

CT 143

# THE PENTATEUCH

AND BOOK OF

## JOSHUA

IN FACE OF

THE SCIENCE AND MORAL SENSE  
OF OUR AGE.

*By a PHYSICIAN.*

“Zufällige Geschichtswahrheiten können der Beweis von nothwendigen Vernunftwahrheiten nie werden.”—“Contingent historical statements can never be vouchers for necessary intellectual truths.”—LESSING.



PUBLISHED BY THOMAS SCOTT,  
NO. 11 THE TERRACE, FARQUHAR ROAD, UPPER NORWOOD,  
LONDON, S.E.

1875.

*Price Sixpence.*

LONDON:  
PRINTED BY C. W. REYNELL, LITTLE PULTENEY STREET,  
HAYMARKET, W.

# THE PENTATEUCH

AND BOOK OF

## JOSHUA.

---

### INTRODUCTION.

---

WITH every wish to find the Bible all it is commonly said to be, against the persuasions of earlier years, and near the end of a long life, the writer feels bound to own that a somewhat careful study of so much of the Hebrew Scriptures as falls within the limits of the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua leaves him with the conviction that this portion of the Bible, at least, is not any Word of God, gives no true account of God's dealings with the world, and enjoins little or nothing that is calculated to edify or to raise man in the scale of his proper humanity. On the contrary, and passing for the moment the incongruities, contradictions, and impossibilities in which it abounds, Ideas of the Supreme are everywhere encountered that were derogatory to man, and averments made that gainsay knowledge and reason, whilst misdeeds are commanded and condoned that outrage humanity, and shock

the moral sense of our age. The Bible, however, is scarcely read without a foregone conclusion in respect of its origin and import; still more rarely is it perused with the amount of general, scientific, historical, and archæological lore that are indispensable to a right understanding of its text—truths which have led a late lamented great biblical critic to ask: How many even of the educated Laity understand the Bible—how many of the Clergy understand—how many of them *are willing* to understand it?\*

## I.

It is long, however, since it was definitely shown that the Pentateuch, so persistently ascribed to Moses, could neither have been written by him nor by any one of his presumed age, but must be the work of men who lived long—very long—after the great mythical leader and legislator;† and it may be confidently maintained that all subsequent critical inquiry by the competent and candid, has not only substantiated, but has greatly enlarged the scope and significance of this conclusion. Writing, in the proper sense of the word, appears not to have been practised by the Jews in times so relatively recent as the days of David. The Hebrew word for ink is of Persian derivation, and the art of writing on prepared sheep and goat skins among them dates from no more remote an age than that of the Babylonian captivity. The very character in which all the Hebrew writing we possess has reached us, is

\* Strauss, *Der alte und der neue Glaube.*

† Spinoza, *Tract. Theologico-Politicus*, 4to, Hamb., 1670. Eng. version, 8vo, Lond., 1868.

Chaldæan, and only came into use after the Exile. A few slabs and pillars rudely cut in Intaglio, and in a more ancient character, are all we possess from which an idea can be formed of the kind of writing that was practised in the earlier ages of their existence by the Semitic tribes inhabiting Western Asia.

How long the legends, which enter so largely into the constitution of the Hebrew writings proper, floated among the people before they were reduced to writing, it is impossible to say; but the date at which they acquired the shape in which they have reached us, is now hardly doubtful. These writings have, in fact, been brought ever near and nearer to times concerning which we have something like reliable records, whilst the events of which they speak and the personages who figure in them, so long regarded as historical realities, are seen in the same measure to resolve themselves into phantoms, with no more of substance or reality than the dreams of the poet or the visions of the Seer.

## II.

Every addition of late years made to our knowledge of the early history of mankind seems to make it more and more certain that though we seem to have so much, yet have we in reality less of reliable information about the Hebrews in the earlier periods of their existence than of many others among the nations of antiquity. The pious people who in person or by delegate are at the present moment so busy excavating in Palestine and Babylonia with a view to demonstrate the divine origin and historical truth of

the Hebrew Scriptures, seem verily to be pursuing their work to their own discomfiture. It is the reverse of the picture they would show that mostly appears. All the evidences of culture and civilisation brought to light of late from the ruined cities of Asia Minor prove their inhabitants to have been well advanced in polity, and the arts of life, in mechanics, engineering, and the rudiments of astronomical science, whilst the Israelites were still wandering Nomads in search of settled homes; nor, save in music, have they yet distinguished themselves otherwise than as petty traders and magnificent money dealers. Some parts of the Hebrew Scriptures, the most important of all in their far-reaching after influence, lose their presumed character of Revelations from God entirely, and appear to be derived from the same source as the mythical tales of the Babylonians;—source whence, in the days of the Captivity, the sons of Israel obtained the whole of the narratives that figure in the earlier parts of the Book of Genesis. The Garden in Eden, the Tree of Life, the Serpent, the Flood and the Ark, and much besides, turn out to be neither history nor original Revelation from Jehovah to the Jews, but stories found among neighbours, their superiors in war at all times as they were also in letters, until, after contact with their conquerors and teachers, the great lyrical and rhapsodical writers called prophets,—the Isaiahs, Jeremiahs, Micahs, and others,—appeared in the late days of the Kings.

