THE BATTLE OF THE STANDPOINTS. THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE HIGHER CRITICISM

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J. Mark Baldwin

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BY

ALFRED CAVE, B.A., D.D.,

Author of "The Inspiration of the Old Testament Inductively Considered;" "The Scriptural Doctrine of Sacrifice and Atonement;" "An Introduction to Theology, its Principles, its Branches, its Results, and its Literature;" &c.,

and Principal and Professor of Systematic Theology of Hackney College.

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THE INSPIRATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT INDUCTIVELY CONSIDERED;

BEING THE

SEVENTH CONGREGATIONAL UNION LECTURE.

PREFACE.

WHEN, last Spring, the Editor of the *Contemporary Review* requested me to reply to articles on Old Testament Criticism by Canons Cheyne and Driver, I instantly availed myself of the precious opportunity, and stated, in the April number of the Review, the grounds of belief in the Mosaic Authorship of the Five Books of the Law. Thereupon I received many requests, some from prominent members of the Church of England, to republish the article for popular distribution. But, from its assuming prior knowledge of the positions of the Development Critics, my article seemed to me unsuitable for popular use. On an invitation, however, to read a paper on the Higher Criticism of the Old Testament before the Evangelical Alliance at its meeting at Manchester, I kept the aim of subsequent publication distinctly in view. The following pages are an expansion of the paper read. And I trust that, by studied avoidance of all technical and scholastic matters, these pages may be fitted to give not unimportant information to all readers interested in the momentous question treated.

ALFRED CAVE.

Hackney College,
London, N.W.

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INTRODUCTORY.

IN closing his contribution to the notorious *Essays and Reviews*, Mr. Mark Pattison gave utterance to a reflection of the profoundest moment. "Whoever," said Mr. Pattison, "would take the religious literature of the present day as a whole, and endeavour to make out clearly on what basis Revelation is supposed by it to rest, whether on Authority, on the Inward Light, on Reason, on Self-evidencing Scripture, or on the combination of the four, or of some of them, and in what proportions, would probably find out that he had undertaken a perplexing but not altogether profitless inquiry." The aphorism is important. *The great intellectual struggles of the modern world are essentially* BATTLES OVER STANDPOINTS.

The most serious intellectual struggles of to-day, I repeat, are battles over standpoints.

Trace, that is to say, the stupendous, the apparently irreconcilable, divisions among religious thinkers of every name to their origin, and these divisions show themselves to originate in differences of view as to the source of human knowledge of the Divine. The Rationalist, for example, differs from the Mystic, the Protestant from the Romanist, the Theist from the Agnostic, and, not to multiply instances, the Buddhist from the Mahometan; nevertheless, pursue these ramifying branches of opinion to their root, and they are all seen to proceed from initial differences of view as to the source of revelation. Indeed, men of diverse creeds are mostly what they are, and mostly believe what they do, because of *fundamental* differences of view; some finding a solid foundation, as they think, for their religious convictions in an infallible man, and some in an infallible church, and some in an infallible book, and some in infallible reason, and some in an infallible spiritual insight, and some in a skilfully concocted compound of these elementary infallibilities.

To blink these divergences of principle is becoming, in the controversial atmosphere of our time, increasingly difficult. Hence the *Battle of the Standpoints.* Such a battle is inevitable. Convictions being so various upon so fundamental a question as

the sources of man's knowledge of the Divine, how can we hope for anything else for awhile but conflict as dire as protracted?

Nay, *should not the Battle of the Standpoints be welcomed by all earnest seekers after truth?* How shall intellectual repose be attained except as the reward of victory in a combat fought *à l'outrance?* If the middle walls of partition between faith and faith, and sect and sect, are ever to fall, is it not a prime necessity of our intelligence that we settle—in cool blood if possible, but at any rate that we settle—what Dr. Martineau has called "the Seat of Authority in Religion?" Alas, that in the churches of Christ civil war is inevitable! However, loyalty to Christ itself demands that we lay not aside the weapons of warfare until the mere pretenders to supreme authority are disclosed. There can be no real union where there is not union in principle. There can be no other than a false peace where there is not union in principle. And is it not evident that he best advances the reunion of Christendom who assists Christian people of many names to a common belief upon matters of principle?

Moreover, that *the great Battle of the Standpoints cannot be postponed*, how clearly the literary activity of the last twelve months demonstrates! For recall for a moment what various solutions of this fundamental problem (as to the sources of revelation and as to their relative value) have been offered to us