

THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

10737

VOL. VIII.

JANUARY 1904.

No. 1.

A BRIEF STATEMENT
OF THE
DOCTRINAL POSITION OF THE MISSOURI SYNOD.

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In the Year of the Jubilee, 1897.

(Translated from the German by W. H. T. D.)

The doctrine taught and professed by our Synod has been repeatedly called *new*. Such has been the experience of the fathers and founders of our Synod, and such is still our own experience at the present time. However, our doctrine is not new, neither wholly, nor in part, but is as old as the Revelation of the Holy Scriptures. Our doctrine is none other than that which God has revealed in the writings of the apostles and prophets, and which the Lutheran church in her public Confessions professes from, and in accordance with, the Scriptures. This fact is attested by every sermon which is preached on Sundays from the pulpits of our congregations. It can also be observed in our periodicals and in other publications of our Synod. Still, it may not be improper, on the occasion of the semi-centennial of our Synod, to present on the following pages a brief statement of our faith and confession, embracing the leading points of doctrine, which we profess over against ancient and modern error.

WAS JEHOVAH IN PREPROPHETIC TIMES A NATIONAL DEITY?

It is regarded as an axiom by the "advanced thinkers" of our times that all things must have a common origin. Where, in past ages, discord and diversity were supposed to reign the light of modern research is said to reveal harmony and affinity. Not satisfied, therefore, with observing facts and phenomena and drawing inferences therefrom, men start quite at the other end of the line and propound theories which shall reduce all data to a common level and bring them into coordination. An ingenious hypothesis or a happy conjecture possesses far more fascination than induction from cold, established facts. Consequently, astronomers educe the whole material universe from the alleged primeval fire-mist that once whirled through the gulfs of space; naturalists put forth theories on the "origin of species," while comparative philologists are no longer content with comparing and contrasting various languages and systems of grammar, but consider it their task to "speculate on the origin of language itself." In other words, the theory of development or evolution is accepted and applied as the one supreme law in the realms of matter and mind. And it is invested with such despotic authority that whatever contravenes it is summarily set aside. The theory is pushed through on all hands, though the very stones should rise and mutiny.

Nor has the domain of religion escaped. The law of evolution is declared to underlie the religious history of mankind. All religious phenomena, it is assumed, are only the outward manifestations of man's inherent religious instincts, just as art is the concrete embodiment of his innate ideas of beauty. According to the advocates of religious evolution, man did not receive so much as a mustard seed of religion to start with, but worked out the whole problem unassisted and single-handed. Naturally, his first attempts

were crude and rudimentary in the extreme. But by a series of regularly graduated upward movements he finally reached that exalted position now occupied by the enlightened nations of Christianity. No gaps, or leaps, or miraculous interventions are allowed in the unfolding of the process. From the first rude beginnings, when the savage paid homage to his museum of fetiches, to the lofty faith of the Christian who worships God in spirit and in truth there is no break in the chain of development. And while some, indeed, hold that Christianity is the goal and culmination of the entire evolutionary scheme, others, more hopeful and more consistent, look forward to the time when Christianity, in its turn, shall become obsolete and be replaced by something still higher.¹⁾

Hence in modern works on comparative religion we find such statements as these:—"The foremost writers on the science of religion . . . attempt to show that the religions of the world have a vital connection with each other and are manifestations in different ways of the same spirit."²⁾ "There is no break in the development from the hooked stick to the steam plough. And should it not be the same in religion?" "If we regard religions as stages in the evolution of religion . . . we shall not divide religions into the true one, Christianity, and the false ones, all the rest; no religion will be to us a mere superstition, nor shall we regard any as unguided by God."³⁾

In view of this all-leveling syncretizing tendency, it is not surprising that those who believe in the unique and distinctive character of the theology (in the narrower sense) of the Old Testament should find themselves compelled to antagonize such positions as the one involved by the ques-

1) According to Auguste Comte, the religion of man began with *fetichism*, proceeded thence to *polytheism*, and finally reached *monotheism*. But while Tiele and his school regard monotheism as a permanent religion, the French philosopher held that it was destined to be supplanted by positive philosophy. Cf. Robertson, *Early Religion of Israel*, vol. II, note III.

2) Menzies, *History of Religion*, p. 4.

