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THE
CHURCHMAN

JANUARY, 1899.

ART. I.—THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH.

No. XVII.

I OBSERVE that Dr. Robertson, the Principal of King's College, said in his paper at the Church Congress that the result of recent critical investigations had been to demonstrate the "substantial historical trustworthiness" of the Acts of the Apostles. It is my belief that, although the task will be a much longer one, in consequence of the paucity of contemporary details, the same result will ultimately be attained in the case of the Old Testament. Beyond this I have no wish to go. No theory of inspiration or assertion of inerrancy in the minor details of Holy Scripture is to be found in the Creeds, in the formularies of the Church of England, or in Scripture itself, and therefore everyone is free to think as he pleases on such subjects. But if not only some minor details, but the history as a whole be incorrect, then it is difficult to see how we can maintain for Scripture the unique position it has always held in the Church.

My last paper brought me to the end of chap. xxv. In chap. xxvi. only two verses, the two last, are assigned to P. It may be well to let the reader know what P's narrative is just here according to the critical version. Part of it we have already seen. It runs thus, "And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian, of Padan-Aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian. And Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them. And when Esau was forty years old he took to wife Judith, the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite, which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah. And Rebekah said unto Isaac, I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth. If Jacob take a

wife of the daughters of Heth, what good shall my life do me?"¹

It may be well to pause here for a moment to observe once more that, according to the theory, P is a document inserted *in extenso* or almost *in extenso* by the redactor, and to repeat that if P's narrative be *not* inserted *in extenso*, it is impossible to say what it may or may not have contained, or to judge accurately of its character, as the critics profess to do, from the imperfect excerpts from it which have been handed down to us. Especially is it impossible to decide of what he can be said to "know nothing," unless we have his whole narrative before us.² In the present case we have neither P's account of the birth of Jacob nor of Esau. Therefore, to use once more the favourite phrase of the German critics, P, if their view of his narrative be correct, "knows nothing" of either. And as the very largest conclusions are sometimes drawn by the critics from the supposed *lacunæ* in J's or E's or P's account in regard to their silence on particular points, we are justified, on the principles of "scientific criticism," in drawing the conclusion that though P admits the existence of Jacob and Esau, he does not admit that they ever were born! It is wearying, no doubt, to draw these perpetual *reductiones ad absurdum*; but it must not be forgotten that in so doing we are pursuing most faithfully the only methods which, as we are told, will enable us to understand the history aright, and to "plant our feet upon realities." Waiving, however, this last deduction from the critical canons, we may remark that if P be a consecutive narrative at all, it must have contained some account of the birth of Esau and Jacob, and we are still without information of the motives which induced the redactor to set aside P's narrative, which *ex hypothesi* was best suited to his purpose, and to substitute that of J and E. But to proceed. The first fourteen verses of chap. xxvii. are assigned to P, and, as I have before observed, these larger supposed draughts from a narrative are far less open to exception on rational principles of criticism than those which pretend to assign, without risk of mistake, a verse, a half verse, or a phrase from one or other of the writers whose works are supposed to have been used by the redactor. But if we proceed further than ver. 14, we again find ourselves in the region of the eccentric at least, if not of the miraculous. For after chap. xxvii. 13, P's supposed narrative proceeds as follows: "Then went Esau

¹ Kautzsch and Socin, however, assign ver. 46 to the redactor. In that case chap. xxviii. 1 follows immediately on chap. xxvi. 35.

