

The Wave of Unbelief.*

By Professor D. B. Willson.

Theodore Parker was born at Lexington, Massachusetts, in the year 1810, and died at Florence, in Italy in the year 1860. He was a Unitarian of the advanced liberal school. He had studied at Cambridge. Mr. Parker was ordained at West Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1837. In 1841 he preached a discourse on The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity. In it he declared that the Church makes an idol of the Bible; that it loves Jesus Christ as God, though he is not God; that the Christian ministry and Sabbath are regarded as Divine institutions, though they are merely human.

His Unitarian brethren were shocked. He refused to withdraw from connection with them. In view of their own liberalism, they could hardly expel him, but he was left to himself. In 1843 he went to Europe, and when he came back he began to preach to a congregation in Boston. The assembly

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has been described as made up of "atheists, deists, physical and spiritual pantheists, fatalists, spiritualists, come-outers, universal sceptics, and secularists."

De Wette, the German critic, was born in 1780, near Weimar, and died in 1849. Among his writings was an Introduction to the Old Testament. In this he treated the miracles of the Old Testament as mythical. He taught the fragmentary character of the Pentateuch, and placed the earliest portion in the time of David, and the latest in the time of Josiah. He held that the Pentateuch was the work of many hands; that the writer of the Chronicles had arbitrarily altered and changed the history in the interests of the Levitical hierarchy. But he held in his own way to the sacredness of the Bible, and was on the side of Revealed Religion.

In 1843 Theodore Parker translated the Old Testament Introduction of De Wette. Mr. Parker's views as to the Bible did not lay hold of his brethren, lax and liberal as we would count them to be. The cause of an inspired, authoritative Bible held its ground in this land through the greater part of the last century. The great champion for the Bible in those days was Moses Stuart of Andover, whose monument bears the inscription: "The father of Biblical science in his native country." The later champion was William Henry Green of Princeton.

In 1881 William Robertson Smith, Professor in the Free Church College, Aberdeen, published his book, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*. He was born in 1846, and died in 1894. Professor Smith had been educated in Aberdeen, and also at Bonn and Gottingen. Contrary to Parker's experience, his views took hold of many minds in Scotland, and popularized teachings which I must characterize as Unbelief, for reasons that I shall hereafter set forth. Earlier than in America, the cause of an

inspired, authoritative Bible lost ground with the younger scholars, the rising teachers.

All through the Reformation period the Bible was the seat of authority for Protestants, while Rome did not disparage the Bible but by admixture, adding to it both written—that is, apocryphal—and oral—that is, traditional—matter. The lapse of half a century has made a complete change. The views of the Bible which Theodore Parker gave forth, to the abhorrence of his Unitarian brethren, are far distanced in Evangelical churches, not by men who are tolerated in the Church, as Parker was in the Unitarian society, but by men who occupy chairs of instruction, training the rising ministry of the Evangelical churches. The enemy has come in like a flood.

Of course, there had always been inquiry as to how the books of the Bible were prepared and transmitted, especially as to that portion of it prior to the period of Moses. Schemes of literary partition were drawn up, one after another. These did not stop with Genesis, content with studying the question of what early documents Moses might have had, but they went beyond. They postponed the date of the entire Pentateuch, one step requiring another, till the books were held up as, in their present form, the patchwork of late revisers. De Wette, in 1805, had assigned Genesis to the reign of David and Deuteronomy to the time of Josiah. Ewald soon after assigned Deuteronomy and the completed Hexateuch, that is, the five books and Joshua, to the latter part of the reign of Manasseh, about 660 B. C. So for a time the destructive critics rested in Deuteronomy as the last part of the Pentateuch. Then the order was changed of priest and prophet, and the Pentateuch, as finally arranged, was placed after the exile.

Julius Wellhausen was born in 1844, and studied under Ewald at Gottingen. He has written a *History of Israel*, the first volume appearing in 1878. He has analyzed the books of the Old Testament on

his theory of the religious development of the people, their course from polytheism to the worship of one God. This development has been assumed to be as natural in the sphere of religion as in the sphere of what we call Nature. This, however, with the restrictive sacrificial laws imposed upon Israel, was for the unbeliever Wellhausen an immense retrogression from the freedom of the early Pagan worship. So we are told that the idolatrous children of the East moved from Mesopotamia, and appeared in Egypt. Thence they came forth under the leadership of Moses, to whom the God Jehovah became known in the wilderness; and in the progress of the people, this Jehovah became their own special God, and in their later history was worshipped with a spiritual worship, to which the surrounding nations were strangers. The present familiar mode of speaking, often with no reference to the Divine ordering, represents the Japhetic race, notably, of course, our own branch of it, as a ruling people, the Hamitic race as for service, and the Shemitic, especially the Jewish people, as the priest-race of the world. Nothing is made of the words of Moses on this side Jordan to Israel:

"Hear, O Israel; Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great, and fenced up to heaven;.....Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord swore unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness;

for thou art a stiffnecked people. Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord."

