

ARTICLE VII.

NOTES OF DELITZSCH ON TRUE AND FALSE
DEFENCE OF THE BIBLE.INTRODUCTION AND TRANSLATION, BY PROFESSOR H. M. SCOTT, D. D.,
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INTRODUCTION.

ALL American students of the Old Testament at the University of Leipzig during the past twenty years recall with pleasure the Anglo-American Exegetical Society, conducted by Dr. Delitzsch, in which in freest social intercourse all burning questions of the Higher Criticism were touched upon. The old master impressed us all with his love of learning, his love of the church, his love of God. He spoke more than once with sadness of two or three radical critics, saying, he feared they had no vital knowledge of the religion of the Bible. He regretted that discussions in destructive criticism were not still carried on in Latin, that simple believers should not be shaken in their faith by extreme and often misunderstood statements of scholars. He deplored the dogmatism with which men of the school of Wellhausen asserted their opinions, and added that he himself was not nearly as sure of some things at seventy as he was at thirty. Amid all storms of criticism and conjecture, he pointed with glowing enthusiasm and conviction to the things that cannot be shaken.

The brief article here subjoined consists of the outlines which he prepared for use in the Anglo-American Society in the summer of 1889. In it will be felt the gentle spirit of the great Hebraist. He seeks to show the attitude of mind

We may not agree with all his statements; we may not accept all his admissions; but the aim and temper of his instruction may well be laid to heart even in America, where the special advocates of the Higher Criticism seem sometimes to suggest the ancient rebuke: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." This little essay was published in German as an Appendix to Johansson's "Die heilige Schrift und die negative Kritik. Ein Beitrag zur Apologetik;"¹ but as it may well be overlooked in so obscure a place, it is here translated for a wider circle of readers.

TRANSLATION.

If one has before him a book which in its general impression and in its moral-religious effects appears to be worthy of our confidence, we are naturally inclined to think that certain things in it which seem objectionable, will, on closer investigation, be found quite capable of a favorable explanation. The Bible may certainly be regarded in an eminent degree as a book worthy of such confidence. We do not ignore the splendid products of genius which appear in the religious books of Brahmanism and Buddhism; but, compared with these, the Bible in its majestic simplicity bears in a much higher way the stamp of God. Upon its very first page God is proclaimed as the One, the Holy, whose work is the universe, and whose special work is man, made in the image of God, and called to be lord of the world. And from the very point where the fall of our first parents is recorded, there run, in loving competition, promise and hope, through history and prophecy, towards a Man, in whom God should reveal himself to humanity, and enter into a new relation to men,—a relation of loving communion resting upon the forgiveness of sins.

In the Gospels, Jesus Christ stands before us as that Man, an ideally great and holy Man, the like of whom

¹ Leipzig; Dörffling and Franke. 1889. Pp. 240.

human history can nowhere else present. We need only to look upon Him to see in all the relations of life what is the will of God concerning us. He is, in his labors and his sufferings, as the very love of Heaven offering itself for our salvation. And undeniably for every man who does not pervert the history of the world to suit his own pleasure, this one thing remains true: Jesus first proclaimed that God, as Creator and Redeemer, is the Father of all men, and that he wills to bring all as his children into a relation of brotherhood to one another. And he first gave any disclosures respecting the fate of man after death, which, as proceeding out of the mouth of the Sinless One, who stood near to God as none other, have a guarantee of their truth in themselves, which raises them far above the opinions and teachings of other religious founders. The Bible is the book of God, the One, the Holy; the book of the ideal of humanity, realized in Jesus; the book of the religion of humanity, which sets God, who wills the salvation of all men, in like relation to all.