3) *Ibid*, p. 5.

tion which heads this article. The fact is that the radical criticism seeks to eliminate the most characteristic feature in Israel's religion, namely, that while the surrounding nations were wallowing in the mires of polytheism and superstition, the Hebrews worshiped the one true God, the Creator of heaven and earth. This is the "traditional" belief, and to any unprejudiced reader of the Old Testament this belief is represented by the books themselves. Nevertheless, to save the honor of the theory of religious evolution, it is maintained by the critics that the course of Israel's history moved along lines entirely different from, in fact, quite the reverse of, those exhibited by the Old Testament writings as we now have them. It is assumed at the outset that the religion of the Hebrews, at least in its initial stages, could not have been substantially different from that of their heathen neighbors. The seeming incongruity between the theory and the present documents is due, it is said, not to any fault in the theory, but to the manipulations, revisions, and redactional adjustments of later hands, when Israel had outgrown the age of religious childhood and put away childish things. In other words, pious (?) priests and redactors, who lived after the introduction of loftier conceptions respecting the deity, are supposed to have transferred these conceptions into the past, retouching, recasting, reconstructing, working over the earlier records and traditions, and systematically representing them in the purer light of their own age. And the critics furthermore contend that by a process of legitimate criticism and sifting they are still able to separate the earlier from the later elements of these writings, and thus to show from these documents themselves that, from the dawn of their history down to the age of the first canonical prophets, the religion of the Jews was essentially of a piece with that of the nations by whom they were surrounded.

According to the critical scheme, a number of wandering Hebrew tribes, "bound together by the memory of a

great national deliverance," came from the desert and found settlement in Canaan. They had their own national deity, Yahveh, who stood in the same relation to them as Chemosh to Moab or Milcom to Ammon. Menzies says that "he was probably a nature-god, and connected with storms and thunder, and had his seat at Mount Sinai." This Yahveh, then, was Israel's god, and *Israel was his people*, and that in an entirely different sense from that traditionally associated with the phrase. Says Robertson Smith: "The god can no more exist without his people than the nation without its god. The mass of the Israelites hardly seem to have risen above this conception. . . . Nay, it is plain that a great part of Israel imagined, like their heathen neighbors, that Jehovah had need of them as much as they had need of him."¹) Though practically monotheists, they were theoretically polytheists. They did not deny the existence of other gods beside Yahveh, nor did they deem it an infringement upon his honor to incorporate many Canaanite elements into his worship, or to participate in the worship of Baal. These tribes had no idea of a universe, nor of a universal deity. For centuries they did not rise above a circumscribed national monolatry, and the fortunes of their god were linked together with those of his people.

At the foundation of the monarchy and the subsequent victories of David over Israel's foes, an advance was made in the Yahveh religion. Israel had been consolidated into a homogeneous people and was beginning to realize its strength. Not only was it conscious of a great past, but it looked forward to a still greater future. And Israel was Yahveh's people. His people had risen, and he rose with them. Henceforth he is a great god, who had chosen Israel as his people and who had made them great. He was mightier than the gods of the nations. Still, Yahveh had by no

1) *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 281 sq.

means attained to a position of absolute supremacy in the popular estimation. He might be the greatest among the gods, but other gods still existed. Another mighty impulse was needed finally to undo the heathen divinities and lift the Yahveh of Israel on the throne of absolute and undisputed godhead. And this impulse was given by the *prophets*.

The prophets, it must be remembered, are, according to the critical program, not reformers or restorers, but innovators and originators. They do not exhort their contemporaries to return to something they had left, but to embrace something new. They do not reproach them with apostasy from a purer form of worship, but urge them to abandon antiquated religious conceptions and practices in favor of a higher and broader faith. These "Semitic thinkers" (Menziés), the Platos and Socrateses of their age, have, by means of a theologico-political pragmatism, arrived at notions of the deity loftier and grander by far than those hitherto prevalent among their countrymen. Keenly observant of the political movements of their times, they foresee the terrible catastrophes about to burst upon the nation. They see the armies of foreign invaders overrunning and pillaging the fair land of Yahveh. The heathenish world power shall carry away its inhabitants, and the entire dissolution of the Israelitish community is imminent. How are those things to be accounted for? Was not Israel Yahveh's people? Indeed! Nor did the prophets attack this fundamental tenet of the popular belief. But while the masses thought it nothing short of blasphemy and iniquity on the part of the prophets in predicting ruin and disaster to Yahveh's people, the prophets themselves, taking a *moral* view of the situation, concluded that the clouds on the political horizon were the harbingers of Yahveh's wrath against the nation. In other words, Yahveh is about to punish his own people for their sins. Whereas in the popular view, Yahveh, who had no other people than Israel, was supposed to be bound to them and to display his power on their behalf even at the

