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ARTICLE VII.

THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL AND THEIR PLACE IN HISTORY TO THE CLOSE OF THE EIGHTH CENTURY, B.C.: EIGHT LECTURES BY W. ROBERTSON SMITH, LL.D.

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THIS work covers the mission of Elijah, Elisha, the Books of Amos and Hosea, and parts of Micah and Isaiah. It has many of the characteristics that marked the preceding publications of Professor W. Robertson Smith. If it had been the first of the series it might have attracted as much attention as they did. But his views have now lost much of their novelty, and cease to startle. There is, moreover, no such attractiveness in the style or vigor of treatment as to be an independent source of interest. It is one of those works which beguile the reader and lead him to think that he is getting hold of some valuable truth or profound analysis, which, however, soon passes out of sight and gives place to something else, leaving him at the end quite at a loss as to the definite ground passed over and the exact nature and value of the results reached.

The writer does not seem to grasp the whole subject and hold it before his vision at once. He approaches it from different points of view, and fails to give the reader the key to his positions, or to take him understandingly to the changed point of outlook. The words are used carefully and accurately. The sentences are generally clear. The paragraphs individually give out, some of them a definite meaning, some an equivocal one. But the chapter as a whole is quite dubious. There is no clear perspective in the treatment. The various parts of the picture are introduced without respect to their relative distances from the spectator, like the different parts of a landscape in a Chinese painting.

If the writer sees things clearly, he does not enable the reader to do it. He suggests the thought that there is something kept back. He leads us around a fine elucidation of history and prophecy in the age of the prophets, but does not take us into it, showing us only glimpses of it here and there.

The naturalistic view of the Old Testament religion which clearly enough runs through the book is not brought out in bold relief, but lurks in plausible statements, in subdued colors and tints, well calculated to deceive the reader and lead him to an unconscious acceptance of positions at length which, if stated clearly and in logical form, with their real premises, would be instantly discredited. It is a work which persons of an enthusiastic turn, fond of novelty, adventurous in speculation, and not grounded in their faith or much troubled with discrimination, are quite likely to be carried away with. It may, therefore, be well worthy of careful critical consideration in the interest of truth and the knowledge of Scripture. But from what has been said it is evident that it is not an easy task to reduce it to its logical substance. It is difficult to overtake the evasions or equivocal meanings and put the right estimate on them. The book must be read and reread; for, while the impression and spirit are definite, the grounds on which they rest are not always tangible in chapter or paragraph.

An obvious criticism turns on the *inconsistencies* of statement. This may be a natural fault in a writer who treats his theme so much from interest in the parts, rather than from a comprehensive insight into the whole; but it is a serious fault. At one time he represents the Northern tribes as faithful to their religious observances, living up to the light that had been given them. Thus he says: "The prophets themselves, amidst all their complaints against the people's backsliding, bear witness that their countrymen were assiduous in their religious service, and neglected nothing which they deemed necessary to make sure of Jehovah's help in every need. The Israelites, in fact, had not reached the

stage at which men begin to be indifferent about religion; and if Jehovah had been such a god as Baal or Chemosh, content with such worship as they exacted from their worshippers, there would have been no ground to complain of their fidelity to his name or their zeal for his cause" (pp. 65, 66). At another time he represents them as having fallen below the standard God had expressly given them, and having thus incurred the denunciation of the prophets. He says: "Prophecy had sunk to a mere trade. Hosea brackets prophet and priest in a common denunciation. In the fall of the priesthood the prophet shall fall with him" (p. 105). And again: "The guilt of Israel is its declension not from the common standard of other nations, and not from a new standard now heard for the first time, but from a standard already set before them by the unique Jehovah, who had made this nation his own" (p. 108). At one time he goes through quite an argument to prove that in the early ages of the prophets the Northern tribes were as faithful to Jehovah and as devout as the two Southern tribes (pp. 199–205). He says: "It is common to imagine that the religious condition of Judah was very much superior to the North; but there is absolutely no evidence to support this opinion." Yet over against this statement he says, four pages later: "On the other hand, the growing corruption of Ephraim [by which he means the ten tribes] in religion and social order was full of peril to Judah." In another place he gives this picture of the low religious condition of the North: "The priesthood were naturally associated in feelings and interests with the corrupt, tyrannical aristocracy, and were as notorious as the lords temporal for the neglect of law and justice. The strangest scenes of lawlessness were seen in the sanctuaries — revels where fines paid to the priestly judges were spent in wine-drinking, ministers of the altars stretched for these carousals on garments taken in pledge in defiance of sacred law. Hosea accuses the priests of Sechem of highway robbery and murder. The sanctuary of Gilgal was polluted with blood, and the prophet explains the general dissolution

of moral order, the reign of lawlessness in all parts of the land, by the fact that the priests, whose business it was to maintain the knowledge of Jehovah and his laws, had forgotten this holy trust" (p. 101). So much for the author's confutation of his own statement that the national religion of Judah was not more advanced than that of Ephraim. Then we have, further, the explicit testimony of Hosea: "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints" (Hosea xi. 12).