Christianity, whose preparation and origin the Bible describes, has cut the history of humanity in two. Wherever it has gone, it has created a new world of thought, and life, and civilization. It has suffered many perversions; but these have not been able to conceal and render inoperative its divine character. In India, the sun of Christianity has arisen, and though it has, so far, melted away but a small part of the idolatry, yet India must thank the gospel for the disappearance of such horrors as the burning of widows, and the suicides of religious asceticism. The seclusion of the caste system is also condemned, at least in principle, by Christianity. But there is repeated in India

gods a Godhead which did not trouble itself in the least about the affairs of men. Then Neo-Platonism sought to idealize heathenism; Porphyry, the pupil of Plotinus (d. 304), opposed Christianity, as Celsus did, with weapons which Jewish hatred of Christ for the most part put into his hands. In like manner, a Hindoo Tract Society has arisen in India, which idealizes the religion of the Vedas, and declares it an incomparably more perfect religion than Christianity, while it fights the gospel with weapons which are borrowed for the most part from the Science of the West, that science which delights in destructive criticism of historic Christianity, and follows the modern view of the world, which denies all miraculous intervention of God in human history. One tract of this Society is called "Contradictions of the Bible." One hundred and nineteen contradictions in the Bible are enumerated. Without taking these up in detail, we desire here only to try to show how the Christian defence of the Bible should take its stand in opposition to this Hindoo polemics, and as against the negative criticism in general.

1. It is true that hundreds of apparent contradictions can be observed in the Bible, but they are contradictions which challenge a reconciliation, and impel investigation beyond the yea and nay to a deeper apprehension and harmonizing of what is contradictory. So, for example, when it is said, on the one hand: "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. cxxi. 4), and, on the other hand (Ps. xlii. 23), the cry to the Lord is heard: "Awake, why sleepest thou?" there sleep is an anthropopathic picture, here sleep is regarded as a return into one's self from relations to the outer world, and as a rest of the forces which worked outward. God sleeps, as it were, inasmuch as he does not intervene in external events here below. In Gen. vi. 6 we read: "And it repented the Lord, that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart;" on the other hand, 1 Sam. xv. 29 says: "God is not a man,

that he should repent." There the expression is anthropopathic, but the expression of the truth that God is not absolute apathy, that he is the Living One, to whom it is not a matter of indifference if his holy love is scornfully rejected.

About twenty years ago I delivered a lecture upon some hitherto little regarded phases of the Gospel of John. It occurs very frequently, as I there showed, in John's Gospel, that what is affirmed in one passage is denied in another. Thus it is surprising at the outset to read (chap. iii. 22), "Jesus baptized," and, on the contrary (iv. 2), "Jesus himself baptized not;" or when it is said (xii. 37-40), that the countrymen of Jesus, though he had done many miracles before them, did not believe on him, and because of their hardness of heart could not believe, and the evangelist proceeds (ver. 42): "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him." But still more frequent than these contradictions within the narrative are the literally directly contradictory statements which occur in the words of Jesus. For while he says (iii. 17), "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn it," and (xii. 47), "I came not to judge the world," he says (ix. 39), "For judgment I am come into this world." He says (v. 31), "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true," and, on the contrary (viii. 14), "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true." He says (xiii. 31), "Now is the Son of man glorified;" and yet the evangelist had remarked shortly before: "The

Why did the evangelist, as he read over his Gospel, not blot out these contradictions? We have reason to thank him that he did not, for they show us, that there can be expressions, which, according to the sound of the words, are contradictory, and yet when we grasp the root of their meaning, are *not* contradictory; we see that between letter and spirit there subsists a relation of incongruence, which makes the letter inadequate to be the pure manifestation of the spirit, the exhaustive expression of the thought; we learn that statements which appear utterly irreconcilable, often turn out, on sympathetic and thorough consideration, to be two sides of the one, complete truth. There is a yea and nay of absolute antithesis which is as incapable of fundamental union as the essential opposites of good and evil. But there is also a yea and nay of relative antithesis which not only permits synthesis, but, if one is not to rest content with one-sided knowledge, even requires it. There is a truth which lies above or below the yea and nay into which it is divided, and in reference to which the words of John V. Weigel, a man who unnecessarily became heretical in fighting dead orthodoxy, are applicable: "*Alteritas est defectus ab unitate, unitas est perfectio,*" that is, a deeper and higher truth lying deep and high below and above the *sic et non*.

