

SOME LITERATURE ON DEUTERONOMY

Wellhausen once said that Deuteronomy was the 'fulcrum' of his position. I always go back to the centralization of the cultus and deduce from it the particular divergences' (*History of Israel*, English edition, p. 368). The truth of this remark is evident. The documentary theory of the Pentateuch associated with his name, and, on its literary side and in its essential ingredients, still very widely held, rests on the view that the origin of Deuteronomy is to be sought in connection with Josiah's reformation — either, as the older critics held, in the reign of Josiah, or, as is the more common view now, with the loyalists in the dark days of Manasseh. The purpose of this note, like that in the previous issue of the Terminal Letter, is to indicate references to significant challenges to this view, particularly from non-conservative writers. The works referred to are sometimes lightly passed over, but their arguments are worth considering, as they reflect a deep dissatisfaction in the most diverse quarters with the usual theory. It is interesting that more conservative and more radical conclusions alike point to some grave deficiencies in it.

We begin with the more conservative. The middle 1920's saw several rebellious monographs by German critics. Th. Oestreicher, *Das Deuteronomische Grundgesetz*, 1923, found that the Deuteronomic law-code reflected a time much earlier than Josiah; and Willi Staerk, *Das Problem des Deuteronomiums*, 1924, setting out to disprove Oestreicher, found himself in substantial agreement, adding moreover that Dt. xii did not refer to centralization of worship in Jerusalem: in effect, Dt. xii. 14 and Ex. xx. 24 say the same thing. In 1925, Max Loehr, *Das Deuteronomium*, argued that parts of the law-code in Dt. xii-xxvi, xxviii, originated from Moses, and that the law of centralization was involved in the monotheistic tendency of the religion of Moses.

More accessible and better known are the works of Professor A. C. Welch, *The Code of Deuteronomy*, 1924, and *Deuteronomy: the framework of the code*, 1932. Welch, in a careful examination of the legal sections of Deuteronomy, shows the early character of most of the laws and their utter inapplicability to the seventh century. 'Men said that it was framed by Moses to meet the new circumstances in which the people should find themselves when they crossed Jordan to take possession of the new land. In that saying they recognized . . . it was only fitted for Palestine, as Palestine was in that earlier period' (*The Code of Deut.*, p. 206). Welch excises Dt. xii. 1-7 as an insertion, for he claims that the rest of the code does not enjoin a single sanctuary; and some laws, such as that of the King, he regards as later reflections: but the bulk of the code refers to the Palestine of the Judges, or of the early monarchy at latest. Its background is the struggle against Canaanite Baalism.

Professor Edward Robertson goes further. Reference has been made in the previous note to his searching criticism of the whole Graf-Wellhausen theory, and to his own suggestion that Deuteronomy represents the final results of a committee of prophets under Samuel's chairmanship appointed to revise the Mosaic traditions for a reunited Israel. He deals with enactments — the curse on Amalek, the ban on the Canaanites — which would have no point in seventh century times: and he makes much of the fact that Deuteronomy is throughout addressed to 'All-Israel' — a designation appropriate only at three epochs: under Moses, in the early monarchy, and after the Exile. With the last named he will have nothing to do: significantly, perhaps, he does not discuss the first.

It is common now to recognize the ancient character of much of the Deuteronomic legislation, but to maintain that the literary question is not thus affected. It is difficult to see, however, why it must be held that the document is late while the material it contains is early, unless there is some precious theory to conserve by doing so. Ancient characteristics are noted, for instance, by G. von Rad, in his interesting *Studies in Deuteronomy* (English edition, 1953). Von Rad, like Welch, also stresses the fact that Deuteronomy has the appearance of preaching: but his book leaves one surprised that his final conclusion is as close to 'critical orthodoxy' as it is.

