

ARTICLE III.

THE COMPOSITION AND DATE OF DEUTERONOMY.

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THE period of the judges was a time of disintegrating and barbarizing tendencies. Often recurring wars and frequent subjugation could not fail to demoralize the people. If they had not lost, during their nomadic life, the culture they must have had in Egypt, they certainly could have retained but little of it at the close of these centuries, and indeed but little of the influence of their great leader and teacher. When we think of the length of it, and look over the effects of somewhat similar periods in the Dark Ages of Europe, we wonder that the worship of Jehovah survived at all, and say to ourselves, It would not, if it had not been for the abiding purpose of God to continue to reveal himself to his chosen people, as said the angel of the Lord at Bochim: "I said I will never break my covenant with you" (Judges ii. 1). In addition to their wars of conquest and civil conflicts, they were seven times subjugated for considerable periods, and the Lord had to send them special deliverers. The habits of idolatry and immorality which they contracted in these conditions would perhaps have exceeded our power of imagination, had not the veil been drawn a little in the closing chapters (Judges xvii.-xxi.).

One result of this period which is very plain, was the almost utter demoralization of the priestly and Levitical orders and their service. Neither the word "priest" nor "Le-

vite" occurs in the book of Judges until we come to those appended chapters which were added perhaps with the design of letting us know what the religious condition of the people had become. And the book of First Samuel is little but a repetition of the same sad revelations. The natural avarice of the people of course conspired with the untoward political conditions to throw the Levites, especially, out of their appointed means of living. Their duties in bearing the tabernacle had ceased with the settlement in Canaan; but the demands of the subsequent temple service had not begun, and perhaps had been lost from the expectations of all. The Levites doubtless had to shift for themselves as best they could, and must have become largely merged in the mass of the other tribes. If they preserved a knowledge of their descent, they probably did little more. At the mustering of the tribes for the induction of David four thousand and six hundred Levites appeared as soldiers.

Wherein then lay the hope of true religion in the nation? It was in the prophetic office. Samuel was the first great successor of Moses. Samuel had divine authority for the reorganization of the nation and the constitution of the kingdom. His authority must also have extended to the preservation and the development, i. e., adaptation, of the sacred national literature to the new condition and needs of the people.

Critics have passed lightly over what Samuel said with regard to the coming kingdom. First Samuel viii. 10 was admonitory, and not specially important for history, but not so of 1 Sam. x. 25. What Samuel "wrote out in a book and *laid up before the Lord*" we may be sure was something extended and most important. Here was a written constitution which antedated the State of Connecticut! Another thing we may be sure of, viz., that it was written on Mosaic lines. There is no doubt that Moses spoke of the coming kingdom in his farewells. Samuel, now at the realization of what was

then foreseen, under the same inspiring spirit, wrote out details which he could see that the time and place demanded. We have here, then, the second element of the law of the kingdom, or, in other words, of the book of Deuteronomy.

There must have arisen, also, by Samuel's time, a necessity for a revision of the Mosaic writings, from the changes in language which time and linguistic growth had brought in. These changes must have been exceedingly rapid and very great from four centuries of rough commingling with the inhabitants of Canaan. A single hint of them is given at 1 Sam. ix. 9 in the substitution of נָבִיא *prophet* for רֹאֵה *seer*. Four centuries of English would carry us back to within a century of Wickliffe's Bible, and we know what changes have arisen since, even with a printed standard and in times of comparative peace and culture. Moses had required that the coming king should keep a copy of his words, and read in them constantly. In David's time this most certainly could not be done readily without revision. There was every reason, therefore, in connection with the consolidation of the monarchy, for revising and adapting to the times the ancient literature. First in order would come the "manner of the kingdom" and "the law" for the people. We therefore place here the origin of our present Deuteronomy. If we are right in doing so, it became *the written constitution of the Hebrew monarchy*. This early origin would account for the fact that no trace appears in Deuteronomy of the revolt of the ten tribes, although such traces do appear in all the literature of the nation known to have arisen after that event.

Again, the historical books contain positive evidence of a great religious and literary reorganization in the times of David and Solomon. Thus, when Josiah set himself to keep the passover, he commanded the Levites "to prepare themselves by their courses according to the *writing of David, king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon, his*

son" (2 Chron. xxxv. 4, 5, 15). He does not go back to Moses directly at all. Again, when Ezra was rebuilding the temple, he set the priests and Levites to praise the Lord *after the ordinance of David, king of Israel* (Ezra iii. 10; viii. 20).