² Still more must this be the case with J or E, whose whole narratives are confessedly *not* before us.

unto Ishmael, and took unto the wives which he had Mahalath, the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth, to be his wife. And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah" (of whom P has previously not said one word) "Zilpah, his maid, for an handmaid, and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife.¹ And Laban gave to Rachel his daughter Bilhah his handmaid to be her maid. And he pitched his tent before the city. And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children. And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife. And God remembered Rachel, and all his substance which he had gathered, the cattle of his getting, which he had gathered in Paddan-Aram, for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan. And Jacob came in peace to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-Aram. And Dinah, the daughter of Leah which she bare unto Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land." If the reader can grasp this somewhat incoherent passage, he must come to the conclusion that P's narrative, if given *in extenso*, is of a very extraordinary character, and that if *not given in extenso* there are some very remarkable *lacunæ* in it, for the omission of which by the redactor it is very difficult to account. On the principles of strictly "scientific" criticism, observe, we are once more entitled to draw the inference that P "knows nothing" of the birth of Leah, Rachel, and Dinah, and that a *lusus naturæ* only accounts for their presence in his narrative. Or, if we venture (under protest, of course) to abate somewhat from the rigour of the canons which scientific criticism has laid down, we are driven to the opposite inference, not that P "knows nothing," but that he knows everything that we know about Laban, Leah, Rachel, and their children. And then we naturally want to know what he said on these subjects, and why the redactor has preferred the narrative of JE to his. We might further ask on what grounds it is necessary to suppose that P, and P only, mentions the fact that Laban gave Zilpah and Bilhah to Leah and Rachel respectively as handmaids.

But this is not all. P "knows nothing" of the marriage of Jacob to Leah. E, though it "knows nothing" of the gift by Laban of Zilpah and Bilhah as handmaidens to his daughters, nevertheless makes Leah and Rachel give these very handmaidens to Jacob to wife;² in other words, the earlier narrative

¹ "Him" grammatically refers to Laban, Esau, Ishmael, Abraham, Nebaioth—anybody but Jacob. How much of P has been omitted here? once more we ask. Mr. Fripp is compelled here to omit some portions of P, to re-arrange others, and to supply some passages out of his own head.

² I will not take up the reader's time by referring to it at length. But the manner in which the redactor has put together his narrative from J, E

presupposes the later here. As to chap. xxxi. 17, the Hebrew words are supposed to be characteristic of P, though they are, strange to say, found in chap. xiv., which, as we know, is ascribed to an altogether different author. We have already discussed the question whether Paddan-Aram can be characteristic of P.¹ But whether this be the case or not, it constitutes the only reason why we are asked in chap. xxxi. 17, and chap. xxxiii. 18, to recognise the hand of P.

Professor Driver, contrary to his custom, has condescended to give a reason for seeing the work of two authors in the story of Isaac and Rebekah, and the departure of their son Jacob to Paddan-Aram. And if his arguments do credit to his (or some one else's) ingenuity, they will not enhance his reputation for common sense. He tells us that the section xxvii. 46 to xxviii. 9 "not only differs appreciably in style from xxvii. 1-45" (an assertion which may be questioned), but that it "exhibits Rebekah as actuated by a different motive in suggesting Jacob's departure from Canaan, not as in xxvii. 42-45, to escape his brother's anger, but to procure a wife agreeable to his parents' wishes."² Now, it is pretty clear, first of all, that Rebekah may very well have been actuated by *both* motives, and that the latter motive, so far from being inconsistent with the narrative in JE, is precisely the motive which actuated Abraham in sending Eliezer to Mesopotamia, as described by JE in Gen. xxiv.³ But even were this not the case, critics with a wider knowledge of mankind than Professor Driver have seen in this supposed composite narrative the "touch of nature which makes all men kin," and the clearest proof of the authenticity of the story. Would any woman of sense in Rebekah's position have gone to a bedridden and possibly dying husband with the alarming intelligence that one of his sons threatened to murder the other? Does not the experience of everyone recall a thousand occasions where a woman's tact has kept back all that might alarm, and suggested only such considerations as might win the acquiescence of the aged or the invalid without disturbing their minds?⁴ I have frequently said that the theories

and P in chap. xxx. 1-4 approaches the miraculous as nearly as any part of his narrative does. The fortunate possessor of a "Polychrome Bible" may study the marvellous *genesis* of the narrative at his leisure. See also verses 20-24.

¹ CHURCHMAN for September, 1897.

² *Introduction*, p. 8.