## III.

The Individuals, again, the personages with whom through their names we are made so familiar in the Bible story of patriarchal times, turn out, under the light supplied by critical inquiry, to be nothing more than mythical personifications. Abraham, who comes from Ur of the Chaldees, is discovered to be a NAME never borne by any individual, but a generic Title applicable, if applicable at all, to God, the Universal Father. He is the Rock, as Sarah his wife is the Cavern, whence the Hebrew people sprang. Abraham is, in fact, a word of like significance with the Dyaus, Zeus, and Deus of the Aryan race. He is the Heaven-God, the active principle in nature, as Sarah is the Heaven-Goddess, the passive principle; the pair being parents of the laughing Isaac (Istzack the laugher), wedded to Rebekah (Fruitfulness), counterparts of the *Ἥλιος* and *Γεα* of the Greeks.

Jacob, the Son of Isaac, so distinguished a figure in the Hebrew story, like Abraham, is also the embodiment of a name, fitted with a character in correspondence with its import. Jacob is the heel-holder, the tripper up, as he is made the deceiver of his blind old father, the filcher of the blessing and superseder of his brother. He is another, yet a counterpart of Abraham, "the friend of God;" nay, he is more than Abraham; for after a wrestling bout with his Deity he is complimented with his name, and instead of Jacob is called Israel, being thereafter always spoken of as the Father of the Israelites.

Moses and Aaron, in like manner, are personifications of names in consonance with incidents

attached to their legendary history ;—that of Moses, which is believed to be old, being plainly enough connected with his fabled rescue from the water, that of Aaron, which is certainly modern, from the office assigned him about the Altar and Ark of the Covenant (אֲרוֹן אַהֲרֹן Ahrun.) The very latest researches, however, have given us a Babylonian Moses, Sargon by name, who may very possibly be the original of the Hebrew leader. Sargon, it is said, was by his mother placed in a cradle of rushes daubed with bitumen, and launched on the Euphrates, but was rescued by a water-carrier, and by him brought up as his son.\*

## IV.

What the absolute age of these names and the personages they are assumed to represent, may be, is questionable ; but of this we are well assured, that of the Jacob-legend there is not a trace to be found until we come down to post-Davidic times ; the latest researches of a critical kind seeming to show that the whole series of legends in which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob figure, are products of days posterior to the secession of Israel from Judah. It was after this disastrous event, and when the States were waging an internecine war, that the scribes of the two great religious as well as political parties into which the country had split—the Elohist and Jehovists—took to tampering with each other's records, and their poets to producing those wonderful lyrics laudatory of their God and themselves, on the one hand, and those libellous tales of rape,

\* Smith, 'Assyrian Discoveries,' p. 224, 8vo, Lond., 1875.



murder, and arson, in disparagement of their enemies on the other.\*

Then it was that El, Bel, Baal, or Isra-El—other forms of El, chief God of the Hebrews in the olden time—was set up under the form of the Bull by the Israelites at Shechem and Dan, in the kingdom of Ephraim, and Jehovah, the latest conception of Deity by the Jewish priesthood, was established as Supreme God, with his sole lawful shrine at Jerusalem, the capital of Judah. Under what material form Jehovah was represented we are left in doubt; everything that would have satisfactorily informed us on the subject having been expunged from the record, although enough remains incidentally scattered through the Scriptures, to satisfy us that neither was this God without his *similitude*, and that the interdict against making an image of their Deity must therefore be one of the latest products of the Jewish legislation.

## V.

The exodus from Egypt under the conditions and in the proportions specified we have shown to be physically impossible; and, recognising no interruption of the laws of nature, which we hold to be the laws of God, we have referred all the miracles in which Jehovah is made to glorify himself, and to show how far he exceeds the Gods of Egypt in power, together with the dramatic passages between Moses and Pharaoh as prologues to that event, to the realm of legendary myth.

\* Vide Bernstein on the Origin of the Legends of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; one of Mr. Scott's Series of Papers; a striking production, but held by competent judges to push matters to excess.

## VI.

The Decalogue, still so persistently assigned to the remote age of Moses, even by advanced Biblical critics, we have spoken of as an eclectic summary, the product of much more modern times, emanating as surely from Mount Zion in the City of Jerusalem, in the peaceful days of Hezekiah in all likelihood, as it most certainly did not come *viva voce* from God on Mount Sinai "all on a quake." The accompaniments of the assumed delivery thence, as described, suffice of themselves to relegate the story to the limbo of the mythical.

