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ARTICLE VII.

THE SWAN-SONG OF THE WELLHAUSEN
SCHOOL.

BY HAROLD M. WIENER, M.A., LL.B., OF LINCOLN'S INN,
BARRISTER-AT-LAW, LONDON.

THE International Critical Commentary is making slow progress towards completion. Two new volumes have recently appeared, dealing with Genesis and Chronicles respectively. When it is remembered that the first instalment of the Commentary was published as long ago as 1895, that not half the books of the Old Testament have hitherto been treated in the series, and that in the advertisement at the end of Genesis no announcement is yet made of any engagement for a commentary on the book of Job, it will be felt that those responsible for the enterprise may justly be blamed for a tardiness that must impair the value of the publication as a whole. Our business, however, in this article is with a volume that has appeared — the long-expected commentary on Genesis. Its full title is "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis" — a grave misnomer as will presently appear — and its author is the Reverend Principal John Skinner, D.D.

Regarded as a whole, the book is mainly a great and laborious collection of the guesses of a particular school of biblical students, made by a writer who has some literary feeling and is not devoid of humor, but entirely lacks originality and critical power, has no acquaintance with the methods of scientific textual criticism and not the vaguest idea of what independent research means. The British theological schools have unhappily been reduced to the level of an intellectual satrapy of the

German Empire, and those who lead them have never been taught to think for themselves. Thus all that Dr. Skinner can do is to collect the views of various German writers and to express his preference for one or another, occasionally suggesting some trifling modifications.

And yet he had an opportunity such as has never before fallen to any commentator on Genesis — for this is the first bulky new commentary on that book that has been published since the appearance of the larger Cambridge Septuagint — and Dr. Skinner had the chance of doing pioneer work on the text which might have given him lasting fame among biblical students, had he been equal to his undertaking. But that was not to be. He has indeed heard of the Cambridge LXX, and there are occasional references to it (e.g. pp. iii, 100, 261), while there are a few passages where, though it is not expressly mentioned, a presumption arises that it has been consulted (e.g. pp. 513, 532); but such cases are very few and far between. Generally speaking, it may be said that the larger Septuagint is of scarcely more use to Dr. Skinner than Dr. Swete's edition would be, and that he has made no effort to utilize the rich new materials that it offers to the true critic. It is in keeping with this that the Introduction contains no section on the text of the book — no general estimate of the textual materials and their value as a whole. Indeed, the Versions appear to have been used by Dr. Skinner principally for the purpose of interpretation rather than of textual criticism. This is of course perfectly legitimate — but then why call the book a *critical* commentary?

Before passing from this, another strange feature must be noticed. Dr. Skinner chronicles versional differences more or less sporadically, for no obvious reason, in a manner that is highly perplexing. To take an instance at random: on page

157, we read, in the small-print note on viii. 20, that the Greek has God where the Hebrew has the Tetragrammaton. What is the object of this remark? That Dr. Skinner does not regard this as the true reading will appear hereafter. It will also be seen that he does not make the slightest attempt to record all divergences of the kind. On what principle, then, is his florilegium of unrecommended variants based? Why is there no explanation of the use to which he thinks they should be put? For myself, having read the book from cover to cover (except the indices, etc.), I am unable to understand the utility of the notes of this type from any conceivable point of view. They are not readings that Dr. Skinner approves himself or quotes others as recommending. They might very easily mislead his readers into supposing that his *apparatus criticus* was exhaustive — though in point of fact it is ludicrously inadequate. What was his object in setting out these facts without giving any clue to the limitations he had set himself or the purpose he had in view?

I wish that the above criticism represented the worst that could be said of the book. If it were impossible to give Dr. Skinner any very high praise, it might yet be said that he had produced a pleasant presentation of a number of improbable guesses, combined with some useful facts, and the volume, though possessing no independent value, might form a passable addition to the existing expositions of Genesis. Unfortunately there are other and even less pleasing features, which justify the title I have given this article.

I turn first to Dr. Skinner's treatment of Astruc's clue — the use of *Elohim* and the Tetragrammaton in the book of Genesis. The discussion will be found in section 7 of the Introduction (pp. xxxiv ff.). After stating Astruc's supposed discovery, Dr. Skinner proceeds as follows:—

"While the earlier attempts to discredit Astruc's discovery took the direction of showing that the use of the two divine names is determined by a difference of meaning which made the one or the other more suitable in a particular connection, the more recent opposition entrenches itself mostly behind the uncertainties of the text, and maintains that the Versions (especially LXX) show the Massoretic Text to be so unreliable that no analysis of documents can be based on its data: see Klostermann, *Der Pentateuch* (1893), p. 20 ff.; Dahse, *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* vi. (1903), 305 ff.; Redpath, *American Journal of Theology*, viii. (1904), 286 ff.; Eerdmans, *Comp. d. Gen.* (1908), 34 ff.; Wiener, *Bibliotheca Sacra* (1909), 119 ff. It cannot be denied that the facts adduced by these writers import an element of uncertainty into the analysis, so far as it depends on the criterion of the divine names; but the significance of the facts is greatly overrated, and the alternative theories propounded to account for the textual phenomena are improbable in the extreme" (p. xxxv).

I pause at this point to draw attention to the admission that the facts adduced import an element of uncertainty into the analysis, so far as it depends on this criterion. In spite of this admission, Dr. Skinner proceeds throughout his book on the view that the ordinary analysis is substantially sound, and makes no attempt to determine the modifications of the theory necessitated by the new facts or the limits of the uncertainty they have imported. To proceed with his arguments:—

"So far as I have observed, no attention is paid to what is surely a very important factor of the problem, the *proportion* of divergences to agreements as between LXX and Massoretic Text. In Genesis the divine name occurs in one or other form about 340 times (in Massoretic Text, יהוה 143 t. + אלהים 177 t. + א' א' 20 t.). The total deviations registered by Redpath (296 ff.) number 50; according to Eerdmans (34 f.) they are 49, i.e. little more than one-seventh of the whole. Is it so certain that that degree of divergence invalidates a documentary analysis founded on so much larger a field of undisputed readings?"

This is a very much graver feature. In the *Expository Times* for May, 1909, the Rev. A. P. Cox asked certain questions (of which more hereafter), and Dr. Skinner attempted to deal with them. He then wrote (p. 378), "in Genesis the

Samaritan version differs from the Jewish in (I think) eight cases, and the LXX in 49 — about one-sixth of the whole. The other versions do not count for much, being all more or less influenced by the LXX, except Aquila and the Targums," etc. I answered this in the July number of the same paper, and I wrote (p. 474): "Dr. Skinner says that the LXX differs from M.T. in forty-nine cases. But in an enormous number of passages *some* Septuagintal authority, e.g. Lucian in Gen. xvi. 11 — sometimes only a single cursive — differs from the ordinary LXX reading. By comparing extant Hebrew variants which confirm some of the Septuagintal variants, I have shown that importance attaches to these. Has Dr. Skinner included all such cases in his forty-nine?" To this no answer was made, but in the September number of the same paper Professor Schlögl, in an independent reply to Dr. Skinner's May discussion, registers the following figures for Genesis i. 1—Exodus iii. 12: The Tetragrammaton *alone* occurs 148 times in the Massoretic text. In 118 places the other texts have *Elohim* or both appellations, so that there is unanimous evidence for the use of the Tetragrammaton in only 30 passages. According to Dr. Skinner, 143 of these 148 occurrences are in Genesis, with which alone he is concerned. Assuming in his favor that all the 30 undisputed instances occur in that book, the proportion of undisputed to disputed readings is 30 to 113.

Next, *Elohim* alone occurs 179 times in the M.T. of the section examined by Dr. Schlögl. Only in 59 passages have the other texts the Tetragrammaton (both appellations in 47). According to Dr. Skinner, *Elohim* occurs 177 times in Genesis; so at the best there are 120 undisputed readings here against 57.

Lastly, the two appellations occur together 20 times in the M.T. of Genesis. There are variants in 19 out of these 20 instances.

That these facts shatter Dr. Skinner's reasoning cannot be denied. There are, however, other matters that need explanation. It appears that while the larger number of divergences quoted by Dr. Skinner is 50, the total mentioned in a controversy to which he was himself a party was no less than 189 (in Genesis alone).

