

De Mozaische Oorsprong van de Wetten in de boeken Exodus, Leviticus en Numeri
Dr. Ph. J. Hoedemaker
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This work may be welcomed as the first important Dutch contribution to the rapidly growing apologetic literature which aims at the refutation of the modern critical views regarding the origin of the Mosaic laws. It may seem strange that the country of Kuenen should have produced no more in defense of Biblical truth against the theories so closely identified with the name of that eminent Dutch critic, especially in view of the extraordinary vitality which the old faith has displayed in Holland. But the Dutch orthodoxy of the Calvinistic type, owing to the very consciousness of its strength perhaps, is not favorably inclined towards Apologetics. It is essentially dogmatic and constructive, and delights more in the positive upbuilding of the truth than in the demolition of error. To some extent this trait may be recognized even in Dr. Hoedemaker's apologetic effort.

His book consists of a series of fifteen lectures, which have grown out of the material of six originally delivered in the English Presbyterian Church at Amsterdam in 1893. A glance at the titles of the separate lectures shows that they deal with fundamental questions of method and principle underlying and determining the old and the modern views, rather than with the concrete points at issue. After an introductory chapter setting forth the distinctive character of the present phase of criticism, the author successively deals with its bearing on the Confession, its method of investigation, its basis, its principal criterion, its critical analysis, its historical point of departure, its conception of history, its view of the law and the three strata of law which it assumes. As will be perceived, these are all general subjects; and only Lectures 11-14 are devoted to the special topics of the sacrifices, the sanctuary and the ark, the priests and the feasts. We think it fortunate that Dr. Hoedemaker has distributed his labor in this proportion, for, although the concluding lectures are not devoid of interest and exhibit a more than superficial acquaintance with the problems, yet evidently the author's main strength lies in the general part of the discussion. His work here is admirable. It furnishes the best practical answer imaginable to the contention of some that the only effective and fair method of controverting the critical views lies in an *a posteriori* demonstration of their unproven character. Apart from this being at best a laborious and never-finished task, Dr. Hoedemaker proves most convincingly by his own example the equal if not greater effectiveness of attacking the critical results in their common roots and principles.

It is a mistake to conceive of the critical process as the simple operation of drawing logical inferences from given facts. If this were so, the only thing to do would be to dispute either the reality of the facts or the correctness of the conclusions. But the critical process is in reality a much more subtle and complicated matter. A very influential philosophical or dogmatic factor enters at the outset. To a certain extent this is true even of a purely literary criticism. Dr. Hoedemaker shows how the interpretation put upon the alternative use of the divine names in Genesis will differ according as one enters upon its study with or without a firm belief in the fundamental fact of redemption and special revelation. This factor becomes much more influential in historic criticism. The critics of the Kuenen-Wellhausen school lay down the principle that in Israel's history all phenomena are to be explained according to the law of natural causation. On the other hand believing critics necessarily deal with the history of Israel and the origin of the Scriptures from the point of view of supernatural revelation, and will be led at each step by considerations ultimately rooted in this idea. Kuenen and

Wellhausen candidly admit that there is an antithesis between naturalism and supernaturalism, not merely in the results, but likewise in the principle of investigation.

Dr. Hoedemaker has been sharply criticized by a reviewer in the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, because on the one hand he concedes the inevitable influence of this *a priori* factor both on the believing and the unbelieving side, yet at the same time makes this common feature the ground of a vigorous attack upon the critics alone. We think this criticism unjust. If we understand Dr. Hoedemaker correctly, what he finds fault with is unconscious reasoning from philosophical premises on the part of those who profess to make use of purely historical arguments. It is not so much men like Kuenen and Wellhausen and their avowed naturalism that his accusation of *a priorism* is directed against, but men of the type of Briggs and Wildeboer, i.e., adherents of the modern view who lay claim to being supernaturalists and evangelicals. Remarkably enough, these so-called “orthodox critics” are the most emphatic in asserting that their espousal of the prevailing theories rests on nothing but historical grounds, and equally emphatic in their demand that on the conservative side likewise all dogmatic considerations shall be carefully excluded from the province of criticism. To critics of this class the vindication of a wholly neutral and purely *a posteriori* standpoint is a most serious concern. For on the one hand they feel bound to ward off the accusation that their criticism has its roots in the pagan principle of naturalistic evolution, and on the other hand they feel instinctively that, if the old dogmatic be allowed to raise its voice in the critical debate, many of their results will fall under its condemnation. What they fear in the old dogmatic is the very essence of Christianity speaking through it and repudiating their views. It is an entirely legitimate proceeding, therefore, to point out, as Dr. Hoedemaker does, how these critics of the “orthodox” type too make use throughout in their reasoning of the presuppositions and principles of which they so loudly profess independence. He shows that the distinction between a so called purely historical and a naturalistic-philosophical principle attempted by Dr. Wildeboer is, in connection with the defense of the Kuenen-Wellhausen theory at least, an illusion, the former principle being simply the latter in disguise. That the charge is brought by one who himself would lay dogmatic principles at the basis of his criticism does not detract anything from the pertinence of this argument. In Dr. Hoedemaker’s case the presuppositions are freely admitted and openly applied; in the case of the “orthodox critics” they are introduced in spite of their protestations to the contrary. And it is perfectly proper also to meet the critical assertion that the evangelical faith and the modern views can live peaceably together, with the retort that this is because the evangelical faith has been denied its rightful influence. A living and active faith ought not to be thus shut out from the sphere of criticism.