## VII.

That the conquest and settlement of the Land of Canaan, to conclude, were not effected at the time and in the manner set forth in some parts of the Book of Joshua, appears plainly enough on the face of that incongruous and contradictory document itself; and more and more persuaded as we are of the relatively modern composition of the Pentateuch, we grow more and more suspicious that the accounts we have of the feats of Joshua are after models found in the history of the Babylonian Empire. The chronicles lately deciphered of the doings of more than one of the Kings of Babylon and Assyria; the vast numbers slain; the extraordinary amount of the booty collected; the tale of the woman made captive, &c.; may very well have served as prototypes from which the writer of Joshua drew, having made himself master during his captivity of the cuneiform inscriptions that still abound.\*

\* Vide Smith, Op. cit.

## VIII.

The history of the Children of Israel, therefore, as it is delivered in the Pentateuch, is, in truth, nothing more than the mythical tale of a barbarous people, steeped in sensuality, superstition, ignorance, and cruelty; their God a demon delighting in blood, requiring the first-born of man and beast to be sent to him in the smoke of the altar as his most acceptable oblation, and having a lamb supplied him night and morning throughout the year by way of food! Among a people with such conceptions of Deity and such a Cult, with ancestors like Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Rebekah, and with heroes and heroines having the stamp of the Eleazars and Deborahs, the Samsons, Judiths, Jaels, Jephthas, and, coming down to the really historical times of David and Solomon, what could have been the character of the religious, moral and social usages and principles that prevailed? The question suggests the only possible reply. Yet, strange to say, the blood-stained annals and barbarous lives of this extraordinary people have been taken by the modern world as the foundation of its religious ideas, and as fit introduction to its moral conceptions.

## IX.

But shall we, living in this nineteenth century of the era from which we date, continue to look to a source of the kind for such knowledge of the Being and Attributes of God as may be attained by man; for guidance in the service that might be acceptable to the Supreme, and in the conduct that were becoming in our dealings with one another? Shall we, who think of God as All-

Pervading CAUSE, persist in viewing the Book as his revealed word and will, which tells of the Earth created in six days, and of its fashioner, like a foredone workman, "resting on the seventh day and hallowing it," when we know most positively that the Earth was not created in six days, necessarily conclude that God never rests, and believe that to him all days must be hallowed alike? Shall we, with the better knowledge we possess, go on putting into the hands of our children the book that narrates how God *came down* from heaven to walk in his Garden in the cool of the Evening, and at sundry other times, to ascertain how things were going on below; how he cursed the creatures he had made in his own image, as said; repented him of what he had done in creating man at all, and brought a flood of water on the Earth to drown all that breathed? Shall we, who measure our distance from the Sun and the fixed Stars, calculate their masses, weigh them as in a balance, analyse their light, and thereby learn that they all are Units in ONE Stupendous Whole, continue to look with respect on tales that tell of the arrest of the Sun and Moon in their apparent path through heaven, to the end that a barbarous horde may have light effectually to exterminate the unoffending people, they have come—by God's command, too, as said—to plunder and to murder? It were surely time to quit us of such worse than childish folly.

Reflection and candour alike compel us to say that the teachings of the Pentateuch, in almost every particular, have to be set aside if we would escape erroneous conceptions of nature and of almost all that civilised man associates with the

name of God and Religion. If the Bible is to be continued as one of the instruments available in the education of our children, it should be carefully weeded of so much that is false and offensive, and be used in a *negative* rather than a positive sense as a means of instruction; the unworthy behaviour of Abraham and Isaac with their wives, and of Jacob and Rebekah with the father and husband, among other instances, being pointed out as examples religiously to be shunned; the recommendation we find in the New Testament, "Not to give heed to Jewish fables" (Titus i. 14), being at all times steadily kept in view.

## X.

As hitherto apprehended, Religion can be said to have brought nothing but misery on the world at large. Deeds of a dye that shock humanity have been committed from first to last in its name, and unreason has still been seen in the seat of reason so often as aught presumed to be due to God has come into question. Of old it said:—"If thy brother, thy son, or thy daughter, the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend that is as thine own soul, entice thee saying:—Let us go and serve other Gods [*i.e.*, differ from thee in thy creed and would have thee follow their's], thou shalt not consent to him nor hearken to him; neither shalt thou spare him, but thou shalt surely kill him; thy hand shall be first upon him, afterwards the hands of all the people, and thou shalt stone him with stones that he die." In later days it has excavated the dungeon, built the torture-chamber and furnished

it with the rack, lighted the slow fire about the stake to consume, drenched the battle-field with blood, and driven into exile from their home and country the best and noblest of their kind.