expense of his holiness, the prophets insist that Yahveh is, above all, a God of righteousness who must assert the holiness of his character even at the expense of his own people. He is no longer a god whose fortunes are indissolubly linked together with those of his nation, but a dispenser of justice, irrespective of race or nationality. He can exist without Israel. Righteousness counts more with him than the prosperity of any people. Thus the important step is taken. A narrow particularism makes way for universalism. By making the ethical element paramount in Yahveh's character the prophets unconsciously unfit him for the role of a circumscribed national deity. He is the God of the whole earth, and rules the nations in the interests of righteousness. In this way, the god of Israel becomes God, while the gods of the nations fade away into "vanities" and airy nothings. Henceforth the fulfillment of his commands and the practice of mercy are the indispensable conditions of securing and enjoying his favor. Or, to use the critical phrase, the prophets are the inventors of "*ethic monotheism*." Says Wellhausen: "Until their (the prophets') time the nation had sprung up out of the conception of Jehovah, now the conception of Jehovah was casting the nation into the shade. The natural bond between the two was severed, and the relation was henceforward viewed as conditional. As a God of righteousness, which is a law of the whole universe, Jehovah could be Israel's God only in so far as in Israel the right was recognized and followed. The ethical element destroyed the national character of the old religion." Such, then, in brief outline, is the theory respecting the evolution of the God of Israel. Before the age of the writing prophets, Yahveh is said to have been a mere local deity whose jurisdiction did not go beyond the borders of Palestine.

Let us now turn our attention to the arguments that are adduced in support of this position. As already observed, the critics maintain that a judicious separation of the early and late constituents of Old Testament documents

will result in a confirmation of their view.¹⁾ They insist that we do not marshal those elements against them which are obviously (in their opinion) the result of later redaction. For the sake of argument, therefore, let us, for the present, take for granted that these sagacious and sharp-eyed critics are perfectly able to detect and sunder out the original materials which, though overlaid by subsequent additions, are supposed to reveal the traces of the low and narrow conceptions of Yahveh's character prior to the prophetic movement.

An argument very much relied upon as establishing the theory that in preprophetic times Yahveh was not regarded as having exclusive possession of the field is the manner in which the name Baal was employed by the Israelites in the formation of proper names. Says Tiele: "Even so zealous representatives of Yahvism as Saul and David named their children after Baal."²⁾ This circumstance is supposed to show that the Israelites must have conceived of Baal in the same way as of Yahveh and accorded him a high place in their regard. Now it cannot be doubted that the Jews, like all Semitic nations, employed divine names in the formation of personal names. We have such names as Israel, compounded with El, or Jehoram or Isaiah into which the abbreviated form of Yahveh enters as an element. And more than this. We indeed find in the preprophetic period names in which the name of Baal, the Canaanite deity, forms a constituent, and that, too, as Robertson says, "among families most distinguished for their reverence to the God of the Hebrews."³⁾ In the list of Chronicles, we find a son of Saul named Eshbaal, 1 Chron. 8, 33, according to Robertson Smith "Man of Baal," according to Keil,

1) Of course, the principal reason why such a process of sifting becomes necessary is to maintain the theory of religious evolution. The critics approach the records with this theory ready made. It is the smoked glass through which they look.

2) *Compendium der Religionsgeschichte*, p. 353.

3) *Early Religion of Israel*, vol. I, p. 191.

“Fire of Baal,” *i. e.*, Destroyer of Baal (the latter is preferable). There is a son of David called Beeliada (1 Chron. 14, 7). There is even such a combination as Bealiah (Baal is Yah, *i. e.*, Yahveh), 1 Chron. 12, 5. Moreover, there is a famous passage in the Prophet Hosea which is thought to be decisive as indicating that before this time the Israelites of the Northern kingdom called their national god their Baal, and that this was a normal state of affairs. The passage runs: “And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi, and shalt no more call me Baali. For I will take away the names of the Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall be no more mentioned (remembered) by their name,” Hos. 2, 16. 17. On these verses Robertson Smith observes “that in Hosea’s time the use of the word (Baal) was felt to be dangerous to true religion; and indeed there can be no question that the mass of the people were apt to confound the true God with the false Baalim of Canaan, the local divinities or lords of individual tribes, towns, or sanctuaries.”¹⁾ To put it in a negative form, Smith would say, that before Hosea’s time no such danger was “felt” to exist, and that it was not thought wrong to apply the title of the Canaanite god to Yahveh. A new era is supposed to have begun with the prophets.

