

## ART. IV.—THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY.

THE question to be discussed in the following paper is the genuineness and authenticity of the fifth book of the Pentateuch?

On taking up the Book of Deuteronomy with the view of subjecting its contents to examination, we are met at the very vestibule by the name that it bears; this has not always been the same. Among the ancient Israelites the Books of the Law were not so sharply distinguished from each other as in later years, but were generally known merely by the commencing words of each book. This begins with אלה הרברים, *Elleh hadd'bharrim*, "These are the words;" this was probably the earliest title. In after-ages the Jews called it משנה התורה, *Mishneh Hatto-rah*, "The repetition of the Law." From this the Alexandrian Jews, who were the translators of the LXX. Version, in all probability conferred upon this book the name *Δευτερονόμιον*, which was transliterated by St. Jerome when he edited the Latin Vulgate, and through this channel has been derived by us the familiar title of *Deuteronomy*.

It is not within the scope of this paper to furnish a summary of the contents of the book; we have simply to investigate its authorship and integrity. In reading its pages we cannot fail to be struck with the following features that stand out in bold relief. The book throughout professes to be the work of Moses. His name is found thirty-seven times on its pages. He makes a plain declaration over and over again, "The Lord spoke unto Moses and said." He treats of events that took place under his own eye and the eyes of his contemporaries. He appeals to his own personal authority and office, and the exercise and duration of the same. The truth of these statements has been called in question, and the book has been relegated either to Josiah and Hilkiah separately or conjointly, or to Jeremiah or some post-exilic scribe. The question therefore is, On which side does truth find rest for the sole of her foot? or in other words, Did God speak to Moses or not? did Moses deliver the speeches herein reported to the people? is this book veritable history? or, as has been advanced, a dramatic work founded on events of the Mosaic period? or is it the idealization, that is, a transference of after-thoughts to an early period? and was the name of Moses appropriated to give weight and win acceptance for its contents?

It will be well, at this point, to state the concessions, as some might term them, or rather rectifications, which it is

necessary to make. There can be little room to doubt that the original autograph of this, as of all the other ancient books of the Old Testament, has undergone revision from time to time at the hands of the schools of the prophets, and finally of Ezra at the return from the Babylonish Captivity, and that not only were explanations, historical, geographical, or otherwise, made in the form of marginal or foot-notes, as we should call them, which were grouped and, to the uninitiated eye, were identified with the text itself, but also that modifications of some passages in the original text were introduced, such as change of time and circumstance rendered advisable in a system of working laws. These editorial additions find an integral example in the last chapter. Such admissions as these relieve the text, as it now stands, of certain difficulties, but in nowise compromise the bulk of the text. The notes were made by competent, that is, by inspired authority, and were intended to elucidate the narrative, and they no more invalidate the original authorship than the notes of a commentary of the present day cancel the text which they endeavour to explain.

It will be most convenient to consider the objections raised against what may be termed the traditional view of this work under separate heads. The first is naturally the question of *authorship*.

With the exception of a few stray utterances of Aben Ezra in the twelfth century, the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, as well as of the preceding four books, was an unquestioned tenet of faith both in the Synagogue and the Church. The seventeenth century ushered in a new movement, and names, by no means savouring of reverence and piety, such as Hobbes and Spinoza, are found giving a certain amount of weight and authority to the nascent efforts to deprive the great Lawgiver of the honour which the foregoing centuries had held was his undisputed right. After this date the question broadened out to wide proportions; some started the theory that, as there is a striking similarity between the book of Deuteronomy and the prophecies of Jeremiah, this portion of the Pentateuch must be attributed to that prophet; others, among whom Ewald must be numbered, ascribed the book to a writer of the times of Manasseh, when idolatry had secured so strong a footing in the kingdom of Judah, and others, again, have assigned the work to the days of Solomon. Kuenen and Wellhausen, whose labours have been received with a warm welcome among members of a certain school of critics in our own country, would allot to Deuteronomy some early materials which have been mixed up with the main body of the book, but they say that the form in which it has come down to us is