## XI.

Yet is the Religious Sense as certainly an element in the constitution of man as his bodily frame. But emotional in its nature it is *Blind*, and requires association with those other emotional and intellectual faculties proper to man from which it has hitherto been dis severed, before it can conduce to good and advantageous issues. Happily the world is slowly emerging from its dream about the Jews being the chosen people of God and the medium of his oracles to mankind. The Hebrew Scriptures are now known to be but *one* among many other books to which a divine original, and sacred character is ascribed by the peoples among whom they took shape. The Sole Revelation which God ever made he still makes to man; and this the truly educated have at length begun to see lies open for perusal by all of cultured mind in the Book of Nature, from which alone can we, without fear of being led astray, know aught of what GOD IS, of that wherein the Providential order of the world consists, and of that which is required of us as agents responsible to God through our fellow-men for our deeds. "Ancient creeds and time-honoured formulas," says a great writer, "are yielding as much to internal pressure as to external assault. The expansion of knowledge is loosening the very earth clutched by the roots of creeds and churches. Science is

penetrating everywhere, and slowly changing men's conceptions of the world and of man's destiny. Some considerable thinkers are therefore of opinion that Religion has played its part in the evolution of humanity, whilst others—and I hold with these—believe that it has still a part to play, and will continue to regulate the evolution. To do so, however, it must express the highest thought of the time. It must not attempt to imprison the mind, nor force on our acceptance, as explanations of the Universe, dogmas which were originally the childish guesses at truth by barbarous tribes. It must no longer put forward principles which are unintelligible and incredible, nor make their unintelligibility a source of glory, and a belief in them a higher virtue than belief in demonstration. Instead of proclaiming the nothingness of this life, the worthlessness of human love, and the impotence of the human mind, it will proclaim the supreme importance of this life, the supreme value of human love, and the grandeur of the human intellect.”\*

With every word of this who in the present day will not sympathise? But the Religious Sense, as we have but just said, is blind, and cannot be trusted to *regulate* the evolution of humanity. On the contrary, Religion, as commonly understood, must itself consent to regulation, and descend to a lower place than it has hitherto held in our Western civilisation. As represented in the most powerful of all the formulated systems in which it has yet been

\* G. H. Lewes's 'Problems of Life and Mind.' Vol. I.

seen, religion shows itself at the present moment antagonistic to the peace of the State and the Family, as well as to all Evolution—it gives Discord a seat at the home-hearth, and would stem the tide of human progress if it could; and it is more than questionable whether there exists any other system that would not be disposed to do as much, and to lead the evolution on to some devious or narrow way ending in a preserve of its own. But Religion is not, in fact, as in these later ages it has been made, the *prime factor* in the moral life of man. Justice, mercy, truthfulness, integrity, reverence, and steadfastness—the moral element in human nature, in a word, outcome of the higher emotional powers in blended action with enlightened understanding, are of far more moment in the aggregate life of humanity than any conceivable form of religious belief and observance. The IDEA OF GOD is the GOAL, not the starting point, in the evolution of mankind, and only presents itself in a guise that can be held worthy of its object in societies the most advanced in moral and intellectual development. Then, but not till then, comes the conclusion that the sole yet all-sufficing service that can be rendered to God by man is study of his laws, which are the laws of Nature; as obedience to their behests is the sum of man's duties to God, to himself, and to his kind. It would indeed be well could an end now be made of the folly men commit when they personify God, endow him with feelings and passions after the pattern of their own, and attach significance and a literal meaning to Eastern tales, the product of rude and ignorant



ages of the world. It were surely good did men now acknowledge that God, ubiquitous essence, in and over all, never spoke in human speech to man; was never jealous of other Gods, for there be none such; never cursed the creature who had come into being in conformity with his laws, nor the ground that fed him; never repented of aught that was as it was through him, and never, in abnegation of his universal fatherhood, elected one among the nations that people the earth to be his own and the medium of his oracles to the rest of mankind.

## XII.

The works of De Wette, Vatke, Von Bohlen, Kuenen, Colenso, Davidson, and Kalisch, to name a few among a number we have read, following in the wake of Spinoza, Astruc, Simon, Eichhorn, and others, have gone far to exhaust what may be spoken of as the criticism of the letter and structure of the Bible. That several hands have had part in the composition of this wonderful book; that the text as it stands is the product of dissimilar minds; was written at various times in different ages, and has been derived from different and often discrepant sources—mythical, legendary, and documentary,—is no longer doubtful, but a demonstrated fact. Bernstein, moreover, if his conclusions stand the test of criticism, will have farther shown the very free play the writers of the Pentateuch have sometimes given to their inventive faculties. In suggesting grounds for some of the tales, and pointing to historical personages poorly disguised under slightly altered names, he will

also have fixed beyond the possibility of question, as it seems, the date at which certain parts of the Bible commonly believed to be among the oldest, were actually written; and this, it may almost be needless to say, is not the mythical age of the Patriarchs and Moses, of which so little or rather nothing is known, but the really historical times of Solomon and the Kings. Bernstein might thus in a sense be said to have done for the part of the Old Testament, to which we refer, what F. C. Baur and the Tübingen School have done for the New. In his hands Jehovist and Elohist present themselves as Judahite and Ephraimite; and even as in the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the New Testament we find records of the differences between Petrinists and Paulinists, so, in the Old, instead of the word of God, we have but evidence of the conflicting views and hostile feelings of the followers of El-Elijon, Belitan or Baal, and Jahveh.