Totally different is the approach of a group of scholars whose conclusions on this question are radical. At the same time as Oestreicher, Welch and Loehr were formulating their judgments for an early date, Gustav Holscher in Germany, *Komposition und Ursprung des Deuteronomiums*, ZATW xl.

pp. 161-255, 1922, and R. H. Kennett in England, *Deuteronomy and the Decalogue*, 1920, and *Old Testament Essays*, 1928, were arguing for a late date. The reason which induced Welch and others to date material early — its inapplicability to the time of Manasseh and Josiah — led these scholars to assume that such 'impracticable' provisions could have been devised only by idealists away in exile, free from the necessity of putting their enactments into practice. This view has been supported by J. N. Schofield in *Studies in History and Religion presented to H. W. Robinson* (ed. E. A. Payne, 1942), who tries elaborately to prove that Deuteronomy depends on the 'writing prophets'. This conclusion has been little accepted (cf. H. H. Rowley in *Studies in Old Testament Prophecy presented to T. H. Robinson*, 1950), but such attempts are another witness to the dissatisfaction felt by many when comparing the provisions of Deuteronomy with the environment from which it is often said to have come.

It need hardly be added that on the principles of the Uppsala school, the specific enactments of Deuteronomy are irrelevant for dating it: for different viewpoints and interests may exist contemporaneously.

In conclusion, attention may be drawn to three important journal articles. In *Vetus Testamentum* II, 1952, pp. 349-355, B. Gemser deals with the meaning of the phrase *Be 'eber Hajjarden*, and concludes that it means 'on Jordan's border' or 'in Jordania', without reference to the particular side of the Jordan, on which the speaker stands. This would invalidate the common suggestion that the redactor betrays himself by attributing to Moses on the east bank, words applicable only from the standpoint of Western Palestine (cf. Driver, *Deuteronomy*, I.C.C., pp. xliif.). G. E. Wright, 'The Levites in Deuteronomy', *Vetus Testamentum* IV, 1954, pp. 325-330, examines the use in Deuteronomy of the phrases 'priests' and 'the priests and the Levites'. He declares that the 'priests' in Deuteronomy are altar clergy, precisely as in P: while the Levites are, with two possible exceptions where the context prevents confusion, a dependent class whose function is to teach and expound. This explains why special provision for the Levites, and special Levitical cities, are necessary: if, as is commonly said, Deuteronomy regarded all Levites as altar priests, such provision would not be required. This is a useful treatment of what is often alleged to be an irreconcilable difference between D and P. Finally, the *Evangelical Quarterly*, XXI, 1949, pp. 81-92 contains an article by the veteran conservative scholar, Rev. G. T. Manley, on 'The Moabite Background of Deuteronomy', in which he argues that the author of the narrative sections of Deuteronomy shows a close acquaintance with the countryside through which the tribes passed on the last stage of their journey. We look forward to the full fruits of Mr. Manley's investigations into the origins of Deuteronomy.

It has been possible here only to point to sources, and not to outline, let alone discuss, arguments. But perhaps enough has been said to permit of one general statement. There may be room for difference of opinion on the question whether the rediscovery of Deuteronomy did in fact induce Josiah's reformation (on this cf. D. W. B. Robinson, *Josiah's Reform and the Book of the Law*, Tyndale Monograph series); but to the suggestion that Deuteronomy was compiled *in order* to induce it, or that some Valiant-for-Truth in Manasseh's persecution 'hid his precious book in the Temple and left it to chance', there are, as many non-conservative scholars have shown, very grave objections. And thereby hangs a great deal of masonry.

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' . . . APPROVED UNTO GOD . . . '

We do not so seriously, unreservedly and industriously lay out ourselves in the work of the Lord, as besemeth men of our profession and engagements. I bless the Lord that there are so many that do this work with all their might! But, alas! for the most part, even of those that we take for godly ministers, how reservedly, and how negligently do we go through our work! How few of us do so behave ourselves in our office, as men that are wholly devoted thereto, and have devoted all that they have to the same ends! And because you shall see my grounds for this confession, I shall mention to you some of the sinful discoveries of it, which do too much abound.

It is common with us to be negligent in our Studies. Few men will be at that pains that is necessary for the right informing of their understandings,