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**The Testimony of the Bible
Concerning the Assumptions of
Destructive Criticism**

S. E. Wishard

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FOREWORD.

*This booklet is sent out
To all Sabbath-school teachers,
To the young people of the Christian churches,
And to all believers in the living Word.*

The work of the destructive critics has been widely disseminated in current literature. Magazines, secular newspapers, and some religious papers are giving currency to these critical attacks on the Word of God. The young people of our churches are exposed to the insidious poison of this skepticism. It comes to them under the guise of a broader and more liberal scholarship. They have neither the time nor the equipment to enter the field of criticism, nor is this work demanded of them.

While abler pens are meeting and answering the questions raised by destructive critics, something may be said that will clear away the fog produced by them and enable young Christians to come directly to the truth.

Hence this booklet is an attempt to "give God a chance" to have his say. The testimony presented is on the divine plan of giving, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line," "lest we forget."

There has been no attempt to cover the whole ground of destructive criticism in the brief compass of this booklet. It will be enough to permit God to answer; hence, in the following pages he speaks for himself. We are content that his voice shall be heard.

S.E. WISHARD.

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I. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD DESTRUCTIVE CRITICISM.

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." Eph. v. 1, 2.

"Be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men." 1 Thess. v. 14, 15.

"He that believeth shall not make haste." Isa. xxviii. 16.

"The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness." Psa. cxi. 7, 8.

"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Isa, xlvi. 10.

The attitude which God's people should assume toward destructive criticism has been questioned. It should certainly be a position of calm patience, that can deliberately weigh valid testimony, and abide by the decision of intelligent judgment. The history and life of the Church for nearly two thousand years should go for something. They are not to be swept away by the bluff, the egoism of what claims to be the only "Expert Scholarship."

There is no occasion for a panic. Truth that has been, and has builded noble, goodly life, is truth still, and ever will be. It is not a time for denunciation. The assumptions of the destructive critics are so enormous, so radically revolutionary, so directly aimed at vital truth, that one's heart is stirred. There is danger of yielding to the heat of a righteous indignation. It is not well to lose one's intellectual and moral poise, even in a contest involving the honor of God and the welfare of immortal souls. But "he that believeth shall not make haste."

The lovers of the Book that has safely passed through every storm of antagonism that the Prince of Darkness could evoke, need not now be moved to hasty utterance. The eternal foundations of truth, like him who laid them, are "the same, yesterday, to-day and forever." The Book, with all its precious doctrines, is here to stay. It can not be destroyed. Fire has not burned it, water has not quenched it, the edicts of tyrants and popes have not been able to break its pow-

er. The Church of God can calmly rest on "the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." (1 Peter i. 23.) Hence we may calmly move on undisturbed in our work.

Further, our attitude should be marked by an intelligent understanding of the question involved. It is not a question of fair, honest criticism, for the purpose of a deeper knowledge of God and his truth. All reverent and helpful study of the Word of God is critical, and is the kind of criticism that the Book challenges. Our Lord invites it, and urges us to "search the Scriptures," which testify of him.

It is assumed by the rationalistic critics that we have entered a new era, that the Bible has never been studied until within recent years. This is an assumption unworthy of scientific scholarship. Critics who have not sought to destroy the Word of God, but, by thorough investigation, to determine its claims, have been at work on the Scriptures in all the past, seeking to know the mind of the Spirit. There is, and ever has been a legitimate study of the Bible. Hence, there are absolutely no grounds for the assumption of the rationalists. The Church of Christ is not opposed to the application of the best methods and best scholarship in the investigation of revealed truth. Indeed, the Protestant Church has ever been the mother of the highest education, and has had an open ear to the call of God—"Come, let us reason together."

It is well to understand that the poorly-concealed purpose of the school of higher critics is not to press the just and holy claims of God's Word on the human conscience, but to eliminate the supernatural from it. The Christian Church should understand this. If atheistic scientists can construct a universe without God, by evolutionary processes, and the critics can construct a Bible without the supernatural, "the wisdom of this world" will have pretty thoroughly disposed of God.