### XIII.

Among ourselves Biblical criticism, in any acceptable sense of the term, can scarcely be said to have existed until the present day. We had Commentaries and Expositions of the Scriptures, indeed, in almost endless succession from after the middle of the last to the middle of the present century; but these were all more or less alike, and after the same rigidly orthodox and uncritical pattern: the Jews were the chosen people of God, the vessels of his word and will to the world; the Pentateuch was the work of Moses, who had the Ten Commandments direct from the mouth of God, and written besides with

his finger on two tables of stone—and there an End; Doubt was sin; Question was Atheism; and as for criticism there was, there could be none. But the Spirit of Time and of Progress

Sitzend am sausen den Webstuhl der Zeit  
Wirkend der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid,\*

had been at work all the while, and found a voice at length from an unexpected quarter in the able Textual Criticism of the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua by no less a personage than a dignitary in the Church, the Bishop of Natal.

#### XIV.

Though not without something like a herald of its coming, in the volume entitled 'Essays and Reviews,' Dr. Colenso's book fell like a thunderbolt from a clear sky among his clerical brethren, and took the laity at large, aroused to something like an interest in the matters discussed, not a little by surprise. "Replies" to the criticisms of the Bishop by clergymen were not wanting, as matter of course. But these were found less satisfactory to the more intelligent of the laity than their authors imagined they would prove. This element in the outside world had outgrown its relish for the old style of Scriptural Exposition, and was not satisfied with the assurance that the Bishop of Natal's objections were not new and had all been answered long ago. They desired to see something like a demonstration of the truth

\* Sitting at Time's murmuring loom,  
Weaving the living garb of God.

that this was so, and were minded that a work so ably and conscientiously composed should be met by arguments of a better kind than unsupported assertion, evasion, and abuse.

Accordingly, at the suggestion of a late Speaker of the House of Commons, the Right Hon. J. E. Denison, and after consultation with the Archbishop of York, a Committee of gentlemen, Dignitaries and others of scholarly attainments in the Church, was formed for the purpose of investigating and satisfactorily replying to the matters called in question,—and these amounted to nothing less, in fact, than the Inspiration and Historical Truth of the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and their consonance as formulated Word of God with the Word of God as announced in the truths of Science and the religious and moral consciousness of educated man. Such, at all events, was the great and worthy object which it was understood Mr. Denison had in view when he broached the subject of an exhaustive Commentary to the Clergy of his Church. “It seemed to him,” says Mr. Cook, the writer of the Preface to the first volume of ‘The Speaker’s Commentary,’ when at length it made its appearance, “that in the midst of much controversy about the Bible, there was a want of some Commentary in which the latest information might be made accessible to men of ordinary culture. It seemed desirable that every educated man should have access to some work which might enable him to understand what the original Scriptures really say and mean, and in which he might find an explanation of any difficulties which his own mind might

suggest, as well as of any new objections raised against a particular book or passage.

“Although the difficulties of such an undertaking were very great, it seemed right to make the attempt to meet a want which all confessed to exist, and the Archbishop accordingly undertook to form a Company of Divines, who, by a judicious distribution of labour amongst them, might expound, each, the portion of Scripture for which his studies might best have fitted him.”

## XV.

This is all clear and to the point: we were to be furnished with a simple, truthful interpretation of the Bible by able men, from the point of view supplied by the latest and most advanced critics and scholars of the day, in consonance with the science and moral sense of the age. But wherein the great difficulties hinted at, though not more particularly specified, consisted, and whence the long delay of seven years (!) that intervened between the conception and the execution of the project, the writer of the preface does not say. A Company of learned Divines had been formed, ample funds had been subscribed, an eminent publisher had been engaged, and by him *carte blanche* was given to the *foreign* bookseller in particular to supply the parties engaged, “to expound the portion of Scripture for which their studies might best have fitted them,” with all they required in the shape of literature. How can we doubt that these gentlemen went to work with a will? They were to have liberal pay, they had been furnished with books in abundance, and the opportunity to distinguish them-

selves in the interesting field of Biblical criticism lay before them. But time flew by—a year, two years, four, six, seven years! elapsed, and all this while the public at large had no intimation, through their work, of what the learned men were about. Not a line in the shape of Note or Comment to help men of “ordinary culture” to understand the Scriptures of the Jews had seen the light in all that time. But rumours were rife of great and even unsurmountable difficulties having arisen in the course of the projected enterprise. Nor was the nature of these kept altogether from the public ear. The workers specially engaged had discovered, one after another, as was said, that the task they had undertaken could not conscientiously be carried out to the issue they had believed possible when they undertook it. They had been led by the hands of their Dutch, and German, and English brethren, to “the tree that grew in the midst of the garden,” they had seen that the fruit it bore “was pleasant to the sight,” and was “fruit to be desired to make men wise.” They had “put forth their hands, taken of the fruit, and eaten,” and lo! “their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked.”