These notices are sufficient to show that the times subsequent to David and Solomon looked back to their age as one of renewal and authority in respect to divine worship. In this connection I refer again to 1 Chron. xxiv. 1-3, where the houses of Zadok and Ahimelech were established in the priesthood by David. With this agrees Ezekiel in his ideal sketch. In xl. 46 the priests are distinguished from the whole body of the Levites as "the sons of Zadok *which from among the sons of Levi* come near unto the Lord to minister unto him." Also in xliii. 19; xlv. 10-15; xlviii. 11 the faithfulness of the sons of Zadok is contrasted with the demoralization of the Levites. More than a half-century later we find Jehoshaphat the king sending princes, Levites, and priests among the people, having "the book of the law" with them, to teach the people. Granting its existence at this time, no one would doubt that this law-book was Deuteronomy. Indeed it has been claimed that Deuteronomy originated at this time, because this king established a central judgment at Jerusalem. But how much more natural to suppose that he, during the revival of worship, endeavored to carry out, more fully than had been done, its requirements.

We come now to the inquiry, What other material must have been in existence at this epoch beside the Mosaic farewells, which were laid up by the ark, and Samuel's "manner of the kingdom," also "laid up before the Lord"? All admit that there must have been some record of the Sinai legislation, and some itinerary of the thirty-eight years between Sinai and Moab. Klostermann argues, with some plausibility, for a different and more extended form of the book of Numbers preceding the production of Deuteronomy, and that this was

largely transferred, i. e., its moral instruction, to Deuteronomy. We see no probability of a remodelling of this kind in the age of Josiah, where Klostermann would place it; but, if Deuteronomy was compiled at the time of the consolidation of the monarchy, the book of Numbers would most certainly be drawn upon for material. Any one can see the want of harmony in the way the book of Numbers now closes with even the existence at all of Deuteronomy. The last verse seems to cover the whole ground as a finality of that which is immediately taken up again in Deuteronomy. It would seem that that verse at some time summed up what are now the first and last parts of Deuteronomy, or some equivalent for them, but was allowed to remain because of its pertinence to much which was left in Numbers.

There are good reasons for supposing that, during the time of the judges, a literary chaos arose analogous to the political and religious. The absence of a political centre, and centre of worship, for four centuries, opened the way for all sorts of disorganization. Tribal and personal ambition would lead to various efforts to build up sundry local centres. We know that there were bodies of priests and Levites for these centres. The last chapters of the book of Judges reveal the fact. The same comes out very clearly in the time of Josiah (2 Kings xxiii. 8-9). These priests and Levites would all desire to lean upon Mosaic authority in their sacred service of Jehovah. This would lead inevitably to a copying, with more or less abridgment and error, of the Mosaic literature. In this every one could do what was right in his own eyes, or was thought to be sufficient for his own purpose. When the period of reorganization came, somewhere between Samuel and Solomon, the exclusive claim of what was with the priests at Shiloh may have come into doubt and dispute. How many like the unworthy sons of Eli had had to do with the sacred writings, we do not know. But in some way confusion enough had arisen, so that the final revision for the

kingdom which has come down to us *bears the aspect of varied authorship* from its recurring repetitions and apparent discrepancies. This it is which has engaged so much the attention of modern critics, and led to their theories for its solution. If we discern, however, in these phenomena the evidence of a style of redaction essentially unlike the modern, we shall hold to a single author or commission of authors. The ancient method of preserving the truth of a text seems not to have been collation and reduction, but inclusion of all that bore marks of verisimilitude, that *thus the whole truth might be conserved.*

An additional source of variants for Deuteronomy existed in the monument of plastered stones ordered by Moses, and set up by Joshua (Deut. xxvii.; Josh. viii. 32). While this remained it would be copied fully or partially, correctly or incorrectly, and the results would find more or less currency in priestly circles. No one at all familiar with the history of literature before the art of printing will fail to see that a great uncertainty must have arisen in four hundred years as to the authentic form of all Mosaic texts. The spirit of prophecy and inspiration must have been needed to guide in the restoration of what inspiration had originally called into being. And this gift did not fail the chosen people in the time of their extremity. The times of Samuel and David were equal to the task.