In the attitude of the Church toward destructive criticism, sometimes called historical, or constructive, we must not fail to discover its bearing on the character of Christ. For the final conflict of all skepticism of every grade and quality is in reference to the person and work of Christ. The elimination of the supernatural from the Bible would be an invalidation of Christ's claims and testimony. It would place him before the world as a false teacher, a fraud, a char-

latan. Loyalty to the Word, and to the Incarnate Word, demands, therefore, that we should clearly understand the end to which this rationalism is drifting. For Christ's testimony concerning the Old Testament Scriptures, which will be presented later in this discussion, is so thoroughly in conflict with the modern critical assumptions that it must be disposed of by those claiming expert scholarship. In the attempt to accomplish that feat, they put our Lord under such limitations as would rob him of his character as Teacher and Redeemer.

The "experts" are logically driven to one of two conclusions: either that Christ did not know the facts of the Old Testament Scriptures, which he believed and was sent to teach, or, knowing the facts, he deemed it not important to teach them.

The first assumption puts our Savior on the basis of a fallible human teacher, and nothing more. The second assumption contradicts all the professions of the critics. For they affirm to-day that the professed discoveries of the mistaken views of the Bible are of the utmost importance, and as honest men they are in conscience obliged to make them known, while claiming that Christ did not make them known.

Shall we assume that these views, which they deem so important to-day, were of no importance when the Church of Christ first took form? We may ask, what estimate should we have of Christ, who, knowing his people were in error as to the authorship and origin of the Scriptures, would leave them in darkness for more than eighteen hundred years? Is it to be assumed that he would wait through the long centuries for the coming of critics to enlighten his people? That is what we are logically asked to accept at their hands. It is thus made clear that the issue of this conflict, as in all the past, is narrowed down to the person and character of our Savior. It is well to face the issue calmly, and with a clear understanding of what is pending. Did Christ know truth? Was he honest? Hence, the attitude of the Church should be taken in view of the trend of modern critical discussion.

II. SHOULD REPLY BE MADE?

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" *Psa. xi. 3.*

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." *1 Thess. v. 21.*

"Buy the truth and sell it not." *Prov. xxiii. 23.*

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints." *Jude 3.*

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle." *2 Thess. ii. 15.*

"I am set for the defense of the gospel." *Paul, Phil. i. 17.*

It is a question among earnest Christian men, who are busily engaged in the work of the Master, as to whether we should turn aside long enough to make reply to the destructive critics. It is affirmed that, as the Word of God has already passed through all the attacks that have been made upon it, it will defend itself in the future as in the past—that our duty is to preach the gospel. Certainly the victories of the gospel are a noble defense of its truth and power to save. There should be no respite from this work. But there are vast multitudes of people that permit the critics to do their thinking for them. They are not well informed concerning the Scriptures, and consequently are not prepared to repel the attacks of skepticism, nor to reply to the specious arguments or positive assumptions of the critics. These multitudes are in danger of casting aside the Word of God, and missing the offer of eternal life.

The fact of the increased activity of the enemies of the truth must be known to Christian people. Their organized and persistent use of the press has gained for them a wide hearing. Shall the Christian people deny themselves this instrumentality of getting a hearing for God and his truth before the world? Would not silence be construed by the world as meaning that the cause dear to the heart of God's people is indefensible?

It should be known to all lovers of the truth that the skepticism widely sown by the destructive critics has entered the Protestant Church and many of our institutions of learning.

"Read the utterances of representative men and teachers in her communion, who deny the Incarnation, repudiate vicarious sacrifice, make light of the story of the resurrection, and refine the risen Son of God into nothing more than the spirit and essence of truth; or, at most, the disembodied ghost of a man who called himself a Messiah, mistaken in his claims, but authoritative in his morals." (Rev. I.M. Holdeman.)