The date of the issue of the *Expository Times* containing Dr. Schlögl's note — to which no reply of any kind has been made — is September, 1909. The date of Dr. Skinner's preface is April, 1910. Yet in the latter he permits himself to write: "At all events, my own belief in the essential soundness of the prevalent hypothesis has been confirmed by the renewed examination of the text of Genesis which my present undertaking required." Now the date of the preface is probably not the date of the introduction, which was presumably in type earlier: yet that introduction itself contains a reference to so recent a book as the "Cambridge Biblical Essays" (see p. xviii), and the Commentary even refers to the *Expository Times* for November, 1909 (p. 292), i.e. to a number that appeared *two months after* Dr. Schlögl's note. But that is not all. In the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA article to which Dr. Skinner refers in this discussion, I had registered a number of divergences other than those mentioned by Redpath and Eerdmans, and Dr. Skinner's attention had been publicly called to this fact in the *Expository Times* for July, 1909. Further, while Dr. Skinner refers only to the numbers registered by these two writers who dealt with the Septuagint alone, he had himself recorded the fact on page 378 of the *Expository Times* for May, 1909, that the Samaritan differs from the Massoretic

text in 8 cases, and on page 330 of his commentary he registers two Syriac divergences (Gen. xxii. 11 and 15), and *actually adopts the Syriac reading in the former of those verses*. I shall return to this matter presently. At this stage I ask:—

1. Why did Dr. Skinner mention only the number of deviations registered by Redpath and Eerdmans when to his knowledge there were others, and when his attention had been publicly called to this fact?

2. Why did Dr. Skinner put forward an argument based on that degree of divergence when he well knew that he had not stated the full facts?

I proceed with his discussion. He continues:—

“In spite of the confident assertions of Dahse (309) and Wiener (131 f.) there is not a single instance in which LXX is ‘demonstrably’ right against Massoretic Text. It is readily conceded that it is probably right in a few cases, but there are two general presumptions in favour of superior fidelity of the Massoretic tradition. Not only (a) is the chance of purely clerical confusion between $\bar{\kappa}\bar{\iota}$ and $\bar{\kappa}$ greater than between יהוה and אלהים, or even between $\bar{\kappa}$ and $\bar{\kappa}$, and (b) a change of divine names more apt to occur in *translation* than in *transcription*, but (c) the distinction between a proper name יהוה and a generic אלהים is much less likely to have been overlooked in copying than that between two appellations *κύριος* and *θεός*. An instructive example is iv 26, where LXX *κύριος ὁ θεός* is ‘demonstrably’ wrong” (*loc. cit.*).

Dr. Skinner’s statement that “there is not a single instance in which LXX is ‘demonstrably’ right against Massoretic Text” would have had more weight if he had attempted to meet the facts and arguments that have been advanced. Thus he makes no effort whatever to deal with xvi. 11. Moreover, it is worth noting that he himself rejects the Massoretic text in favor of Versional readings when it suits him. On page 402 he writes of xxxi. 50, that the LXX *Elohim* must be adopted if the verse is rightly ascribed to E, and, as already

indicated, he adopts *Elohim* from a Syriac reading elsewhere; but other points in this discussion are of even more importance. In the *Expository Times* for May, 1909, the Rev. A. P. Cox drew attention to the fact that, in the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA article to which Dr. Skinner is here replying, I had produced evidence to show that the versional variants *rest on divergent Hebrew texts*, and are not due to avoidance of the Tetragrammaton by the translators. Dr. Skinner evaded the point in his *Expository Times* reply, and accordingly in the July number of that paper, I drew attention to Genesis xvi. 11, where Septuagintal authorities are supported by a Hebrew MS., and continued:—

“Dr. Skinner says it is reasonable to expect that Jewish scribes would be more careful in this matter than Greek copyists. But this instance shows that the variant is a *Hebrew* variant, for the mistakes of *Greek* copyists could not possibly influence a *Hebrew* MS. I therefore submit that little reliance can be placed on this argument. For numerous other examples see pp. 128–130, 150 ff.;¹ and for a further body of evidence drawn from the support of other Versions, see pp. 130 f.² Once the fact that the Greek rests on Hebrew variants has been established in a number of cases, a presumption arises that it does so in other cases where no independent testimony is preserved; and a case is made for further investigation.”

In view of all this, I ask:—

3. Why has Dr. Skinner entirely ignored the Hebrew variants and argued on the basis of causes purely internal to Greek MSS., although his attention had twice been publicly drawn to the fact that, in a number of passages, Greek variants are confirmed by Hebrew texts? His statement that in iv. 26 the Greek reading is demonstrably wrong leaves me unmoved, for

¹ I.e. of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January, 1909 = *Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism*, pp. 14 f., 36 f.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 15 ff.

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I had written of the LXX, "It has also in a number of cases preserved readings that are demonstrably inferior."¹

Dr. Skinner next says that "in the present state of textual criticism it is impossible to determine in particular cases what is the original reading." This, again, would have had more weight if he had shown any signs of attempting to deal with the arguments of his opponents. That it is impossible in a very large number of cases is merely to repeat what I have already written in the article that has been cited so often; but solid reasons have been advanced for preferring Septuagintal readings in certain specified passages, and Dr. Skinner has made no attempt whatever to grapple with these.²

He then proceeds to argue on the basis of averages; but here his figures are hopelessly wrong. Thus he says that there are only 4 cases of *κύριος* and 6 of *κύριος ὁ θεός* for *יהוה* (10 in all). This figure 10 is now replaced by Dr. Schlögl's 59. It is, however, remarkable that Dr. Skinner, after some further discussion, writes: "There is force, however, in Gray's remark on a particular case (Num. p. 311), that 'wherever [ὁ] $\overline{\kappa\varsigma}$ appears in LXX it deserves attention as a possible indication of the original text.'" Why, if that be so, did not Dr. Skinner devote attention to those cases in Genesis in which, to his knowledge, the Septuagint read *κύριος* (e.g. Gen. xlviii. 15)? The omission is the more curious because on

¹ *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January, 1900, pp. 133 f. = *Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism*, p. 19.

² In noticing an article of mine in the *Biblische Zeitschrift*, Professor Göttberger drew attention to three articles by the late Professor Vetter in the *Theologische Quartalschrift*, vol. lxxxv. (1903) pp. 12-47, 202-235, 520-547. I have now inspected these articles, and while I am of opinion that they contain some valuable hints, I think that certain general criticisms may be made on Professor Vetter's work: (1) He made no attempt to bring the evidence of extant Hebrew variants into consideration. Yet these form a very important element in weighing the value of the Sep-

this verse he quotes with approval Gunkel's note "in such cases the polytheist names all the gods he worships, the ancient monotheist all the names and attributes of the God he knows." If this be true, does it add nothing to the significance of B's variation? And was it no part of the duty of a "critical" commentator to take cognizance of such points?

Dr. Skinner next writes: "The documentary theory furnishes a better explanation of the alternation of the names than any other that has been propounded." He proceeds to argue against certain hypotheses of Redpath and Dahse with which I am not in agreement. Of the documentary hypothesis in general, I shall speak later. For the present, I wish to see how far it provides an explanation of the phenomena. On page xlix of the introduction, rules are laid down to account for J's using *Elohim* in certain instances. But the Commentary contains many admissions that are extremely damaging to the hypothesis. Thus, on page 2, we find a conjecture that there were two recensions of J's Paradise story in Genesis ii. and iii., marked respectively by *Elohim* and the Tetragrammaton, characterized as "plausible"; on page 74, Dr. Skinner is driven to admit of one of his artificial explanations of J's tuagIntal readings. (2) He treated the text of Dr. Swete's edition (i.e. the text of the best MS. available for any particular passage) as the text of the Septuagint. This procedure would not be defended to-day by any responsible authority. (3) He made no attempt to weigh considerations for or against particular readings in given passages. Such considerations may have a vital bearing on the larger question involved. (4) He did not compare the evidence of the different authorities in particular cases, but treated each by itself in separate compartments. (5) He started with a belief in the antiquity and correctness of the Massoretic text that cannot now be maintained. I am glad to have this opportunity of drawing attention to the care and thoroughness with which Professor Göttsberger performs the task of Old Testament bibliographer in the *Biblische Zeitschrift*.