The contents of the five books of Moses have been distributed all along through the history from the beginning till after the exile. The early religious history of Israel is thus only what they had in common with the children of the East. The early law of their Jehovah-worship is in the Book of the Covenant, Exodus 20-23. The written Book of the Covenant is assigned to the eighth or ninth century before Christ. Thus its contents were committed to writing many centuries after the events related in the record.

Meantime Israel worshipped on the high places. They were much as the people about them in many ways. Their development appears in the later records in Deuteronomy, with the one required place of service, as laid down in the twelfth chapter. This book is assigned to the time of Josiah, and was produced, rather than discovered, by the hands that gave it to the king.

The complexity of services in Leviticus, with the minute directions as to priests and sacrifices, shows a ritual only reached after centuries of development, and is ascribed to the period after the exile. This seems to be the consensus of opinion at present, though the theories have a jelly-like consistence. To the consequent view of the structure of the books of the Old Testament, many scholarly men have come. They have in truth been led by the naturalistic view of the religion of Israel. The view of the history given by the Old Testament in its present form is stamped as the traditional view, held from the time of Ezra to the era of the Protestant Reformation. This is dismissed as shown to be unfounded in the light of modern critical investigation. The results are gathered up in two

Cyclopaedias of recent date—Hastings' Bible Dictionary, and the more radical Encyclopaedia Biblica.

I have given my subject as *The Wave of Unbelief*. The results these critics have reached are called scientific; the processes are deemed correct, and, once begun, there appeared for these men no other outcome. As the apostle declared: "The world by wisdom knew not God," so he spoke of the opposition of science falsely so-called. We conclude that the whole movement, however formidable in appearance, is a wave of unbelief. It is Unbelief. The men, who took it up, may or may not have been conscious that they were losing their footing. They had been moved on and on. Now they are without a sure foundation. This movement is a wave; it will subside. There have been many mighty movements of unbelief; they have waxed strong, they have continued long. Look, for instance, at the domination of Arianism in the Roman Empire. Arius gave forth his denial of the divinity of Christ early in the fourth century, and in 340 Constantius took the Arians formally under his protection. The contest was long, and the true faith was brought low, so that the issue seemed to be "Athanasius against the world"; but in the reign of Theodosius, before the century closed, the supremacy of the true faith returned. To-day we may say of these transient views: "All flesh is grass...the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever."

I argue that this whole rewriting of the history of religion in Israel, with its new arrangement of the contents of the books of the Old Testament, is but the work of transient unbelief, because

I. This view throws the contents of the books into inextricable confusion. The results are set forth in what is known as the Polychrome Bible, and the various colors are used to show the materials of the composition; and every page is as Joseph's coat. The history has been lately rewritten by a Yale professor, in the way the results de-

mand, and anyone can see the endless complexity. A claim of discernment in looking back through the records of the past has been set up, that is akin to omniscience, seeking to command the faith of men. The unity of the Bible was long a familiar argument for its inspiration. As to these results, we may quote the principle of Margoliouth, the Oxford professor:

"Aristotle tells us that a work of art should be so constructed that the removal of any part should cause the whole to fall to pieces. We can, therefore, easily tell whether such a work is a unity, by seeing what will happen if we take any part away. If the experiment results in leaving two unities where we fancied there was one, there will have been no original unity or plan. But if the result of the first experiment leads to endless dissection, then it will have been shown that the work was originally an organized whole."

The human mind seeks simplicity, and where investigation, however laudable, has only wrought confusion, the results can only be temporary. The reaction has already set in.

II. This view we are considering has compelled its advocates to deny the reality of the whole history of the tabernacle in the wilderness. We turn to Hastings' Bible Dictionary, and find there an elaborate article by Professor Kennedy, of the University of Edinburgh. The whole structure we are so familiar with is treated of, its dimensions, its divisions, its furniture, the setting-up, and all, and the conclusions of this elaborate study are given. First of all, the description is picked to pieces. Of the altar of incense, he says:

"It must suffice here to indicate in a summary way the principal grounds on which recent critics with one voice have pronounced against the presence of this altar in the tabernacle, as sketched by the original author of Exodus 25-29."