The author of this statement refers also to the fact that there are "modern professors of theology who convict the very prophets whom they hold up as exemplars of righteousness, of absolute literary fraud, and deliberate piracy." They "demonstrate with cool precision that the higher critics of to-day are better informed concerning the mistakes of Moses than was he who claimed that Moses wrote of him, and prove to their own satisfaction and the belief of many followers that Jesus Christ, our Lord, was limited in intelligence, and would, if he were here to-day, deny some of the statements he once so unqualifiedly made."

We may not shut our eyes to the fact that many of our colleges are more or less infected with this rationalistic criticism. Some of our theological professors have substituted the theory of evolution for the Scriptural doctrine of creation by the Word of God. Our young men preparing for the work of the ministry are under the influence and instruction of some of these teachers here in our own country.

It is a matter for thanksgiving that we have literary and theological institutions into which the destructive critics have never entered—institutions that stand for the Word of God as given by the Holy Spirit, and believed in by God's servants in the past and to-day.

We do well to recognize the further fact concerning the effort to eliminate the supernatural from the Bible, that the work of the rationalists has permeated the literature of the day. In this age of reading fiction, that form of literature has become a convenient vehicle for taking everything out of the hands of Providence. It has become easy to leave God out of his universe and supplant him with the heroic in man. Hence, the literary appetite, ever craving the human instead of the divine, turns away from the truth that confronts the conscience of the reader with God and his claims.

For the defense of truth we have the example of prophets, apostles, and Christ himself. Much of the work of the prophets of the Old Testament was devoted to the exposure of the "New Thought" of their times. Moses dealt thoroughly with the new theology that asserted: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." The heresy was ended as suddenly as it was introduced.

The Epistle to the Galatians was Paul's reply to the Judaizing teachers who would substitute ceremonials for the doctrine of justification by faith. His Epistle to the Ephesians was a constructive work, in answer to Jewish prejudice and teaching, in which he set forth the unity of Jews and Gentiles in one Church, which is the body of Christ. In his Epistle to the Corinthians he answered their false views of marriage. He shamed their partisan spirit, in which some claimed to be of Paul, some of Apollos, some of Christ. He labored most earnestly to convince them of their false views concerning the resurrection, and dealt faithfully with the errorists concerning the inquiry that was coming to the Church through their magnifying and perverting the use of the gift of tongues. He showed them a more excellent way.

There should be no turning aside from preaching a full and free gospel, nor should there be any halting in its defense, or against the effort to eliminate the supernatural from the Word of God. The critical work that logically leaves us a Savior ignorant of the Scriptures, or, if knowing them, afraid to meet Jewish prejudice by correcting their mistakes, should be kindly, candidly, and manfully met by those to whom the truth has given life.

III. WAS MOSES "A LITERARY FICTION"?

"God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.... Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt!" Exod. iii. 4, 10.

"And afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go." Exod. v. 1.

"Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.... And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses.... And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children" Exod. xii. 21, 35, 37.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel." Exod. xxxiv. 27.

"And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee" Deut. xxxi. 24-26.

We turn now to the assumption that Moses was not the author, under God, of the Pentateuch. The destructive critics do not agree among themselves as to the origin of the Pentateuch. Dates and authors are variously adjusted among those claiming to be experts. There is, however, agreement on one point, that Moses did not write the Pentateuch. It is affirmed that his name has been attached to it to give it authority, because many of the events recorded and much of the history took place during the period of Moses' life and in connection with his influence. But the critics place the *record* of those events almost altogether after the exile, between nine hundred and a thousand years after the time of Moses.

It was once affirmed that writing was not used in the days of Moses, and therefore he could not have written the five books that claim him as their author. But the fact now brought to light, and conceded by the critics and all well-informed scholars, that writing

antedated Moses by many centuries, has swept out of existence that objection. But the question is still raised as to the Mosiac authorship of the Pentateuch. It is said in reply:

First—The Holy Spirit declares by the mouth of Stephen that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds." Acts vii. 22.