When they now met one another and the “Company,” their superiors, in conclave, it was not as Marcus Tullius tells us he thought the Haruspices of his day could only meet, to laugh, but with grave looks and bated breath. Colenso and the free critics were not after all the men of straw they had been supposed to be, and not to be slain with lathen swords and pointless spears; they were rather found like the “well-greaved Greeks”

in panoply of proof, their line compact and as little assailable as it seemed on the flanks as in front. For awhile—a long while, therefore, there must have appeared nothing for it but retreat from an untenable position,—or, could it have been the bolder and nobler alternative that presented itself, and gave the pause—“to speak truth and shame the Devil,” as the saying goes? If this were ever contemplated it certainly has not been followed. And yet there was a great opportunity for the Clergy of the Anglican Church to show themselves as exponents of the Bible on at least as high a level as their continental Protestant brethren. Mr. Cook in his preface acknowledges the want of a real Commentary; but he and his colleagues have not given it. Retreat from the position forced on them, perchance, rather than willingly assumed, must have been the contemplated course. Silence breaks no bones, it is said, and the “Speaker and his Commentary” would perhaps pass out of mind and be relegated to the limbo of things forgotten. But the thought of retreat—if it ever were a thought—was vain. The outside world grew clamorous for its ‘Commentary,’ and something must be done to satisfy it. The “conscience that makes cowards of us all” had procured a respite of seven years, indeed, but the business must be faced at last. If the workers first engaged had disqualified themselves through the pains they had taken to execute their task in the best possible way, the way, too, that was held desirable; and as they in entering on it had believed it could be done, but as they had been brought to see that it could not truthfully and

without reservation be accomplished, others might be found who took a different view of the matter. There were orthodox as well as heterodox commentators in plenty—there were Hengstenbergs as well as Hupfelds, Delitzsches as well as Colensos. Why not take them for guides? Or if even the least liberal of these were too outspoken for our insular orthodoxy, why not fall back on the good old-fashioned English style of the Browns and Henrys, the Doyleys and Mants, and give explanations by simple iteration of the text, discover harmony amid discord, and congruity in discrepancy; to say nothing of so much that could safely be referred to the inscrutable will of God, and that passed the power of human comprehension? The workers first selected could not be suffered to make victims of themselves, and have their names enrolled beside those:—

Die thöricht g'nug ihr volles Herz nicht wahrten,—  
Dem Föbel ihr Gefühl, ihr Schauen offenbarten,  
[Und die] man hat von je gekreuzigt und verbrannt.\*

They would too obviously be acting under the ægis of Hierarchs of the Church who would be compromised with them, of Dignitaries who had no taste for martyrdom, and who doubtless thought “of the fish, and the leeks and the onions, the cucumbers, the melons, and the garlick, which they did eat freely in Egypt.” Of others, also, conscientious enough in their ortho-

\* Who have been fools enough not to keep their minds to themselves, but to the people have revealed their hearts, their thoughts, and for their pains have hitherto been crucified and burned.



doxy, having minds cast in a believing mould, unfamiliar with the fruit of the tree that grew in the midst of the garden, who did not see why the sworn and salaried officers of a system should be held bound to say aught in disparagement of the grounds on which it rested, and who could not be persuaded that there was not a perfectly legitimate and even proper way of escaping from the dilemma in which they had become involved by the strike among their workmen.

Many and anxious, we must conceive, were the consultations that now were held, deep and long the discussions as to what had best be done, that followed. It was even thought, as reported, that Escape from the dead-lock might be found through Counsel out of doors, as there was none within; a suggestion which led to an interview with a late lamented Dean, not one of "The Company;" for he having eaten of the fruit of the marvellous tree in years gone by, and spoken somewhat freely of the Patriarchs, was held too *far advanced* for such Society. But from this liberal writer came little comfort. He is said rather to have enjoyed the difficulty in which his learned brethren had become involved, he even *chuckled* over their distress; but assured them he could help them with no advice; it was their business, not his, and they must get through the work they had undertaken as they best could.

To proceed, indeed, was matter of necessity: a Commentary and Exposition must be forthcoming; but why need it be of the kind that was contemplated by the Speaker? It might be of a sort that would satisfy the *many* and such as had no misgivings; and the *few*—the doubters

and such as were dissatisfied—might be left to their doubts and dissatisfaction. A dangerous course as concerns the future, though meeting the most pressing want of the hour; for reaction inevitably follows, and the recoil is not always comparable to the gentle lapping of the summer sea, but sometimes comes like the upheaval wave laden with destruction.

## XVI.

The work, then, had to be gone on with, and a fresh staff of workers to be found; and this, not without difficulty nor without a second secession in more than one instance, by report at the time, was at length got together. But such must have been the obstacles still encountered, we must needs surmise, that before any real progress could be made, *seven years* had passed away! for it was at the end only of this long period of incubation that the first instalment of the 'Speaker's Commentary' saw the light.