avoidance of the Tetragrammaton, that "J's usage in such cases is not uniform, and it is doubtful what is the true explanation here"; page 125, after a reference to the preservation of iv. 25 f., brings us the following curious admission: "The circumstance shows on how slight a matter far-reaching critical speculations may hang. But for this apparently arbitrary decision of the redactor, the existence of a Sethite genealogy in J would hardly have been suspected; and the whole analysis of the J document into its component strata might have run a different course." On page 154, in the small-print note, vii. 8 and 9 are said to "present a mixed text," because, while the "distinction of clean and unclean points to J," "all other features (*Elohim*)," etc., point to P, in which document, however, "the verses are not wanted." On page 155, we read of viii. 1b, that "but for the name אלהים the half-verse might very well be assigned to J." On page 182, a passage (ix. 20-27) is given to J "in spite of אלהים in verse 27." On page 289, the Tetragrammaton in xvii. 1 is declared to be "either a redactional change or a scribal error." On page 320, the Tetragrammaton of xxi. 1b is "a scribal error." On page 328, xxii. 11, 14, go to E "in spite of" the Massoretic Tetragrammaton. On page 379, the Tetragrammaton in xxviii. 21b "shows that it does not belong to E; and in all probability the clause is to be omitted as a gloss. The apodosis then has the same unusual form as in xxii 1." On page 402, *Elohim* (of the LXX) "must be adopted if the verse [xxxi. 50] is rightly ascribed to E." On page 412, we learn that xxxiii. 1-17 "are rightly assigned in the main to J, in spite of the fact that the only divine name which occurs is אלהים in 5b, 10, 11." Yet "in these verses we must recognise the hand of E; and, for all that appears, E's influence may extend further." Finally, on page 439, Dr. Skinner practically

throws up the sponge in dealing with the Joseph story. The Tetragrammaton, we learn, "occurs only in chapter xxxix (7 times); elsewhere יהוה is invariably used, sometimes in contexts which would otherwise be naturally assigned to J, though no reason appears why J should depart from his ordinary usage (e.g. xlii 28). It may not always be safe to rely on this characteristic when it is not supported by other indications"! So, in eleven chapters out of the fifty, "no reason appears" why the famous explanation is not explanatory, and in the remainder it is perpetually breaking down.

Dr. Skinner's last point in this connection is stated as follows:—

"Nevertheless the opinion can be maintained that the Massoretic Text is far superior to the Versions, and that its use of the names is a valuable clue to the separation of documents. Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction; and, however surprising it may appear to some, we can reconcile our minds to the belief that the Massoretic Text does reproduce with substantial accuracy the characteristics of the original autographs. At present that assumption can only be tested by the success or failure of the analysis based on it" (pp. xxxvi f.).

That test will be applied in some measure hereafter: for the moment I wish to point to one matter that appears to me very significant. Time after time it happens that perplexing phenomena of the Massoretic text can be explained with supreme ease by the natural processes of textual corruption, and the Versions in very many cases come to the rescue. To this must be added the fact that the translation of the Septuagint is much older than the earliest known Hebrew MS. It is by no means certain that the ultimate judgment of specialists will favor the Massoretic Pentateuch against the Septuagintal. On the contrary, recent investigations lead me to incline to the opinion that in the long run the latter may be shown to have a general superiority. What is certain, both from the Ver-

sions and extant Hebrew variants, is that the Massoretic text is merely one recension out of many that were current at one time or another. It should be added that Professor Toy has recently abandoned Astruc's clue. He writes as follows of my contention as to the textual evidence: "While this point calls for a more thorough examination than has yet been given it, the conclusion just stated is not out of keeping with the tone of modern criticism. As is well known, critics generally hold that our Hebrew text has suffered greatly from scribes and editors in the process of transmission. It is agreed that divine names have been changed in Chronicles, Psalms, and elsewhere. Why not in the Pentateuch?"¹

To avoid all possibilities of misconception, I now repeat the three questions to which it is most essential that Dr. Skinner should supply answers:—

1. Why did Dr. Skinner mention only the number of deviations registered by Redpath and Eerdmans when to his knowledge there were others, and when his attention had been publicly called to this fact?

2. Why did Dr. Skinner put forward an argument based on that degree of divergence when he well knew that he had not stated the full facts?

3. Why has Dr. Skinner entirely ignored the Hebrew variants and argued on the basis of causes purely internal to Greek MSS., although his attention had twice been publicly drawn to the fact that in a number of passages Greek variants are confirmed by Hebrew texts?

Whatever the answers to these questions may be, it is obvious that the documentary theory is mortally wounded when its exponents do not meet the facts and arguments publicly advanced against them. The theory may stagger on for a

¹The Christian Register, April 28, 1910.

while, owing to the momentum it has already gained. Such books as Dr. Skinner's may serve to delay the recognition of the truth in certain circles. More than that they cannot do for not merely is truth sometimes stranger than fiction: in the long run it is always stronger. *Magna est veritas, et praevalerebit.*

In treating of Dr. Skinner's presentation of the documentary theory, I shall confine myself to the main Genesis phenomena, although much of his case rests on other considerations. My reason is that most of these have already been dealt with in other publications. For example, anybody who has read the sixth chapter of "Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism" (which appeared in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for October, 1909) will greet with hilarity this sentence of Dr. Skinner's: "It is particularly noteworthy that the profane, as distinct from the sacrificial, slaughter of animals, which even the Deuteronomic law treats as an innovation, is here carried back to the covenant with Noah" (p. lx). The real pillars of the hypothesis have already been destroyed. It is the documentary theory in the book of Genesis that we have to consider. Of this, Dr. Skinner writes in his preface:—

"It has to be remembered that the analytic process is a chain which is a good deal stronger than its weakest link, that it starts from cases where diversity of authorship is almost incontrovertible, and moves on to others where it is less certain; and it is surely evident that when the composition of sources is once established, the slightest differences of representation or language assume a significance which they might not have apart from that presumption" (pp. viii f.).

That is an excellent statement of certain higher critical fallacies: and I must try and point them out as clearly as I can.

1. The statement that "the analytic process is a chain" begs the question. Quite apart from the objection to the meta-

phor — and I shall endeavor to suggest a happier one hereafter — there is a very strong objection indeed to the main idea. It does not follow from an analysis of the first three chapters of Genesis, that an attempt should be made to dissect the last eleven. There may be two or more creation stories and only one Joseph story. How many creation stories and how many Joseph stories there are constitute questions which it may or may not be possible to answer after investigation; but the number is not necessarily or even probably the same in the two cases.

2. The fact that there are cases in Genesis where “diversity of authorship is almost incontrovertible” does substantially nothing to help the documentary theory, for it is not to be supposed that the author of the Pentateuch was guilty of free invention for the whole pre-Mosaic period. Let me take a concrete instance. (It is one that I have quoted before in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, and that Dr. Skinner has not ventured to tackle, although it occurred in the article to which he refers, and although I carefully confronted him with it in the *Expository Times* for July, 1909.) In x. 19 we read the words “As thou comest to Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim.” Such language could have originated only when the places named were in existence. They were destroyed in the time of Abraham. The verse cannot therefore be later than that period. Dr. Skinner assigns it to J, who “will hardly be earlier than the 9th” century (p. liv). That is to say, that Dr. Skinner is probably about eleven hundred years out. It is “almost incontrovertible” that this verse is not by any writer who could narrate, say, the Joseph story: for it could have originated only before the birth of Joseph. Now what has happened in this case? First, the documentary theorists have grouped it with a number of other passages which must be

from later hands. Secondly, they have dated it eleven hundred years too late. Thirdly, they have treated later compositions (e.g. the song of Deborah, which cannot have been written before the events to which it relates) as being earlier than this very ancient passage. Why have they done these things? Because they held that the analytic process was a chain, and that consequently a number of continuous documents could be recovered mainly on the basis of the Divine appellations. Here then an "almost incontrovertible" "diversity of authorship" hoists the critics with their own petard. But, once it is proved that compositions long precedent to the time of Moses are included in Genesis, no presumption in favor of a documentary theory such as that supported by Dr. Skinner arises. There might have been two or two hundred creation stories in circulation before the days of Moses, but this proves nothing. There is no evidence whatever of a late origin of the creation stories. In ii. 14 we perhaps read of the Tigris as flowing "east of Ashur." Professor Gressmann has pointed out that this was only true before 1300 B.C., for about that date the ancient capital of Assyria on the right (west) bank of the Tigris was replaced by Kalchi, on the left (east).¹ If, therefore, the translation "east" be correct, this passage also must be pre-Mosaic, since after 1300 B.C. the Tigris was on the west of Ashur. In point of fact, there is legal evidence to the same effect; for, as will presently be seen, the law of murder in the case of Cain is shown by the comparative evidence to be very early. I shall return to the question of dating hereafter.

