

Implications of the Historico-Critical Method in Interpreting the Old Testament

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PART ONE

IN DEALING with the interpretation of a Biblical book, students are required to employ Biblical criticism which is often divided into lower and higher criticism. The former endeavors to recover the text that was produced by the original author. This type of criticism is also called textual, the foundation upon which higher criticism builds.¹ By "lower" criticism is not meant inferiority to so-called "higher" criticism.

I.

Since the original autographs are no longer available, the first step in interpretation of a Biblical book is to ascertain the true text. The original Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were inspired in their actual wording by the Holy Spirit. Our present printed texts are based upon manuscripts copied by amanuenses during the course of about 3,500 years. Throughout the centuries much effort has been expended by many competent scholars to produce a reliable text. Especially during the last four hundred years, textual criticism has been developed to a point where today it is a science that employs reliable norms for ascertaining the true text of the Bible. Such men as Tischendorf, Weiss, Westcott, Hort, Nestle, Kittel, Kahle and a host of scholars have devoted years of painstaking research to make available to Biblical students correct texts of the Old and New Testaments. The American Textual Criticism Seminar has been working for a number of years to give the world a new critical text of the New Testament, while discovery of the Dead Sea Biblical Manuscripts and portions of Biblical manuscripts have opened up new vistas for textual criticism of the Old Testament. The Christian Church is greatly in debt to the men who have specialized in this area for their earnest endeavors to ascertain what were the *ipsissima verba* of Holy Writ in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Every Christian should be interested in the efforts of

present day scholars to restore the Biblical text in all its original purity.

Task of Higher Criticism

After the textual critics have completed their task of preparing a text which they believe to be a facsimile of the original, the higher critic begins his task of delving into questions of authorship, literary form, and historical background. Some scholars divide higher criticism into literary and historical criticism.

In describing the importance of literary criticism, Father Steinman wrote: "Literary criticism is no less necessary. Its function will be to determine exactly what the inspired writer had in mind and what the import of his statements was. We must know what literary form a book of the Bible belongs to before we can understand it properly and suggest how it should be interpreted."² Literary criticism tries to localize a given writing, determine its author, if possible, and ascertain all that is known about him; the place where the book was composed; the time of writing; the person or groups of people to whom it was addressed, and the occasion, cause, or circumstances for penning the document. These steps in the localization of a book have been summarized under six questions: Who? Where? When? To whom? Why? and What? The genuineness of a writing, whether it is pseud-epigraphic or whether in the course of tradition the book has been given a false ascription, is a problem closely related to the localization of a literary document.

Under "Who?" the problem of authorship is discussed. Literary criticism employs the same techniques as the student of English literature does in his evaluation of the claim that Bacon wrote Shakespeare. Two types of evidence are considered in the determination of the authorship of a document: external and internal. External evidence embraces two considerations: the tradition as to authorship, and the light cast on the problem by its original recipients. Internal evidence is based on the vocabulary and style of a book together with reference to other literary productions of the writer, which are compared for ideas and content. Liberal scholars claim that the objective application of these literary canons to Biblical literature has resulted in the repudiation of some erroneous ideas held about the origin and purpose of many Biblical books.

Under "What?" the literary features of the book are consid-

ered. A knowledge of literary form is necessary. The Bible contains such literary types as history, narration, parable, dialogue, proverb, drama, and essay. Matthew Arnold was convinced that the "first step toward a right understanding of the Bible was to appreciate that its language was not rigid, fixed and scientific, but fluid and literary."

A problem closely related both to the authorship and nature of the contents of a writing is the necessity of determining the sources that were employed by its writer. In a literary work, oral or written, or even both, sources may have been used which should be identified and, if possible, localized. The Book of Joshua and the Books of Chronicles refer to written sources besides those indicated in the writings themselves which latter sources have become a passion with most liberal and neo-orthodox scholars, especially in the Old Testament field. A perusal of R. H. Pfeiffer's *Introduction to the Old Testament* will reveal how practically every book of the Old Testament has been torn apart so that many Biblical writings resemble a patch quilt.³ Colwell claimed that in the writing of Hebrew literature, "the scissors and paste" method was employed, thus enabling the modern student to discern the sources used in writing, re-writing, and editing the Old Testament books.⁴

In the study of the Gospels, scholars are convinced that it is possible to detect the literary sources. Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John are supposed to have written their Gospels in the same manner as the pre-Christians wrote their histories. Confidently, Colwell has announced: "The identification of these sources made a sane interpretation of Gospel parallelisms possible and dealt a death-blow to superficial harmonizing of the Gospels."⁵

Since many books of the Old Testament, according to the understanding of liberal scholars, give a great deal of evidence of editorial activity, called redaction, the work of this redactor (a hypothetical personality) must be taken into account. Most of the redactional activity is supposed to have taken place in post-Exilic times.