I take occasion here to remark that the critics who place the development of Hebrew literature, prose or poetic, in a period of national decline or decadence, violate all the analogies of history. Literature, unless the philosophic be an exception, belongs to the blooming period of a nation, and not to its seed-time and decay. Every people of antiquity witnesses to this; and it will require vastly stronger evidence than has yet been brought forward to make the world believe that this was reversed with the Hebrews. No: it was the period of the first empire, and of the dawn of the arts, that

was the time of national self-assertion in sacred history and lyric poetry, and not the age of subjugation or the fierce life and death struggle with the cruel successors of Alexander. It is time enough to look for a thing where it does not belong, when we fail to find it where it does belong.

We are now in a position to go into the details of our analysis of the book. The most striking surface feature is the form of direct address by Moses to an assembly of Israel ". . . this day." When we try to reproduce the circumstances to the imagination, we bethink ourselves that, at the census recorded in Num. xxvi. 51, the children of Israel were "six hundred thousand and a thousand seven hundred and thirty," from twenty years old and upward. The possibility of a personal oral address to "all Israel" disappears therefore at once. Whatever Moses did by way of oral address must have been done in some representative way, and the matter of it repeated by others, or merely intrusted to writing, for the benefit of the whole body. The form also of being delivered on "this day," especially as it is "this day" when they are to cross over Jordan, must plainly be understood as accommodation in the Mosaic original, and retained subsequently as a rhetorical feature. Then, with the evidence before us that the present Deuteronomy was a compilation, some centuries after Moses, we must pronounce the form of continuous address as merely the rhetorical form into which the whole book was thrown, for the sake of condensation and continuity, while at the same time it represented the whole under the original form of the part, as all Mosaic instruction was originally, without doubt, addressed to hearers at some time and place.

But the compiler, having chosen this form, would naturally obscure the welding of the different sections, little conscious of the literary puzzle he was preparing for his successors after nearly three thousand years. He did his work so well that a perfect dissection of all the elements which entered

into it will probably ever remain impossible. But though we cannot undo the sutures to a line to the satisfaction of all scholars, yet it is quite easy to point out the distinct features of the different sections of the book, and also to trace more or less of the matter to its sources. Critics have often remarked the similarity of relation between Deuteronomy and the rest of the Pentateuch to that between the Gospel of John and the other Gospels. The Deuteronomist did a harmonistic work in which he also brought into new prominence certain features of the great lawgiver's instruction.

After the victories over the Amorite kings, at least a month's time was spent before Moses' death in preparation for the final move across the Jordan. Moses doubtless filled this time with the outpouring of his great soul in his final teachings and farewell exhortations. The first part of Deuteronomy is precisely what we might expect from such conditions. Up to chap. iv. 41 we have an historic review from Sinai on, and especially from Kadesh Barnea, where the real wandering began, mingled with words of hope and warning. The incidents of this portion still stand in more or less fulness in the book of Numbers. Moses could not have done otherwise than recall the minds of the people to the way in which they had been led. Parentheses, geographic and ethnic, explain the situation to the contemporaries of the writer. And when we reach verse 41 of chapter iv. there is interposed a section of three verses which can hardly be called a welding. It is rather a separating clause before the introduction to the second section of the book. This introduction is of six verses, closing the fourth chapter.

With the fifth chapter begins Moses' emphatic rehearsal of the decalogue. With a prophetic prevision of the power this was to be in the world, he could not do otherwise than repeat it. Certain critics have made much of the variation in minor points of the ten words here given from the form in Exodus. But who of all men should feel at liberty to make

such variations as would Moses himself? He knew the authoritative original was graven in stone in its essential parts, if not as it now stands in Exodus xx. If, therefore, he saw fit, as a master dealing with his own work, to introduce slight changes of form or append additional "reasons," it should not seem strange to us, but rather an additional evidence of genuine Mosaic authorship.

Closely connected with this rehearsal, beginning with verse 32 of chapter v., is a strain of lofty ethical conceptions and spiritual fervor, based as upon the words of God himself (ver. 28), "Oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always." This section plainly runs on into the tenth chapter. But its height of moral exaltation is reached in the fifth, where love to God, fear, and obedience are enjoined upon the hearts of the people as nowhere else in the Old Testament, and scarcely in the New. This section may well have belonged to Moses' farewell. In fact we can hardly conceive it to have proceeded from any other source. The "old man eloquent" of the Bible, through whom, a generation before, had been given to the world that form of the divine law which was to shape the moral life of the ages in their advance and consummation, was the man of the whole human race to say: "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. And these words . . . thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up,"—words which the Son of God himself, ages after, could but re-echo as a part of his gospel.

