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*"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"*

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*Editor:* A. McDONALD REDWOOD

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH

A. McDONALD REDWOOD

BIBLE STUDY to be effective must have a sound basis upon which to build. An essential of such a basis is a correct appreciation of the relation existing between the different parts of the Book. No less than sixty-six separate books go to make up the one Volume. These differ among themselves in a variety of ways. Such differences tend to lead the unwary student to a wrong valuation of the separate parts unless he is enabled to understand the underlying principles which combine them into a unity of purpose and idea. For example, the N.T. cannot be properly understood apart from the O.T., for it really arises out of the Old—somewhat as a medallion springs from its mould; or, better still, as a flower from its seed. Likewise the separate parts of the Old are interrelated not merely as a literary scheme, but in the expression of a developing purpose, and a prevailing ideal—not always obvious to the casual reader. The basis, the “tap-root”, of all the parts is the Pentateuch.

To understand the Old Testament, therefore, some definite knowledge of the Pentateuch is essential. But it is not always recognised that, the real foundation of even the New Testament is also found in the Five Books of Moses. The study of the Pentateuch, therefore, becomes of supreme importance to all who would understand the Word of God. This is superlatively true for the preacher and teacher of the Bible: also it cannot be overlooked by anyone wishing to know the Bible as it deserves to be known.

Besides this, there is a wealth of spiritual teaching in these books which holds a very strong appeal for the spiritually minded student. The method of the teaching is largely pictorial, and goes by the name of *Typology*. It is found in a variety of form throughout the five books; whether the subject-matter is history, or the Law, and legislation in general. This typical teaching occurs also in other parts of the O.T., but is most abundant here, offering a wide field for fruitful study.

In the “good old days”, when the world was 50 to 80 years younger and Christians generally made time to “sit and think”

more than they seem able to do now, these books were a favourite field of study for private student and public speaker alike. The results were obvious and productive of untold spiritual blessing throughout the Christian church. No doubt there were occasions when typology in the hands of "enthusiasts" ran riot, and the powers of imagination became overworked! But it was only when the German Modernist Cult finally succeeded in corrupting and seducing the intelligentsia of the Theological World—including the universities of Britain and America—as to the *origin and quality* of this great literature, that the wonderful spiritual inheritance it enshrined became dissipated. The results were moral and spiritual bankruptcy. The Pentateuch was relegated to the Theological College Fossil Room, and ceased to be read even by the rank and file.

But the Pentateuch is coming to its own again. Of this we are persuaded. There is evidence of a growing and intelligent enquiry into these books by the young people of various Christian communities in the English-speaking world. Whilst the so-called Barthian Theology\* has possibly done something to start this movement prior to the War, it is moving on to firmer ground doctrinally and with a sounder spiritual revaluation of Biblical essentials.

How far it will travel we cannot pretend to foresee, but at least it is one more evidence of the indispensable and indisputable quality of the Scriptures, not in one part only but in all its parts.

This series of articles will be in the nature of *Introduction*; the necessary setting for a more detailed study of each separate book. The first essential is to view the Five Books as a whole; Synthetical study must precede the Analytical, the Doctrinal, the Expository, the Exegetical, etc.

TITLE.—"Pentateuch" is the collective title of the first five books of the Bible, derived from the Greek Septugint Version; from *pente* (Gk. 'five') and *teuchos* (Gk. 'implement'), but often used by the Alexandrian writers in the sense of a book or scroll

\* What Karl Barth and his followers did was not so much to restore "Fundamentalism" but to expose the critical school to a withering cross-fire of a positive type of transcendentalism, and related truth (e.g. see his Gifford Lectures, 1937-38)—so clearing the ground for establishing a positive belief in the WORD, as the Word of a Self-revealing GOD. The Pentateuch is part of that Word.

—hence a work consisting of five books. The Jews designated it as “the Five-fifths of the Law”. Its more usual Hebrew title was *Torah*—“Law” (Neh. 8:2; cf. verse 18, and Deut. 31:26); or, “the book of the law of God” (Josh. 24:26; Ezra 6:18; cf. Luke 24:27, 44).

CHARACTER.—As with any other literature, the character of these books is only found by *reading* them just as they are, and so allowing them to make their own impression upon the mind. Strangely enough, this is what many fail to do, being content to obtain their ideas regarding the books merely from text-books or in lectures. But the writings themselves deserve to be given the chance to tell their own story in their own words, even before the student begins to probe into the details of their origin, composition, and other questions.