But there is a more serious defect than inconsistency that must be noted. Professor Smith seems to have the faculty not only of coloring but of spinning the threads that go into the web of history. He is always ready to tell us what the facts must have been, and to reconstruct the supposed historical fragments that have come down to us, putting aside such impertinent statements in the old records as stand in the way of the theory, and supplying the lacunae which the scriptural writers left with the desired data. Thus the theory requires that the idea of God — his absolute and solitary divinity and spirituality — should come gradually into the world. He provides for it, and removes all opposing evidence. He says: "The very name of Jehovah became known as a name of power only through Moses and the deliverance" (p. 33). Again, all that lay in the personal difference between Jehovah and the gods of the nations "came out bit by bit in the course of a history which was ruled by Jehovah's providence and shaped by Jehovah's law" (p. 53). Yet the very first verse of the Bible, which, as he does not call in question, was indorsed and put in writing by Moses, points to the underived and absolute existence of God: "*In the beginning God* created the heaven and the earth." The idea of self-existence contained in the name Jehovah, and of the divine spirituality indicated in the second commandment, he summarily disposes of, as a charmer with a wave of his wand dismisses spectres that have intruded on the scene. "As for the common notion that the name

Jehovah expresses the idea of absolute and unconditional existence, that is a mere fiction of the Alexandrian philosophy, absolutely inconsistent with the whole language of the Old Testament, and refuted even by the one phrase 'the Jehovah of the armies of Israel.'" As if God could not be the God of all the earth and the God of Israel in a special manner at the same time. "Even the principle of the second commandment," he continues, "that Jehovah is not to be worshipped by images, which is often appealed to as containing the most characteristic peculiarity of Mosaism, cannot, in the light of history, be viewed as having had so fundamental a place in the religion of early Israel" (pp. 62, 63). But does the lapse of the people from the high idea in practice, shown in history, prove that the idea did not exist as a revelation? All revealed ideas do not work themselves out into recorded national history.

The theory, also, requires that the worship of God in the Jewish nation should begin in simplicity and go on to a more complicated ritual. Accordingly, the facile reconstructor of history goes through the ancient records and adjusts them to the necessities of the case by regarding all the passages that oppose the *a priori* theory as manifest interpolations by a later hand, the evidence of the work of a post-exilian editor. In this way he regards the Book of Deuteronomy as written in a later age, thrust forward, and incorporated in the Pentateuch; the priestly and ritualistic legislation no older than Chronicles as also antedated and thrown back to the time of Moses and ascribed to him; and the Books of the Kings as resolvable into strata of very different dates, — some of which, as the histories of Elijah and Elisha, the author thinks "every one can see to be ancient and distinct documents, while others take their coloring and their facts from a much later age" (p. 109).

The theory requires that there should be no priestly legislation, — no sharp discrimination between the Aaronic priesthood and the Levites, such as is recorded in Leviticus, — till after the Exile, and no requirement of worship at one central

sanctuary till the time of Josiah, in the seventh century B.C. Accordingly, everything in the narratives purporting to describe the preceding events, containing intimations of the existence of a priestly caste or the requirement of centralized worship, must be set aside as a later addition designed to give the weight and authority of a Mosaic origin to a ritualism that had sprung up centuries afterward. He speaks of modern historical criticism as having resulted in "the demonstration — for such," he says, "I will venture to call it — that the priestly legislation did not exist before the Exile" (p. xi). And he ascribes "the principle of the one sanctuary," as contained in Deuteronomy, to the age of Josiah, "as the chief visible mark of the religious revolution which the teaching of the prophets had effected" (p. 293). Of the idea of the one sanctuary, he adds, in another place, "there is absolutely no trace in history before the Exile" (p. 435). The fact that from the time of Moses down through the period of Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, and Saul to David, the clear testimony of history shows that the ark was the central place of worship, and that the ritualism of the nation revolved around it, and the fact that subsequently the temple of Solomon emphasized and increased this tendency, and burned the idea of one sanctuary as the religious faith of the nation into history beyond any possibility of erasure, give him no trouble. The theory does not require these facts, and they are quietly overlooked by the late historical criticism.

