshua in fulfilling Mosaic ordinances."⁵

Accordingly, we have in Joshua not one of the sources of the Pentateuch, P, JE, or D in their purity, as the Critics allow, but in a hardly recognizable form, even to the Critics. And it is by these flimsy bonds that Joshua is connected with the Pentateuch. It is also to be noted that the subject-matter of these alleged sources is different, narrative (JE), statistics (P), and moralizing (D₂). Now, is any man's style the same, or marked by the same characteristics, when he is writing a table of statistics, for *The Times*, an account of a holiday for a monthly magazine, or a homily to his son at school? Driver himself felt the difficulty of his own analysis. But yet he said it is "required by the facts." We have seen what the facts are,

¹ *Introduction*, p. 112, f.

² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 104.

and feel certain that all the exigencies of the case would be met by supposing the author to be one of the elders who was a companion and survivor of Joshua. Such an one would be keen to note and dilate upon the obedience or disobedience to the commands of Moses, and the success or failure that followed obedience or disobedience. He would give the narrative in a flowing style, and the divisions of the land in a businesslike manner.

All the external evidence is opposed to the Critics. And the internal evidence, on their own showing, cannot be pronounced to be in their favour. And in the face of all this, the attempt to incorporate the book of Joshua with the books of the Pentateuch, which seems to have no other object than to show the impossibility of Moses having written any portion of the Pentateuch, has met with no better success than would the similar attempt to incorporate the Domesday Book in the Saxon Chronicle of Alfred's day. Accordingly, we may say that the theory of the Critics so far from being "required by the facts," is formed independently of, and contrary to, the facts it is alleged to explain.

THE STORY OF OLIVER PLUNKET.

BY THE REV. S. R. CAMBIE, D.D.

QUITE recently the Roman Church canonized Joan of Arc and Oliver Plunket. Of the former everybody has heard, but I rather suspect that few could tell much about the latter. I must confess that I had never heard of him before. When I discovered that his bones rest in the great Church at Downside, near my home—in the stately Abbey of the Benedictine Fathers who conduct Downside School, the Eton of the Roman Catholics—I became more curious. I felt less ashamed of my ignorance when I made fruitless inquiry of several who might be expected to know and I was comforted somewhat when one of the masters of the School, who courteously showed me over the Church, was obliged to admit that he himself knew very little about "Blessed Oliver"! I returned to my library and renewed my search, with the result that presently I unearthed the story, and since others are possibly in like state, knowing nothing about this worthy, I will endeavour to give an outline of the facts concerning his career.