Writing was long known to and practiced by the Egyptians, hence the man trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians *was competent* to write the Pentateuch.

Second—The Pentateuch very definitely claims Moses as its author, not once or twice, but many times, all through these writings.

"The Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua, for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." Exod. xvii. 14. This was not the law, parts of which even some of the critics concede that Moses wrote. It was God's judgment against Amalek. But it was written in a book. What book? The inspired Scriptures say it was written here in Exodus xvii. 14. And again it was repeated in Deut. xxv. 19, and that Moses wrote it.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Exodus Moses has given an account of God's call to him, to Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders, to come up to Horeb. Moses was called into the immediate presence of God, while the others remained at a distance. After his interview with Jehovah it is written: "Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord.... And *Moses wrote all the words of the Lord.*" Exod. xxiv, 3, 4.

In the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus God is represented as giving definite instructions to Moses concerning worship, at the conclusion of which "the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words, for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel." Exod. xxxiv. 27.

We turn to the positive statement in Deuteronomy xxxi. 9. The chapter opens with the declaration that "Moses spake these words unto all Israel," giving an extended account of what the words were. In the ninth verse it is stated: ... "*And Moses wrote this law* and delivered it unto the priests and unto all the elders of Israel." What be-

came of that writing of Moses? Was it lost? Or is the statement false? And did some later writer forge the statement, attributing the writing to Moses, to give weight and authority to the forgery? To ask the question is to answer it. "Moses wrote all the words of the Lord."

In the twenty-fourth verse in this same chapter in Deuteronomy it is stated that "Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book." Yet the critics teach that this book, Deuteronomy, was not written until after the exile, almost a thousand years after the events narrated. Does not critical credulity make larger demands than are laid on faith?

The summing up of the book of Numbers, of what had been said and written in the book, is stated in the last chapter and last verse, namely, that "these are the commandments and the judgments which the Lord commanded *by the hand of Moses* unto the children of Israel." Again and again it is affirmed in the Pentateuch that God commanded Moses to write, and that he did write, but the critics affirm that the hand of Moses had nothing to do with producing the books of the Pentateuch—that they were written after the exile!

Not only does the Pentateuch distinctly teach the Mosaic authorship of the five books of Moses, appropriately so called, but all the Old Testament saints entertained the opinion which the Jewish people and the Christian Church hold to-day, that God spake to Moses, and that *Moses committed to writing* the messages that God gave him and commanded him to write, embracing the story of God's miracles, his instruction and dealing with them in the wilderness.

We find the critics contradicted in the Scriptures from Joshua to Malachi. To Joshua God said: "As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee." (Joshua i. 5.) Eight times in the first chapter of the book of Joshua God accredits Moses with having received and having given the law to Joshua and the people.

The Pentateuch is the book which God, speaking to Joshua, calls "the law which my servant Moses commanded thee" (Joshua i. 7), and it was so accepted by Joshua. Was he mistaken? or the critics? He had long enjoyed most intimate relations with Moses, and knew what Moses had written by the command of God.

David affirms that God had "made known his ways unto Moses, and his acts unto the children of Israel" (Psa. ciii. 7). We have seen that the man Moses was competent to write, and did write, what God had made known to him (Deut xxxi. 24). The Psalms are illuminated and set aflame with the faith of Israel, that Moses said and wrote what is ascribed to him in the Pentateuch.

Ezra, Nehemiah, and the prophets down to Malachi reiterated the same belief, sung and taught it to their children. Were they mistaken?

The finding of the Pentateuch during Josiah's reign, which had been lost in the rubbish of the temple during the wicked reign of Manasseh and Ammon, is evidently referred to in 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14, 15; "Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of Jehovah by the hand of Moses. (Margin, R.V.) And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan, I have found The Book of the law of the house of the Lord." Four times within seven verses it is called "*The Book*." It was read before the King, who humbled himself, and prepared himself and the people to observe the Passover as it had been prescribed in "the law of Moses." Josiah commanded them to "kill the Passover, and sanctify yourselves and prepare your brethren, that they may do according to the word of the Lord *by the hand of Moses*" (2 Chron. xxxv. 6). This took place long before the exile, which the critics insist was the beginning of Israel's literature, and after which they say the Pentateuch was written.