³ Compare carefully chap. xxiv. 3, 4, 7, 37-40 (JE) with xxvii. 46, xxviii. 2, 8, and note that what is an especial characteristic of JE in chap. xxiv. has in chaps. xxvii., xxviii. become so foreign to his notions that it has to be removed.

⁴ Woman's instinct, or as Mr. Merriman, as good a judge at least on this point as Professor Driver, calls it "woman-craft," and the "*esprit de sene*."

of the critics sometimes postulate "an unknown Shakespeare." Here, however, the unknown Shakespeare, we are asked to believe, arises from the combination of two inconsistent narratives. Separate one narrative from the other, and the unknown Shakespeare ceases to exist. It is the redactor who, by combining them, has added the graphic touch which gives the dramatic character to the whole. Once more, is it not far simpler and more reasonable to believe that we have here the real account of matters as they occurred—that where critics of the academic or German type find a divergence of statement, mankind in general, who on such a point are better judges than scholars, will find the clearest evidence of the genuineness of the whole?

I do not wish in the least to blink the fact that the length of Isaac's illness is a serious difficulty. That he should have survived the events recorded in Gen. xxvii. for forty-four years seems as nearly impossible as anything can be. It certainly seems as if chap. xxxv. 27-29 might be an insertion by a different hand. It might be that the original writer, whoever he may have been, might have neglected to mention the death of Isaac, and that some later writer may have taken upon himself to supply the deficiency here. But it is a "far cry" from this possibility to the elaborate theories of a Jehovist, an Elohist, a Deuteronomist, and a priestly writer, composing their narratives from "the eighth or ninth centuries B.C." down to the fourth. The frank admission of a difficulty here, which I have no wish to avoid, is very far indeed from proving the critical case.

In chap. xxviii. 2 (P) we have a notice of Laban, which falls in precisely with the mention of him in chap. xxiv. 29 (JE). It is true that the critics, with an eye to this emergency, have arbitrarily severed chap. xxv. 19, 20, from a consecutive narrative, and assigned it to P, so that Laban is mentioned in P's account. But the mention of Laban in the passage before us is far more in keeping with the whole narrative than with the cursory previous mention of Laban in chap. xxv. 20. With chap. xxviii. 9 the selection from P is supposed to have come to an end. But ver. 10 (J) follows quite naturally on ver. 5 (P), and does *not* follow on anything contained in J. Vers. 11, 12, are assigned to E, and 13-16 to J. But where are the obvious differences in style and dislocations in sense which are to guide us in our selection? Could anyone, reading the remarkably easy and flowing narrative of this chapter, believe that it is extracted bodily from three authors, and that the only work of the editor in welding his fragments together is "and in thy seed" (ver. 14), "but the name of the city was Luz at the first" (ver. 19), and "shall Jehovah be my

God, and" (ver. 22). This last invocation of that *deus ex machina*, the redactor, is because the critics' waggon is here in a rut. The passage has been declared to belong to the earlier Elohist. But lo! Jehovah appears in it. The only escape from the difficulty is the usual prayer to Hercules, who, in a spirit alien to that he is described as showing in the fable, at once puts his shoulder to the wheel, and the waggon goes merrily on.

