

ARTICLE VI.

PROFESSOR EISELEN ON THE BOOKS OF THE
PENTATEUCH.

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THERE lies before me a new book¹ by Professor F. C. Eiselen which is devoted to an introduction to the Pentateuch. It is the first of four volumes which are intended to deal with the Old Testament; the Law, Prophets, and Writings forming respectively the subjects of the first three, while the fourth will be devoted to the Old Testament Canon and Text, and to a consideration of the proper place of the Old Testament in the light of the conclusions reached by the professor. The temper of the discussion appears from a paragraph of the Preface:—

“On questions regarding which scholars are not in agreement the author tries to state his own view and to present the reasons upon which his view is based. And it may be stated in passing that he holds his views not because they agree with the views of other scholars, but simply because, to his way of thinking, they offer the most satisfactory explanation of all the facts in the case. At the same time he endeavors to be fair in presenting the arguments used in support of divergent opinions, for he believes that every student should have the

¹The Books of the Pentateuch: Their Origin, Contents, and Significance. (Biblical Introduction Series.) By Frederick Carl Eiselen, Professor of Old Testament Interpretation in Garrett Biblical Institute. New York: The Methodist Book Concern. Pp. 351. \$1.50, net.

opportunity of estimating for himself the value of the arguments and of drawing his own conclusions" (p. 8).

Unhappily, however, though the author means well, it does not seem ever to have occurred to him that it is impossible for him to be fair to arguments with which he is totally unacquainted. And so it comes about that throughout the volume he is at fault through not having read or considered the facts and arguments which have been advanced of recent years — often in writings to which he himself refers. If Eiselen really wishes to carry out his purpose, let him undertake a complete and careful study of the literature of the last few years, deliberately weighing the points that have been made on each side and seeing how far they have been met by the other. He would learn of phenomena of which he does not yet entertain the slightest suspicion.

The study of the Pentateuch is at present in a stage of transition. For many years all who aspired to be regarded as "modern" had to do obeisance to the documentary and evolutionary theories. These were based on three main props: indifference to the facts of the textual history, the scantiness of the archæological materials, and absence of the most rudimentary training in legal methods. Within the last few years much has been done to remove the bases of the theories. Textual investigations have been begun which have already revolutionized our conceptions of the transmission of the books of the Old Testament, and have shown the methods of the school of Astruc and Eichhorn to be radically unsound; our archæological knowledge has increased so greatly as to enable us to locate the exact position of the Exodus in Egyptian history, and to vindicate the minute accuracy of large portions of the Biblical narrative; and the application of legal methods has revealed the main fallacies of the school of critics whom

Eiselen follows. Before he continues his publications he should familiarize himself with the present position in regard to all these matters. He will find that the articles which have appeared in the *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* during the last ten years will enable him to see entirely fresh aspects of the problems with which he seeks to deal.

A brief summary of some of the more important conclusions to which textual study appears to be leading us will probably go far to assist our author in grappling with his task. It is the more necessary to draw his attention to these, because they would naturally fall to be considered in the fourth volume of the series.

First, then, it has become clear that the views of the mutual relations of the various ancient texts which have held the field since the appearance of Gesenius's monograph on the Samaritan Pentateuch in 1815 are not in accordance with the facts. There was a long controversy about the relative merits of the Massoretic and Samaritan texts, and the method pursued was to compare the two and then to consult the LXX at the points of divergence. That the main differences between the LXX and the Massoretic text might be where the Hebrew and Samaritan agreed does not seem to have occurred to the disputants. Hence the line of their inquiry was fundamentally vicious, and their results were necessarily unsound. Now it is important to notice that, though this point has been repeatedly pressed by the present writer, and though Skinner, at any rate, has sought to deal with his earlier discussion of this problem, no follower of Gesenius has ventured to mention this aspect of the matter or to defend his procedure. Let Eiselen carefully compare the discussions in the *Expositor* for September, 1911, and the *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* for April and October, 1914, and January, 1915, on the one side, with Skin-

ner's arguments, on the other, and weigh the different contentions. He will find that Skinner has mentioned only those points that he thought he could handle, leaving aside the main arguments against the current views, and in particular saying no word in defense of Gesenius's method.