Ezra testifies to the existence of the Mosaic law before his time. His testimony establishes the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Ezra vii. 6: "This Ezra ... was a ready scribe *in the law of Moses*."

After the return from captivity Ezra describes the building of the altar in these definite terms: "Then stood up Joshua, the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, *as it is written in the law of Moses*, the man of God" (Ezra iii. 2). Was Ezra deceiving the people?

There are several things to be noted here:

1. *There was a written law of Moses*, the man of God, then in existence. It was not a written law of Ezra which the priests palmed off as the written law of Moses.

2. *There was a priestly order*, according to the written law of Moses the man of God, not according to the invention of the exiles returning from captivity, under the pretense that Moses wrote it.

3. The altar was built according to the written law of Moses the man of God. These records by Ezra effectually bar the door against the critical conjecture that the Pentateuch, in which the written law of Moses the man of God is found, was fabricated after the exile.

The definite law for the place of building the altar, by which the priests proceeded in the days of Ezra, is recorded by "Moses the man of God," in Deut. xii. 5-7: "Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither shalt thou come; and thither shall ye bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices and your tithes and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds, and your flocks; and there ye shall eat before the Lord your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the Lord thy God hath blessed thee."

It is Ezra, not the critics, who informs us that this was "written in the law of Moses the man of God." We will be pardoned for accepting the testimony of Ezra. He does not mean to forsake his faith in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, for he writes in chapter vi. 18: "They set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which is at Jerusalem; *as it is written in the book of Moses.*"

In the eighth chapter of the book of Nehemiah, that great servant of God affirms his faith in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, which was also the faith of all the people of his time. In the first verse in this chapter he informs us that "all the people gathered themselves together, as one man, into the street that is before the water gate, and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring *the book of the law of Moses*, which the Lord had commanded to Israel." Ezra was not to make a book and call it the book of Moses, as some of the critics teach, but to "bring the book of the law of Moses," a book in

their possession already made, and with which they were already familiar — "*The Book of the Law of Moses.*"

"The Book of the Law of Moses" was the Jewish title given to the Pentateuch at that time, and is so recognized again and again. Nehemiah viii. 14 affirms again: "They found written in the law, which the Lord had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month." Nehemiah quotes this "command of the Lord by Moses" from Lev. xxiii. 39-42, which was a fraud on the part of Nehemiah, if Moses was not the author of the book. Again he says in the thirteenth chapter of Nehemiah and first verse: "On that day they read in the book of Moses, in the audience of the people"; but it was not the book of Moses if he had not written it, but the book of another one of the "unknown" so frequently found (?) in Scripture by our critics.

The book of Moses in which this last reference from Nehemiah is written is the command that the "Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever," and is recorded in Deut. xxiii. 3, 4.

But our critical friends inform us that Deuteronomy was not written until after the captivity. Hence, the logic of their position is, that Nehemiah attributes to Moses what he did not write, and proves himself to be either ignorant of the truth or practicing a fraud upon the people. We prefer the testimony of Nehemiah to that of the latter-day critics.

It should be repeated that the prophets and inspired writers down to Malachi reiterated their confidence in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. And he, the last messenger of the Old Testament to Israel, gave them this message from God: "Remember ye *the law of Moses* my servant, which I commanded unto him" (Mal. iv. 4). Indeed, the entire testimony of the Old Testament is in harmony with the positive statements made in the Pentateuch, that Moses was commanded to write, and that he actually and positively "wrote all the words of the Lord" (Exod. xxiv. 4). There is not a word, syllable, hint, or shadow of a hint assigning these five books of Moses to a later date or author.

The presumption, or guess, of the critics carries no weight in the face of the testimony of the entire Old Testament that God com-