not older than the reign of Josiah; and many advocates of the rationalistic movement do not scruple to assert their conviction that Hilkiyah wrote the work and brought it to the king, Josiah, pretending that he had found it in the temple, or that the book was the joint work of the prophet and the king, got up by connivance, to meet a crisis that had arisen in the national affairs, or to bring about a revival of monotheism among the people, who had become almost universally addicted to idolatry. It will be seen that the attack has considerably changed front. The earlier critics post-dated Deuteronomy to a period long after Moses, but they held also that it was later than the other books of the Pentateuch. Most of the later critics, however, teach that this book, though a comparatively late production, was penned before the other portions of the Pentateuch. There are great names on both sides, hence we may gather that in such fundamental questions each critic followed his own subjectivity. If there had been any real internal evidence, there could have been no room for a difference of opinion on a point of so much importance. So much for the history of the movement.

Now, it is right that the strictest examination should be prosecuted when the highest claims are made by any authority upon our faith and our fears, and the same scrutiny should be exercised when such an authority is called in question; the arguments on both sides that should carry any amount of legitimate conviction should be either possible, or probable, or plausible; but short of this the verdict must be "not proven." But admitting that there are considerable difficulties in this, as in all other literary remains that have come down to us from remote ages, yet if we cast a truly critical eye over the evidence both internal and external, it will be evident that the surrender of the Mosaic authorship involves demands that are far more preposterous and incredible than any claim that is made upon our faith in accepting the traditional view.

One main characteristic of this book is solemnity. It comes into our presence like a figure draped in holy vestments, that fills the mind of the beholder with reverence and godly fear; but the new school demands a critical inspection of the pretentious *simulacrum*. It is stripped of its disguise and exposed to the gaze of theologians, students, and the Christian public at large, naked and bare, and behold! this awe-inspiring form, according to their verdict, is discovered to be not even a clever delusion to puzzle the wise, but only a mere scarecrow to intimidate the ignorant. The stately personage, that marches up and down the scene as a tender-hearted father breathing his dying exhortations into the ears of his children, is the design or the dream of a playwright,

and the awful admonitions conveyed in the ever-recurring "Thus saith the Lord," are not the veritable utterances of the Deity, but are simply supposititious strains, like the burden of a song or the empty echo of stage-thunder; they are only the words of a wily though well-intentioned priest, who may be placed on a level with an after-generation of false teachers, who imposed upon the faith and fears of the crowd with figures that winked their eyes or moved their limbs in obedience to the wires that were concealed under the skirts of their clothing. This may be a very unpalatable mode of exposing the tenets of the modern teachers, but can any honest or even plausible escape be found for those who hold that the book which contains the constantly-reiterated asseveration that God spoke these words to Moses, and that it was Moses who spoke in turn these words to the people, and details also other incidents of a strictly personal nature. was not written by Moses, and that God never spoke to him, and that all the contents of the book are due to the design of a writer hundreds of years afterwards, who imitated an archaic style, and arrayed his narrative in fictitious garniture, and performed the ruse so successfully that he deceived priests and people, kings and subjects, Rabbis and scribes, the Synagogue and the Church, Apostles and Evangelists, and critics and expositors, till the latest centuries of the Christian era, and then the plot was discovered, the lie detected, and the bubble burst? Well may we say "*Credat Judæus!*"

But to turn to some of the specific indictments that have been advanced. The charge of patent errors in this book has been brought against statements that are made concerning the geography and relative positions assigned to certain localities in the wilderness, and concerning the ethnography, the origin and distribution of other ancient tribes and nations. It is argued that neither Moses, nor any one of his time, could have penned these particulars, neither will they bear close examination, nor comparison with other statements which are contradictory. There is no need to crowd our pages by entering into these objections severally, as one simple, but to our mind complete, refutation disposes of them all in a mass. If anyone at any age after Moses had undertaken to write a pseudograph, or to palm off an idealistic romance upon the great name of Moses with a view of reproducing his personality, his character, his times, and his circumstances, he would have taken at least ordinary pains to have avoided so many difficulties; he would have kept silence about things concerning which he was totally ignorant or not quite sure; he would have made occurrences fit in with one another more mechanically, and not have bounded off at a tangent instead of keeping