The dating of a document, the "When?" is another problem the Biblical student encounters. There are two categories into which the evidence is grouped: external and internal. External evidence comprises the testimony derived from literature other than

the document under consideration. Thus a number of New Testament books give information about other books in the canon which were written earlier. Peter refers to the Epistle of St. Paul as in existence as he writes 2 Peter 3:16. The non-canonical literature of the second century contains valuable information about the writing and formation of the New Testament canon. Internal evidence, on the other hand, consists of data furnished by the books themselves. An example of internal evidence as an aid to the dating of the Book of Luke is the statement of 3:1, giving the 15th year of Caesar Tiberius as the beginning of Christ's public ministry, which means that the Gospel must have been written after this year. The opening verse of the sixth chapter of Isaiah gives the year in which Isaiah began his ministry and consequently must have been written subsequently to this date. Evidence as to the date of a book is often found in a quotation or quotations from other books that are datable. Again, when the sources are dated or datable, it is possible to date the document of which they are a part. Often the place of origin of a literary document is sometimes datable. A book purporting to originate at a certain time and place, written, however, in a language never used at the time in question or in the locality, cannot be genuine in its claim.

After these considerations have been determined, the next step for the user of the historical method is to consider comparatively the book being interpreted, especially with reference to its historical, cultural, social, economic, intellectual, and religious background, which may be determined by a study of the geography, epigraphy, numismatics, and archaeology of the period from which the book claims to have come.

Historico-Critical Method

The use of both lower and higher criticism is often referred to as the employment of the "historico-critical method." It is not easy to define what is meant by this method since it is more than simply resorting to the critical use of all helps available today, whether historical, linguistic or archaeological in the study of Scripture. Such well known scholars as Luther, Calvin, Flacius, and Calov were proponents of this methodology. However, the birth of the modern use of the historico-critical method is usually traced by historians of Biblical exegesis to Richard Simon, Jean Astruc, Pascal,

and Spinoza. The "historico-critical method" was born during the period of rationalism which generally rejected miracles and the inspiration of Scripture. The latter half of the eighteenth century produced a type of theology that was "destructive" of the theological position of the reformation and post-reformation periods. With the historico-critical method also arose a school of biblical criticism which was based on rationalistic presuppositions. Early studies by Astruc (1753), Eichhorn (1783), DeWette (1805) and Ewald (1823) resulted in "the documentary hypothesis" of the Pentateuch, claiming that the first five books of the Hebrew Bible had their origin in a combination of a series of documents which were not committed to writing until four or five centuries subsequent to Moses' death. After this hypothesis had gone through various stages, and Old Testament scholars had made many additions and changes, there emerged the final documentary hypothesis, sponsored by two Hebrew scholars, Graf and Wellhausen. Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* resulted in the stabilization of a theory which before had been subject to much flux⁶

One of the contributors to the *New Bible Handbook* wrote regarding the philosophy behind the Wellhausen theory: "Not believing in the possibility of miracles, they elaborated a theory which pictures the religion of Israel as a gradual evolution from primitive animism, through a stage when Jehovah was taken as a tribal god, like the gods of the heathen, until, under the influence of the later prophets, a lofty level of monotheism was reached. The whole Old Testament was radically affected by this theory; the sources of the various books were dated in accordance with it, using as a criterion the stage of development which they were thought to reflect. The late dating of the documents opened the way for attributing their supernatural elements to the growth of myth or legend, and the history was completely reconstructed from this point of view."⁷

The early proponents of the historico-critical approach to the Old Testament were strongly influenced by the philosophy of Wolff and Kant, and such advocates as Spinoza, Lessing, Kuenen, Strauss, F. Baur, Eichhorn, and DeWette were guided in their study and interpretation of the Bible by two positions: 1) all were certain that the new criticism must be applied indiscriminately to the Bible, and 2) all had adopted a new and freer view of what the Bible was and what was involved in Biblical revelation. Robert Preus

writes: "Without these two developments there would never have been a "historical-historical" method in the modern sense."⁸

The development of the views that resulted from the use of the historico-critical method had its origin in the rejection of the orthodox view of Scripture. One of the first theologians of the age of enlightenment to reject the traditional view was Sigmund Baumgarten (1706-1757). He failed to grasp the truth that Holy Scripture was but one mode of divine revelation, claiming the traditional view identified revelation and inspiration. He looked upon the Old and New Testaments merely as the original source of revelation (*Urkunde*). Baumgarten was followed by Johann Semler (1725-1791 often called the father of modern Biblical criticism. The latter distinguished between the Word of God and revelation and claimed that the Bible was only then relevant when and to the degree that it had a message for the internal life of man. When this was evident then it was proper to speak of Holy Writ's inspiration. In his approach to the Bible, Semler was thoroughly rationalistic, which meant a rejection of the supernatural under the form of miracles and predictive prophecy. For him these were necessary presuppositions that must be utilized by any interpreter that would adequately comprehend the message of the Biblical books. It was uncritical to ascribe *a priori* God's authority to Scripture and proceed with its interpretation on this assumption.