But this argument from the use of the name Baal is very precarious. It is to be observed, in the first place, that the word *baal* does not designate, in the first instance, the god of the Canaanites. It is primarily a common noun of the widest and most general application. It is employed to denote the husband of a wife, or the owner of an ox, or the inhabitants of a city, etc. It is, in fact, one of the commonest words in the Hebrew tongue, and there is no reason to assume that the Israelites first became acquainted with it after their settlement in Canaan. Manifestly, therefore, there could have been no impropriety in itself, if an Is-

1) *Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 68.

raelite, being asked who his lord, his baal, was, would have answered that his baal (using the word in an appellative sense) was Yahveh. But by an obvious coincidence the Canaanites employed the same word as a proper noun, and applied it to their principal deity. And this circumstance was the occasion of mischief. As long as the Israelites were not infected with the idolatry of Canaan, they might use the word in the ordinary sense without giving honor to the pagan divinity. But we know that the children of Israel often apostatized and followed the baalim of Canaan. And thus it came that in times of such apostasy the mass of the people ceased to draw any sharp line of distinction between Yahveh and Baal, even going so far as to ascribe agricultural blessings to the goodness of the Canaanite gods, as pointed out by Hosea.

Bearing this in mind, the words of Hosea in the above-mentioned passage appear in a different light from that in which they are viewed by Robertson Smith. What the prophet means to say is not that the religion of Israel was now about to enter upon a higher stage of development, when Yahveh should no longer divide his empire with Baal as in former times; but, having charged them with idolatry and spiritual whoredom in the preceding section, Hosea goes on to say in the verses in question that the time is coming when Israel shall be cured of their inclination to serve other gods, when this religious amalgam shall cease, and the very name of Baal be shunned because of the idolatrous associations which it recalled. There is, therefore, no force in the argument that up to Hosea's time the Israelites placed their own Yahveh on the same, or nearly the same, level with Baal and other pagan divinities and that the prophet was trying, for the first time, to lift his people from this ancestral polytheism and syncretism to the recognition of one God. If David and Saul gave their children the names referred to, it was either because they used the word baal in an appellative sense with no thought of the

Canaanite Baal, or (if Baal was indeed in their minds) because they knew that an idol was nothing in the world. And this is probably the most natural explanation, since they were "zealous representatives of Yahvism." This argument is largely dependent, it appears, on the critics' own conception of what Yahvism means. To one who regards it as the worship of a national divinity it may seem irresistible; to another, who recognizes in Yahvism the worship of the one true God, it amounts to nothing. All depends ultimately on the critics' standpoint. And if there were cases when the name Baal, as denoting an actual deity, was used by the Israelites in forming proper names, this is no more than we should expect from a people that persistently lapsed into the idolatries of Canaan. The difference between us and the critics on this point is that, while they consider the whoring after the Baalim a normal state of things, we regard it as a defection from pure Yahvism. Besides, it is noteworthy that while "we find proper names compounded with the name Baal . . . we have no instances of a similar use of unequivocal proper names of heathen deities—such as Melkart, Eshmun, Astarte, etc.—which we should certainly expect if the Israelites were the polytheists they are made out to be. There is, in fact, no instance of any name of God being used to form proper names except the names that were applicable to their own God."¹⁾

The weakness of this argument will appear still further if we consider the ridiculous and absurd conclusions to which a similar mode of reasoning would lead us at the present day. It might be shown, for instance, that the inhabitants of the United States are still worshipers of the deities of German mythology, because the names of these deities are imbedded in the names of our days (Wednesday, Thursday, Friday); or that the belief of the Christian Church was largely permeated by a Judaistic leaven, because of the occurrence of such names as Daniel, Nathaniel,

1) Robertson, *Early Religion of Israel*, vol. I, p. 197.

Abraham, David, etc.; or that Apollos, the Alexandrian Jew, who was "mighty in the Scripture," was a devotee of the Greek god Apollo; or that the parents of Martin Luther must have retained a high veneration for the god Mars; or that such names as Phoebe or Irene, borne by Christian women, presupposed that Christendom had not yet fully emerged from the polytheism of Greece; or that "Isidore of Seville was a worshiper of the Egyptian Isis." In short, the very fact that recourse is had to this argument by the critics in the attempt to sustain their position only reveals the sandy foundation on which this position rests.