Of the laver he says:

"A curious tradition grew up at some still later

period, to the effect that the laver was made of the bronze mirrors of the serving-women which served at the door of the tent of meeting. The latter, needless to say, was not yet in existence."

Of the structure of the tabernacle he says:

"The fondness of the priestly writers for proportion has again led to strange results. For even with the colossal 'boards' of previous writers reduced to frames, the loads of the Merarites were out of all proportion to those of the Gershonites."

He speaks of the writers describing certain parts with "tantalizing obscurity," and of P's "awkwardness and inconsistency" in his attachment to numbers in the construction of the tabernacle. Of the whole account he says:

"The attitude of modern Old Testament scholarship to the priestly legislation as now formulated in the Pentateuch, and in particular to those sections of it which deal with the sanctuary and its worship, is patent on every page of this Dictionary, and is opposed to the historicity of P's tabernacle."

With this conclusion agrees the writer of the article on the Temple, Dr. Davies, Professor in the Bangor Baptist College, who says:

"The assumption of Fergusson, based on the oldest authorities, falls to the ground, when it is remembered that the tabernacle in question had no actual existence at any time, and no existence in thought until about the time of the exile."

Thus these writers agree in arguing out of existence the tabernacle, whose structure and arrangement and services occupy so large a part of Exodus and Leviticus. Professor Kennedy uses the prophet Ezekiel's temple to idealize the history of the early books, these books being taken as, in their present form, subsequent to Ezekiel. The priestly writer, the critics' own invention, is made real, while the Bible characters, as Bezaleel and Aholiab, are idealized. Professor Kennedy declares that the tabernacle is ideal, because no account of it is given in the historical books. That is, Exodus, Leviticus,

and Numbers are robbed by criticism of historicity, and the allusions in the early life of Samuel and in the Psalms are set aside, while the closing words of I. Kings 8:4, which speak definitely of the tabernacle in Solomon's day, are said to be a baseless tradition. The account of the early tabernacle of the wilderness journey, around which camped the host in regular order, and which was set up at Shiloh, is made nothing of, because no Bezaleel or Aholiab in that day could have made it. Yet Israel had come from Egypt, whose ruined temples testify to the skill of her builders, while the opened tombs display the arts of the painter and the weaver. The Pyramids, with their recesses for the dead, were ancient when Abraham entered Egypt. It seems as if the exclusive linguistic study, as of the Germans, narrows the mind. Bishop Moule says in his Preface to Sir Robert Anderson's book, *The Bible and Modern Criticism*:

"At the bar we sometimes find a man's logic swamped by his learning; and so it is in theology." Thus wrote the late Lord Hatherley to me in a private letter thirty years ago. He went on to say that he wished for leisure to illustrate the poor reasoning power of some of the greatest German literati."

Wendell Phillips' lecture on the Lost Arts might instruct these men; but no. The priestly writers of the various strata in the books, they say, had fixed their creation on the minds of the Jews, and the fiction of the tabernacle has thus "dominated Jewish and Christian thought from the days of Ezra to our own." Yes, this is their explanation of the comments and references and conclusions of the Bible as to this place of God's dwelling. It post-dates Solomon's temple, and follows Ezekiel, and all this history woven into the wilderness journey is a projection into the past, as Ezekiel's work looks into the future. Thus they would account for this as an allegory, and that the later Jews were deceived in their apprehension of it as real.

True, the Temple of Solomon is not sublimated as well, and the comparison of the two structures shows the similarity in their ground plan and in the distribution of the area, so that Fergusson has said "The Temple of Solomon was a copy of the tabernacle." The new structure, the Temple, stood to the era of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, whose monuments exist to-day. But the tabernacle, of which it is said (Hebrews 9:2), "There was a tabernacle made," stands in the way of the attributed lateness of the Priestly Code. It must go. It is too powerful a witness against the falsity of the new view of the history of the religion of Israel.