Semler's position was adopted and perpetuated by Vatke, a member of the Hegelian school, by Kuenen and F. Baur and many others in the first part of the nineteenth century. They all rejected the divine origin and unique character of Israel's religion. The consequent result for all these men was the adoption of skepticism. In the same manner as all those who had rejected the inspiration of Scripture and its teaching that the Bible was the inerrant Word of God, Semler, like Lessing, Fichte, and Kant, resorted to moralism as the essence and core of religion.⁹

Upon the foundation of his predecessors Wellhausen built and rejected the accounts of the miraculous in the Old Testament as either legend or myth and proceeded to explain the religious development according to an evolutionary scheme. "This involved the abandonment of the story of revelation as told in the Bible, and the reconstruction of what was conceived to be the true history

which lies behind its fables and traditions. The documentary analysis rendered this possible by affixing to each document, or fragment, a date corresponding with the critic's view of the history and religious progress. Thereby a book which purports to be a true narrative derived from contemporary sources was turned into a late compilation derived from varying traditions, myths and legends."¹⁰

Two of the main pillars of the Wellhausen position were to the effect that writing was unknown before the days of the monarchy, and that Israel's religion could be traced back to totemistic animism, from which it progressed through the stages of polytheism, henotheism, and finally monotheism. These assumptions resulted in the necessity of holding the narrative of the Old Testament to have been handed down for long ages by oral tradition.

J, E, D, P, etc.

"The New Document Theory" (associated with Hupfeld, Reuss, Graf, Kuenen, Wellhausen) postulated four sources for the Pentateuch, which came to follow the general order of J, E, D, and P.¹¹ In essence, the theory holds that J (ca. 850 B.C.) and E (ca. 750 B.C.) were combined by a redactor (R^{je}) ca. 650 B.C.; D (621 B.C.) was added by R^d ca. 550 B.C.; P (ca 500-450) by R^p ca. 400 B.C., bringing the Pentateuch in general to its present form. By the beginning of this century this theory was accepted in many Protestant circles. In 1891 Professor Driver issued his *Literature of the Old Testament*, a book which closely followed the position set forth by Julius Wellhausen. Later Oesterley and Robinson in a number of volumes propounded the same theory with the result that modern criticism (called by conservatives "negative criticism") eventually permeated the textbooks of colleges and theological seminaries in England America.

Higher criticism, however, in the twentieth century did not remain static. Many changes were introduced into the scholarly understanding of the origin and development of the Old Testament. Flack asserted: "Critics have posited not only divisions and alterations in the four principal sources, J, E, D, and P, but also numerous additional documents. Smend, for example, found two parallel strands in J (J¹ and J²). Hempel named three phases in J (J¹, J² and J³) corresponding to the three divisions of Genesis 1-11,

12-36, 37-50."¹² Most critics assign J to Judah, the southern kingdom, and E to Israel, the northern kingdom. Mowinckel, outstanding Scandinavian scholar, assigns E to Judah and denies the independence of J. Eissfeldt, a German scholar of repute, finds a document called L in the Pentateuch, which is in contrast to P, a priestly source. Morgenstern posits a Kenite document called K, which is supposed to be the source for the life of Moses. R. Pfeiffer, on the other hand, postulates a document S, whose origin was in the south or around Seir.

One of the four documents of the Pentateuch is D (Deuteronomy) placed by Wellhausen around 621 B.C. Hoelscher has challenged the Josianic date and claims it originated after the Exile about 500 B.C. Other scholars, A. C. Welch and Th. Oestreicher, have assigned it to a period earlier than the reign of Josiah. Edward Robinson assigns it even to the time of Samuel.

P, the latest document of the Pentateuch, was originally assigned to the Exilic period, ca. 550 B.C. Many believe that Ezekiel wrote it. Found in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, it is supposed to be recognized by a formal style, its systematic arrangement, a unique vocabulary and its predilection for genealogies, numbers, cultural laws, and the rights of priests. Yet, outstanding authorities like Max Loehr and Paul Volz have rejected its existence, while Gerhard von Rad has divided it into two parallel writings, designated by him as P^a and P^b.

In addition to the alleged existence of J, E, D, P, S, L, K, scholars have also advanced the idea that in the Old Testament writings there are separate units of laws, as the Decalogue, the Covenant Code, and other legal sections, which as Flack asserts had the result "that the documents in question have become less distinct than formerly, particularly as their origin as the work of a single author or school."¹³

In the twentieth century many of the positions espoused by Wellhausen have been rejected. That aspect of his views which may be called the Development hypothesis has been surrendered, although most scholars insist on employing some form of the Documentary Hypothesis.¹⁴ According to Bright¹⁵ and Mendenhall,¹⁶ Wellhausenism in its classic form has almost ceased to exist. Mendenhall asserted: "Perhaps the most important gap in the field of

Old Testament history is the lack of an adequate hypothesis to replace that of Wellhausen."¹⁷ In place of the regnant Wellhausian theory, new views have been proposed, such as those of the Form Critical School, the Myth and Religion School, the Traditio-historical or Uppsala School. Although these new schools differ in some respects, they have one feature in common: They all repudiate the Mosaic dating and the full trustworthiness of the Pentateuch.