A second general charge which the author brings against the adherents of the prevailing hypothesis is that they largely fabricate its proof by manipulation of the sources. Dr. Hoedemaker shows this in a highly interesting retrospect of the genesis of the modern view. As early as 1833, Reuss, by way of intuition, lit upon the hypothesis. But not until 1879, that is after almost fifty years, did he come forward to render a scientific account of his early discovery by publishing *L'Histoire Sainte et la Loi*. Whence this prolonged silence? Reuss himself explains it as due to his lack of courage in 1833 to offer to the scientific world a theory then utterly at variance not merely with conservative but likewise with progressive critical opinion. Dr. Hoedemaker is loath to accept this explanation. Reuss was not a man lacking in scientific courage, and his reputation as a scholar, even at that early date, was sufficiently well established to enable him to afford to stand alone in defense of a new hypothesis. The true motive for his silence was that he felt himself unable to justify his new discovery at the bar

of critical science as then constituted, that is at the bar of a criticism which did not on principle exclude the supernatural factor. The sources in their given condition at each point contradicted the new hypothesis. But since then, for half a century, a ceaseless manipulation of the sources and reconstruction of the history of Israel has gone on, on which a marvelous amount of ingenuity and learning has been expended, all the data have been shifted and readjusted and reinterpreted, so that at present the theory can be offered as resting on the most ample and convincing of historical evidence. Dr. Hoedemaker argues that the literary division of the documents is to a very slight extent the basis of or even concurrent with, but is in reality the product of, the application of the principle of natural evolution. Thus is explained the renewed favor into which the literary argument for the division of the text has recently come with some of the critics, e. g., with König in his *Einleitung*, although in the labors of Kuenen and his companions, while it was as yet a question of placing the hypothesis on a firm basis, it had been kept in the background. The truth is, as Dr. Hoedemaker acutely observes, that the results of the literary dissection have, by the labor of many scholars, been made to conform to the theory of the development of religious life in Israel, and can now be paraded as the ostensible basis of this theory. A purely literary investigation would never have yielded such results. And, even granting for a moment that the literary criteria prove distinct documents, they are not sufficient to indicate the historic sequence of the documents; so that after all the evolutionary principle is the really decisive factor in determining their date of composition.

One excellent feature in Dr. Hoedemaker's discussion, important enough to justify us calling special attention to it, is his effort to explain away the difficulties raised by the critics, not so much by resorting to independent possible explanations in each single case, as rather by throwing upon what seems perplexing and disordered the light of the great principles of revelation. What is most imposing in the critical structure raised by men like Kuenen and Wellhausen, is the thoroughness and persistency with which all details of history have been made to harmonize with the fundamental principles of their hypothesis. The critics, it is true, disorganize the Scriptures and reject the harmony wherewith they offer themselves to us. But we should remember that they reconstruct the dissected parts into an artificial organism to which a certain grandeur cannot be denied. The defenders of the Biblical view will always be weak unless they succeed in outlining with ever growing clearness and placing over against this artificial structure the living organism of revelation as contained in the historical Scriptures. A successful example of this is given by the author in reference to the complicated chaps. Ex. 19-34, whose alleged confusion has furnished the critics such ample scope for the use of their divisive methods. Dr. Hoedemaker finds that the weakness of the apologetic of Hengstenberg and Keil is largely to be attributed to the element of false supernaturalism in their theology, owing to which they failed to appreciate what Dr. Hoedemaker aptly calls "the elasticity of revelation," i.e., its adaptability to historic environment and its truly human as well as divine character. The critics constantly make demands upon the law from this exaggerated supernaturalistic point of view, and, failing to find these satisfied, hastily conclude that the true organic view of revelation is equally untenable. We are sorry that the author has not more fully and consistently elaborated this thought so as to place over against the critical notion of natural evolution the true Biblical idea of a progressive revelation. One passage on p. 47 might even be interpreted as denying the latter.

For us the chief value of the book lies in the fact that it brings out unanswerably the antithesis in principle between the modern view and the common Christian idea of special revelation, and

exhibits the precarious scientific position of those who try to effect, or claim to have effected, a reconciliation between these two. After reading it we are impressed more strongly than ever with the impossibility of framing a consistent view of the divine method of revelation, the critical results being given as premises. What "orthodox critics" like König have offered in this line is hardly more than a conglomerate of incoherent beliefs saved from the critical conflagration, a series of concessions and compromises. Mere protestations to the effect that the old faith and the new theories do not to the subjective consciousness of the critic exclude one another are insufficient. We may legitimately expect that their harmony shall be shown objectively by the scientific unfolding of some theory, which, on the one hand, will retain unimpaired the essence of supernaturalism, and on the other hand show how the critical tenets admit of natural subsumption under the latter.