2. In another direction will the defence of the Bible against being dissolved in contradictions not be able to succeed unless we freely admit and teach, that the Bible is not a book that fell down from heaven, but that it is a revelation of the will and the ways of God, which has passed through human hearts and been written by human hands, consequently is not free from all affections of the human.

a more overwhelming way by the Spirit than he is when he reduces to writing the history of the past ; and the prophet writing history stands higher than the psalmist pouring forth in spiritual words his own individual experiences and feelings. So, too, are the spiritual pangs under which a psalm is born, of an entirely different sort from the spiritual labor of the chronicler, gathering extracts from older historical works, and arranging these extracts according to certain leading points of view. Then the sacred learning of the chronicler stands, on its side, higher than the pious patriotism with which Nehemiah wrote his *Memorabilia*, or the national confidence, making no spiritual impression, with which the author of the book of Esther composed his Memorial upon the origin of the Purim festival. But all these manifold operations of the Spirit, which pass through so many stages, reaching almost to the zero point, where they are for us no longer perceptible and demonstrable, are enclosed by the circumference of one spiritual operation, whose product was not only the Thora, but also the book of Esther. God overruled it so that the author set himself to write, and He who had in view a Canon of Scripture, which should serve in its totality to the end of the world, wrought through his Spirit, so that the books should gain such contents and form as would fit them to be integral parts of this sum total of Scripture. This operation of the Spirit, lying beyond the literary consciousness of the writers, is the final cause of the origin of all parts of the Old Testament Scriptures.

A great part of the overcriticised contradictions lose everything objectionable, as soon as we readily admit, and confess without reserve, that it belongs to the peculiarities of biblical, and especially Old Testament, writers to make true extracts from their sources, and where they found, respecting this or that event, different traditions in their sources, to place these, without any forced treatment of their own, side by side, leaving their reconciliation, or the preference of one

form of tradition over another, to the investigation of their readers. A proof of the painful exactness of such copying is the fact, that sometimes the remark "until this day" is transferred from the written source, even where it is no longer applicable; as, for example, the chronicler (2 Chron. v. 9) and the author of the book of Kings (1 Kings viii. 8) have retained the "unto this day" of the written source, although at the time of the one as little as at the time of the other did the temple with ark of the covenant still exist. An example of the communication of one and the same piece of history according to different traditions is found in Num. xxii., where verse 22 shows that there the extract from another source begins. Other striking examples of this sort occur in the history of Saul and David.

3. It must further be admitted that in the text of the Holy Scriptures, as it lies before us, errors occur. There are mistakes which come from defective transmission of the text; such are certainly inoffensive. That in Jer. xxvii. 1 Jehoiakim must be changed into Zedekiah is generally recognized. That in Matt. xxiii. 35, instead of "Zacharias son of Barachias," it should be "Zacharias son of Jehoiada" (2 Chron. xxiv. 20), is equally certain; in the Gospel of the Hebrews this mistake was corrected. In Matt. xxvii. 9, a passage of the book of Zechariah is quoted as from Jeremiah. The question arises here, whether it is an error of the evangelist or of the copyist. We must seek to keep all such inaccuracies as far as possible away from the sacred writers; but, as a matter of principle, we are certain of this, that the inspiring Spirit of God does not make his organs infallible, as he does not in natural affairs lift them above and beyond the degree of culture that marks their age. The God of revelation needs no lawyer-like defence which *in majorem ejus*

and mind, external and internal, circumference and centre, are to be distinguished. The centre, and as it were the heart, of the Scriptures is, for the individual man, the answer to the question: "What must I do to be saved?" and for humanity as a whole the inquiry is: "What is the counsel and will of God in reference to the salvation of sinful humanity? and what are the ways of God which he has taken, in order to realize progressively his counsel and will?" The goal of the ways of God in the Old Testament is the Son of God and Son of man, the Mediator of a childlike attitude towards God, the Heavenly Father, such as before was not possible, the conqueror of death and Hades, who has opened heaven to us, the founder of a new beginning of the history of humanity, whose enthronement at the right hand of God is the culmination of the exaltation of humanity from the depths of the misery of sin.