The case is not very different with the other ancient texts. The Vulgate proves clearly that Jerome still knew a Hebrew that differed in material respects from our Massoretic text.

Questions of this sort go to the root of our whole conception of the textual history and to the basis of most modern theories, and require the most earnest and searching consideration from every serious Bible student.

A second matter that calls for deep study is the view which finds even increasing support from the evidence that the Old Testament text has been deliberately emended to accord with the interpretation placed on certain Scriptural passages. It has long been recognized that changes have been made from motives of this kind. An account of some of these will be found, for instance, in C. D. Ginsburg's Introduction to the Massoretico-critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible (1897), pp. 345-469. Thus in Isa. xix. 18 "city of righteousness" was changed, and our Massoretic text has "city of destruction" (*op. cit.*, pp. 406 f.). Again, "The most significant changes are those connected with Baal. The appellative Baal, which denotes *Lord, owner*, like the appellatives *Adon, Lord, owner*, and *El, the mighty*, was originally one of the names of the God of Israel. This is evident from the fact that names compounded with Baal are of frequent occurrence in the families of Saul and David. . . . But Baal was also the name of the supreme deity of the surrounding nations" (pp. 400 f.). After enlarging on this, Ginsburg quotes Hos. ii. 16 f. and continues: "It is due to this declaration that the authorita-

tive custodians of the sacred text interpreted the precept, 'and make no mention of the names of other gods' (Ex. xxiii. 13), in a most rigid sense as implying that the very name of Baal should be cancelled even in compound proper names. For this reason names compounded with Baal have been altered either in a good sense or principally by way of ridicule into compounds with *Bosheth* = *shame*' (p. 401). He then cites instances.¹

What is new is the recognition that this influence has been much more potent and more widely spread than had been generally supposed, and that it has been one of the main factors in the formation of the text from which our Hebrew Bible is descended. It is unnecessary to traverse at length the whole of the ground that has been covered in the articles that have appeared on the subject in this Review during the last two and a half years. It will be sufficient to introduce Eiselen to the topic by considering a few of the more important passages. The removal of Baal from proper names was merely one manifestation of the influence. The word itself was common in the original text of all the earlier books, and its removal and the various substitutions for it are due to a regular principle of emendation by supposed divine command consequent on the interpretations placed on particular passages.

Perhaps no more convincing example can be found than the narrative in 1 Kings xxii. 6 and 2 Chron. xviii. 5. Take the passage in the earlier book. Ahab, the worshiper of Baal, summons four hundred prophets who advise him in the name of some deity. In the Massoretic text it is the Lord, but twenty-nine MSS. and a number of Versions read the Tetra-

¹ His whole discussion should be read, but it is too long to transcribe.

grammaton, and Chronicles has God. Then in the following verse we get the curious question, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord that we may ask of him?" The Massoretic text inserts "yet," but this is missing in the best Greek authorities and the Vulgate. Now consider: If four hundred prophets of Jehoshaphat's God had already been consulted, what sense can be obtained from his question? No commentator is able to make anything out of the passage. But if the original reading was Baal, all becomes plain. Ahab was a worshiper of the Baal, and he consulted the court prophets. Jehoshaphat, on the other hand, adhered to his ancestral Divinity, and it was probably on account of this that he was so highly esteemed by the Chronicler. He was not satisfied with the opinion of the prophets of the Baal, but desired an oracle from his own God. Hence his question. When Baal was removed from the Biblical texts there were different substitutions. This caused the variations of readings in our authorities. The word "yet" was a later attempt to make sense of a verse which, after the expression "the Baal" had been removed, was obviously nonsensical.

It is not necessary to repeat once more the many evidences which have been collected in earlier articles of this series that the Old Testament has been systematically emended in obedience to what was held to be Divine command. Once attention is drawn to the point, the facts rapidly tell their own tale, and it is as easy for Eiselen as for another to peruse and consider the materials which have been published on this question. A full careful study of them should greatly enhance the value of his concluding volume.