Form-Criticism Evaluated

Herman Gunkel introduced the study of oral tradition into Old Testament field. By the use of "Form-Criticism" Gunkel was able to raise the question of the pre-literary course of the Old Testament religion and history. Robinson says "that the net result has been to overthrow the construction of Wellhausen, by tracing the roots of the post-exilic law and of the interpretation of Israel's historical origin in terms of *Heilsgeschichte* (history of salvation) back into the period of the Israelite origins itself."¹⁸ The materials which are found written down in J, E, D, P, were first handed down in oral traditions, and with few exceptions, were not written till the time of David, or somewhat later. Hebrew historiography began only in the time of David and Solomon, with the account of David's rise to power (I Samuel 16:14 through II Samuel 5:25) and the narrative as to his successor (II Samuel 7:9-20; 1 Kings 1-2). These narratives are considered by the critics as factual and sober. However, before this time, history was handed down only as a mass of legends clustering about cultic formulas which gave them their meaning, and this meaning was *Heilsgeschichte*. The traditions which were transmitted orally for generations are not to be considered reliable because they have been molded and modified in the course of being handed down, so that it becomes the task of the scholar to remove the accretions and get back to the core or the kernel. This means that it is up to the critic to establish the amount of material in the Pentateuch that is reliable.

Does the new approach support the traditional understanding of the five books of Moses? To this Robinson replies: "The historical implications of this study of oral tradition are thus not a confirmation of the sequence of the story as we have it in the Pentateuch. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not the kin, did not worship the same God. The band which escaped from Egypt, the people who

received the law at Sinai, and the nomads who over a period of centuries settled in Palestine are not one and the same group.”¹⁹

Alt by his emphasis upon the existence of legal units and Albright by the employment of comparative Near Eastern archaeology, have tended to emphasize the complexities of oral tradition, which must be grasped, it is contended, before the history and theology of Israel can be understood.

According to Flack, there has occurred in recent decades as a result of the work the Swedish School (Mowinckel, Nyberg, Volz, Engnell, etc.) and that of Von Rad and others, a weakening of the case for the documentary hypothesis. Thus Flack asserts: “It is now clear that the present Pentateuch cannot be fully accounted for by a mechanical process of piecing together diverse documents. Nevertheless, the theory of the four major literary sources, J, E, D, and P, still holds the field in recent criticism in general.”²⁰ In 1951, Prof. North asserted concerning the status of Pentateuchal criticism: “Thirty years ago it looked as if the problem of the Pentateuch was reaching a definite solution. . . . The Graf-Wellhausen theory had triumphed and it seemed that little or nothing remained to be done.”²¹ However, the attacks by scholars like Dahse, Lohr, Möller, Cassuto, Eerdmann, Rethpath, Wiener, Dornseiff, James Orr, and others have led to a serious questioning of the validity of the classical literary analysis of the Graf-Wellhausian theory. Already in 1945, Evan Engell of Uppsala maintained in *Gamla Testamentet* that the Wellhausian theory “represents a modern, anachronistic book-view (*boksyn*), and is therefore an interpretation in modern categories, an *interpretation europeica moderna*. For a right judgment of the problem, a ‘modified’ or ‘moderate view’ of literary-critical type is, therefore, not enough; what is demanded is a radical break with this whole method. There never were any parallel continuous documents in the Mosaic books of the kind that are assumed. That large parts of the material in the Mosaic books were from the beginning or at a very early stage fixed in writing is quite another matter.”²² The present status of Pentateuchal criticism has, therefore, resulted in considerable confusion and uncertainty as to the sources. John Bright recently contributed an article to *Essays in honor of William Fox Albright* in which he asserted: “One should begin by warning the reader that it is impossible to make general statements regarding any phase of Biblical criticism

today without running the risk of oversimplification. The whole field is in a state of flux. It is moving, certainly, but it is not always easy to say in what direction. Sometimes it gives the impression that it is moving in several mutually canceling directions at once. Even upon major points there is often little unanimity to be observed. As a result, scarcely a single statement can be made about the state of the field that would not be subject to qualification. Indeed, perhaps the only safe generalization possible is that the critical orthodoxy of a generation ago, with its apparent certainties and assured results, has gone, but that no new consensus has taken its place. Nevertheless, in spite of confusion and disagreement, certain significant trends can perhaps be chartered."²³

Cyrus Gordon of Brandeis University, world famous as an archaeologist and an authority on Ugaritic, wrote an article for *Christianity Today* in which he rejected the J E D P theory, claiming it is "the badge of interconfessional academic respectability."²⁴ At one time a devotee of the JEDP source-structure of the Pentateuch, he became convinced of its untenability as a result of archaeological evidence. On the basis of his study of the description of the ark in the Gilgamesh Epic, he rejects the arguments of the critics that the P source for the Flood story is from the time of the Second Temple. Thus Gordon writes: "The pre-Abrahamic Genesis traditions (such as the Deluge) are not late P products; they are essentially pre-Mosaic and it is not easy to single out even details that are late."²⁵

Different styles found in a document do not mean different authorships as modern criticism asserts. Just as a lawyer employs different styles in preparing a brief than in writing a letter to his mother, or as a clergyman uses one style when conducting a religious service and still another when speaking to his children at breakfast, so the description of the Ark in Genesis in technical language is no more proof for different authorship from that of the narrative which surrounds it.