3. It follows, from what has been said, that it is no sufficient justification of the higher critical procedure to say that the analytic process "moves on" to cases where diversity of

¹ *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, vol. x. (1907) p. 347.

authorship is "less certain." The critical theory should rather be likened to a string of beads. If the string be snapped in not more than one hundred and eighty-nine places the beads will fall. Many of them may be lost or destroyed: some may be strung together with other beads on a fresh thread, and formed into a gewgaw of entirely different pattern, purpose, and appearance from the original string.

4. "It is surely evident that when the composition of sources is once established, the slightest differences of representation or language assume a significance which they might not have apart from that presumption." The chief part of this sentence has been answered in the foregoing paragraphs. It is, however, necessary to point out that the fallacies already exposed are here admitted to import into "the slightest differences of representation" a "significance which they might not have apart from that presumption." In other words the significance goes by the board with the presumption.

It is at this point that Dr. Skinner's claim as to the success of his analysis (omitted from the preceding discussion of the Divine appellations) should be quoted.

"One has but to read consecutively the first three chapters of Genesis, and observe how the sudden change in the divine name coincides with a new vocabulary, representation, and spiritual atmosphere, in order to feel how paltry all such artificial explanations are in comparison with the hypothesis that the names are distinctive of different documents. The experience repeats itself, not perhaps quite so convincingly, again and again throughout the book; and though there are cases where the change of manner is not obvious, still the theory is vindicated in a sufficient number of instances to be worth carrying through, even at the expense of a somewhat complicated analysis, and a very few demands on the services of a redactor to resolve isolated problems" (p. xxxvi).

It is possible to test this theory in many different ways. (1) The involuntary admissions of Dr. Skinner himself may be quoted. (2) His clues may be taken singly and it may be

shown how he has to abandon them one after another and introduce the wildest hypotheses in order to get through at all. (3) The narrative may be examined to see whether the theory is probable or tears asunder what cannot be separated. (4) The evidence of the Versions which so often show the true origin of the phenomena sought to be explained by the documentary theory may be adduced with the result that passages supposed to belong to the earliest sources are seen to be the additions of late glossators and the unglossed text appears to be unitary. (5) The historical and comparative evidence which demolishes the theory may be adduced.

Other tests could be suggested: but this is an article, not a treatise, and it is impossible to cover all the ground. It will be sufficient to give some samples of each of these methods with references which will enable the reader to supplement this article for himself—especially as this very claim of Dr. Skinner's contains the admissions that "there are cases where the change of manner is not obvious," that the documentary "experience" which "repeats itself" does so "not perhaps quite so convincingly," and that the analysis is "somewhat complicated."

At this point it is necessary to advert to Dr. Skinner's treatment of Dr. Orr. The latter's fascinating volume on "The Problem of the Old Testament" is well known. Dr. Skinner has read it: and it is difficult to think that he has not been considerably influenced by it in the admissions he is driven to make about J and E, but he objects to Dr. Orr's hypothesis. My own view is that Dr. Orr's book points to a far more conservative position than that of its author as the only one tenable. I do not agree with him in accepting the documentary theory at all, nor can I concur in his dating. In fact, his work is very valuable; but to my mind it attains its full force only

when it is coupled with the tests (4) and (5) above, which lead to an entirely different solution. Hence in so far as Dr. Skinner criticizes Dr. Orr's documentary theory I agree with him: in so far as he refuses to accept Dr. Orr's view of the futility of the JE analysis I disagree with him and clinch the matter with my own new materials.

I begin then with Dr. Skinner's independent admissions about J and E:—

"When we compare the two documents, the first thing that strikes us is their close correspondence in outline and contents. The only important difference is that E's narrative does not seem to have embraced the primitive period, but to have commenced with Abraham. But from the point where E strikes into the current of the history, there are few incidents in the one document to which the other does not contain a parallel. What is much more remarkable, and indeed surprising, is that the *manner* of narration changes in the two documents *pari passu*. Thus the transition from the loose connection of the Abraham legends to the more consecutive biography of Jacob, and then to the artistic unity of the Joseph stories, is equally noticeable in J and in E. It is this extraordinarily close parallelism, both in matter and form, which proves that both documents drew from a common body of tradition, and even suggests that that tradition had already been partly reduced to writing" (pp. xlili f.).

"J presents, on the whole, a more uniform literary texture than E. It is generally allowed to contain the best examples of pure narrative style in the O. T.; and in Genesis it rarely, if ever, falls below the highest level. But while E hardly attains the same perfection of form, there are whole passages, especially in the more ample narratives, in which it is difficult to assign to the one a superiority over the other. J excels in picturesque 'objectivity' of description.—In the power to paint a scene with few strokes, and in the delineation of life and character: his dialogues, in particular, are inimitable 'for the delicacy and truthfulness with which character and emotions find expression in them' (cf. Gen. xlii 18 ff.). E, on the other hand, frequently strikes a deeper vein of subjective feeling, especially of pathos; as in the account of Isaac's sacrifice (xxii), of the expulsion of Hagar (xxi 3 ff.), the dismay of Isaac and the tears of Esau on the discovery of Jacob's fraud (xxvii 35 ff.), Jacob's lifelong grief for Rachel (xlviii 7), or his tenderness towards Joseph's children (xlviii 14). But here

again no absolute distinction can be drawn; in the history of Joseph, *e.g.*, the vein of pathos is perhaps more marked in J than in E. Where parallels are sufficiently distinct to show a tendency, it is found in several instances that J's objectivity of treatment has succeeded in preserving the archaic spirit of a legend which in E is transformed by the more refined sentiment of a later age. The best example is J's picture of Hagar, the intractable, indomitable Bedawi woman (ch. xvi), as contrasted with E's modernized version of the incident (xxi 8 ff.), with its affecting picture of the mother and child all but perishing in the desert. So again, E (ch. xx) introduces an extenuation of Abraham's falsehood about his wife which is absent from the older narrative of J (xii 10 ff.).

"It is not surprising, considering the immense variety of material comprised in both documents, that the palpable literary differences reduce themselves for the most part to a preference for particular phrases and turns of expression in the one recension or the other" (pp. xlvi f.).¹

"The redactors have done their work (in Genesis) with consummate skill and care, and have produced a consecutive narrative whose strands it is often difficult to unravel" (p. lvi).

Certainly these passages are remarkable. Dr. Skinner is so impressed with the close correspondence of his two supposititious documents that he is driven to suggest that both drew on a tradition that "had already been partly reduced to writing." I will next quote his reply to Dr. Orr:—

"What reasons, then, hinder us from deserting the critical view, and coming over to the side of Dr. Orr? In the *first* place, the difference between J and E is *not* confined to the divine names. The linguistic evidence is very much clearer than Dr. Orr represents;² and differences of conception, though slight, are real. . . . In the *second* place, J and E consist largely of duplicate narratives of the same event. It is true, this argument is lost on Dr. Orr, who has no difficulty in conceiving that Abraham twice told the same lie

¹In other words, no criterion can be laid down which Dr. Skinner does not immediately contradict, as in the foregoing extracts. As to the supposed superior antiquity of J, he is driven to admit (on p. llii) that "E has occasionally preserved the more ancient form of the tradition." Other critics hold E to be the older document.

²Nevertheless, I have not observed that Dr. Skinner has answered a single point made by Dr. Orr as to the linguistic evidence.

about his wife, and that his son Isaac followed his example, with very similar results in the three cases" (p. xli).

In reply, attention should be drawn to the following facts:

(a) Dr. Skinner has made no attempt to meet in detail Dr. Orr's examination of the linguistic evidence and the differences of conception. For example, Dr. Orr's discussion on pages 233 ff. of his "Problem" conclusively breaks down Dr. Skinner's allegations as to dreams and night visions in E representing a more advanced stage of theological reflection (p. 1). Or, again, compare Dr. Skinner's statement as to the "national feeling" in both sources (p. 1) with Orr's (pp. 210 f.). (b) The textual evidence, in fact, disposes of the main differences of conception, and shows how the present troubles have arisen. Here I may refer to my articles on Joseph.¹ (c) With regard to duplicate narratives, it should first be noted that Dr. Skinner has misunderstood Dr. Orr, as the following passage shows: "This suggests, lastly, that even were the similarity of incidents as clear as is alleged, it would not necessarily prove different authorship. The same author might find varying narratives in the traditions or sources from which he drew, and might *himself* reproduce them in his history." (Problem, p. 237.) (d) Moreover the argument is extraordinarily subjective. As I have pointed out elsewhere, the critics first deny the two water stories (Ex. xvii. and Num. xx.) to a single author, and then proceed to assign two such stories *each* to J, E, and perhaps also P.² In the case of some of the Genesis stories it will appear, to most minds, that the supposed duplicates are really narratives of

¹ *Ante*, pp. 59-69, 274-283.