III. This view flatly contradicts the Bible statements of the origin of the Codes. These Codes, according to the new view, belong to the eighth or ninth century or onward, to various stages of development. The early views are termed traditional, as handed down and open to question. We must be on our guard here, as to this term that the critics employ. The Bible itself gives with the Codes an account of their origin. Thus of the Book of the Covenant it is said in Exodus 24:4, "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord;" 7, "and he took the book of the covenant and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." Of the Deuteronomic Code it is said before the entry into Canaan: "These are the statutes and judgments which ye shall observe to do in the land which the Lord God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth." (Deuteronomy 12:1). Of the Priestly Code it is said (Leviticus 7:37, 38): "This is the law of the burnt offering, of the meat-offering, and of the sin-offering, and of the trespass-offering, and of the consecrations, and of the sacrifice of the peace-offerings; which the Lord commanded Moses in Mount Sinai, in the day that he commanded the children of Israel to offer their oblations unto the Lord, in the wil-

derness of Sinai." Leviticus 26:46: "These are the statutes and judgments and laws, which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses." Leviticus 27:34: "These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai."

The endeavor for the so-called Evangelicals is, then, to preserve a place for faith in a book as to certain portions of it, when no faith is given to its own statements, given in connection with these parts. Not so, however, for Wellhausen, for he has no reverence for the sacred writings, while Kuenen says of the principal religions of the world in his Religion of Israel (vol. I. page 5, English translation): "For us the Israelitish is one of those religions, nothing less, but also nothing more." The endeavor is hopeless, and the teachers of the new view, in presenting the messages of the Word, can only fall back on their early training. The view we oppose makes the Old Testament as we have it an imposture as to great and important portions of it, being given to the people by their religious leaders by misrepresentation. Yet these men would fain make the new to be a more impressive form than the old, when faith in the honesty of the book is broken. How can regulations introduced by deception by their leaders be represented as steps of progress of the people? How can men hope to preserve a reverence for a book with which they thus deal?

IV. This view discredits miracle and prophecy as given in the Old Testament. How large a place they fill in the various books, especially if we unite with miracle and prophecy the appearances of God to his servants. These all in former days were made much of, in the study of Evidences. Of late years they have been neglected, and the internal evidence has been given the exclusive place, thus preparing the way for dispossessing the Old Testament of its authority. If a book contains a prophecy, then in

the new view this is used as a proof of a later date for the book; the prophetic element is thus voided. Some who yield on these questions hardly see the path they are treading. Even such an unbeliever as "J. S. Mill admitted that if there be a God the difficulty about miracles sinks into insignificance." (Minton).

The evolutionary view of the Religion of Israel is thus in face of all the signs of the supernatural in the books of the Old Testament. The contest is between the materialist and the spiritualist, and the issue is not uncertain. The new view is but temporary, for it marshals against itself, not only the metaphysician, but also every man's conscience, when it testifies to him of the Judge of all, whose verdict it anticipates. These men cannot command faith for their views. The moral sentiment of the Bible-reading Christian world, a sentiment created by this Bible under the power of the Divine Spirit, will yet make itself felt.

Bishop Moule demurs to some expressions of Sir Robert Anderson in reference to the destructive critics, where the latter characterizes them as infidels in some of his comments. It is difficult to discuss calmly objections that are brought forward by good men, when they owe their origin to men who, as Wellhausen, make no profession of faith in the Scriptures.

V. This view contradicts the representation of the Old Testament given us in the New. There were at first labored examinations of the various New Testament declarations as to the Old Testament, in an endeavor to show that they did not commit the New Testament writers and speakers to what these advocates of the view under discussion call the traditional view. But the labored explanations did not make much impression, even on the critics themselves; and now it is acknowledged that the so-called traditional view was the view of the Jews after the exile; is the New Testament view; that not only the Jews of Christ's day, but also the

Apostles, held the early religion of Israel as a revelation, that God did indeed give his testimony to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, that he in truth communed with Moses, and that Moses instituted by his commands the elaborate service of the tabernacle, afterwards continued in the Temple. For example: the apostle Paul, in writing to the Romans, declares his love to his people, "to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;" and all his arguments, from the Pentateuch, or from the Prophets, or from the Psalms, as in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of the Epistle, deal with the books as we have them, and in the light we have always been taught to regard them. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in all his exhortations to his people, discusses the records in Genesis and other portions of the Pentateuch, and the Prophets and the Psalms, in the same light; while the eleventh chapter, naming the Heroes of Faith, uses the Old Testament history as orderly and veritable. So James, Peter, and Jude deal with the Old Testament. For all of them, it is the record of the revelation of God, of the extraordinary call of their father Abraham, of the institution of a Divine economy, and the foretelling of a coming era, the time of Christ.

To all this, these scholars have only to say, that the Apostles were not beyond their time in matters of Biblical Criticism, and had the limitations of their age on these questions that modern scholarship has solved. We, however, regard the Apostles, with their credentials of signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Spirit, as far more credible witnesses as to the Old Testament than these modern scholars, with all their learning. The apostolic writings have passed through many a crucible, yet they have always been shown to be most fine gold. Their declarations will abide the present fire.