The theory of religious progress which the author adopts requires him to believe that God in those early days was occupied with the training of the nation as a whole, not with that of persons. He says: "The basis of the prophetic religion is the conception of a unique relation between Jehovah and Israel, — not, be it observed, individual Israelites, but Israel as a national unity. The whole Old Testament religion deals with the relations between two parties — Jehovah on the one hand, and the nation of Israel on the other" (p. 20). Consequently his eyes are holden, that he

should not see the bearing on this theory of the numberless denunciations by the prophets of the personal sins of the people, and their repeated calls to practical righteousness, nor the blazing light of the ten commandments focussing the moral law upon the individual conscience, and held up from the beginning of the nation as the central, authoritative standard of personal duty. The theory destroys the vision, and prevents the discovery of patent facts. "Obedience to Jehovah as King," he says, "is not the affair of the individual conscience, but of the nation in its national organization. The righteousness of Israel which Isaiah contemplates is such righteousness as is secured by a perfectly wise and firm application of the laws of civil justice and equity" (p. 303). Yet he now and then admits more than his theory demands, and concedes that God's real aim included the individual righteousness and obedience of the people. For example, God "desired mercy, and not sacrifice; obedience, rather than the fat of lambs. While these things were wanting, his very love for Israel could only show itself in ever repeated chastisements, till the sinners were consumed out of his land, and his holy will established itself in the hearts of a regenerate people" (p. 69).

The theory requires that the righteousness of God as first made known should not be personal and spiritual, but administrative. He calls the ancient conception "forensic" (p. 388). He says, "Jehovah's righteousness is nothing else than kingly righteousness, in the ordinary sense of the word, and its sphere is the sphere of his sovereignty; that is, of the land of Israel" (p. 245). To maintain this view he represents the conception of God's holiness as not so much an ethical conception as a conception of distance and exaltation (p. 224). So all the moral terms descriptive of the character of God, in the earlier period of the Old Testament are emptied of their ethical meaning, and the primitive materialistic, or a low earthly, thought put into them. Accordingly the earnest efforts of the prophets and sacred writers to exalt the character of God before the people, or to

have them conceive of him as a morally perfect being, jealous of the purity of his service, and rebuking men for their sins, break down, because the very terms used are considered as having been incapable in that age of delivering any such high message, as also those using them are regarded as having been incapable of having any such high thought. The author overlooks the intuitional nature of man — the native moral and spiritual divine image in him — which enables him, having hints only of sublime moral and spiritual truth, to apprehend it readily, borne on to the full knowledge by some inner instinct of kindred. The slow progress of the world in religion is not owing to the difficulty of conveying the fundamental spiritual and ethical conceptions, but of having them put in practice. The ancient sacred writers were not beating the air in using terms having a materialistic origin in a metaphorical way, and putting into them fundamental spiritual meanings, but they carried the apprehension of the people with them. The whole trend of the sacred history shows this. The very atmosphere of the Old Testament proves that the fundamental conception of God's righteousness in the background of the messages of the prophets, and in the religious consciousness of the people of God, was a conception of exalted personal righteousness, an absolute righteousness, and that this is the ground of the "forensic" or "administrative" righteousness, and of the wailings and chidings of the prophets on account of the personal sins of the people. A fundamental mistake of Professor Smith is in regarding the picture in the Bible of the lapsed condition of the Jews, when they had fallen into idolatry, or when they blended idolatry with the worship of Jehovah, and were living in open sin, as indicating all they knew about the true God and his service, and in denying that any higher revelation of duty existed at that time or had been made known to Israel previously.

In like manner, at the demand of theory, the ethical contents of the conception of sin are largely spirited away, and sin becomes rather an outward mistake than a spiritual wrong.

It is "missing the mark"— a failure to reach the prescribed end, and that end is the formal acknowledgment of Jehovah as the king of the land, and obedience to his kingly rule. The deeper action of the human conscience in the experience of sin is ignored; so also are the facts, the historical facts, of remorse, which does not require a revelation from God or any especial divine training for its activity, but springs up spontaneously in the human heart even in pagan lands. But the attempt to reduce all sense of sin exhibited in the early writings of the Jews, and especially in the Psalms of David, to grief on account of ritualistic or civil blundering, or failure to meet the formal requirements of Jehovah, or anything short of a feeling of personal guiltiness, betrays a very superficial reading of the history, and of man in the history.