One of the reasons why higher criticism posits different authorships in the Old Testament is the existence of accounts that are repetitious, with variants. Judges 4 gives a prose version of Deborah's victory, while Judges 5 is a poetic account of the same historical event. Between the two versions there are variants.

According to higher criticism the poetic version is much older; the prose account written centuries later. However, Gordon points out that in Egyptian literature historic events were recorded "simultaneously in prose and poetic versions, with the major differences appropriate to the two literary media."²⁶

One of the cornerstones of the JEDP hypothesis is the supposition that the occurrence of "Jahwe" indicates a J document and "Elohim" an E document. When Jahwe-Elohim is found, it is supposed to represent a conflation of J and E into JE. However, Gordon calls attention to the Rash Shamra or Ugaritic texts where the gods often have compound names, such as: Qadish-Amrar, Ibb-Nikkal. Sometimes an "and" is placed between the two names, as in Qadish-and-Amar, Nikkab-and-Ibb, Koshar-and-Hasis and many others. One of the best known deities of Egypt was Amon-Re, a name representative of a widespread practice of fusing two names into one for designating a god. To claim that "Yahweh-Elohim" is the result of combining names from two divergent sources would just as logically demand postulating Amon-Re from two documents, an "A" and an "R" source, which no Egyptologist has thought of doing.

The Old Testament indicates in a number of books that the inspired writers used literary sources. But Gordon contends that JEDP are artificial ones, for whose existence there is no evidence. The uncertainty of these ever having existed is shown also by the fact that Old Testament authorities disagree where J, E D or P begin or end.

Excavations at Ras Shamra have revealed a highly developed civilization in Canaan before the emergence of the Hebrew people as a nation. The simultaneous existence of prose and poetry in a developed form is clearly shown by the Ugaritic literature. Eight different languages have been found at Rash Shamra, with dictionaries compiled in four different languages for the scribes' use. In the days of the Patriarchs, Canaan was the center of a great international culture. Thus the beginnings of the Chosen People "are rooted in a highly cultural Canaan where the contributions of several talented peoples (including the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and branches of the Indo-Europeans) had converged and blended."²⁷

Higher Criticism and Conservative Churches

In the first three decades of the twentieth century there were generally two camps in regard to the use of higher criticism as developed by Protestant theologians of the last two hundred years. Liberal Protestantism espoused the conclusion of higher criticism and used its findings in the study and teaching of the Old Testament. Conservative Protestantism rejected modern literary and historical criticism because of its denial of the doctrine of plenary inspiration, the supernatural element in the Bible, the miracles, and prophecies of the Old Testament. The Roman Catholic church with few exceptions before 1942 also rejected the views of higher criticism of liberal Protestantism.

However, with the advent to America of the views of neo-orthodoxy, many liberals as well as many neo-evangelicals have joined this theological camp. A perusal of the writings of neo-orthodox writers on Old Testament subjects reveals the fact that they accept "the assured results of Biblical criticism." William Hordern, in his book *The Case for a New Reformation Theology*, has clearly indicated that neo-orthodoxy or new reformation theology is not opposed to Biblical higher criticism, but espouses and uses it.²⁸ He berates fundamentalism for its refusal to bow before the findings and dictates of Biblical criticism.²⁹

In the last two decades there has been a trend among Southern Baptists³⁰ and Roman Catholics^{30a} and conservative Lutherans³¹ to accept the neo-orthodox position on revelation and the Scriptures. They have also been adopting higher critical views on revelation and the Scriptures. They have also been adopting higher critical views on isagogics which were foreign to their denominations and were not previously promulgated in their divinity schools. Seminaries of American Lutheranism which once rejected higher criticism as it pertained to the Old Testament have turned to the neo-orthodox concept of revelation and inspiration and with it have accepted the view of higher criticism on the Old Testament.³²

In the following treatment of this matter an attempt will be made to set forth and evaluate the implications which flow from the use of the historico-critical method for the interpretation of the Old Testament. It will be the purpose of the writer to show that

in the light of the position of Scripture subscribed to by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in its official pronouncements, the conclusions of higher criticisms are in conflict with Synod's position on the inerrancy of Scriptures and with its doctrine of the attributes of Holy Scripture.

II.

The views of the historico-critical method cannot be harmonized with the traditional view on the inspiration of the Bible as held by conservative Christians in the past nor by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Paragraph 1 of *The Brief Statement* sets forth the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Bible. In the same paragraph we read: "Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35."³³ The "Statement on Scripture" adopted at the 1959 Synodical Convention asserts: "We believe and teach that all Scripture (that is, all the canonical books of the Old Testament) is given by inspiration of God and is in its entirety, in its parts, and in its very words inspired by the Holy Spirit." Again: "We condemn and reject any and all teachings and statements that would limit the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture or that deny that divine authorship of certain portions of Scripture. Inspiration applies not only to such statements as speak directly of Christ but also to such as may seem remote (e.g. in the field of history, geography, and nature)."^{33a}