## XVII.

And here we avail ourselves of the appreciation of the work by a distinguished continental Biblical critic and scholar, Dr. A. Kuenen, Professor of Theology in the University of Leyden.\* After premising that much is to be learned from the work, especially by laymen, for whose benefit it was written; that the composers of it are learned men, and farther—yet hardly in keeping with what he goes on to say—that

\* See Three Notices of the 'Speaker's Commentary' from the Dutch of A. Kuenen, by J. Muir, D.C.L., one of Mr. Scott's Series of Papers.

they have shown an able apprehension of what they had to do, he continues: "But they lack one thing; and this vitiates the whole. *They are not free.* The apologetic aim of the work is never lost sight of, and constantly operates to disturb the course of the enquiry. It is, in one word, Science such as serves a purpose that is here put before us. The writers place themselves in opposition to the Critics of the Pentateuch, depreciate their arguments, make sport in the well-known childish manner of their mutual differences, and try to refute them with reasonings which they themselves in any other case would reject as utterly insufficient or regard as unworthy of notice. None of them sins in this respect so *naïvely* and grossly (sterk) as Dr. Harold Browne, the Bishop of Ely. But they are miserable, far-fetched, and unnatural suppositions to which he treats us. . . . Dogmatical considerations have clouded the understanding and exegetical perception of this apologist, and on fitting occasions his fellow-labourers do not fall short of him in this respect. If I am not deceived, this 'Commentary,' entirely against the intentions of those who planned it, will, before all things, have powerfully contributed to make Biblical criticism indigenous in England."

With the work of so thorough a critic and accomplished scholar as Dr. Colenso, and the excellent Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament of such a Hebraist as Dr. Samuel Davidson (to name but two among several others), at command, it cannot fairly be said that Biblical criticism had not already become indigenous among us. It was, indeed, well established, though

rare, but all the more firmly rooted from having grown in the light of freedom, truthfulness, and competence; and though ignored by the Clergy at large, who shut their eyes to it themselves and denounce it from their pulpits as impiety, it is by no means without its influence among us.

“When, after reading the Introductions to the several Books and the Notes to the ‘Speaker’s Commentary,’” continues Dr. Kuenen, “I reflect how much time, labour, and money have been expended on the writing and printing of this work, I receive a painful impression. Here learned theologians, and such, too, as are high dignitaries in the Church, come forward as instructors of the participators in their religious belief, and all that these learn from them they must afterwards unlearn. Many faults in the authorised version, indeed, are amended, and points of an archæological and geographical nature are illustrated. But such is not the question here. The point of importance is this: Do the contributors to the work make their learning subservient to the diffusion of a sound [*i.e.*, a truthful and reasonable] method of estimating the Bible? The reverse is the fact. They regard it as their duty to maintain that which appears to them to be the *sound* [*i.e.*, the orthodox] view, and to reject all more reasonable conceptions as unbelieving and sacrilegious. Now and then, indeed, the truth is too powerful for them, and they find themselves forced to give up the correctness of the Biblical narrative, but the concessions form the exception. As a rule, the traditional view is maintained, even in cases where it may be said to be absolutely untenable; and then the diffi-

culties are either passed over in silence or are not recognised in their real force, or are answered with childish arguments. But it will one day become manifest that that which the adverse critics already know must before long become known to all, and that it is fearless criticism alone which opens up the access to Israel's sanctuaries. *Magna est veritas et prævalebit.*"

## XVIII.

So far Dr. Kuenen, the studied moderation of whose adverse criticism is conspicuous. But the Doctor is still a theologian, although a Liberal one. It is habit and the prospect he enjoys from his Professor's Chair that enable him to speak of fearless criticism of the Record the Israelites have left of themselves in their Pentateuch and historical books as opening up the access to *any sanctuary*. We who write here as Physician, as Naturalist, cannot see the matter in the same light as Dr. Kuenen; and do not scruple to avow that the purpose of the Exposition which follows is to aid, in so far as this is possible, in disabusing the public mind of the false conceptions it entertains of so much of the Bible as falls within the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua; to which portions of the Hebrew Scriptures, we would have it understood, is our criticism intended to apply. We are behind none in our appreciation of the beauties that abound in many parts of the writings of the Lyrist and Rhapsodists of Israel—though neither are we blind to their blemishes—but we deny *in toto* that we have either in these, in the so-called Five Books of Moses, or in the historical writings that precede

the Psalms, any true account of God's government of the world. We are even bold enough to believe that he who accompanies us through our exposition will scarcely fail, however reluctantly, to arrive at the same conclusion.

## XIX.

The laity of this country, we believe, were really looking for a perfectly truthful and authoritative exposition of the Bible, of the Hebrew Scriptures especially; and a great opportunity undoubtedly presented itself for the production of such a work; but it has not only been neglected; it may even be said to have been abused. The most cursory perusal of so much of the 'Speaker's Commentary' as applies to the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua, will enable any one possessed of the mere Alphabet of Biblical criticism to see that the writers do but "keep their promise to the ear and break it to the hope." The intelligent inquirer will gain from them none but the most unsatisfactory responses to his most pressing questions,—if perchance he finds response at all—and the ignorant be only confirmed in his ignorance, his errors, and his superstitions. The views of the great liberal enlightened critics of the Continent and our own country, men of unblemished lives, the purest piety and ripest scholarship, are scarcely noticed, the conclusions of science ignored, and the moral blemishes passed by unheeded, whilst nothing absolutely is ever said that will help men of "ordinary culture" to know more of what the "original Scriptures really say and mean" than the text itself supplies. Iteration of a proposition in other

terms is no demonstration of its meaning or its truth; and where the exposition is not simply of the old-fashioned orthodox and now untenable character, it is hardly ever of a kind that will enable the reader to see the matter referred to in any more reasonable and acceptable light.