The theory requires Professor Smith to maintain that the Levitical ritualism had not been developed in the time of the early prophets, because it had not been instituted at that time, and was an after-thought of later ages. Hence he is oblivious of the significance and force of the allusions to the priestly services in the historical books, or regards them as later fabrications. He regards the silence of the prophets about the necessity of maintaining the ritual forms as evidence that these forms had not been then authoritativly enjoined. He says: "There is never the slightest indication that repentance and obedience require to be embodied in acts of ritual worship in order to find acceptance with God. There is not a line in all the prophecies that have come down to us which gives the slightest weight to priesthood or sacrifice" (p. 360). Therefore, he argues, they did not then exist. He loses sight of the fact that at that time formalism was the dry-rot of Israel, and needed no emphasis laid on it. What Israel then needed was to be awakened to more spiritual devotion. The burden of the prophets was to bring them back to the spiritual requirements of the service of Jehovah.

The theory also demands that the mission of the prophet should be to speak to his own time— to dovetail a message from God into the wants of that particular age; further

than that Professor Smith has no use for the prophet; and thinks God has none, and the world has none. The prophet was simply a living medium between God and his own age, not between God and that age and coming ages. That is, the Professor does not give scope to the mission of the prophet by conceding to him the office of prediction beyond a shrewd discernment of the outcome of existing tendencies, and sometimes outlining the course of present historical principles to their definite future issues. On the contrary, the prophetic mission is regarded as simply to outline current principles of the Divine government, and apply them to existing conditions. It is the possession of these spiritual principles as certainties, he says, "which constituted Isaiah a true prophet. Everything else in his teaching is nothing else than an attempt to give these principles concrete shape and tangible form in relation to the problems of his own day..... But when he embodied his faith and hope in concrete pictures of the future, these pictures were, from the necessity of the case, not literal forecasts of history, but poetic and ideal constructions" (p. 341). Thus with him all prophecy as prediction of history in remote events, or of anything more than the principles underlying such history, falls to the ground. He affirms that "the substance of the Messianic prophecy is ideal, not literal; the business of the prophet is not to anticipate history, but to signalize the principles of divine grace which rule the future, because they are eternal as Jehovah's purpose. Their faith asks nothing more than this" (p. 249). Accordingly, under the arresting gaze of the Professor, all the prophetic intimations of the Messianic times contract themselves to descriptions, "poetic and ideal," of events near the time when they were written. The wings of the prophet are clipped. The words are "poetic and ideal" enough, but they collapse, when we see their object, to a paltry application. A specimen of the value of the critical acumen which settles at sight all exigetical difficulties in the way of this contracting and belittling view, may be seen in the way in which he empties of its

meaning the prophecy, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. ix. 6). He refers these words to a king and adds: "The prophet does not say that the king *is* the Mighty God and the Everlasting Father, but that his *name* is divine and eternal, that is, that the divine might and everlasting fatherhood of Jehovah are displayed in his rule" (p. 307).

It is sad to see what havoc is made of the prophecies by thus restricting the scope of the mission of the prophet to his own age. The interpreter is left, often to find meagre fulfilments in current history or the near future, or, failing of these, to charge the prophet with idealizing or falling into mistakes. Thus, as we have seen, Professor Smith explains all the early Messianic prophecies, in Isaiah as referring exclusively to some near Davidic king,—he does not tell us which one,—and he sees the fulfilment of the prediction that the land should then be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, that the wolf should dwell with the lamb, the leopard lie down with the kid, and that the sucking child should play on the hole of the asp, in "the abolition of all hurt and harm as the fruit of judgment and pure government" (p. 301). In another place he speaks of Isaiah's apprehensions of evil as "of the nature of a shrewd political forecast, rather than of exceptional prediction, and as the future actually shaped itself his worst anticipations were not realized" (p. 268). Again, "the prophets speak in broad, poetically effective, images" (Ibid). The vindication of their divine mission, he adds, "in the precision of detail with which they related beforehand the course of coming events must be received as a vain imagination" (p. 336).

Again, the theory that the prophet has reference to his own times finds the last part of the Book of Isaiah, from the fortieth chapter to the end, in the way. There are no events in that period to which the glowing prophecies of the coming Messiah and the future church could possibly be referred. But the difficulty is easily overcome by this ready readjuster of sacred writings. He says: "Instead of taking up his

prophecies in the order in which they now stand, we must look for internal evidence to connect each oracle with one or other part of his career. Those sections of the book which can not be read in close connection with any part of the prophet's life and times must provisionally be set on one side" (p. 213). He gives the final verdict: "The great prophecy, chapters xl.–lxvi., which is separated from the rest of the book by an historical section, was certainly not written by Isaiah" (p. 217). He gives no reasons for this exclusion, except the want of connection between the predictions and the times; and we are left to the infallibility of the historical instinct under the guidance of the genius of modern historical criticism for evidence that no mistake has been made. All these last chapters of the Book of Isaiah are, therefore, omitted from his survey, though he generously enough suggests that they, too, written some time after the Exile, may doubtless refer to some passing events of their day. Other portions are also omitted because they do not relate to Israel, but foreign nations, and his special purpose is to consider the prophets of Israel, and the prophecies in relation to Israel.