The main *literary* characteristic of the five books is their plain, straightforward narrative of men and events. Sobriety of statement is combined with a certain vividness of description. Yet there is no apparent attempt at “literary effect” or effort. The supernatural, or the extraordinary, in whatever form or degree, is never stressed or forced, but sufficiently stated with restraint and careful regard to essential details only. Even the biographies reveal thorough honesty of design and moderation in treatment, without the exaggeration of virtues or palliation of sins in any one instance. Facts are stated purposefully; no attempt is made to prove, or to discuss, or to theorise on difficult points, but the reader is given all that is necessary.

Another characteristic is the remarkable interweaving of (*a*) the historical, (*b*) the biographical and (*c*) the legislative elements which make up the bulk of the record. These will be dealt with in more detail later. The first book begins with a terse description of Creation and primeval times; then passes on to the biographies of the patriarchs in the land of Canaan, specially those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. The second book introduces us to the history of the people of Israel, having traced their rise from Abraham, Jacob, etc.: Their hard bondage in Egypt; their deliverance by the hand of Moses and Aaron; the giving of the Law at Sinai and then the setting up of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Leviticus is almost entirely legislative in character, showing the varied divinely-given regulations and ceremonial for

the acceptable worship of God. Numbers traces the long march to the promised land, which, because of a spirit of rebellion and disobedience to the divine commands, was protracted to forty years. The last book contains the closing addresses by the great lawgiver, leader, and mediator, Moses. They are largely retrospective, but contain also some wonderful pieces of prophetic utterance.

Altogether it is a remarkable combination of literary features, and with it there is a certain chronological arrangement, though the sequence is interrupted by gaps of varying lengths, in which the narrative pauses only to be taken up at some distant point. The writer is not anxious to give a detailed account of the whole history but only just sufficient to reveal the stages by which God's great plan of Redemption for the world was to be accomplished (see later on this point). The materials are carefully *selected* therefore, and what does not actually serve the purpose is omitted. The whole gives the impression of an over-ruling Providence, controlling, guiding, ordering. So that we have an impartial and inspired story developed under the consciousness of such Divine guidance.

A *third* characteristic is the pervading high religious value of these writings, in striking contrast with the mythical and fantastic early histories of other nations and their religious conceptions. The very first words of Genesis serve to strike the great key-note of the whole record, in fact, of the whole Old Testament: "*In the beginning God created . . .*" With these words the "gods many" of the heathen mythologies are brushed aside, the extravagant cosmogonies of all eras are swept away, the deification of things material, so characteristic of all pagan systems, is contradicted, and the world and the human race are revealed in their proper relation with the eternal Creator God. The chief corner stone of this Biblical Religion is: "Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is ONE LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:4, 5). This is the divine utterance of the Divine Will, the self-revelation of the very heart of the Eternal GOD. Later, when the revelation has had time and opportunity to make itself known through chosen channels, Paul the Apostle is able to give the final word of the self-revelation: "There is One God, One MEDIATOR also between God and men, himself Man, Christ Jesus, who gave

himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:5, 6, R.V.). The writings which lie in between these two utterances, though separated by many centuries, reveal stage by stage the development of the religion which relates God to man in Redemption.

It is impossible to lay too strong emphasis upon this aspect. It cuts away all foundation for the theory that the religion of the O.T. resulted from some "evolutionary process" on the part of the Israelites, who are said to have emerged out of primitive polytheism by a gradual process of religious *intuition* and so finally arriving at the conception of GOD. On the contrary, the religion of the Pentateuch, and of all succeeding writings in the O.T., is God seeking man, not man seeking God. The reason for stressing this is well expressed in the words of Prof. James Orr: "The tendency of the modern mind is to substitute *psychology* for *revelation*. Instead of God's word *to* Isaiah, or John, or Paul, it gives us the *thoughts* of Isaiah, or John, or Paul *about* God. Even where the word 'revelation' is used (by the modern), it is with this psychological connotation. This, however, is *not* the Bible's own point of view. The Bible is not primarily a record of man's thoughts about God, but a record of what God has done and revealed of Himself *to man*. Its basis is not, 'Thus and thus thinks man', but 'Thus and thus *saith* Jehovah', or, 'Thus and thus Jehovah has *done*'."