on the safe boundary-line of the circle of known truth. Places, peoples, titles, names, dates, and events would have found an arrangement that would have witnessed to identity and not have suggested diversity; the writer would have saved the reader trouble instead of thrusting before him at every corner a stone of stumbling and rock of offence; there was no necessity for an imitator or an impostor, whatever object he might have in view, to introduce such matter, and it was far too dangerous ground to tread upon, as disproof, and that on a large scale, might spring up at any moment and from any quarter. The very discrepancies and difficulties introduced, that might have been avoided, furnish the best proof of the author's integrity. Had we all the facts in possession as he had, there is little reason to doubt that all that appears to us perplexing and enigmatical in a narrative so concise and fragmentary, and penned at so distant a date, was to the patriarchal author and to the people of his generation quite plain and correct, straight as a right line, and clear as a sunbeam.

Another general objection has been raised that Moses almost always is spoken of in the third person, which looks unmistakably as if another author were describing him, rather than that Moses is giving personal details respecting himself; but if we compare other books of the Bible, do we not find this to be a rule of great frequency? To say nothing of the superscriptions of the prophets, the titles of the psalms and the prefaces to the epistles, does not St. Matthew speak of himself as "a man sitting at the receipt of custom," St. Mark probably as "a young man having a linen cloth cast about his naked body," St. John as "the other disciple" or "the disciple whom Jesus loved," St. Paul as "a man caught up into paradise"? Such a mode of self-description by an author appears to have been one of universal usage. And we may add that our blessed Lord is reported by the Evangelists to have spoken of Himself constantly as "the Son of Man."

But further, if the author is Moses, the charge is preferred against him of speaking in most complimentary and self-adulatory terms about his own character and disposition, which is scarcely compatible with humility and decorum. We are very apt to transfer the manners and modes of speech and thought from the second millennium after Christ, and from a Western and Japhetic nation, to the second millennium before Christ, and to an Eastern and Semitic nation, entirely ignoring the wide difference that time and racial peculiarities must have introduced and stereotyped. All this plain speaking, both of themselves and others, was perfectly natural and according to established usage, and far removed from the conventionalities and "the pride that apes humility" of our

day. Why should we find a stumbling-block in a few phrases which, though they may savour of self-laudation in our ears, were perfectly true, and yet find none in the utterances of other writers of Holy Scripture, as of St. Paul, "As ye have us for an example;" "Those things which ye have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do"? or have we forgotten the words of the Great Exemplar of all, "I am meek and lowly in heart"? On the other hand, we may retaliate: If the praise of Moses forbids our believing him to be the author of this book, what shall we say of the dispraise that is awarded him in the same book? Would any other writer, usurping the authority of Moses and appropriating the glory of his name, have disclosed his faults and failings and recorded the sentence of his punishment? Surely a novelist would have avoided such a handicapping of his hero, and would rather have painted, in the most vivid colours, the climax of his career, and instead of concealing his remains in an unknown spot in the valley of Moab, would have borne him on a triumphal car through the fords of Jordan, and planted his feet safe within the precincts of the Promised Land.

A difference in the style of composition is urged: This objection partakes so much, wherever it is advanced, of a subjective character, that little dependence can be placed upon it, and indeed critics are, to a great extent, laying this weapon of warfare aside. A style which in the judgment of one critic is a proof of variety, is to another a proof of identity. The variation exists generally more in the mind of the reader than in that of the writer. Nevertheless, men in their old age, it is to be expected, modify the features of their composition; advancing life and ripening years produce a chastening effect on utterances that once burned with zeal, and passion gives place to pleading. Moreover, a difference in subject almost necessitates a difference in style. In other books of the Pentateuch Moses is the Leader and Lawgiver; his words must be definite and decided, they must command and enforce obedience in his hearers: but in this book the patriarch presents himself as a prophet, to warn of future dangers and depict future blessings, to win the hearts of the hesitating and the refractory with tears and touching appeals, as his form is about to vanish from their sight, and his voice dies away in his last farewell. Surely we might know that *Exodus*, with its authoritative behests, and *Numbers*, with its stern rebukes, must be couched in verbiage distinct from the elegiac valedictions of *Deuteronomy*.