But, apart from the coloring and distorting influence of theory on Professor Smith, and the seeming disposition to reconstruct history out of his own consciousness, there are many assertions in the book calculated to mislead, if not destitute of proof of their truth. The following are specimens. He denies the authenticity of the blessing of Moses, in Deuteronomy, and calls it "the so-called blessing of Moses," and says it "does not itself claim this name, but, on the contrary, bears clear internal marks of having been written in the kingdom of Ephraim" (p. 49). It is misleading to say, "It does not *itself* claim this name," when the blessing is *introduced* in the sacred narrative by the words, "This is the blessing wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death" (Deut. xxxiii. 1). He refers to the complaint of David: "They have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord,

saying, Go, serve other gods" (1 Sam. xxvi. 19), as proof "how absolutely access to the sanctuary was conceived as the indispensable basis of all religion," and of the "conception that Jehovah cannot be worshipped in foreign lands" (p. 98). He seems to have forgotten, when he writes this, that he holds that the Jews at that time knew nothing about the necessity of one place of worship. But, apart from this, what David said only shows the popular estimate that the worship of Jehovah was best observed by the use of the prescribed ritual, and that David felt it could not be conducted by him abroad in the customary way.

He affirms that Elijah and Elisha "are indifferent even to the worship of the golden calves" (p. 109); and he does this because there are no recorded utterances of theirs against it. As if the modern critical faculty discerns that the ancient prophets approved all the evil about them concerning which, in the fragmentary history, there is no record of their disapproval.

He asserts that in the time of Amos and Hosea "the feasts of Baalim were Jehovah's feasts" (p. 176). As if the fact that Baal's rites had in some instances usurped the place of those of Jehovah, on account of the lapse of the people into idolatry, proves that the people thought they were still practising the religion Jehovah had revealed to them.

He also interprets the story, in the first chapter of Hosea, of the marriage of the prophet to Gomer, and about "the wife of whoredoms and the children of whoredoms," as a literal occurrence, not as an allegory (p. 179 et seq.) He insists on this as actual history, although the ancient Oriental practice both of acting and speaking allegories, and the allegorical names given the children, — Jezreel, Lo-ruhammah, and Lo-ammi, — with the explanation of their allegorical meaning by the prophet in the immediate connection, betray the absurdity of the interpretation to other eyes than those anointed with the critical discernment.

But it is time to consider more directly the fundamental

assumption which underlies the book, and comes out in it in many ways and forms. It is briefly this: Moses wrote nothing about the necessity of one central place of worship, nothing about the priestly legislation which discriminates between the Levites and the sons of Aaron. Both of these things came into existence as the result of the religious awakening under the early prophets, and were not incorporated in the sacred books till after the Exile; and then they were written as if they had been instituted by Moses, and their origin put in his mouth. Professor Robertson Smith says it did not seem important to these later writers "to distinguish the very words of Moses from the equally authoritative additions of later organs of revelation" (p. 35). Everything in the historical books, as we have them, from the time of Moses down, which conflicts with this theory, and which intimates the necessity of one place of worship or the existence of a priesthood as a separate order from the Levites is therefore summarily branded as of later origin, and set aside from being evidence in the case. And it is the high function of historical criticism to go through the nominal records of those ancient times, assort their contents and declare authoritatively when the several parts were written, what portions were original, and what interpolations — a task which is not so difficult as it might seem to be, inasmuch as each part must have been written, it is assumed, at a time when it would dovetail in with the stage of religious knowledge which the theory accords to the people at that period. The method and rate of religious progress are assumed, and the facts are interpreted under that, instead of inferring the method and rate of religious progress from the historical records as they come down to us. The history must be assorted and adapted to the theory of progress, rather than the theory of progress shaped to the history. This makes the task comparatively easy, and at the same time proclaims the greatness and sagacity of the historical critic.