Another argument which is supposed to prove the circumscribed character of the preprophetic Yahveh is grounded by the critics on such passages as seem to imply that Yahveh's power and dominion were restricted to the land of Israel. Robertson Smith points to the words of Ruth: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God," as involving the notion that in the early days of Israel's history every god was confined to a particular nationality. Regarding the words of David, 1 Sam. 26, 19: "They have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, Go, serve other gods," the same critic observes that "to be banished from the land of Israel, the inheritance of Jehovah, is to be driven to serve other gods."¹)

But the matter is not quite so simple as it might appear at first sight. Apart from the fact that Ruth is a foreigner and speaks from a heathen standpoint, we must not insist too emphatically on pressing to the letter language which bears on its face the stamp of uncultured simplicity. What if the Moabite had said to her mother-in-law, "I have, by a comparative critical study, reached the conviction that your religion is superior to mine. I am therefore determined to forsake the faith of my people and embrace the religion of the people of Yahveh. Pray do not turn me aside

1) *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 281.

from my purpose"—would the critics be satisfied with such language? But this is, in effect, what she does say; only she says it in her own homely, childlike way. Would you have this plain country-woman speak in the abstract language of a Leibnitz or a Locke? She is employing her own native, concrete style, and to press its literal words into the service of the theory is to betray an amazing lack of apprehension for the simplicities of unsophisticated speech.

Of the words of David in the passage cited above, it would, perhaps, be sufficient to say that they were uttered in the wilderness of Ziph, therefore within the bounds of Yahveh's own land. Whatever was the precise signification which David or other Israelites associated with the phrase, this much is certain that it had no such meaning as the modern critical school attaches to it. What David meant to say was probably that, being cut off from the services at Yahveh's sanctuary, he was treated no better than a pagan who was unentitled to participate in the worship of the one true God. This is all that can legitimately be evolved from the passage. It does not prove by any means that David thought to be banished from his own home and country would place him beyond the reach of Yahveh's help and power. That this is not blind dogmatism will appear from a consideration of other passages. In Deuteronomy, chap. 28, we find the following statements: "Yahveh shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which thou hast not known, and there shalt thou *serve other gods*, wood and stone," v. 36. "Yahveh shall scatter thee among all peoples, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; and there shalt thou *serve other gods*, which thou hast not known, thou nor thy fathers, even wood and stone," v. 64. This is surely as strong an expression of the supposed belief that Yahveh's power ceased, if his worshipers went beyond the borders of Palestine, as the words of David. But hear the following verse of the same chapter: "And among these

nations shalt thou find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of thy foot: but Yahveh will give thee a trembling heart and failing of eyes and pining of soul," etc., v. 65. In chap. 30 we find such words as these: "It shall come to pass when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call to mind . . . , that then Yahveh, thy God, will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee and will return and gather thee from all peoples, whither Yahveh, thy God, hath scattered thee." Here, then, we have the very same phrase which David employs—to be driven from the land of Yahveh "and serve other gods"—and that, too, in a writing which, according to the critics, was not in existence before the year 621, which originated, therefore, in an age when the supposed "ethic monotheism" of the prophets was in full bloom. And, combined with this phrase, there is the promise that Yahveh will hear the cry of His chastised people in their banishment and, in spite of other gods, restore them to their own country. Consequently, it is an unwarranted wresting of language to make this innocent expression of David serve the purpose for which it is employed by the critics.

We now come to consider the argument that the prophets, by investing Yahveh with a moral character, were the inventors of the so-called "ethic monotheism." We do not think that the critics give a satisfactory account of the rise of this "ethic monotheism." It was brought about, they say, by political events. Wellhausen states the case as follows: "Until the time of Amos there had subsisted in Palestine and Syria a number of petty kingdoms and nationalities, which had their friendships and enmities with one another, but paid no heed to anything outside their own immediate environment, and revolved each on its own axis, careless of the outside world, until suddenly the Assyrians burst in upon them. . . . They (the Assyrians) introduced a new factor, the conception of the

world—the world, of course, in the historical sense of that expression. In the presence of that conception, the petty nationalities lost their center of gravity, brute force dispelled their illusions, they flung their gods to the moles and bats. The prophets of Israel alone did not allow themselves to be taken by surprise; . . . they solved by anticipation the grim problem which history set before them. They absorbed into their religion that conception of the world which was destroying the religions of the nations, even before it had been fully grasped by the secular consciousness. Where others saw only ruin of everything that is holiest, they saw the triumph of Jehovah over delusion and error.” Wonderful men, these prophets! How skillfully and cleverly they contrive to save the honor of the god of their little nationality instead of flinging him to the moles and bats! If the other petty nationalities lost their center of gravity when the world-conception began to dawn upon them in the presence of the Assyrian power, *i. e.*, if they recognized the impotence of their gods when the Assyrians, under the patronage of their deities, were grinding them to powder, what we want to know is *why* the prophets of Israel *alone* retained their equilibrium and deftly turned the confusion of other gods to the glory of their own. What enabled them to take such a unique view of the situation and cling to their faith in Yahveh, the deity of their petty nation, even though the nation itself be annihilated? Why should they, instead of losing their “center of gravity” in the face of the new conception, at once begin to declare that it was Yahveh, their own national deity, that was controlling all these forces, and straightway leap from a narrow monolatry to a world-wide monotheism? To these questions the theory we are considering gives no satisfactory answer. The prophets make the bold leap, but we are not told why, nor how they managed to clear the gulf. If we consult their own writings, we find the proper solution. It was because they had higher notions of Yahveh to start