But with the sixth verse of the tenth chapter the welding process begins. We have repetitions which look like a gathering up of snatches from variant accounts, until, at the twelfth chapter, we reach an entirely different style of thought,

and details of administration are enumerated which, as I have said, are entirely unsuited to a solemn and final farewell. This portion of the book runs on to chapter xxviii., where the lofty tone of the section preceding the central part is resumed. The style is again admonitory, as can hardly have failed to be the case with the actual Mosaic leave-taking. We are struck with the similarity of Moses' forebodings to those of the apostle Paul as he drew near "the time of his departure."

This return in the last of the book to the tone of the earlier parts has led Klostermann to his conclusion that the Book of the Covenant has been made to include, as in a frame, a section of a book of history and practical precepts. The "covenant," also, gets its proper form (xxix. 1) by joining this last part of the book with the first, to the exclusion of the intermediate details which must have constituted a portion of the general instruction of the wilderness period.

The intermediate portion consists of practical directions on more than sixty different topics, interspersed with exhortations to obedience. Here it is that we may suppose that we have Samuel's "manner of the kingdom" as an elaboration of what Moses had said on this topic. And here we have "the words which Moses spake unto all Israel in the wilderness in the Arabah over against Suph, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, by Di-zahab." The author has combined all into a continuous fundamental "law," which, in our opinion, is what was known as "the law" during all the regal period, or, if not, at least after the reign of Solomon. The details can most of them be traced here and there in the other books of the Pentateuch, either in identical form or developed as the spirit of prophecy may have directed.

We have in Deuteronomy, therefore, a culmination and codification of what the books of Exodus and Numbers give us in the circumstances of its origin and historic sequence. Deuteronomy was the working law both for magistrates and

people. This codification would not, of course, take from the sacredness of what Moses had written and put in charge of the priests just before his death—the final covenant. That must have been preserved in the original, or by copy, as long as the ark with its sacred arcana. And, as has been said, the bringing out of this revered original—the *ipsissima verba* of Moses—would have been quite sufficient to produce the highest pitch of the reforming excitement in the time of Josiah.

It remains to consider the two lyrical compositions with which the work of Moses concludes. "The Song" has been the subject of much criticism independently of the rest of the book, as also "the Blessing." The general verdict in regard to the former has been that it is as old at least as the rest of the book, even from those who have denied its Mosaic origin. There is abundant reason for regarding it, like the rest of the book, as of Mosaic origin, but having been subjected to subsequent editing under prophetic authority. Such lyrical compositions are characteristic of early non-literary ages, and have always been the first steps from purely oral tradition to literary records. In the first place, the Song is thoroughly in the spirit of Deuteronomy, and may almost be called a summing up of its moral instructions. Besides, it is woven into its very texture by chap. xxxi. 19–29.

Again, it supplements in an essential manner the method of Deuteronomy for keeping in mind the law of God, so as to make it possible to fulfil the directions for the constant instruction of the young. We have spoken of the apparent insufficiency of the public reading of the law once in seven years. But with the great truths in a form easily committed to memory the case is changed. Moses was bidden to "teach the song to the children of Israel, put it in their mouths as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed." The Song and the Blessing were probably not alone in this use; but we must suppose that other poetic

compositions by Moses and different authors, like those spoken at the Red Sea and the books of "the wars of Jehovah" and of "Jasher," were in constant repetition among the people. Everything, therefore, points to Moses as the author of the original of this song.

But if we find that it must be held to be an indissoluble part of Deuteronomy, we gain new evidence that Deuteronomy, as we know it, was known to the prophets Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. Their references to it are frequent and clear, considering its length, just as we should expect if the song was in the mouths of the many. (See Isa. i. 2; xxvii. 11; xxx. 9, 17; Amos v. 25, 26; Hosea iv. 7; vi. 3; ix. 10.) Of all literature, however, popular lyrics have ever been most subject to change, both accidentally in passing from mouth to mouth, and of purpose in revision and adaptation. It is not strange, therefore, that some have seemed to detect late forms in the Song. Indeed, it would be strange if they were not there. Nor would it be strange if the matter itself had undergone any changes that did no violence to the original spirit and intent.

The Blessing has much more of the appearance of an appendix to the rest of the book, especially as it occurs in the midst of the account of the death of Moses.