## XX.

Dr. Kuenen in this notice of the first and second volumes of the 'New Commentary' gives a few examples of the perfunctory way in which the Speaker's Exegetes proceed in their work;\* and we, too, had got together some samples of the chaff they present so carefully sifted from the grain of truth and common sense, for illustration in this direction. But they would be out of place here. We, however, add below, the very First and One among the Last of Bishop Harold Browne's comments to Genesis, by way of justification of aught we have said that seems disrespectful.†

\* Vide Three Criticisms, &c., already quoted.

† Gen. i. 1. *In the beginning.* 'Not "first in order," but "in the beginning of all things," says the Bishop. "The same expression is used in John i. 1, of the existence of the "Word of God:" "In the beginning was the Word." The one passage illustrates the other, though it is partly by the contrast of thoughts. The Word *was* when the world *was created.*' The reader may be left to make what he can out of such a style of exposition; for how the mystical assertion of the Neo-platonic author of the Fourth Gospel that "In the beginning was the Word," should be brought in to throw light on the simple statement of the writer of Genesis, that God in the beginning created the heaven and the earth, passes our faculty of understanding. Was the note introduced for any end but to give Dr.

## XXI.

The Exposition of the Pentateuch and Book of Joshua that follows, it may be needless to say, is conceived in a totally different spirit from that which has guided the writers of the 'Speaker's Commentary.' Holding that "*suppression of the truth is near akin to assertion of the false,*" and that truth can never be dangerous save to error,

Harold Browne an opportunity of showing at the very outset the out-and-out orthodox flag under which he was enlisted?

Gen. xlvii. 8, 9. "And Pharaoh said unto Jacob: How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh: The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years." To the words *my Pilgrimage*, the Bishop appends this gloss, 'Literally my sojournings.' 'Pharaoh asked of the days of the years of his life; he replies by speaking of the days of the years of his pilgrimage. Some have thought that he called his life a pilgrimage because he was a nomad, a wanderer in lands not his own: but in reality the patriarchs spoke of life as a pilgrimage or sojourning, because they sought another country, that is a heavenly. Earth was not their home, but their journey homewards.' Now the Bishop of Ely—when he wrote, the Bishop of Winchester now (for orthodoxy unflinching brings preferment)—knows full well that the patriarchs never spoke of their lives in any such sense. They had no idea of any state of existence after the present life; and when in later days the children of Israel, after contact as slaves with a people entertaining an idea of the kind, did attain to it, the place to which they went after death was not thought of as a *heavenly* home of light and love and joy, but a dark and dismal pit under the earth, called Scheol, whence the Hell of the modern world, peopled by Satan and his angels, and furnished with its burning lake of brimstone and other appliances as a place of punishment for the wicked. Was it not in some sort the Bishop's *duty* to inform his readers of so much?



we have not hesitated to give expression to the views that are most adverse to the idea of the Divine Original of the Hebrew Scriptures, and of the Israelites, in the earlier periods of their history at all events, as worthy recipients of the oracles of God. So much progress had been made in Comparative Mythology and the Science of Religion of late years, that it did not appear so difficult to us to discover what "the original Scriptures really say and mean," as it seems to have done to the writer of the Preface to the 'Speaker's Commentary.' Unfettered by foregone conclusions, having subscribed no Articles, and sworn allegiance to no system of doctrine, but under the guidance of such lights as the somewhat miscellaneous reading we have indulged in has supplied, we have striven to give a thoroughly truthful exposition of so much of the Bible as has come under our scrutiny; the result being, as the tenor of this Introduction will already have made manifest, that this extraordinary Book is but one among a number of other Books held sacred by the followers of the several religious systems of which they are the exponents; that though its literary merits may be more, it has no higher title to be held a Revelation from God than any one of these; that its contents are not always of a kind calculated to raise our estimate of the people among whom it took its rise, or to prove beneficial to ourselves, and that it enunciates no such Ideas of God and his providential government of the world as can be accepted by civilised man.

## XXII.

The world of to-day does, in truth, stand in need of more than the ablest and most outspoken exposition of any Book expressing the Religious Ideas, the Social Usages, and the Guesses at Scientific Truth of a bygone age. It is waiting for a BIBLE OF ITS OWN DAY,—a great Intellectual Survey of Nature, Nature's Laws and Nature's God, as Révealed in the Universe of things apprehended by the Mind of Man. *Veniat, veniat, cito veniat!*