with than the theory allows. It was not the political disasters that suggested to them a new center of gravity, but it was an old center of gravity, the belief in the sovereignty of Yahveh, that enabled them to keep their balance when "the Assyrians burst in upon them." In other words, the belief in the ethical character of Yahveh was not the result of prophetic reflection, but was inherited by the prophets from preprophetic times.

Moreover, if this idea had its origin with the Assyrian invasion, we would naturally expect that it would be somewhat crude at its initial stage and be further developed and elaborated as time went on. But, like Athene from the head of Jupiter, it seems to have sprung full-grown from the head of the earliest prophets. Within the range of written prophecy we find no expansion or development in this "ethic monotheism" idea. Amos speaks of the all-controlling power of Yahveh in words which recall the majestic diction of the "Second Isaiah," Is. 40—66, the "great Unknown," who is supposed to have lived toward the close of the Babylonian captivity. But since we do not believe in this "great Unknown," we will say that Isaiah, hundred years before Jeremiah, celebrates the sovereign majesty of Yahveh with incomparably sublimer language than the later prophet. The critics insist on development in the conception of Yahveh, but they are powerless to read any development out of the writings of the prophets. In order to trace out a certain progress in the idea, some of them resort to the convenient practice of retrenching a number of the noblest passages in the earlier prophets as interpolations. The critic thinks they "disturb the connection" or are "not suited to the context."

In the light of the preceding statements, therefore, it involves an utter misapprehension of the position of the prophets in the Jewish theocracy to regard them as revolutionaries storming at traditional beliefs and customs with the zeal of iconoclasts. The truth is that they were zealous

reformers who exhorted the nation to repentance. They invariably appeal to the conscience of their hearers, and nowhere give themselves the air of promulgating loftier ideals and conceptions in reference to the character of Yahveh. They remind Israel of its past history and the many favors it has already experienced at the hands of its faithful God; and on this foundation they base their warnings, rebukes, admonitions, and promises. When they denounce sacrifice (cf. Is. 1), it is not because, as the critics maintain, they have recognized that outward ceremonials are incompatible with the worship of a God whose character is essentially "ethical," but because sacrifice was offered in a cold, perfunctory way, without a pious disposition of the heart. What they denounce is the *opus operatum* theory of sacrifice, just as any preacher in our day must denounce the *opus operatum* theory of church-going.

A further argument supposed to uphold the theory we are antagonizing is drawn from the circumstance that the Biblical writers speak of the gods of the nations as if they ascribed to them a real existence. There can be no doubt that they speak of Chemosh as the god of Moab, Milcom (Moloch) as the god of Ammon, or Baalzebub as the god of Ekron. It is furthermore contended that even such expressions as the "God of the Hebrews," Ex. 3, 18, "Yahveh, the God of Israel," Judges 11, 21, involve the belief in the existence of other gods. We even find such a passage as, "Wilt thou not possess that which Chemosh, thy god, giveth thee to possess?" Judges 11, 24, which is thought to be decisive on the point under consideration. Nay, the very first commandment in the Decalogue, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," it is positively asserted, takes the existence of other gods for granted, though forbidding their worship by the Israelites. And the same notion is said to lie in the background of the question: "Who is like unto Thee among the gods?" in the Song of Moses, Ex. 15, 11. Again, in Ex. 12, 12 we have the ex-

pression: "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and against the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment." Jethro says, Ex. 18, 11: "Now I know that Yahveh is greater than all gods." And many more passages of a similar character might be cited.

The contention is that the Old Testament writers regarded these deities as possessing actual existence and as endowed with divine attributes, enabling them to stand forth as the rivals of Yahveh. Such a position is, however, absolutely without foundation. True, they call these deities *elohim* (אֱלֹהִים, gods), as if they were indeed possessed of the powers of deity. But we must not overlook that these same writers call these selfsame deities *elilim*, or *habalim* (אֵלִילִים, הַבָּלִים, vanities, nothings, not-gods). As to their intrinsic nature and essence, these "gods" are "vanities" and phantoms, devoid of actual reality; but in the estimation of their worshipers they are real *elohim*, gods. Now, there can be no doubt that the writers of the Old Testament often spoke from the standpoint of the heathen themselves when referring to their deities. This is certainly the case in Judges 11, 24, which the critics triumphantly declare to decide the question once for all in their favor. The application of this obvious rule will, in itself, remove a whole row of difficulties with respect to the naming of other gods.