Finally, this religious element is not something detached, even though distinctive, from the other elements remarked upon. Rather there is a profound relation between it, the history, *and* the legislation. In fact, the religious is communicated and made understandable *through* the historical, etc. God reveals Himself, His loving will, His purpose of redemption, *in history*. "He made known His *ways* unto Moses, His *doings* unto the children of Israel" (Ps. 103:7). Hence, as Orr again remarks, "it is this which makes the historical element in Scripture so indispensable and precious, and warns us against the tendency to speak slightly of it, as if myth and legend would serve the purposes of revelation equally with fact." It is enough to remark that the God of Truth has ever chosen to use the *true* things of life and not the untrue to communicate *His* truth to man.

AUTHORSHIP.—That Moses was the author of the Five Books Books has been held by the Jews since before the Christian era.

The Christian Church also accepted it without question (except in isolated instances) from Apostolic days. Only since about the early years of the nineteenth century did there arise a critical school of theologians (more particularly and firstly in Germany) who denied the Mosaic authorship and thus initiated "the problem" of the Pentateuch. Controversy has literally raged around the problem and the modernist critics have at times seemed to carry all before them. But there has always remained a body of conservative scholarship which has found it impossible to accept the critical "findings". A large number of able and scholarly works and articles have continued to appear in refutation of their arguments and in defence of the Mosaic authorship—the latest (published in 1943) being *The Five Books of Moses*, by Dr. Oswald T. Allis, late professor of Hebrew in Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.\*

We do not feel it necessary in a Course like this to enter upon any discussion of the controversy. Our purpose is better served by setting down a brief *positive* statement, showing some of the very cogent reasons for adhering to the Mosaic authorship, few if any of which have drawn any adequate answer from the critics. This is not to ignore the fact that problems (of a literary character) *do* exist, and are far from being finally solved. But it remains true that whatever the nature of these problems, the authenticity, validity, and veracity—and *therefore* the essential spiritual value—of the Pentateuch, are entirely unaffected. They are, as ever, the result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, divinely authoritative for life and faith.

What, then, are the grounds for believing that the Five Books are the work of the great lawgiver Moses? To begin with, we must clearly understand what exactly is meant by the phrase "Mosaic authorship". It is not necessary to think that Moses wrote every word with his own hands, no more than the Apostle Paul did, who used the services of an amanuensis in most of his literary work. There is no reason for denying to Moses similar

\* A later work still, though perhaps not so strongly conservative, is Dr. R. Brinker's *The Influence of the Sanctuaries on the History and Legislation of early Israel*, published by Manchester University Press. We have not actually seen this work, but personal talks with Prof. Brinker have indicated a decided conservative standpoint. He is a converted Hebrew.



helpers; men who under his superintendence wrote according to his direction. Moreover, there is nothing contradictory to the essential fact of divine inspiration in the possibility, we may even say probability, of earlier records of genealogies and records of a historical character being preserved prior to the time of Moses. We have no reason to think that God made known to Moses by a special revelation facts which he could readily ascertain by ordinary means. As far as the facts of *history* which were available to him, he needed only the guidance of the Holy Spirit to enable him to select the facts and record them correctly. So that, besides the law and regulations which God gave to Moses by divine revelation, the divine guidance must be considered as extending also to the right selection being made from any previous records. That is, by "the authorship of Moses" we imply that the framework of the Pentateuch as we have it is the work of Moses in the same general manner as the Code of Hammurabi was the work of the king whose name it bears, excepting in the vital point of the "divine guidance" *through inspiration*. This latter is the *distinguishing* feature above everything else.

(To be continued)

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## ALFRED EDERSHEM

HEBREW CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR; THEOLOGICAN;  
AUTHOR, AND PREACHER

On March 7th, 1825, there was born in Vienna of orthodox Jewish parents a son who was destined to become one of the leading Christian theologians in the field of Biblical research, study and translation. Alfred Edersheim's education began in his Jewish home and later in the Jewish schools, where his parents sought to give him the best training in the Jewish faith. Nurtured by long hours of study in the Scriptures and in the writings of the sages of Israel, young Alfred's keen mind was being prepared for the enormous task God had chosen for him to do.

At the age of 24, Alfred Edersheim, a brilliant young Jewish student athirst for learning, was converted to the faith that is in Jesus Christ. This took place in Budapest through the ministry