It is like, in this, the blessing of Jacob, which is a part of the narrative of the end of that patriarch. A number of writers have discussed the two together. Professor H. Zimmer,¹ perhaps the latest critic of the blessing of Jacob, speaks of the "blessing of Moses" as "dependent throughout" upon the former. This critic seeks to relate these poems with Assyrian poetry based upon the mythological beast-forms in the zodiac. One would think from such writers that when animal forms were placed in the sky, they left the earth altogether, and that thereafter all illustrations drawn from the animal kingdom had to be taken from the zodiac! There is

¹ *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, Aug. 1892.

no doubt that the astrology and the astronomical mythology of the East were known to the Hebrews, and that their thought was more or less affected by this knowledge, but not so but that illustrations from the animals occurred to them at first hand. The lion, e. g., is used for illustration in the Old Testament some eighty times, and the wild bull and serpent frequently. The astronomers went to the animals for illustrations, and so must every other class of thinkers have done with a like independence.

The thought of the Blessing, from the twenty-sixth verse on, seems supplementary to the Song. This latter is made up largely of foreboding and threatening, and does not by itself seem to be exactly what the great leader would have been likely to leave for the thoughts and mouths of all, but, taken in connection with the last section of the Blessing, all would be complete, and the goodness of Jehovah and the prosperity of his faithful people be set in strong bright colors. In these features, too, we begin to see evidence of the date of the Blessing. Whether we regard it as prophecy or as idealized history, it certainly could not have been written after the revolt of the northern tribes. It is as a whole that "Israel dwelleth in safety." "Israel is happy . . . saved by Jehovah the shield of thy help." No such period of prosperity as is here depicted can be pointed out before the reign of David. It is to be remarked, also, that the word *Jeshurun*, a poetic designation of the people, occurs only in the Song and the Blessing in the Pentateuch—a circumstance which seems to place the two together in time.

We are unable to think, however, that Moses wrote or spoke the Blessing entirely in its present shape. The omission of any mention of the tribe of Simeon would seem decisive of this. According to the preceding narrative, Moses had just assigned Simeon his part in the great drama of blessing and cursing on Mounts Gerizim and Ebal; and we cannot suppose that he would immediately after pass this tribe

entirely in a special mention of all by name. To suppose that all the text in which Simeon was mentioned has accidentally fallen away from its connection is a desperate refuge. The ideal form does not so easily disappear from literature. Indeed the ideal Simeon reappears in Ezekiel and Revelation. It is also quite certain that a writer who was aiming to pass off a deceptive fiction as the work of Moses, would never have thought of omitting one of the tribes. In this light the omission of the name of Simeon is strong evidence of the real historic character of the composition at its true date. We know that Simeon declined in importance and became more or less merged in Judah; and here probably lies the key both to the omission and the date of the Blessing in its present shape.

The blessing of Jacob had said: "I will divide them [Simeon and Levi] in Jacob and scatter them in Israel." In the sin and destruction by plague in the matter of Baal-Peor, Simeon seems to have had a large share (Num. xxv. 14). When the division of territory for the tribes was made, Simeon's share was "*in the midst of the inheritance of the children of Judah*" (Josh. xix. 1, 9). The chronicler says that Simeon "did not multiply like to the children of Judah" (1 Chron. iv. 27). But in David's time they brought out a respectable contingent for his installation in the kingdom (1 Chron. xii. 25); and there were Simeonites in Hezekiah's time (1 Chron. iv. 41-43); and in Josiah's time (2 Chron. xxxiv. 6); and in the time of the book of Judith (vi. 15). It therefore seems a not unreasonable conclusion that the lowest point in Simeon's history was during the period of the wars and oppression under the judges. If, in the eyes of their contemporaries, they ever became practically one with Judah, their part in the "Blessing of the tribes," supposing it to have started with Moses, may have been dropped.

Then, in the flowering of the monarchy under David, Simeon may have regained something of its lost position.

But still Simeon does not appear to have been accounted of at all in the revolt under Jeroboam. If he had been strong and so disposed, his position in the very bowels of Judah would have enabled him to have paralyzed David's kingdom; but we hear of no disturbance of this kind. Thus while no demonstration of the exact state of the case seems possible, yet the omission of Simeon's name among the tribes must be said to correspond in a general way with the facts of history after the time of Joshua.

In conclusion it is pertinent to remark that the placing the date of Deuteronomy not later than the reign of Solomon affords the only rational explanation of the fact that the Pentateuch entire, and none of the later Hebrew scriptures, was received by the Samaritans.