² See Essays, pp. 104 f. The expression "and Meribah" in Exodus xvii. 7 is missing in the Vulgate, and is clearly a gloss. Compare Deuteronomy ix. 22; xxxiii. 8, where the place is called Mas-sah only.

different events: but, however that may be, I can see no reason for supposing that the collection of traditions was made first by two schools of writers (J and E) independently, then by a redactor of JE, then by a P school, and lastly by a redactor who combined all these. It must be remembered that for all this there is not a scintilla of evidence.

To come back to Dr. Skinner's admissions. When we turn to the detailed discussion in the Commentary, matters are no better. After prolonged consideration, Dr. Skinner divides Genesis xxxiv. into two sources, which in utter perplexity he calls J^x and E^x, adding (p. 418), "This seems to me the best solution, though it leaves the dual recension, the amalgamation, and the Priestly redaction unexplained riddles"! On page 456, chapter xxxix., "with the exception of a harmonising gloss . . . and a sprinkling of E variants," goes to J; but on the next page we read "This conclusion is partly confirmed by the literary phenomena [which are then cited]. It is somewhat disconcerting to find that none of these occur in the central section, 7-20; and Wellhausen positively assigns 6-19 to E." The phrases supposed to support this are quoted, and Dr. Skinner proceeds: "These are not decisive, and on the whole the material argument must be held to outweigh the dubious linguistic evidence," and so on. On page 465, we learn of another passage that "a satisfactory analysis cannot be given." On page 486 (chap. xlv.), "The *sources*, E and J, are here so intimately blended that a complete analysis is impossible," etc. Perhaps it will be sufficient on this part of the case to close with some admissions as to the Joseph story as a whole. "From the other patriarchal biographies it is distinguished first of all by the dramatic unity of a clearly conceived 'plot'. . . . To this higher unity everything is subordinated; the separate scenes and incidents merge naturally

into the main stream of the narrative, each representing a step in the development of the theme. . . . The close parallelism of J and E, together with the fact that the literary features enumerated above are shared by both, show that it had taken shape before it came into the hands of these writers, and strongly suggest that it must have existed in written form" (p. 440). When to this are added the admissions cited above, the breakdown of the Divine appellations, the breakdown (as will be shown hereafter) of the main clue for this section (Jacob and Israel), and the fact that the textual evidence, as shown in the articles already cited, not merely destroys the details of the analysis but also explains the real origin of the difficulties of the present text, it will be seen that the admission of the unity of the Joseph story is merely a question of time. *It must be remembered that this is the locus classicus for the JE analysis, which falls with the establishment of the unity of this section and the abandonment of the clue from the Divine appellations.*

Next I turn to examine some of the clues. It may be convenient to begin with that which is most important for the Joseph story, and collect some of Dr. Skinner's observations on the subject. On page xlix we read, "For the name *Jacob*, J substitutes *Israel* after xxxv 22 (except xlvi 5b); E consistently uses *Jacob* (except xlvi 2, xlviii 8, 11, 21 [1 25?]." It will seem to most people that there is nothing very "consistent" about a practice to which there are admittedly four or five exceptions in a very few chapters, but this is only the beginning of our experiences. On pages 438 f., we are told, "With regard to the composition of J and E, the most important fact is that the clue to authorship supplied by the divine names almost entirely fails us, and is replaced by the distinction between Israel and Jacob which as names of the

patriarch are characteristic of J and E respectively (exceptions are xlvi 2, xlviii 8, 11, 21, [1 25?]; xlvi 5b." I agree that this "replaces" the distinction between the divine appellations, but I go further and say that Dr. Skinner's statement is a good deal truer than he ever imagined; for we have here again the same self-contradictions, the same improbable divisions, the same uncertain attitude towards the textual evidence. On page 423, in the small print at the top, the only section in chapter xxxv. which can be assigned "purely" to J is 21, 22a, on the ground that "Israel" occurs twice, but *at the bottom of the same page* Dr. Skinner notes in his curious way that in verse 5 the LXX¹ has "Israel" for the Hebrew "Jacob." On page 427, in the small-print note on 22a, "Israel," we read, "The name, instead of Jacob, is from this point onwards a fairly reliable criterion of the document J in Genesis." Note that it is only "from this point onwards," and, even so, it has sunk to the level of "a fairly reliable criterion." On page 474 (chap. xlii.), in the small print *at the top*, "Jacob" is quoted to prove E's authorship of verses 29 and 36, but *at the bottom* it is noted that the Septuagint differs from the Massoretic text in omitting this very word in verses 1 and 4. On page 479, "the name Israel" in xliii. 6, 8, 11, is a "positive point of contact with J." On page 486, E appears from (*inter alia*) "Jacob" in xlv. 25, while "Israel" in verse 28 is an "indubitable trace" of J. Our "fairly reliable criterion" is obviously looking up in the world. On page 491, at the top of the page, it is still in good credit: "Israel" in xlvi. 29, 30, helps to prove "a continuous J narrative," in xlvi. 1a it vouches for J, while "Jacob" in verses 2, 5a, evidences E. But alas for fleeting glories! The

¹ I believe that when Dr. Skinner speaks of the LXX without further details, he only means the text of the Cambridge Septuagint. Vol. LXVII. No. 268. 8

bottom of the page witnesses a sad reversal of its fine position, for it becomes necessary to comment on the word "Israel" in verse 2, and Dr. Skinner is reduced to writing, "The word has crept in from verse 1 through an inadvertence of the redactor or a later scribe"! On page 492, Dr. Skinner chronicles the fact that the LXX omits "Jacob" on its second occurrence in verse 5 (where it had on the preceding page proved E's authorship). On page 501, in the small-print note on verse 27, we are told that "the verse is usually divided between J and P; but *ישראל* is no sure sign of J, since it denotes the nation." On pages 502, 503, there is some more shuffling, and in the small-print note on xlvi. 2b (pp. 503-504) the clue is abandoned: "2b is usually assigned to J because of Israel. But the clause comes very naturally after 2a; and as there are three other cases of confusion between the two names in this chapter (8, 11, 21), the name is not decisive." It seems unnecessary to follow Dr. Skinner further on this point. This clue, like others, is followed and abandoned when convenient. The whole analysis is a mass of the most arbitrary subjectivity. For the rest the textual evidence which completely disposes of it will be found in "The Answer of Textual Criticism to the Higher Criticism of the Story of Joseph."¹

To take some more examples: On xii. 5 we are told in German — probably to make it more impressive — that "land of Canaan" is "an almost certain mark of P" (p. 245); but on page 474 we hear (in the vernacular) that "A peculiar feature of this and the following chapters is the name 'land of Canaan,' which is elsewhere in Genesis characteristic of P. From this and some similar phenomena, Giesebrecht and others had inferred a Priestly redaction of the Joseph pericope;

¹ *Ante*, pp. 66-68.

but the usage may be due to the constant and unavoidable antithesis between Canaan and Egypt," and we are further referred to page 438. Here we learn, with regard to this hypothesis of a priestly redaction, that "the cases in point have been examined by Kuenen, who rightly concludes that they are too few in number to bear out the theory of systematic Priestly redaction." Needless to say, the textual evidence on this phrase has not been considered. Again, when the lists of words are critically examined, they yield very curious results. Thus, to take merely Dr. Skinner's admissions in the lists themselves, we see the following on page xlix: Of J one expression is found "also in P," another in xlii. 1 "E?," a third שָׁחַח (of which more hereafter) in "xx 14, xxx 18 R: also common in P," a fourth occurs "in E and P once each," a fifth is found "in J about 40 times, in E about 6 times (in Gen.)." Clue after clue has to be abandoned, and the effect produced by the successive breakdowns of all these unsound arguments is cumulative. E's main list consists of *five phrases and idioms*, but then "a number of rare or archaic words or phrases," occurring sometimes only *once each in the whole Pentateuch*, are assigned to him to help him out. This sort of learned trifling is hardly likely to have influence with any sensible man.