Both liberal and neo-orthodox writers repudiate the doctrine of verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture. C. H. Dodd in *The Authority of the Bible* devoted the first chapter to repudiating the historic view of the Church concerning the authority of the Bible. Thus he wrote: "The old dogmatic view of the Bible therefore is not only open to attack from the standpoint of science and historical criticism, but if taken seriously it becomes a danger to religion and public morals. A revision of this view is therefore an imperative necessity."³⁴ Again he said: "God is the Author not of the Bible, but of the life in which the authors of the Bible partake, and of which they tell in such imperfect human words as they could command."³⁵

Professor W. F. Albright, one of the leading archaeologists and Semitic scholars of America, claims that modern Biblical scholarship has made untenable this "once reputable doctrine of verbal inspiration."³⁶ Professor H. H. Rowley, leading Semitic scholar of Great Britain, claims that relinquishing the doctrine of verbal inspiration might mean for many the "abandonment of any real belief in the inspiration of the Bible" and asserting on the other hand, "that while modern scholarship has made impossible the old view of inspiration, it does not threaten a truer view of inspiration."³⁷ Eric Kuhl asserts that the critical evaluation of the Old Testament which was initiated by the Enlightenment was only possible when churchmen broke away from the prevailing doctrine of inspiration. Rejection of verbal inspiration made it possible to obtain "a better and more correct understanding of the Scriptures."³⁸ In the same book in which Rowley claims that modern scholarship has produced a truer view, he also tells his readers that "for the New Testament no more than the Old . . . can inspiration be supposed to yield verbal infallibility. Because human beings wrote the Scriptures, they may be said to have been the result of a divine-human process, which in the end means that as far as the human side was concerned it was subject to error."³⁹ Rowley says regarding those through whom revelation was vouchsafed: "Not only did their failings mar the word which God spoke through them, and pervert the perfect revelation reaching men by their means, but those same failings marred their own vision of Him. They also had false ideas of God and cherished false hopes, and their false hopes dimmed their eyes. They could neither communicate the perfect Word of God."⁴⁰ In discussing his view of the inspiration of the Bible, Rowley claims that "All that we learn of God in the Old Testament that is in harmony with the revelation given in Christ is truly of God. . . . And all that we learn of God in the Old Testament that is not in harmony with the revelation given in Christ is not of God. It represents the misunderstanding of God by sincere men, whose view was distorted by the eyes through which they looked upon Him."⁴¹ Elmer Homrighausen states: "Few intelligent Christians can still hold to the idea that the Bible is an infallible book, that it contains no linguistic errors, no historical discrepancies, no antiquated scientific assumptions, not even bad ethical standards. Historical investigation and literary criticism have taken the magic out of the

Bible and have made it a composite human book, written by many hands in different ages. The existence of thousands of variations of *texts* makes it impossible to hold the doctrine of a book verbally infallible. Some might still claim for the 'original copies' of the Bible an infallible character, but this view only begs the question and makes such Christian apologetics more ridiculous in the eyes of sincere men."⁴²

Contradictory Accounts?

In harmony with the belief of the fallibility and errancy of the Bible is the documentary hypothesis which assumes that there are contradictory accounts of the same events in Scripture; in fact, it was because of existing doublets in the earlier books of the Old Testament that scholars were supposed to have been helped to discover different sources used by the redactors or compilers of the Pentateuch.⁴³ Genesis 1:1-2:4a is said to come from "P" and Gen. 2:4b-25 is ascribed to "J". These two accounts are presumed contradictory because they differ in the order of creation, in the names used for the deity (God and Lord God), and in vocabulary. Furthermore, they are imputed to have a different point of view. In the "P" account, God creates by divine fiat and stands in contrast to the God of the "J" account which has God strolling through the garden in the cool of the evening. There are also two different genealogies in Genesis 4 and 5. Genesis 4:7-26 and Genesis 5 are said to differ in vocabulary, style and outlook. Genesis 4:7-26, it is claimed, corresponds to Gen. 2:4b-25 (J), while Genesis 5 corresponds to Gen. 1:1-2:4a. In Genesis 6-9 the critics contend there are two stories of the flood interwoven. In "P" one pair of every species is to be brought into the ark (Gen. 6:19) while in "J" seven of each clean species are to enter the ark (7:2). In the Joseph cycle of stories in the "J" account, Joseph is sold to the Ishmaelites; in verse 38 (E) the Midianites buy Joseph. In the Abraham narratives, according to the critics, there are two different accounts of Abraham's deception. In Gen. 12:10-20 Abraham is portrayed as telling Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister (J); in chapter 20 Abraham tells the same half truth to Abimelech. Old Testament higher critics also assert that there are many duplicate narratives of the same event in other historical books of the Old Testament; these contradictory accounts clearly indicating the use of different sources. An examination of the lists of duplicate accounts as given

by Driver and other Old Testament Introductions at first appears to be formidable. Conservative Old Testament commentaries and conservative Biblical Introductions have examined these individually. Those scholars and Bible students who accept the trustworthiness, inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture will endeavor to explain difficult passages insofar as this is possible. William Arndt has done this in two writings of his: *Does the Bible Contract Itself?* and *Bible Difficulties*.⁴⁴ Examination of the so-called duplicates, however, shows that the majority of them can be explained as either (1) expansions, where the second part supplements the former, or (2) where the accounts are referring to *different* events which have certain features in common, or (3) they are entirely fictitious, because they are produced by an artificial division of a single story. A comprehensive examination of all alleged doublets in the Pentateuch is made by Oswald T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses*, chapters IV and V.⁴⁵