At the same time it must be remembered that this method of textual editing has colored the presentation of the history and the religion — often with curious results. The word Baal

was as applicable to the God of Moses and the patriarchs as to any other divinity. But it was also used of many other gods, and it has been removed from stories that originally had reference to some of them. For example, Jer. xii. 16 writes, "if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by my name, as the Lord liveth; even as they taught my people to swear by Baal." From this we see that the common oath even in Israel was by the Baal, and in most cases this was doubtless understood as a mere title of Israel's God. But not in every instance. When this verse was treated as a canon of emendation, 1 Sam. xxix. 6 was affected and we find the Philistine king Achish made to swear not by the Baal, which was doubtless the original reading, but by the God of Israel. The Gibeonites, again, unexpectedly became His votaries through this strange method of editing, with the result that the barbarous story of 2 Sam. xxi. is perverted from a narrative of their baal to the form in which it stands at present. Many a passage has been turned into something curiously remote from its true meaning. The charge against Naboth (1 Kings xxi. 10, 13) was not that he blessed, but that he cursed, Israel's God, and the alteration which appears in the Massoretic reading was due partly to the texts directed against such curses and partly to the injunction, "Bless ye the name of the Lord." Tamar was robed as a hierodule of a local deity — probably Ashtoreth — but "there shall not be a hierodule of the daughters of Israel" (Deut. xxiii. 18 [17]); and so the editors of the text would not allow Judah to take her for one. Hagar doubtless reported that she had met a Baal on the occasion of her first flight. Change after change was necessary: first, to remove the offending word; then, to banish the anthropomorphisms and consequent offenses against other texts which resulted from the earliest alterations. Stories of Nimrod, Ba-

bel, Sodom, etc., which originally made mention of Bel or Baal were transferred to Him Who was held to be the sole divinity. Worthy polytheists like Laban and Abimelech were transformed into believers in Israel's God by the operation of the same canon of textual criticism. He who would understand the literature, the history, or the religion of the Old Testament must go behind the extant recensions of the text and seek to approach as near as may be to the original.

Another great cause that has been at work is the habit of glossing. Our present texts contain an immense number of words, phrases, and clauses that have been added by pious commentators for the purpose of explanation or amplification — often from parallel passages. These seldom do much harm until they fall under the notice of hyper-acute professors who begin to count and to assign them to various sources and redactors. The testimony of the ancient versions shows quite clearly that this method of investigation is entirely worthless. Words that are used to prove the presence of a particular source are frequently seen to be nothing more than the pious glosses made by men who were simply interpreting the text before them to the best of their ability.

I have been led to suspect that many of the difficulties of our present Pentateuchs are due to yet another editorial cause — the incorporation of a vast amount of systematic but frequently erroneous commentary with the text. It is necessary to speak with great reserve, as the matter is still under investigation; but in preceding articles I have indicated with some clearness my view of the concluding chapters of Exodus and some other passages. It must be remembered that the form of ancient books was not favorable to the separate transmission of text and commentary, and the fusion of the two may often have led to results that were equally remote from

the minds of author and commentator. As at present advised I incline to believe that we have a good deal of systematic editorial work incorporating certain definite views, and that much of the present trouble has been due to the fact that in the course of transmission this has become amalgamated with the original text. It seems to me that one piece of editing was the addition of a commentary containing a definite schematic chronology based in part on the best knowledge (such as it was) of the period in which it was composed, and in part on the interpretation of the ancient authorities. That appears to follow with some probability from the facts revealed by modern discussions of the Biblical chronology from various standpoints, archæological, textual, physiological, geological, etc. Another motive that seems to have been at work was the desire to round narratives off satisfactorily; for instance, to secure to Abraham and Isaac suitable burial by their respective sons, and so satisfy the sense of dutiful fitness in dealing with the revered figures of the patriarchs. And, again, other editorial views seem to have been responsible for a number of transpositions. But, for the present, it is necessary to speak with great caution on these points, since we have much to hope from the progress of investigation, once the spell thrown over many minds by the documentary and evolutionary theories is dissolved.

These are some of the leading principles that emerge from the studies of the last few years. Eiselen can supplement them at his pleasure by the simple process of really acquainting himself with the contents of publications to which he refers. Will he do so, or will he prefer the easier course of continuing to publish to the world a readable account of views which none of their champions have ever yet been able to defend in fair debate?