On the other hand, it is not necessary to suppose that the Hebrew writers, in denying real existence to the pagan divinities, did not recognize the presence and activity of supernatural potencies in heathen idolatry. They call these *elohim* and *elilim* also by another name, *shedim* (שְׂדִיִּים, from שָׂדַד, *violenter egit*, to destroy), *destroyers*, *demons*. And in this they anticipated the teaching of Paul, who, while asserting that "an idol is nothing in the world," 1 Cor. 8, 4, at the same time declares that "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to *demons* and not to God," 1 Cor. 10, 20. In other words, paganism is demonolatry, and the *elilim* or *elohim* are, as it were, the incar-

nations or representatives of demoniacal powers. Hence it becomes quite intelligible that the superior greatness and might of Yahveh should be contrasted with the comparative weakness of the gods of the nations, as in the above passages.

Moreover, what does this naming of other gods really amount to after all? Do we not still employ the names of heathen divinities? We do not find it irreconcilable with our belief in one God to speak of Zeus, or Apollo, or Jupiter. We speak of the God of the Jew and of the Allah of the Mahometans, and yet we know that there is only one God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And just as the Biblical writers speak of the "God of the Hebrews," so do we, as Robertson says, even in our day, "speak of the God of the Christian, though we believe there is none other."¹)

It may, therefore, be assumed that the mention of pagan divinities by the Old Testament writers can in no wise be construed into an argument for the critical theory that in preprophetic times Yahveh was supposed to have a host of divine rivals in the field. The story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, 1 Kings 18, is alone sufficient to overthrow this theory. Not only do Elijah's contemporaries, conscious of their guilt, receive his rebukes without a murmur or protest (v. 21: "And the people answered him not a word"), but the prophet himself, by the way in which he ridicules Baal and his worshipers, gives clear evidence that he knew that a Baal, an idol, was "nothing in the world." The conduct of Elijah becomes all the more important for our present purpose, inasmuch as it is asserted by the critics that the narratives of the patriarchs, as we possess them, were a product of this age. They must therefore be supposed to give a correct representation of the religious ideas that prevailed among the Israelites at that time. From these narratives we learn that Yahveh was to the

1) *Early Religion of Israel*, vol. II, p. 44.

patriarchs the "Most High God, the Possessor of heaven and earth," Gen. 14, 22, "the Almighty," 17, 1, "the everlasting God," 21, 33, the Controller of all nature, 49, 25, etc. Consequently, the Israelites must have believed in the exclusive Godhead of Yahveh, long before the Assyrian irruptions started the idea of "ethic monotheism" in the minds of the canonical prophets. Abraham had already given clear and concise utterance to the same truth when he said, "Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?" Gen. 18, 25, a passage assigned by the critics to the Yahvistic narrator, who is supposed to have written about 850—800 B. C.¹) Consequently, if the names of other deities are mentioned, it does not imply a belief in the actual existence of these gods on the part of the writers. But this argument, if it proves anything, proves too much. For it might easily be shown that even Jeremiah believed in the reality and divinity of Chemosh, when he says, ch. 48, 7: "Chemosh shall go into captivity with his priests and princes together." And this, long after Yahveh is supposed to have been elevated to a position of exclusive and absolute deity!

There is, however, a single argument which seems to be fatal to the whole theory of a localized national deity in preprophetic times, and that is involved in the name Yahveh itself. We cannot here enter in detail upon the various derivations which have been proposed in accounting for the origin of the name. It has been traced by some scholars to an Indo-Germanic source and brought into connection with the Sanscrit root *div*, to shine, which lies at the basis of Jovis or Diovis. This same root, it is said, underlies the Hebrew tetragrammaton, which may have been pronounced Yavo, Yevo, Yove. Others have found the original home of the word in Egypt, and Yahveh is identified with the Egyptian moon-god Yoh. Stade and others trace the name

1) Driver, *Introduction*, p. 123.

to a Kenite source, and Moses is supposed to have borrowed it from the priest Jethro. Another view is that the name is to be sought for in the Canaanite language. And now that the excavated mounds of Babylon are being used by some critics as the graveyard of the Old Testament religion, the Yahveh name is said to have been derived from Babylonian sources. Friedrich Delitzsch confidently declares to have found the name on clay tablets dating from 2500 B. C.¹⁾ But he himself admits that the characters which are supposed to represent the name are very difficult to decipher ("schwer lesbare Schriftzeichen"), and, in fact, equally competent assyriologists, such as Hilprecht, deny the contention of Delitzsch altogether.