In accepting the documentary hypothesis and the methodology by which many Old Testament scholars treat other Biblical books, the rejection of the belief in the inerrancy of the Bible logically results. This is a fact which all liberal and neo-orthodox scholars have asserted and reiterated in their writings. The adherence to higher critical views on the Old Testament necessitates the adoption of a view regarding the Scriptures' inerrancy which is foreign to that formerly held by Lutheran theologians and exegetes in the twentieth century. Professor Hove in *Christian Doctrine* wrote of the Bible: "All parts are *equally* inspired, are equally true. Even those parts which do not directly speak of the sublime matters that constitute our Christian faith are given by inspiration of God." According to Hove matters which belong to the range of that which is naturally known to man, references to historical events, or physical occurrences, or geographical facts, were written under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, Who preserved the writers from penning anything that was untrue (p. 10). Professor Reu in the revised 1951 edition of his *Lutheran Dogmatics* asserted that the Scriptures are to be viewed from the standpoint of saving faith. "All other items of knowledge are subordinate to saving knowledge. This does not imply, however, that errors are found in these subordinate elements, i.e. matters of history, genealogy, natural science, etc." (p. 54). The Pittsburgh Agreement, adopted by the A.L.C.

and the U.L.C.A., stated that the Scriptures "taken together, constitute a complete, errorless and unbreakable whole."

III.

The acceptance of viewpoints of higher criticism, whether set forth by liberal or neo-orthodox authors, also eventuates in a rejection of the reliability of the historical narratives of the Bible. G. W. Wade in *A New Commentary On Holy Scripture* said: "In connection with the religious pronouncements of the Old Testament historian upon the events related by them, it is desirable to distinguish between the reasonableness of the view taken of the general fortunes of their race, and that of some of the explanations furnished by particular occurrences."⁴⁶ According to Wade, the writer of 2 Sam. 6:6-7 ascribes the death of Uzzah to God's anger because Uzzah touched the sacred ark. However, Wade believes that if this account had been written later, when the Jews had a more highly developed concept of God, they would have attributed this catastrophe to some physical cause, such as heart disease or apoplexy.⁴⁷

Robert Pfeiffer claims that "the tribal memory of Israel does not go beyond Moses (except for Simeon and Levi's attack on Schechem) but even the most historical stories from Moses to David are not accurate in all details."⁴⁸ The same authority contends that the biographies of Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, Elisha, as well as other outstanding personalities, tend to become legendary even before the time that Jewish piety portrayed them as saints or reprobates.⁴⁹ The episodes of Moses' birth, the meeting of Saul with Samuel, or the slaying of Goliath by David are, in Pfeiffer's opinion, classical examples of legends, and that many Old Testament stories have no factual basis at all but are popular explanations of certain natural (myths) or historic (sagas) phenomena.

Is Genesis a Factual Account?

Liberal and neo-orthodox Old Testament writers will not accept the historicity of many of the historical narratives of the book of Genesis. Thus the accounts recorded in Genesis 1-11 are not considered reliable history. John Bright begins his *A History of Israel* with the patriarchal narratives, completely omitting Gen. 1-11.⁵⁰ A. M. Barnett claims that with the story of the patriarchs,

we begin to cross the threshold of history.⁵¹ According to the critics, the early chapters of Genesis contains myths and sagas which were stripped of their polytheism, brought originally by the Patriarchs from Babylonia, where they had grown up in centers influenced by Summerian and Babylonian religious ideas. In not accepting Old Testament history as factual, modern critical scholars justify their rejection by claiming that the Old Testament writers were not much concerned about mere events in their chronological sequence but more with their theological significance. It is the contention of liberal and neo-orthodox higher critics that Genesis 1-3 does not contain a factual record of the manner in which God created the world, made Adam and Eve, established marriage or how sin entered the world.⁵²

While many scholars as a result of archaeological evidence are willing to admit that in Genesis 12-50 we have a record of historical events and that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph here historical personages, yet there are those who claim that these narratives cannot be used without critical scrutiny. Cornfeld in *From Adam to Daniel* states: "We must be on our guard against deducing actual 'historical' information from such narratives as the parallel Abraham and Sarah stories . . . As in all ancient folk literature, the story-cycles of Abraham, Jacob, or Joseph consisted of kernels of historical facts in enveloping layers of legend."⁵³ The inconsistencies in the narratives, he states, are due to the fact that the stories of the patriarchs were compressed from different oral traditions by different chroniclers who failed to make adjustment in the details. According to Cornfeld there are inconsistencies that the compilers failed to eliminate and this is a phenomenon found throughout the Pentateuch.