As a final example, I take the stylistic argument on page 315 dealing with chapter xx., "the first continuous excerpt from E." First, of course, comes *Elohim*, verse 18, containing the Tetragrammaton, being turned into a gloss, though the narrative is incomprehensible without it. After what has already been said of this clue, it is only necessary to add that in verse 4 14 Hebrew MSS. have the Tetragrammaton. Then אָמָה for "maid-servant" (J שִׁפְחָה), but this breaks down because the latter word occurs in verse 14. Therefore in

that verse another gloss has to be postulated, "this being the only instance of שפחה in an E context." But that is barely true. On page 389, we read (xxx.), "18a β while correctly expressing the idea of E, contains the word שפחה, which E avoids; and is therefore probably redactional." The next proof is "לבב (לבב), verse 5"; but in Exodus xiv. 5, J uses לבב. That exhausts the more important stylistic clues, but we are referred to the notes on four other words and phrases. Of one of these, we read "only here in Hexateuch; E is addicted to rare expressions." Of the second, "'said regarding' is rare: 2 Kings xix 32, Jer. xxii 18, xxvii 19;" of the third "='permit' xxxi 7, Nu. xx 21, xxi 23, xxii 13 (E), Ex. xii 23 (J), iii 19 (R), Dt. xviii 14, Jos. x 19 (D):" of the fourth "as xviii 13, Nu. xxii 37; but cf Jos. vii 20. These are all the occurrences in Hexateuch." Joshua vii. 20 is given to J in the Oxford Hexateuch. Thus two of the four occur nowhere else in the Hexateuch, and the others are not exclusively E. Now I ask: Could a single one of those clues have a scintilla of probative force for any impartial mind?

These "stylistic peculiarities" are reinforced (?) by others. "The appearing of God in a dream is characteristic of E." I have already referred to Dr. Orr's refutation of this allegation, and Dr. Skinner's failure to meet it. "And the conception of Abraham as a prophet (?) is at least foreign to the original J (but see on xv 1)." I will just put by the side of that Dr. Skinner's statement on page 1: "Nor does the fact that Abraham, as a man of God, is called *Nabi* ["prophet"] (xx 7, cf Dt. xxxiv 10) necessarily imply that the figure of an Amos or an Isaiah was before the mind of the writers." And on xv. 1 we read of the Hebrew word for "vision": "Only Nu. xxiv 4, 16, Ezk. xiii 7. The *word* is thus not at

all characteristic of E, though the *idea* of revelation through dreams and visions undoubtedly is" (p. 278). I ask my readers to turn to the two verses in Numbers (which belong to J), and say whether "the idea of revelation through dreams and visions" is or is not present. Further on, on "the word of the LORD came" (in this very verse), Dr. Skinner writes: "The conception of Abram as a prophet has no parallel in J; and even E, though he speaks vaguely of Abram as a *Nabi* ["prophet"] (xx 7), does not describe his intercourse with God in technical prophetic phraseology." That clue is therefore valueless. Returning to chapter xx., we find Dr. Skinner laying stress on the fact that "Sarah is here conceived as a young woman capable of inspiring passion in the king." That is a good point — the only point he really makes: but it does not justify anything more than the view that this episode is probably misplaced; while, as will be seen hereafter, there is textual evidence against the present chronology of Genesis. Lastly, Dr. Skinner returns to the Divine appellations, and says this "is the beginning of a section mainly Elohist, representing a cycle of tradition belonging to the Negeb and, in particular, to Beersheba." That argument also falls with Astruc's clue. That disposes of the case on chapter xx. It must be remembered that the effect produced by examining the critical contentions is cumulative. After a century and a half of destructive work, these critics are unable to produce a single clue that will bear examination to justify their treatment of this chapter; and this is merely typical of the analysis in general.

I now proceed to examine another argument in the light of two methods jointly — the consideration of versional evidence and of the argument from contexts. For this purpose it will be

well to take what Dr. Skinner apparently regards as one of the strongest portions of his theory — P's biography of Abraham. It is to be remembered that this portion of my discussion can be supplemented from Dr. Orr's "Problem," where numerous instances of the context argument will be found, and my own "Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism," as well as from the examination of the story of Joseph, to which reference has been made. It must be borne in mind in considering this biography, that Dr. Skinner is arguing against the view that P is a mere supplement — a view that I do not hold, as I reject *in toto* the analysis into documents. He writes, "No critical operation is easier or more certain than the separation of this work, down even to very small fragments, from the context in which it is embedded" (p. lvii). He admits (p. lix) that "in the sections on Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, there are undoubtedly omissions which *we* can only supply from JE; and if we were to judge from these parts alone, the supplementary theory would be more plausible than it is. We miss, *e.g.*, accounts of the birth of Jacob and Esau, of Jacob's arrival in Paddan Aram, of his marriage to Leah and Rachel, of the birth of Joseph, of his slavery and elevation in Egypt, his reconciliation with his brethren, and perhaps some other particulars." This does not prevent Dr. Skinner, whose work is one mass of inconsistencies, from writing three pages later: "In the history of the patriarchs there seems no reason to suppose that he [P] had any other authorities than J and E. The general course of events is the same, and differences of detail are all explicable from the known tendencies of the Code." It appears, then, that the omissions not merely are such as "*we* can only supply from JE," but never could have been supplied in any other way at all. This, as usual, is supplemented by admissions in the Commentary (*e.g.* pp. 428 f., 438, etc.). but

it is with the supposed strength, not with the admitted weakness of the P theory that I desire to deal. Dr. Skinner writes:—

“... Here is literal translation of the *dissecta membra* of P's epitome of the biography of Abraham, with no connexions supplied, and only one verse transposed (xix 29): xii 4b 'Now Abram was 75 years old when he went out from Harran. 5 And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions which they had acquired, and all the souls whom they had procured; and they went out to go to the land of Canaan, and they came to the land of Canaan. xiii 6 And the land could not bear them so that they might dwell together, for their possessions were great, and they were not able to dwell together. 11b So they separated from one another: 12ab Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the Oval. xix 29 And when God destroyed the cities of the Oval, God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot away from the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.— xvi 1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. 3 So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband for a wife to him. 15 And Hagar bore to Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son whom Hagar bore to him Ishmael. 16 And Abram was 86 years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.' [Then follows chap. xvii. in full.] . . . The narrative is resumed in xxi 1b [but Dr. Skinner has to explain the Tetragrammaton in this verse as a scribal error, and I therefore correct his translation in this respect]. 'And God did to Sarah as he had spoken, 2b at the appointed time which God had mentioned. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised Isaac his son when he was 8 days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac his son was born to him. xxiii 1 And the life of Sarah was 127 years; 2 And Sarah died in Kiryath Arba, that is Hebron, in the land of Canaan.' . . . [Then chap. xxiii. in full, followed by] 'xxv 7 And these are the days of the years of the life of Abraham which he lived: 175 years; 8 and he expired. And Abraham died in a good old age, an old man and full [of years] and was gathered to his father's kin. 9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar, the Hittite, which is opposite Mamre: 10 the field which Abraham bought from the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and

Sarah his wife. — 11 And after the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac his son.' [Dr. Skinner then says:] The reader can judge for himself whether a narrative so continuous as this, every isolated sentence of which has been detached from its context by unmistakable criteria of the style of P, is likely to have been produced by the casual additions of a mere supplementer of an older work" (p. lviii).

I fancy that there are a good many other points on this curious production which the reader can and will judge for himself. If from any biography isolated sentences are snipped off relating to successive episodes, some measure of continuity must result. Take a long life of any modern statesman, cut out sentences relating to his birth, marriage, death, and one or two episodes, print them consecutively, and you will necessarily have a continuous narrative *of a sort*. But it does not follow that it will be in the slightest degree probable that the continuous narrative is original.

In this case there are three glaring incredibilities, to start with: (1) It is contrary to the whole genius of Hebrew literature to compose such a meager, dry, desiccated, colorless narrative as this. There is nothing like it in the Old Testament. (2) The supposititious writer to whom it is assigned is supposed to be characterized by prolixity and redundancy, which makes the theory that he of all people should have produced such a composition still more incredible. (3) The omissions are such as to make the narrative unintelligible. For example, "God . . . sent Lot away." How or whither? Such a statement cannot stand alone. Nor does even Dr. Skinner suppose that it can, for he writes of this verse on page 310: "The dependence of P on J is very manifest." That of course is fatal to his hypothesis, for if the dependence is very manifest, there is no independent document P, which is what Dr. Skinner undertook to prove. He cannot both eat his cake and have it. Abram called his son's name Ishmael.

