

PREFACE

It is the purpose of the present volume to show that intelligent Christians have a reasonable ground for concluding that the text of the Old Testament which we have is substantially correct, and that, in its true and obvious meaning, it has a right to be considered a part of the "infallible rule of faith and practice" that we have in the Holy Scriptures.

I have not gone into a discussion of miracles and prophecy, either as to their possibility or as to their actuality. All believers in the incarnation and the resurrection must accept this possibility and this actuality. I seek rather to show that, so far as anyone knows, the Old Testament can be and is just what the authors claimed it to be, and what the Christ and the New Testament writers thought it to be. The theory of *kenosis*, so far as it affects the Lord's knowledge of the Old Testament, is, I hope, shown to be unnecessary, because the facts and the evidence bearing upon the Old Testament support the testimony of Jesus.

I have not said much about the chronology and the geography of the Old Testament, because in neither of these two departments of history are the facts and the evidence sufficiently well established to give us re-

liable testimony upon the details of the Biblical records as they bear upon these two important subjects.

As to the first chapters of Genesis, the extra-Biblical sources now known show that before the time of Abraham the minds of men were much occupied with the origin of the universe; and also, that the account of Genesis is the only one which is clearly monotheistic, and that it is incomparably superior in rationality to the ten or more accounts from Egypt and Babylonia. The Babylonian account of the flood confirms the probability that the Biblical records describe a real historical occurrence and, as Professor Sayce said long ago, shows by its similar combination of the so-called J and P documents of the Pentateuch that the radical hypothesis of the post-captivity composition of the Biblical record of the deluge is absolutely contrary to the facts. The time, the extent, and many of the circumstances of the flood are still debatable; but that there was a flood before the time of Abraham and that the Genesis account of it is correct is abundantly supported in substance by the evidence of the eleventh tablet of the Babylonian record.

The method followed may be called the evidential method; because I have sought to follow the Laws of Evidence as applied to documents admitted in our courts of law. I presume that the *prima facie* evidence of the documents of the Old Testament is to be received as true until it shall have been proved false. I hold, further, that the evidence of manuscripts and

versions of the Egyptian, Babylonian and other documents outside the Bible confirms the *prima facie* evidence of the Biblical documents in general both as to text and meaning; and that this text and meaning cannot be corrected or changed simply in order to be brought into harmony with the opinions of men of our generation. To demand that we should verify every statement of any ancient document (or modern for that matter) before we can reasonably believe it, is demanding the impossible. The most that we can reasonably require is that the author of the document and the document itself shall stand the test of veracity wherever their statements can be examined in the light of other testimony of the same age and provenance and of equal veracity. Examined in this way, I contend that our text of the Old Testament is presumptively correct, that its meaning is on the whole clear and trustworthy, and that we can as theists and Christians conscientiously and reasonably believe that the Old Testament as we have it is what it purports to be and what Christ and the apostles thought it to be, and what all churches have always declared it to be—the Word of God and the infallible rule of faith and practice.

In the title I use the phrase “Scientific Investigation,” because I am trying to judge the Old Testament documents in the light of the facts made known in the documents of the nations who surrounded and influenced the people of Israel through all its history from Abraham to Ezra. Again, I have ventured to

use the term *scientific*, not merely because these conclusions are based on knowledge, but because, after the introductory pages, I have presented the evidence in an orderly manner, treating of text, grammar, vocabulary, and history in what I consider to be a logical sequence. The results of some of my investigations, such as those of the foreign words in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and of the religion of Israel, have not yet been fully published. If it please the Lord to spare my life and grant me health I hope in the future to publish the results of my labors on these and other subjects.

It may help the less learned of my readers if I explain why I have given so much space to the discussion of text, grammar, and vocabulary.

As to the text, or written form, of the documents of the Old Testament, as they issued from their authors, it is obvious that, if we do not have exact copies of the original writings, it will be impossible for us to be sure that we have the very words of the prophets who wrote or approved these writings. In my discussion of the text, therefore, it is my endeavor to show from the evidence of manuscripts, versions, and the inscriptions, that we are scientifically certain that we have substantially the same text that was in the possession of Christ and the apostles and, so far as anybody knows, the same as that written by the original composers of the Old Testament documents.

As to grammar, since the critics date the documents of the Old Testament largely by the forms and syntactical constructions of the language, it is necessary to show that these forms and constructions are irrelevant as evidence of the time at which a document was written.

