

p. 81 In theory, the critics gave these views pretty much unanimous approval; in application, however, they have tempered, qualified, and changed them to some extent, and assailed them with so many objections, limitations and exceptions, as to lay their soundness open to serious doubt. The result has been their repudiation not only by traditionalists but by many who, though out of sympathy with the extremes to which some critics have carried their theories and the cocksureness with which they have asserted Genesis to constitute a web of legends, would have welcomed a critical and courageous approach to the problem. Of those who have re-examined the main tenets of the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis, many have rejected it in part or in toto, some have been satisfied merely to expose its inherent weaknesses, while others have come forward with solutions of their own.

At the very threshold of the controversy between extremists, and shall we call them, the neo-critics, there is a fundamental point at issue; namely, whether the Patriarchs and Moses possessed the art of writing

p.83 And yet it is expressly stated in Joshua that the generation responsible for the enactment of the two events was most eager to preserve the remembrance of them for posterity. But unaccountable as these omissions appear, they are no whit as puzzling as the fact that in the records of the whole period of the Judges we should hear of only one occasion, and one of passing interest at that, on which writing was resorted to, and in those of the two long reigns of David and Solomon, of not a single instance. Evidently the argumentum e silentio is a broken reed.

The argument turns out to be even more disappointing when we recall the dates critics have assigned to the various documents of which they say Genesis is a compilation. For their chronology makes it necessary for us to assume that literary men, living between the tenth and the fifth century, could still have believed that an illiterate Joseph might have been the ruler of Egypt. A somewhat similar objection the neo-critics raise against the documentary theory as a whole. How, in truth, they ask, does the theory of documents unravel the knotty problems in the book? Do not the perplexities remain the same whether we assume one author or a final editor? If R, who combined J and E, did "his work so deftly that it is frequently difficult, and sometimes impossible, to sunder the documents," how could he have been so obtuse as to overlook the discrepancies between them and load his own product with so many repetitions?

p. 84 Why not acknowledge that the habits of thought and expression of an Oriental author of those days or of still earlier times differed radically from those of literary men of our milieu and age? And if that be true, perhaps what strikes us as useless repetition was to him a way of expatiating on what he had already said, and giving emphasis to one point or another in his story.

p. 86 For, indeed, the style of great writers is no more uniform than is the character of their writings. Dante could give us his Divine Comedy, and his De Monarchia, Milton his Paradise Lost and his Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, Goethe his Faust and his Farbenlehre. In each of these instances, though the author is one, we expect, as indeed we find, a different manner of treatment and style. For style is not only the man, it is the subject as well. And it is the latter that distinguishes our two chapters one from the other and is responsible for their dissimilarity in style. But to maintain that he who clothed the first chapter with its majesty was unequal to impart to the second its picturesqueness is unreasonable and goes contrary to what we know of the versatility of genius.