Intimately connected with this question of style and character of composition is the theory that Deuteronomy must be the product of Jeremiah's pen, inasmuch as both the line of

thought and the language also frequently furnish a striking similarity to that prophet's undoubted writings. This leads us to ask the question: Who was the copyist, the Deuteronomist or the prophet? Let us seek an answer. Who was Jeremiah? He was a prophet, but he was also a priest; moreover, he was the son of a man called Hilkiyah; it is scarcely possible that this Hilkiyah was identical with the high priest who found the Book of the Law in the Temple in the days of Josiah, but it is by no means unlikely that the name points to some family connection between the prophet's father and the high priest. The fact that Jeremiah was a priest accounts readily for his knowledge of the book recently discovered in the Temple; and if the latter hypothesis is true, the strength of the argument is much enhanced. The prophet-priest, connected not only by official but by family ties, would naturally draw largely from these archives recovered by one of his own race and calling; and as the predicted judgments had sunk deeply into his heart, his mind would recur continually to the source of his information, and his language would take shape in the same or similar terms, as a sermon echoes and repeats the text on which it is founded. From a moral point of view this explanation of the similarity of style and diction between the two books is much more likely to be true, than to suppose it credible that Jeremiah wrote the Book of Deuteronomy and foisted it on the people as the work of Moses, and that the ruse was not discovered till the latter days of another dispensation by a comparison of the acknowledged and the pretended writings of the prophet. Moreover, from a critical point of view, even though it is admitted that a close relationship subsists between the phraseology of Deuteronomy and the prophecies of Jeremiah, still, on the other hand, it is equally certain that the differences in phrase, in construction, and in dialect, are even more striking, so that, if weighed in the balance, the result of gain would largely be on the side of non-identity of authorship. Neither must it be forgotten that, if Jeremiah was the author, the book found in the Temple could neither be, nor contain, the Book of Deuteronomy; and again, it must be added that such a theory altogether negatives the still more impossible and profane theory, mentioned above, that the Book of Deuteronomy was the composition of Hilkiyah, with or without the assistance and connivance of King Josiah, to bring about a reformation among the people of Judah. Rationalistic theories are for the most part mutually destructive.

Among the many minor objections to the genuineness of this book, we may select as examples two of those most frequently raised against it. It is asserted that the priests are

called the "sons of Aaron" in the earlier portions of the Pentateuch, but the "priests the sons of Levi," or the "priests the Levites" in Deuteronomy. Many reasons have been advanced to account for this divergency. One of the most satisfactory is, that in the former books the classes which composed the clerical tribe were differentiated from each other, and in Deuteronomy the tribe itself was distinguished from the other tribes, that is, the clergy of all ranks from the rest of the tribes that formed the laity. But it may be suggested as a better explanation that the title "sons of Aaron" was in favour before the profane act perpetrated by Aaron's eldest sons in offering strange fire before the Lord, but after that sacrilege the portentous punishment of silence fell upon that name, and the tribe, rather than the family, furnished the badge that defined the priestly race. The other example is found in the laws which affected the imposition of tithes. We should have thought that the incidents of our own history, during the last half century or so, would have shown what variations both in assessing and collecting this payment may be legalized. Laws, laid down in the early years of the wandering in the wilderness, may well have been modified, added to, or even withdrawn, when the people were about to exchange the nomad for the settled life, and the fortuitous patch in the desert for the lot of a tribal and family inheritance. If we knew all the changes and chances of that period of unrest, the difficulties would vanish, which, after all, are not more puzzling than the Parliamentary Bills respecting the imposition, the levying, the commutation and the redemption of the tithe which have become, and are becoming, history in our own time and country. The above may serve as specimens of the objections that have been framed against the Mosaic authorship of this book. Want of space forbids extension in this direction.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that there is another side to this question; that is, that there are evidences both patent and latent which substantiate the unbroken tradition that Moses was fundamentally the author of Deuteronomy. In the former part of this paper a brief account was given of the rise and development of the theories that labour to controvert the Mosaic authorship of this book. But against these new-born efforts to disparage the archives of our faith, what a long and unbroken line of witnesses may be summoned to support the validity of the traditional view! We ask the Christian Church in all its branches, Eastern and Western, ancient, mediæval and modern, reformed and unreformed, what is the place in the Canon which universal consent has allotted to the book of Deuteronomy? and the answer is too well known to need repeating, and no voice has called that decision