The central point of attack, in the readjustment of the

authorship of the Old Testament, is the Pentateuch. The historical criticism in question denies the Mosaic origin, in any literal sense, of the first five books of the Bible. The only things which we know Moses really wrote, it affirms, are the ten commandments on the tables of stone. Other portions are doubtless to be ascribed to him, as the directions about "a primitive mode of worship" by the use of an altar of unhewn stones, contained in Ex. xx. 24–26; and the primitive code of moral and social duties immediately following, to the end of the twenty-third chapter. But the other portions were written, it claims, when the progress of the people was up to them. As they run in the general line of the teachings of Moses, they were ascribed to him. In the time of Ezra the whole Pentateuch had thus come into existence as a collection of sacred writings, and was in this sense covered by the authoritative name of Moses, the leader of the movement.

An obvious objection to this hypothesis is, that at the first appearance of the Pentateuch, as we follow it back into the dim twilight, it comes forth, taken as a whole, as the production of Moses. Professor Smith admits that in the time of Ezra, in the fifth century B.C., it was complete, and was ascribed to Moses. He regards the time of Ezra as an age of reform and special religious quickening and activity — a "renaissance." Is it not fair, then, to presume that the leaders of a movement of fresh religious life would know as much about the authorship of that portion of Scripture then current and authoritative, and would be as trustworthy in expressing an opinion about it, as the critics in our day? Is it the presumption that the modern critical faculty can give us better insight into the history of that period than the men divinely quickened to know it, and living amidst the fresh tests of the truth or falsity of the history? Is it the office of historical criticism to make history, or to find it and recognize it?

Again, if this method is to be carried into the treatment of the Pentateuch, and if the plain statement, reappearing

in it in so many different places, "The Lord spake *unto Moses*," is to be discredited, what authority can there be in the book? What evidence can there be from the record that anything in it is from God? What becomes of a book the contents of which can thus be spirited away at the movement of the wand of a criticism largely subjective? If there are allusions in it to names, points of the compass, and colorings or shadings of fact, in single words or phrases here and there, which do not so well suit the idea of the Mosaic authorship of the book, and of the wilderness as the place of its composition, as the theory of a later and Palestinian origin, — as is admitted, — which is the easier and more in accordance with true historical criticism, to suppose that the later Palestinian transcribers, sometime during the thousand years before the age of Ezra, while the Jews were living in Palestine, made certain verbal changes in unimportant matters, by substituting current for ancient names of places, using familiar terms to denote the points of the compass, and changing certain words to those having a more exact agreement with the local coloring of the place where they then lived, for the convenience and the understanding of the people, — a most natural thing to do, — or that devout men forged the whole narrative, with the exception of a few germinal teachings, antedated it, and put it in the mouth of Moses? As a question of historical criticism, which is the more probable? Our critics of the school of Robertson Smith see insuperable difficulties in the way of admitting a few verbal changes by copyists to promote greater geographical and national or civil adaptation in the narrative to the changed circumstances of the people, but none in imagining a wholesale fabrication and reconstruction of history by new authors.

Besides the testimony of the age of Ezra, which is admitted by the critics, there is a higher endorsement of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. At the time of Christ, it is conceded by all parties, Moses was universally regarded as its author by those who accepted the sacred writings. Christ

endorsed this belief. When the pharisees came and questioned him, "Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement and to put her away?" he replies, Moses because of the hardness of your heart suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. xix. 7–8). Here he says, "*Moses* suffered you to put away your wives"; but the place where Moses says this is in Deuteronomy, one of the books which is ascribed to the age of Josiah. Would Christ speak thus, if he knew that Moses had not given the permission, but some one else a thousand years later? Again, Christ says: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Luke xvi. 31). He here refers to a well-known classification of the Scriptures at that time, and evidently credits Moses with the authorship of the part assigned to him. In many other places he confirms the popular belief. In Luke xx. 37, he says: "Now that the dead are raised even Moses showed at the first, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob"; and in John v. 45–47: "One accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust; for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he *wrote* of me [explicit testimony]. But if ye believe not *his writings*, how shall ye believe my words?" The apostles and evangelists, also, gave their sanction to the same view. Are we to suppose that Christ and the inspired writers of the New Testament knew less about the authorship of the Pentateuch, or had less discernment to find it out, or less care to be accurate about it, than this school of modern critics? Did the Son of God and the apostle Paul know less of the real origin of the early historical books of the Bible than W. Robertson Smith, Wellhausen, and Graf? Or are we to believe that, knowing differently, they indorsed the popular fallacy? Must we sacrifice our respect for their honesty and moral courage to magnify the sagacity of the modern critics, and to applaud their honesty and moral courage — taking the ground that the conscience of the

critics will not suffer them to be quiet about the supposed authorship of the Pentateuch, while they see no difficulty in believing that Christ and the apostles could be indifferent to it, and indorsed the popular misconception?