Why? No reason whatever appears. Again, there is a gap as to Abraham's prosperity. If "after the death of Abraham; God blessed Isaac his son," the narrative must have explained somewhere that during his lifetime God blessed the father.

With regard to the marks of style by which this strange narrative is separated, it would of course be possible to show their futility in detail, but after what has already been said that is perhaps unnecessary. Our old friends "*Elohim*," "land of Canaan," etc., would come in again, and they would be joined by a number of auxiliaries of the same caliber. I turn to the effect of this separation on the general narrative and to some versional evidence.

The result of separating xii. 4b, 5, from the context is to leave a statement in verse 6 that Abram "passed through the land." This with only the data of J must refer back to "thy country," but the end of the sentence shows this to be nonsense. Hence something in the nature of the excised passage must be supplied to make J's narrative intelligible. In the next passage (xiii. 6) the Septuagintal MSS. E, a, c₂, rightly omit the words "and they could not dwell together," assigned to J. Here again the J context demands P for its explanation: "And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle." Why? Obviously because the land could not suffice for both. The explanation lies in P's "And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great." Then comes xiii. 11b. On this, Dr. Skinner admits "11b, in spite of its resemblance to 9a β , must be assigned to P, being necessary to the completeness of that account, and because it disturbs the connexion of 11a with 12b β ," i.e. this verse is given to P not on any evidence, but because of the exigencies of the

theory.¹ The section in its original form reads perfectly, and there is no reason for tearing it asunder. We have already seen that xix. 29 cannot stand alone, and need therefore not linger over the textual evidence. Next comes xvi. 1a. Its severance leaves J to begin with the impossible "And she had a handmaid." Who was "she"? J's sentence will not read without the opening. In verse 3 the Vulgate omits "Sarai Abram's wife" and also both the other occurrences of "Abram." The best MS. of the LXX exhibits a text that has been glossed, as is proved by the impossible *λαβοῦσα . . . καὶ ἔδωκεν*. The variants suggest that it may originally have read "And she took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, and gave her to her husband to be his wife." This, supported as it is in part by the Vulgate, appears to me to be correct. It is important to notice that the schematic chronology "after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan" is unknown to this text.² The marks of P's style are, in fact, the work of glossators, as in so many other cases. Next, the removal of xvi. 15, 16, leaves Ishmael unborn in JE, where he makes an unexpected appearance in xxi. 9. But here again the textual evidence is very important. *The two MSS. (d, p) that omitted the previous chronological notice in xvi. 2 also omit the whole of verse 16.* Other Septuagintal variants here recorded in the larger Cambridge Septuagint point to other chronology. As to verse 15, the Vulgate reads "And Hagar

¹ Consequently Dr. Skinner's allegation that "every isolated sentence has been detached from its context by unmistakable *criteria* of the style of P" cannot be supported.

² How important the chronological scheme is to the P analysis may be seen on page lxii, where Dr. Skinner writes (after the admission quoted before as to the dependence on J and E): "But the important facts are that nearly the whole of the history, both primitive and patriarchal, is reduced to a meagre summary, *with little save chronological significance,*" etc. (my italics).

bare Abram a son: and he called his name Ishmael." Its omissions are confirmed by Septuagintal MSS. Again, in xvii. there are significant variations — especially in the age of Ishmael (ver. 25), who, according to another reading, was three, not thirteen, years old (compare chap. xxi. 14, 15, 18), but it is impossible, for reasons of space, to treat of this chapter now, and we come to xxi. 1b. The Septuagintal MS. n omits this half-verse probably rightly. The Vulgate cuts it down to the words "and did as he had spoken," which, however, may be a paraphrase. Neither of these texts will suit Dr. Skinner. In 2b "at the set time" is missing in two Septuagintal MSS., and the LXX substitutes the Tetragrammaton for "God." Verse 3 again is omitted altogether by one Septuagintal MS. — possibly by accident — and is in any case heavily glossed, as the other variants show. It is perhaps unnecessary to continue these somewhat dry details. It is of course quite possible to continue the refutation, but these samples are sufficient to show what can be done. No textual critic who examines these instances carefully can doubt that Dr. Skinner's method is radically unsound.¹

Perhaps it may be said that I am merely substituting one set of hypotheses for another. That charge would be quite unfair, for it would overlook the important fact that I am careful to follow the evidence. The Vulgate is a well-known translation of the Bible that to this day possesses great authority. So is the Septuagint. But J and E and P and D are

¹The facts stated above respecting variants to the chronological notices are of great importance. It turns out that the extraordinary chronological embarrassments of Genesis are in part due to the work of a late annotator. I hope to return to this subject on some future occasion. For the present it is to be noted that these readings are of vital consequence, not merely to the question of the composition of Genesis, but also to any estimate of its historical character.

mere conjectural figments of whom history knows nothing — the creations of some very subjective minds which have ignored the available evidence. How subjective and arbitrary the whole theory is, may be very strikingly exemplified from a statement that of thirty-one passages in JE in which Kraetzschmar (another member of the school) finds a particular idea, all but three are assigned by Dr. Skinner to the Deuteronomistic redaction (p. 284). That is a very interesting illustration of the way in which the documentary theory feeds on itself.

I come now to the last test I propose to apply — the dating. We have already seen that x. 19 (certainly) and ii. 14 (probably) contain passages that must be pre-Mosaic. It is, moreover, to be noted that no post-Mosaic background can possibly be found for many of the narratives of Genesis, e.g. that of Noah's drunkenness (Skinner, p. 187). With regard to Genesis xiv., again, Dr. Skinner has to admit "some traditional (perhaps documentary) material" (p. 272). But these considerations do not stand alone. After showing the compatibility of the patriarchal narratives with Oriental archæology, Dr. Skinner adds:—

"All this is of the utmost value; and *if* the patriarchs lived in this age, then this is the background against which we have to set their biographies. But the real question is whether there is such a correspondence between the biographies and their background that the former would be unintelligible if transplanted to other and later surroundings. We should gladly welcome any evidence that this is the case; but it seems to us that the remarkable thing about these narratives is just the absence of background and their general compatibility with the universal conditions of ancient Eastern life" (pp. xvi f.).

That is to say, that what is now wanted is more evidence that will not fit any but early conditions. Some evidence of that nature can be provided by comparative jurisprudence. If

Noah's law of homicide is shown by the comparative method to be much earlier than Exodus or Numbers or Deuteronomy, there is an end alike of the documentary hypothesis which would make it a post-exilic production — though the Babylonian law of homicide was quite different — and of the historical theories that depend on this hypothesis. Such evidence is in fact forthcoming. I showed in the *London Churchman* for January, 1908, that the legal evidence strongly confirmed the book of Genesis. It is impossible to transcribe the whole of that article, but the following passage may be quoted:—

“But, then, may it not be argued that the legal conditions were common to the post-Mosaic period and the patriarchal age? Can it not be said that in legal matters ‘the narratives are more or less coloured by the ideas of later ages?’ The answer — which is important — is in the negative. There are, of course, no sufficient materials for writing a history of Hebrew law in Biblical times, but, so far as it goes, the evidence of the Book of Genesis will not fit in with the critical theories. Perhaps the most interesting case is the conveyance of the field of Machpelah to Abraham, a passage attributed by the critics to the supposititious exilic or post-exilic ‘P.’ Like every other legal transaction in the Book of Genesis, and unlike every Babylonian legal tablet, it is conspicuous for the absence of writing. When it is contrasted with the very modern form of conveyance with which we meet in Jeremiah xxxii., it at once becomes evident that it represents a much more primitive stage of legal development. The instance is peculiarly important, because we are asked to believe that ‘P’ (who is supposed to have been very much under Babylonian influence) forged or inserted the narrative of the purchase of the cave of Machpelah for the purpose of giving validity to the claim of the Israelites to the land of Canaan. Now, had that been so, it is evident that a writer who, according to the critics, is distinguished by a peculiarly lawyer-like style would never have failed to mention every particular that was material to the complete validity of the transaction according to the ideas of his own age. Nor can it be said that he would have been deterred by any scantiness of information or any scruples as to the truth, for *ex hypothesi* he was an admitted master of fiction, wholly devoid of anything that we should regard as historical conscience.