in question till these latter days. We pass out of the precincts of the Church into the courts of the Synagogue, and the Jews scattered throughout all the lands of their dispersion proclaim the same verdict as the Church. We consult the Massoretic text, which was fixed by the Rabbis about the sixth century according to the most ancient traditions of their fathers, that when their schools were broken up, and communication between distant settlements intercepted, all might possess the same form of the written Word, and the Hebrew Bible thus edited bears witness that Moses was the author of Deuteronomy, as of the other books of the Pentateuch. We inspect the pages of their great historian, Josephus, who flourished between 38 and 100 A.D., and we read in *Antiq.*, iv. 8, a most graphic paraphrase of this book, in which Moses is declared to be the author. We open the works of the great Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, Philo, who lived some years before the birth of Christ, and survived the date of the Crucifixion a few years, and we find a like testimony. We trace our steps further into the recesses of the past. The LXX. Version was undertaken about 280 B.C. It is from this source that we derive the familiar name of this book, *Deuteronomy*. It is classed with the other books of the Pentateuch, and is clearly accepted as the composition of Moses. The Samaritan Pentateuch is a valuable witness also. Whether this copy of the Law was in possession of the ten tribes from the day of their disruption, or whether it was compiled when the temple on Mount Gerizim was built—to take the two most extreme opinions—at all events this book forms the same integral portion of the Samaritan Pentateuch that it does in the Hebrew Bible, and that before the LXX. Version was made. The opinion that the Pentateuch was preserved among the ten tribes, however its commands were neglected, is by far the most probable both on external and internal grounds, and if so this testimony is of very ancient date. But if the latest date is accepted, it will bring us almost to the period which those that advocate a post-exilic origin for this work have fixed for its composition. Would the hostile Samaritans have accepted so recent an addition to the Jewish literature, whose text they felt constrained to alter in some places? would they not have rejected it altogether, and by that rejection have exposed the imposture? Thus this theory at least receives its death-blow. Still further, it may be urged that there are numerous passages in the prophets and the psalms that go far to show that this book was in existence and well known and esteemed as one of the foundation-stones of the temple of revelation. To these evidences must be added the express testimony of the New Testament Scriptures. St.

Paul, who was well versed in the sacred lore and traditions of his people, quotes the book of Deuteronomy and attributes it to Moses (Rom. x. 5-8 and 19). St. Stephen, when standing arraigned before the Sanhedrim, spoke "with wisdom and the Spirit," and he testified, "This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you," etc., thus stamping with his authority the Mosaic authorship of this book (Acts vii. 37 and Deut. xviii. 15 and 18). St. Peter also quotes the same notable prophecy and connects it with the name of Moses (Acts iii. 22). And it may be observed, in passing, that these undoubted authorities in the word and doctrine apply this prophecy to One, and to One alone, the promised Messiah, and do not evaporate the force and point of the prediction, as so many moderns seek to do, by thrusting a plural sense upon a singular noun, which is contrary to both the text and context. It is true that a singular generic noun sometimes represents a plural idea, but certainly not always, and the context settles the question that it cannot be so here, for then, beyond legitimate doubt, the pronominal suffixes that follow would have been plural. But more, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself made frequent use of this book. It was from this quiver that He drew the arrows by which He repelled the tempter in the wilderness; and when the Lord would set forth the first commandment of all, He cited the well-known formula of the Creed of Israel, "Jehovah, our God, Jehovah is One" (Mark xii. 29 and Deut. vi. 4). Surely the Lord would never have countenanced and honoured a mere religious romance; and who will dare to say "the Lord God of the holy prophets" did not know the authorship of the inspired writings? Side by side with these testimonies we must place the witness of the work itself, such as the constantly-repeated "the Lord spake to Moses," and that Moses acted as a mediator and interpreter to the people, the various places visited by the wanderers, the sights they saw, and the circumstances experienced. All these are detailed with a minuteness that could only be in the power of an eye-witness.