But, apart from the testimony of the most remote and most authoritative witnesses to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the question comes up about the practicability of a scheme to introduce a new and complicated ritualism in the age of the prophets, frame it into a fabricated ancient history, and then impose both the ritualism and the history upon the age as the work of Moses. Must not the innovation have been known, and the fabrication been detected at the time? How could the real authors, in introducing a great and radical novelty into the religion of a people who were proud of the beginnings of their history, studied them, and kept them alive in their traditions and usages, come out with new and unheard of documents, — purporting to recount the events of those early times, and having these novelties framed into them, — and escape instant detection?

Then there is the question of motive prompting to the strange concealment of authorship — Why should the authors desire to ascribe it to another? Men of honesty and purity of life, who have helped their age to take what they conceive to be a great step in advance, a new departure in true religion, are not wont to wish to hide their agency in bringing it about, or to conceal their work. In general they willingly leave their mark behind them. Yet, according to Professor Smith, a remarkable change in the ritualism of the Old Testament was introduced clandestinely, leaving not a positive trace of its origin or of the action of those introducing it on the historical records; and this work was so skilfully done as to cause that age and all subsequent ages — including that of Christ and the apostles — down to the nineteenth century, when these critics arose, to believe that it had actually been done a thousand years before.

Furthermore, if Moses was not known to be a great legislator on religious subjects by those who invented the ritualism

and by that age, why should the inventors be so anxious to put the new ordinances to his credit? And how could he be popularly regarded as a great religious legislator, unless he had already been in fact the author of such a system? And how could he have been the author of such a system, if the larger part of the system and its characteristic features originated many centuries after his time? Professor Smith denies that most of the Mosaic system was due to Moses, yet makes the fame of Moses as such a legislator a reason why those who invented it were eager to trace it to him, and committed a religious forgery for that purpose.

There is another objection to the hypothesis that the priestly legislation and a new ritualism originated after the early prophets. If we search the period in question — that is from the age of Josiah in the seventh century to that of Nehemiah in the fifth century B.C. — we scan the historical evidences in vain for those signs of surprise, abruptness, opposition, controversy, or even curiosity, which generally accompany the introduction of great social innovations and religious revolutions. The ritualistic customs in question spring up on the sacred page describing the events of that period naturally, not as novelties, but rather as a return to neglected customs, or an attempt to overtake an ancient neglected ideal. Professor Smith considers the requirement of one sancturary and the complex Levitical ceremonial a great innovation on the simple primitive worships instituted by Moses, making an epoch in the development of the Old Testament religion. Yet the historical records give no hint of such a revolutionary epoch. There is nothing in the history that suggests the throes of such a crisis. The documents have no place for such a record. The discovery must be guessed out from the silence of the prophets concerning ritualism, when the burden of their hearts and of their mission was to raise the people to the spiritual demands of worship above formalism and idolatry. In the actual records the advance in ritualism comes in, not as the lighting of an electric light in a dark night, but as the light of day follows a

dim and distant dawn. It comes naturally, from a preceding historical cause and long preparation.

There is a further difficulty. Professor Smith regards the ritualistic movement as the result of a renaissance under the prophets, especially Isaiah and Jeremiah, and considers the religious condition in the time of Jeremiah very much in advance of that in the time of Isaiah. But while the influence of the earlier prophet was by no means inconsiderable, there are no historical indications of a general reform beginning in the time of Isaiah and increasing through the age of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as to justify at the close of that period the term renaissance. In fact, Jeremiah bewails the spiritual decadence of his times in terms even more despondent and pathetic than those his illustrious predecessor used a hundred years before. Ezekiel takes up the same sad refrain. Neither of them has the air of jubilance and hope characteristic of one living in a spiritual dawn and witnessing the breaking in of day. Yet Professor Smith supposes that that was an era of renaissance, and in that was the birth-hour of ceremonialism. The decisive steps he thinks were taken in the age of Josiah. The cast was then made. The practice of preparing the sacred books, of recasting the alleged history of Moses, and blending into the narrative the doctrines and prescriptions of ritualism, one central place of worship, and the distinctions of the priests and Levites, was then begun, and went on till the compilation of the historical books, some time after the Exile. According to him and this school of critics, that period of awakening was a creative religious age, an age of discovery and production, of literary brilliancy in religion, outside of the writings of the prophets. This is not openly stated. The assertion would be too preposterous. But it must have been so; for these writers ascribe to that age a most complicated and skilful series of literary creations, so adroitly managed and woven in with authentic facts, that they carried the whole nation over to the practice of the injunctions of the forgeries without questioning their genuineness. But we look in vain for the evidence of such a