As to vocabulary, since all the commentaries and introductions to the Old Testament in general, or to particular books or documents of the Old Testament, are full of conclusions based upon the origin, or meaning of the Hebrew words, both as to the time, place, authorship and meaning of these books and documents, it is necessary to investigate the history of the Hebrew language and of the particular words produced in evidence, in order to see whether these words really prove what they are alleged to prove, with regard to the origin and contents of the books and documents.

Perhaps at this point it will be well also to give a statement of the conservative and radical views as to the time of the composition of the books of the Old Testament.

The radicals claim, in general, that the Canon was not completed till about 100 B.C., and in particular:

1. That the first six books, that is, the Pentateuch and Joshua, were composed by at least a dozen redactors out of five or more other books (J, E, D, H, and P), which were written from 900 to 450 B.C.; although, with the exception of Ezra, the authors and

redactors of these five books are alike unknown to history, either as to name, time or provenance. The sources of their information are also unknown to history, and consequently no one can rely upon the veracity of any statement in the Hexateuch. The books of Moses are simply a mythical and confused account of the origin of the people and institutions of Israel.

2. That the book of Judges is “hardly strictly history,” but “probably traditions preserved among the individual tribes”; and that it was put in its present form “by a hand dependent on P,” i.e., after 450 B.C. Most of the critics now admit that the larger part of the books of Samuel and Kings is from original sources written at the time of, or shortly after, the events recorded in them. Ruth and Esther are romances, idylls, or historical novels. Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah have some historical matter; the rest was invented for one purpose or another, mostly to exalt the priestly caste.

3. As to Hosea, Amos, Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Malachi, Ezekiel, and most of Jeremiah, the conclusions of the radical critics as to authorship and date are not very different from those of the conservatives. Jonah and Joel are placed after the captivity; Micah and Zechariah are divided into three parts and scattered over three or more centuries. Isaiah has a dozen or more authors, scattered over four centuries. In all the books anything looking like a prediction is ruthlessly cut out and attributed to

some unknown redactor of an age at, or after, the event. Daniel, because of its apocalypses, is placed about the middle of the second century B.C.

4. As to the other books, the radical critics are united in declaring that the Lamentations was not written by Jeremiah, nor the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs by Solomon. Some parts of Proverbs and all of Ecclesiastes are by many assigned to Persian or Greek times. As to the Psalms, most of the critics now deny that David wrote any of them, and many critics put the Psalms after the captivity and assign many of them to Maccabean times. Job is generally assigned to the sixth century B.C.

On the other hand, the conservative position is, in general, that the Canon of the books of the Old Testament was completed in the fifth century B.C., before the succession of the prophets ceased. As to the particular portions of the Old Testament, their view is:

1. That the Pentateuch as it stands is historical and from the time of Moses; and that Moses was its real author, though it may have been revised and edited by later redactors, the additions being just as much inspired and as true as the rest.

2. That Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, and Kings were composed from original and trustworthy sources; though, in the case at least of Kings, they were not completed till about 575 B.C.

3. That the prophets Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, and Isaiah were all written about or before

700 B.C.; Obadiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah before 600 B.C.; Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel, between 650 and 550 B.C.; Daniel, Haggai and Zechariah between 550 and 500 B.C.; and Malachi in the fifth century B.C.

4. That there is good and sufficient reason for concluding that the headings of the Psalms are as a whole correct; that it is probable that all of the Psalms were written before 400 B.C.; that Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs and most of the book of Proverbs may, for all we know, have been written by Solomon; that Esther, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles were written before 400 B.C.; and Job at 550 B.C. or earlier.

In conclusion, let me reiterate my conviction that no one knows enough to show that that the true text of the Old Testament in its true interpretation is not true. The evidence in our possession has convinced me that at "sundry times and in divers manners God spake unto our fathers through the prophets," that the Old Testament in Hebrew "being immediately inspired by God" has "by his singular care and providence been kept pure in all ages"; and that, when the wisdom of men and the law of God had alike failed to save humanity, in the fullness of time, when all the preparation was complete, God sent forth His Son to confound

the wisdom of man and to redeem those who come under the Law. Thank God for the Holy Oracles. Thank Him yet more for “the unspeakable gift” of His love, who brought life and immortality to light in His gospel.

These studies originally appeared in The Princeton Theological Review for 1919, and after thorough revision, with the addition of much new material, are now published in this permanent form.

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