The editors of the *New Commentary on Holy Scripture in "Advice to the Ordinary Reader of the Historical Books"* believe that the history in the Old Testament is idealized for the purpose of edification.⁵⁴ They contend that the historians of the Old Testament were not critically precise about the facts they recorded but were more concerned with the meaning of history. "They are true interpreters, but not true recorders."⁵⁵

Rowley maintains that while it is possible to accept the Biblical account which brings Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran

and later into Canaan, and afterwards describes his descendants as going into Egypt, it must nevertheless be remembered that these accounts were transmitted orally and took the form of saga rather than history.⁵⁶ "The recognition of a historical kernel does not mean that every detail of the tradition can be accepted without hesitation."⁵⁷

The account of the exodus from Egypt to the Sinai peninsula, from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea, and from Kadesh-Barnea to the plains of Moab is not considered accurate by many liberal and neo-orthodox scholars.⁵⁸ Some Israelites are alleged to have entered Canaan in the fourteenth century, and should likely be identified with Habiru referred to in the Amarna Letters. Those who were lead out of Egypt by Moses were principally the Joseph tribes, although Levites were also linked with this tradition. The Biblical reader knows that this interpretation is not in agreement with the facts recorded in Exodus, but critical scholars contend that the Bible version represents a fusion of two separate traditions. Some of the facts reported in the Pentateuch are not from the Mosaic period, according to the critical school, but are ascriptions from a much later period which redactors depicted as coming from the past. Many words and deeds are credited to Moses which were never spoken by him or performed by him. It is believed that the Book of Numbers, where the census of the tribes is recorded, may have exaggerated the numbers of those who left Egypt. The figure of 600,000 men reported by Moses to have left Goshen may mean a multitude of over two million who entered the Sinai Peninsula. Liberal and neo-orthodox scholars believe that it was impossible for such a multitude to have found sustenance in the wilderness.⁵⁹

The trustworthiness of historical records of the Book of Joshua has been questioned by the users of the historico-critical method. There is considerable disagreement among them regarding the story of the conquest. Those who reject the skepticism which many scholars manifest over against the Book of Joshua, claim however that the Book of Joshua presents a simplified and schematized account of events, since as Bright asserts "there is much evidence from the Bible (e.g.) Judges and elsewhere that the Israelite occupation of Palestine did not take place in a single onslaught but was a process that went on for a matter of centuries."⁶⁰ Joshua and Judges con-

tain contradictory accounts of the conquest of Canaan by the children of Israel.⁶¹

Bicknell thinks that the Book of Chronicles is bad evidence for the truth of what happened in the days of David. However, he contends that Chronicles is good evidence for the beliefs and opinions that were current among the priestly class in the third century B.C.,⁶² the time when these books were allegedly composed.

Who Wrote the Books of Samuel?

According to higher criticism, in the Books of Samuel and Kings, the Biblical student has to distinguish between the Biblical account as recorded and what really transpired, especially where there are doublets for the same happening. The editor in the 7th century B.C. who wrote the Books of Samuel combined two sources that allegedly displayed contradictions, duplications, fusions, and differences in points of view, style and diction. Critics who divide the book into two main documents drawn from J and E contend that there are two divergent views about Samuel, the judge; one document makes him an unknown figure, the other describes him as a great national personality. Other critics divide the books of Samuel still further. They also maintain that there are two different accounts of the introduction of David to Saul (1 Sam. 16:17; 17:55); two diverse reports in which Saul met his death (2 Sam. 1 and 1 Sam. 31); two varied accounts of the origin of the proverb: "Is Saul among the prophets?" (1 Sam. 10:11; 19:24), as well as other incidents. Definite evidence for divergent sources for the Samuel books is said to be found in the existence of two attitudes toward the monarchy; one, rejecting the request of the people for a king, and the other, favoring it.

Conservative scholars, on the other hand, believe that "the careers of Samuel, David and Saul are so interwoven that they present an orderly progressive narrative. Although events are not always recorded chronologically, a consistent plan is discernible throughout. This plan is most naturally explained as the result of one and the same writer (who, however, most certainly used documents) rather than as the result of later editors who simply combined conflicting sources."⁶³

The critical view of the origin of the books of Samuel depict the compiler or editor as an incompetent blunderer. Unger says that "it is more inconceivable that the editor should have left the alleged contradictions and fusions stand in the text, when his precise task as editor was to eliminate such discrepancies."⁶⁴ Those who are not biased by the presupposition of the higher critical theory would be able to make an honest attempt to harmonize the accounts. "As in the Pentateuch many of the alleged parallels are accounts of different events with merely similar features, others are records of the same event from a different point of view. Still others are not parallel at all but brief allusions to events already related which are referred to again because they have a special connection in the progress of the narrative. Alleged contradictions are only apparent, and may in every case be satisfactorily explained."⁶⁵

Neil admits that there is in the Bible a story emphasis on history, but it is history with a difference. The Bible contains a record of certain events which happened in the Middle East between about 2,000 B.C. and 100 A.D. Yet Neil affirms that "the writers do not consider it to be their prime function to give us a painstaking factual narrative, complete with maps and dates, of the political, economic and military fortunes and misfortunes of the group. . . . As in the case of its scientific data, the Bible does not stand or fall by the accuracy or inaccuracy of its historical information. Its writers did not aim to provide either science or history. They were writing theology. The Bible is primarily a book about God and ourselves."⁶⁶

(To Be Continued)

NOTES

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