This soteriological content of the Holy Scriptures, which is like a stream of living water flowing in its bed, is the peculiar Word of God in the Holy Scriptures, and abides independent of all the results of literary and historic criticism, which has to do only with the human side of the Sacred Scriptures, the times of their origin, and the composition of the biblical books. We may readily admit that the biblical writing of history is not free from the limitations of human productivity, and that it is a work of compilation; we may admit that in the historical books here and there different traditions are recorded; we may admit that the Mosaic Thora had passed through a historical development. It exercises no diminishing influence upon our faith in the God of salvation and the Mediator of salvation, if it should be settled that the right to the priesthood was at one time limited to the family of Aaron, and at another extended to the whole tribe of Levi; that the Hebrew festivals and the law of sacrifice have passed through a changeful history; that post-Mosaic institutions were traced back

to Sinaitic legislation as their original source—for in the Old Testament history as in the New, divine and human cross one another, and if the picture which we get by critical methods should be ever so different from the traditional one, it is still true that what we reach are the ways of God for the salvation of man, which have as their goal Jesus the Christ, and which lead from him as Redeemer on to perfection through him.

It is true that the Word of God was earlier than the Holy Scriptures, but after that word was reduced to writing, the Sacred Scriptures are our source of knowledge and our rule of faith. The word transmitted orally would be liable to dangerous perversion. "Faith cometh by hearing," said Paul (Rom. x. 17), "and hearing by the word of God." The *viva vox* of the preacher draws from the written and fixed word of God, especially the word of Christ. There exists between the word of God and the Holy Scriptures in general no such difference, that we might say in any wide sense that they did not coalesce. In the apostolic epistles the word of God and the Scriptures are identical; they are the written proclamation of the word of God. Just so is it in the discourses of the prophets, which were delivered orally, and then, partly under direct divine instruction, committed permanently to writing for posterity. The Decalogue is a monumental word of God, graven in stone. Also the fundamental laws of the Sinaitic Covenant, and the final laws of the covenant renewed in the Plains of Moab, did Moses write down at the command of God. The Psalms and the teachings of Wisdom in Proverbs are written confessions and sayings, which stand upon the same level with the *viva vox* of oral preaching. The Holy Scriptures are for the most part the written and spoken word of God, which has given itself a written form. If it is observed that this written word was not able to save the church from the degradation out of which the testimony of Luther raised

her, it is to be said in reply, that the fall of the church became deeper and deeper, the farther she departed from the written word. The oral word of God became changed into a tradition that contradicted the Scriptures. The Reformation was a return to the written word. Out of the Epistles of Paul, Luther drew the knowledge by which the church became free from the yoke of a corrupt, traditional Christianity.

It does not at all detract from the binding force of the canon of Scripture, that the authorities that gave rise to it did not possess the critical competency required by modern biblical science. Is there any work of human history, anywhere, the resultant of previous labors, which does not give the impression of an interco-operation of human imperfections and historical accidents, whenever we close our eyes to the providence of God, which makes all things serve his purpose? The Greek Apocrapha, though received into the Alexandrine Codex, were yet not able to gain from either Philo or Josephus the same recognition as the books of the Hebrew canon; and such ecclesiastical books of instruction as the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas were gradually excluded from the New Testament canon. The New Testament Scriptures, as they proceeded from this smelting house, are as true a monument of the historical development of the new covenant, as the Old Testament Scriptures are a true monument of the historical development of the old covenant, looking towards the New Testament as its goal. But we can never make to biblical criticism the concession, that Christianity rests upon the oral, and not upon the written, word of God. It is true that the *sola gratia* is certain to us in experience sealed by the Spirit of God, but yet never apart from the Scriptures. Our sure hold in life and death is this, "It is written;" that was the weapon with which the Lord himself smote Satan. The building, of which Jesus Christ is the corner-stone, rests

upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. ii. 20). We are regenerate through the living Word of God, which abides forever, the New Testament Word of the fulfilment of the Old (1 Pet. i. 23 ff.). If we consider the history of the church, after the death of the apostles, we must say: If the New Testament and Old Testament Word had not been fixed by writing, the church would have gone astray into errors, without ever being able to find a way of escape from this labyrinth. We are glad that now the system of Christian doctrine is deduced from the Christian consciousness, we rejoice in the proof that all that is in our Christian, in our evangelical, faith is articulately connected, and that one thing follows from another with inner, necessary consequence, as seen by enlightened reason; but, we must add, that without constant instruction from the Holy Scriptures such a deduction of doctrine would be impossible. The believing consciousness draws from the Sacred Scriptures, but its content remains ever subjective. The source and treasure-house of sound doctrine in its divine objectivity is and remains the Holy Bible.