But why roam so far afield when the object of our search lies at our doorstep? We think that the Biblical account of the derivation and significance of the divine name is so exquisitely simple and adequate that it carries with it its own authentication. According to the Bible, as is well known, Yahveh is derived from the verb $\text{הוה} = \text{היה}$, to be. In Ex. 3, 14 God gives Himself the name: Ehyeh asher Ehyeh ("I will be that I will be"; *Septuagint*: $\epsilon\gamma\acute{\omega} \epsilon\iota\mu\epsilon \acute{o} \acute{\omega}\nu$; *Vulgate*: Sum, qui sum), of which the word Yahveh is the noun formation. By its etymological signification, therefore, the name implies that Yahveh is the absolutely Existing One, the Self-existent, the eternal, uncaused, unconditioned, independent, self-sufficient, unchangeable Deity. Nor should it be overlooked that the word Yahveh is formed from the imperfect. There has been needless diversity of opinion as to whether Yahveh denoted the absolutely Existing One, or the Becoming One. Both ideas are included in the name. Jahveh does not retreat into abstract metaphysical being and stagnant quiescence like the Hindu Brahma, but reveals Himself in continuous self-manifestation, and guides the course of history according to His own

1) *Babel und Bibel*, p. 46 sq.

plan. He is, therefore, the God who enters into covenant relations with man, makes promises, and realizes them in due time. He controls all things and makes them subservient to His gracious counsels. He will always be what He will be. His designs cannot be thwarted or frustrated, but will go irrepressibly forward to their consummation. Yahveh is, therefore, the most appropriate and expressive name for the covenant God who implements His promises, who is unswervingly faithful and resistlessly powerful in accomplishing His purposes. All this is included in this pregnant name.

And now let us ask ourselves the question whether a name so rich in meaning, so broad and universal, so wide in connotation, so abstract and metaphysical, if you will, could have been invented or adopted by a number of uncultivated tribes who, according to the critical hypothesis, thought that their own little corner was the universe, and who had not yet fully stripped off the lowest forms of animistic and fetichistic worship. Thus the theory breaks down from the first. The divine name Yahveh becomes singularly inappropriate and premature, if the preprophetic religion was the crude and elementary thing which it is declared to have been.

Finally, there is one aspect of this whole question—and it is the most important of all—upon which we have not yet touched. We mean the bearings of this criticism on the New Testament and the teaching of Christ. All questions relating to Biblical criticism are, in the last analyses, of intensely vital and practical concern, though the critic moves about in the Old Testament something like the antiquary in an old curiosity shop. To be sure, Driver tells us that “criticism in the hands of Christian scholars does not banish or destroy the inspiration of the Old Testament,”¹⁾ nor does it, in his opinion, infringe upon the authority of

1) Driver, *Introduction*, Preface, p. XIII.

Jesus who in appealing to the Old Testament Scripture did not "design to pronounce a verdict on the authority and age of its different parts."¹⁾ But this matter is not to be gotten over so simply and easily. We know that Christ everywhere refers to the Old Testament as the Word of God, and to the Yahveh of the Israelites as His Father. But this Yahveh was, according to the critics, in preprophetic times only a little national deity. Are we, then, to suppose that Christ professed spiritual and essential unity with this petty divinity, whose rise or fall was conditioned by the political fluctuations of a petty nationality, and who was at best only a *primus inter pares* in the form of Chemosh, Milcom, Baal and Company? *Credat Judaeus Apella!* Or are we to suppose that Christ, either from ignorance or connivance, sanctioned the wholesale frauds and forgeries by which the earlier traditions were reconstructed into conformity with the ideas of later times? If Christ did this from ignorance, He was a self-deluded fanatic and mistaken as to His own identity; if from connivance, He compromises His moral integrity and renders Himself unworthy of our faith and homage. Such are the implications of the critical position with reference to the teaching of Christ and to Christian faith. And if "Christian" scholars, such as Driver, who leans very strongly toward the Wellhausen standpoint, experience little trouble in overcoming the difficulties involved, this is just what many others have done and still do, who strain at gnats and swallow camels. We think that, under the exigencies of logic, the stern alternative of Elijah is once more applicable: "If Yahveh be God, then follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him."

C. GAENSSLE.

1) Ibid., p. XII.