I will defer the discussion of a point by no means unworthy of attention: I mean the prominence assigned to Bethel in the narratives of JE and P alike, until I come to P's mention of Bethel. But I cannot refrain from noticing here the fact that the supposed earlier writer, E, here merely speaks of a "stone" as put up by Jacob after his vision, while it is the redactor who, in chap. xxxv. 14, represents him as setting up the very *matzebah* which the Deuteronomist, whose views we are asked to suppose the redactor desired to emphasize, had forbidden in Deut. xvi. 22. Thus E contains what, *ex hypothesi*, ought to have been found in the final redaction, and the final redaction what should have been found in E. This is surely a result of the analytic criticism which should provoke inquiry, if not even scepticism. Nor is it very clear why the redactor, whose special business it was to uphold the Deuteronomist, should not have struck out E's allusion to Jacob's breach of rule here, and why he should have gone out of his way to emphasize this breach of rule in chap. xxxv. 14. If the redactor was too stupid to see his own obvious mistakes and inconsistencies with his own principles in his compilation, how did he manage to persuade the Jews to follow him so implicitly as they have done?¹ Moreover, E's "stone" is called by him a *matzebah* in chap. xxviii. 22, and is so called by the redactor himself in chap. xxxv. 14. On critical principles, therefore, Deuteronomy could not have been in existence even in post-exilic days. Nor is this all. The redactor actually inserts a passage from E which declares that this forbidden *matzebah* should be *God's house*. Could anything show more clearly how unreasonable it is to assert that the Deuteronomist prohibition of the *matzebah* could not have been in existence before the time of Manasseh? We are asked to believe that Deuteronomy could not have been in existence in the time of the "first Isaiah," because in chap. xix. 19 that prophet connects a *matzebah* with God's altar in

¹ The obvious explanation of the inconsistency which the critics have invented is that only *idolatrous matzeboth* were forbidden, as must, in fact, be very obvious from Joshua's conduct after crossing the Jordan. Properly speaking, the *tz* in *matzebah* should be doubled, only it looks so very barbarous thus in English letters.

Egypt, and in Deut. xvi. 22 such a *matzebah* was forbidden.¹ *A fortiori*, then, this Deuteronomist prohibition could not have been in existence at the time of the post-exilic redaction of the Pentateuch which has come down to us. It would have been impossible, had the redactor known of such a prohibition, that he could have written chap. xxxv. 14, and more impossible, if that might be, that he would have copied out of his "eighth or ninth century B.C." authority a statement so diametrically opposed to Deuteronomist principles as that the forbidden *matzebah* could be God's house. Nor is this the crowning point of the absurdity. As we shall see when we get there, chap. xxxv. receives rather summary treatment at the hands of the critics. It is pretty arbitrarily divided between P and the redactor. But the most utterly inconceivable thing of all is that the redactor himself, the very latest of all the authorities whose writings form part of the marvellous *mélange* which we have been so long considering, and the component parts of which modern critics have ascertained with such indisputable certainty, is declared to be the person who asserts that the patriarch Jacob himself broke what it was the redactor's object to represent as Divine laws, by setting up a *matzebah* of stone and offering wine and oil upon it. Could anything have been more inconsistent than this with the purpose attributed to the latest Jewish historian, or more certain to defeat it?

J. J. LIAS.

¹ The passage is also used to prove that before the time of the Deuteronomist, pillars, presumably idolatrous in their character, stood beside the Israelitish altars. On this let us hear Professor Robertson ("Early Religion of Israel," p. 237): "The prophet thus foretells that in the midst of the land of Egypt there shall be an altar to the Lord, and at the border of Egypt there shall be a pillar to the Lord. The conclusion is, that beside every altar of Jehovah in Palestine stood also a pillar dedicated to Him, and this is the kind of argument adduced to prove that the setting up of pillars beside Jahaveh's altars was part of the recognised worship. The argument, like many more of its kind, gives proof of great ingenuity, but will hardly commend itself to sober reason as any proof at all. . . . The pillar itself was no idolatrous object; it was a memorial or commemorative mark, and as such we frequently hear of it in the early history. If superstition turned the simple usage to a wrong purpose; if, especially, the pillars set up beside Canaanite altars were imitated by the people in their aping of Canaanite idolatries, that does not prove that pillars were part of the original Jahaveh worship, much less that they were symbols of Jahaveh Himself." To this it may be added that the word *matzebah* simply means *something set up*; and we might as well imagine that the monuments which so frequently dot our landscapes here were symbols of the Almighty, as that the various memorial pillars mentioned in the Bible were such. Even a *matzebah* to the Jehovah need be no more than a memorial of His doings, if we put a literal interpretation on Isaiah's words, which it seems scarcely reasonable to do.