“The law of homicide also presents us with some interesting

testimony. The story of Cain the outlaw, subject to death at the hands of any man who met him, reveals a legal institution well known to students of early law.¹ But here it is important to notice that it brings us face to face with an earlier state of law than that postulated by the Mosaic legislation. The blood feud is not yet recognized. It is not yet the duty of the avenger of the blood alone to exact retribution for the crime. The murderer is expelled from the religious and social community, and left as an outcast from the peace and protection of the tribe, to encounter single-handed any stranger or enemy—the terms are synonymous in early times—he may meet. Nor is the position much better for the higher critics if we turn to ‘P’: ‘Whoso sheddeth the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed.’ That is not the law of ‘JE’ or ‘D’ or ‘P’ with the place appointed for refuge in certain cases of homicide. The distinction between murder and other classes of homicide has not yet been drawn.²

“Another matter that has probably never been considered by any higher critic is the history of the *patria potestas*—the legal power of a father over the children. As at Rome, so among the ancient Hebrews, the *jus vitae necisque* was at first quite unlimited.³ We have several instances of this, the most striking being Judah’s conduct to his daughter-in-law (xxxviii. 24), who had passed into his *potestas* by her marriage, and Reuben’s treatment of his children (xlii. 3). It is to be noted that in neither case is there any suggestion of a trial. The *paterfamilias* acts with plenary authority. But in both Rome and ancient Israel this power underwent curtailment. It is true that the power to sell or pledge children endured to the end of Old Testament times (Neh. v. 5), and probably the paternal power was in many ways extremely extensive till a very late period,⁴ but the family jurisdiction in cases of wrong-

¹ See Post, Grundriss, vol. i. pp. 163–165, 352–354; vol. ii. p. 248; Kullischer, Zeitschrift f. vergl. Rechtsw., vol. xvii. p. 3; Studies in Biblical Law, p. 105.

² Here, again, there are universal parallels to the course of legal history as depicted in the Bible. The distinction is elsewhere later than the treatment of all cases of homicide as being on the same footing. See Post, *op. cit.*, vol. i. pp. 237 f.; vol. ii. pp. 333 f.

³ For a succinct account of the history of the *patria potestas* with the *jus vitae necisque* at Rome, see Moyle on Justinian Institutes, vol. i. tit. 9. The parallel is sometimes extremely close. There are countless parallels among other peoples.

⁴ Especially in religious matters. The power to sacrifice children appears to have long survived.

doing had been greatly curtailed before the days of Moses. I am not thinking merely of the provisions of Deuteronomy *xxi.* 18-21. If they were all we had, the critics might reasonably suggest that the relative dates of 'D' and 'JE' would account for the alteration. But it is clear that in Exodus *xxi.* 15, 17, offences against parents are no longer regarded as matters for the domestic tribunal, but are included within the competence of the ordinary courts of elders. Times have changed since the days of Judah and Tamar."

At this point I leave the analysis, having tested it sufficiently for the purpose of this article. It is interesting to note that in other matters Dr. Skinner is as unreliable as in the instances we have considered. For example, speaking of J and E, he writes (p. 1): "A very singular circumstance is that while both frequently record the erection of altars by the patriarchs, they are remarkably reticent as to the actual offering of sacrifice: E refers to it only twice (*xxii.* *xlvi* 1), and J never at all in the patriarchal history (contrast *iv* 3 ff., *viii* 20 ff.)." With this we may compare page 246. Yet, in *xxxi.* 54, E records a sacrifice, and we read of "feasts" in *xix.* 3; *xxi.* 8; *xxvi.* 30 (the covenant of Isaac and Abimelech), and *xxix.* 22. Presumably there were sacrifices in some of these cases. Certainly Dr. Skinner, who holds that profane slaughter was a Deuteronomic innovation, would say so. Further, we are repeatedly told of building altars and calling on the name of the LORD. Does Dr. Skinner really suppose that this was done without sacrifice? Another choice example of his reliability is to be found in his note on the word for drink-offering in *xxxv.* 14 (p. 425). He writes: "2 Kings *xvi* 13, 15 is the only other instance of the word before Jeremiah . . . its legalisation for the worship of the temple appears in *Ezk.* *xlvi* 17 and P." As his reference to Kings shows that it was properly and legally used in the Temple long before the date to which he would assign Ezekiel or P, the note is an admirable instance

of the confusion in which his theory involves him. Again, on page 420, in connection with circumcision, he speaks of "the fact that both J (Ex. iv 25) and E (Jos. v 3 ff.) record its introduction in the age of the Exodus." It is scarcely necessary to say that his references do not support his allegation.

Finally, something must be said on Dr. Skinner's views of the historical or rather unhistorical character of Genesis. A large part of his introduction is devoted to these. The foregoing discussion is fortunately destructive of a considerable portion of them. If it be the case that we have in Genesis traditions that go back at least as far as the time of Abraham, it does not matter that "the historical memory of the pre-Islamic Arabs was so defective that all knowledge of great nations like the Nabataeans and Thamudites had been lost within two or three centuries" (p. vi). Or perhaps it would be more correct to say that such parallels provide a foil to display more fully the superiority of Genesis. They also show how hard the critics have worked to discredit the Bible. Again, it is quite immaterial whether or not Genesis relates to "great public and political events." An inquiry into the historical character of Genesis means an inquiry whether that book contains a trustworthy account of actual happenings. If Abraham lived as is recorded in that book, then the life of Abraham is a historical fact, and it is none the less historical because Abraham was not a king, a general, or a politician. Genesis does not claim to narrate the fortunes of a king Abraham: it deals with the life story of a man of that name. All happenings constitute history. Nor again is there any force in the argument based on chapter xxiv. of which Dr. Skinner writes: "We may assume that the scene at the well of Harran actually took place; but that the description owes its graphic power to a reproduction of the exact words spoken and the precise actions

performed on the occasion cannot be supposed" (p. vi). Of course not: probably the exact words spoken would have brought the scene very much less vividly before us than the actual narrative that we have. But that does not impair the historical character of the book. Those who wish to comment on the narrative would do well to consider that a literary artist seeks to convey a true picture of the events that form his subject-matter. Just as a portrait may faithfully represent the original though it differs in colors, size, etc., so may a narrative of this character reproduce the interview with more fidelity to its true import and spirit than a verbatim report of the actual dialogue. The author's duty is to bring the scene before our eyes as graphically as possible, provided that in so doing he does not introduce any untrue element. He too must take account of perspective. To put a narrative into literary form is not to falsify it. "The final test . . . is the hard matter-of-fact test of self-consistency and credibility" (p. vi). Here distinctions must be drawn between various parts of Genesis. With regard to the earlier narratives, Dr. Skinner's views might have been entitled to more respect if he had shown any power of sympathizing with the methods of the narrative or any acquaintance with Dr. Wright's "Scientific Confirmations of Old Testament History."

How incapable he is of understanding the genius of the book may perhaps be illustrated by quoting his note on "the herb of the field" in iii. 18: "The creation of this order of vegetation has not been recorded by J. Are we to suppose that it comes into existence simply in consequence of the earth's diminished productivity caused by the curse? It seems implied at all events that the earth will not yield even this, except under the compulsion of human labour" (p. 84). Sympathy with a narrator's spirit and methods of expression is

indispensable to an intelligent exposition of his meaning, and this quality Dr. Skinner unhappily does not possess. Hence while some of his criticisms on the earlier chapters contain a measure of truth, we cannot look to him for any real appreciation of the meaning of the book. And with regard to the patriarchal traditions, we have seen even in this article how a sifting of the text may remove "impossible situations." There may be some discrepant traditions in the book, but all speculations on this subject are premature till we know more of the textual history. I have seen too many problems that seemed insoluble yield to some surprisingly simple solution, to have any faith at all in the complicated guesswork that appeals to Dr. Skinner's credulity. A final example of this may be taken from the discussion of chapter xxxviii.: "It is obvious that the legend belongs to a cycle of tradition quite independent of the story of Joseph. The latter knows of no separation of Judah from his brethren, and this record leaves no room for a reunion [! H.M.W.]. Although P, who had both before him, represents Judah and his sons as afterwards accompanying Jacob to Egypt (xlvi 12), there can be no doubt that the intention of this passage is to relate the permanent settlement of Judah in Palestine"! (p. 450). Lucubrations of this kind need no refutation. It is only necessary to read the chapter in order to see that it refers to a family incident and is quite innocent of any "intention to relate the permanent settlement" of a tribe.