VI. The last consideration I present, adverse to the view I am discussing, is that our Saviour be-

lieved and taught otherwise. How long these men held back from opposing him! Now the new Hastings Dictionary says in the article on the Old Testament: "Both Christ and the Apostles, or writers of the New Testament, held the current Jewish notions respecting the Divine authority and revelation of the Old Testament."

Yes, here are some of his words:

Matthew 22:29-32. "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, or the power of God; for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." These men do also err, yet they claim peculiarly to know the Scriptures. Jesus declares that God spoke, as we have it recorded in Exodus, third chapter. They hesitate not to speak of the limitations of Jesus, in comparison with the abundant knowledge of our day, Bishop Moule of Durham says: "By whatever process it has come to be, teachers and disciples far and wide now regard the Old Testament (to speak of it only for the instant) from an angle totally different (I use the words deliberately) from that taken by our Lord Jesus Christ, alike before and after his resurrection from the dead. To him, tempted, teaching, suffering, dying, risen, 'it is written' was a formula of infinite import. The principle thus expressed lay at the heart of his teaching. It is not too much to say that it belonged to the pulse, to the vital breath, of his message to others, and, what is mysteriously yet more, to his certainty about himself. But in wide circles of our Christendom, it is now openly taken to be out of date, to be narrow, to be uncultured, to make much of 'it is written'; as if an appeal to a definite, supernatural book-revelation were a thing discredited and to be given up." (Preface to Anderson, *The Bible and*

Modern Criticism, pp. vii, viii).

Again, in the sixth chapter of John, we have the conversation of Jesus with the Jews as to the manna in the desert. He and they meet on common ground in all the references to the Mosaic record of the wilderness life. These critics, then, are driven to say that Jesus shared herein the false conceptions of his day. This is said as to matters as to which he came especially to be the Light of the world. Are we not nearing Arianism again? The more radical *Encyclopaedia Biblica* has reached this stage. The article, *The Gospels*, giving nine passages from them says that these "might be called the foundation-pillars of a truly scientific life of Jesus..... They prove that in the person of Jesus we have to do with a completely human being, and that the Divine is to be sought in him only in the form in which it is capable of being found in a man; they also prove that he really did exist, and that the Gospels contain at least some absolutely trustworthy facts concerning him (p. 138). As to such high words, we may well quote Sir Robert Anderson: "It is noteworthy that this boast of a monopoly of scholarship, and this taunt of want of culture, were among the weapons used by the Arians in the supreme controversy of early days. Those who stood with Athanasius in the great struggle for the faith of Christ appeared for a time to be a weak minority. But the undeclared suffrages of the 'whole congregation of Christian people' were behind them, and in the end the truth triumphed." (p. 256). He thus closes the book from which we have quoted: "It is clear, therefore, that the Higher Criticism raises again in a new and more subtle phase the same issue as the old Arian heresy. It is not the Bible that is at stake, but the Christ of the Bible. Is it, then, the language of exaggeration to declare that in resisting it we are 'fighting for our all'?"

Of course these scholars are on an inclined plane, and can hardly stop short of the bottom. They may

not halt, though prophecy must be cast aside, and miracle for one Testament, yes, for both. Their view-point is necessarily radically changed. The supernatural must go. They may possibly console themselves with the thoughts of Henry Drummond, once so much extolled in his fancied identification of the natural and spiritual worlds, when he says in his later book, *The Ascent of Man*: "No man can run up the natural lines of evolution without coming to Christianity at the top." "The facts and processes which have received the name of Christian are the continuation of the scientific order." But the common-sense philosophy will assert itself. Matter and spirit are not one. Man is both matter and spirit. He is capable of knowing and of communing with God. God who made him can communicate with him, and has done so. The religion man has evolved is idolatry. The religion of Israel, of Israel's Messiah, is of God, and the record of it will abide. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." To the study of this we address ourselves.

The present wave of unbelief will pass away. With all their scholarship, these men are blind leaders of the blind. The Pietist Revival in Germany, when the Bible came again to be revered and loved, will be repeated in English-speaking lands. There is such an increase in Bible Helps. In the homes of the people you will find Teachers' Bibles with notes, references, concordance. "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear." If God give his Spirit to the many who are now engaged in Bible study, in the home, in the church, the academy, the college, the university, they will turn in faith to him and to our Lord who bade the people: "Search the Scriptures..... they are they that testify of Me."