creative age. There is not a scintilla of historical proof of its existence. That was not an age of originality or production, so far as there is evidence, apart from the prophets. What power there was was not shown in invention, but in stimulating the people to recover a spiritual standing with God, to regain lost ground, overtake abandoned ideals. The only freshness that appears, from the historical evidence coming down to us, was in the prophets; and their whole influence was to call the people up to something higher and more important than ritualism,— to revive the moral and spiritual ideals of worship and practical righteousness, which had already been too much covered up and lost sight of by the popular ceremonial. The only creative power of the age, of which there is any trace, was directed against the very end for which our critics suppose the age was ripe. They ascribe invention and literary creation to an age which was not an age of invention and creation, but of reform; and the invention and creation of ceremonialism to a renaissance, when the influence of the renaissance, whatever that was, was against any such production, and when its leaders, the only ones of whom we have any knowledge who were at that time capable of producing it, were using every exertion in an opposite direction, to quicken the public conscience to a sense of the spiritual claims of Jehovah, and were, besides, morally incapable of such a forgery. The critics bring out of that age what could not have been in it; and they bring it out when the drift of the only creative thought in the age was against its production.

Moreover they are involved in another difficulty. By discarding the accounts in the historical books detailing the practice of the ceremonial in the earlier times, and holding that it sprang up under the influence of the prophets, they have this strange phenomenon on their hands: the introduction among a historical people of a revolutionary ritualism, not only with no record of its introduction, and in an age showing no signs of invention or creation apart from the prophets, whose influence was in another direction, but with

no recorded historical preprations for it. It sprang full-grown into power, not like Minerva from the brain of Jupiter, but out of the womb of historical night and nothingness, historically unannounced, uncaused; and it sprang into such instant dazzling and bewildering influence as to send its glamour back over the past and cause a new history of the preceding times to be written, in which it should have the appearance of all the gravity and dignity of hoary age. And this is done in the name of historical criticism, by those who think that sacred history is an orderly and natural flow of events, and is to be explained on rational principles; discrediting the records we have of the antecedents of ritualism, they bring it in by a bound as a new creation, and with such a weird, supernatural power as to charm all the historical records into a false representation of its antiquity! This is another instance of facility of credulity in those who lack faith.

We take our leave of this work of Professor W. Robertson Smith, feeling that the study of it has been the means of greatly quickening interest in the ancient prophets and the Old Testament history, but with the profound conviction that the subject is too broad and deep for him. There are many good things well stated in the book; but to divine the secrets of God's purpose and method in the training of Israel, and to fathom the scope of the mission of the prophets and interpret them, and then reconstruct the whole sacred history around a narrow and superficial theory is too much for an ordinary human mind to do. The difficulties in the way of the proposed reconstruction of history are far greater to one who attempts to think the subject through, than those of accepting the common view. And to press this hypothesis, which can only make its way by a singular keenness in sighting minute historical facts and colorings and tints of historical facts, and a marvellous inability to see great historical facts and the general drift of history, in the name of historical criticism, is a strange misnomer, calculated to degrade the science. True historical criticism is just to the historical

sense, keenly sensitive to the facts of history, and weighs them with a judicial mind. Meanwhile, the writings of this school have been the occasion of a more general and thoughtful study of the Old Testament history and literature among Christian scholars, and seem likely to usher in the dawn of a genuine Old Testament renaissance.

ARTICLE VIII

RECENT EVANGELISTIC MOVEMENTS IN GREAT BRITAIN AND ON THE CONTINENT.[1]

BY REV. SAMUEL IVES CURTISS, D.D., PROFESSOR IN CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

THIS is an age of great cities. London, Paris, Berlin, and Vienna are growing in population and magnificence every year. And there are a score of other cities on the continent that are opening their gates for the thronging multitudes. For weal or woe the masses are deserting the country and pressing to the cities, until, as has been estimated, from a fifth to a seventh of the population of some countries live in cities. As the battle centres where the enemy is most thickly gathered, we shall find that the recent evangelistic movements have been especially confined to cities and large towns.

These movements have sprung from certain needs. London, Paris, Berlin are each situated at the foot of slumbering volcanoes. To the ordinary eye all is calm and peaceful; and but for an occasional wreath of smoke around the summits of the heights that overhang them, there would be no suspicion of those molten streams that are liable to leap forth at any moment, carrying ruin and death in their train. The moral tendency in these cities, so far as the ordinary and historical agencies of Christianity is concerned, is, I am constrained to believe, downward. In London, Paris, and

[1] Part of a paper read before the Congregational Club, Chicago, Oct. 15, 1883.