The cumulative force of all these arguments, each strong in itself, and irrefragable when taken together, compels us to form but one conclusion, that the book of Deuteronomy was substantially the work of Moses. Let the above suffice for declarative testimony. Our attention may now be directed to certain evidences that present themselves in the book itself. No one who reads Deuteronomy can fail to see that the most clearly-pronounced purpose which the writer had in view was the prevention and suppression of idolatry. He points out the heinousness of this sin, and the deadly results that follow our

defection from God and submission to idols. He reminds the people of their apostasy in making the molten calf, and the hot displeasure of the Almighty that arose against them; he bids them remember their turning aside unto Baal-peor and the destruction that ensued; but why does he stop at this period of Israel's history? Why, if the book was written in the time of Jeremiah or after the Captivity, was no mention made of Jeroboam, who "made Israel to sin" by the setting up of the calves at Dan and Bethel? and why is he silent about the judgments that were predicted, and the fulfilment of the same in the days of Josiah? Why did he pass over the outburst of idolatry under Ahab and Jezebel, and the signal victory achieved by Elijah? And why, may we demand further, is there no reference made to the provocations of Manasseh that were culminating, or had already culminated, in the banishment to Babylon? Why were these examples, which would have served the writer's purpose so well, withheld? Surely no other answer can be forthcoming than that these episodes in Israel's history had not yet taken place—they lay in the depths of a distant future, and the author confined his examples within the limits of his own knowledge and experience.

Again, in the blessings pronounced upon the tribes of Israel, could a Jewish writer at a late date have penned such a panegyric upon the ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh, to say nothing of the other tribes after the apostasy under Jeroboam and after the leading into captivity of the ten tribes by Shalmaneser? The thing is incredible.

Moreover, if the work were devised by Hilkiiah and Josiah, or if written by Jeremiah or some Jew of the Captivity, could any such recent composition have had any influence upon the then present generation or a closely subsequent one? Either the book would be known to be a pretentious publication or not; if the origin was not known, the success of the work would consist in a misrepresentation—in a falsehood, and if it were known, respect and reverence for its contents would be impossible.

Among all evidences none are so valuable, because convincing, as those that are undesigned. Men speak and write naturally about things which are around them, and their experience prompts the choice of the facts which they relate and the features of those facts. Out of a number of such testimonies one or two examples may be selected. One characteristic of this book forces itself on the observation of the most careless reader, the greatness and grandeur of the cities and houses of the land which God had promised Israel.

"The cities" of the Amorites "are great, and walled up to heaven," i. 28. And those of Bashan are "fenced with high walls," iii. 5. Would a writer accustomed to the palaces of Jerusalem or the noted walls of Babylon have selected this feature for emphatic demonstration? But how suitable is such a description in the mouth of one who was addressing those who had for forty years bivouacked in tents or sought shelter in the limestone rocks in the wilderness? Again, why should a writer of the date of the exile contrast the land of Canaan with Egypt, and the mode of cultivation there, xi. 10? Such an one must have been familiar with the agriculture of Assyria, and not of Egypt, but restore the author to the place and period which he claims, and all falls into shape and is intelligible. Would the threatening of the diseases of Egypt (vii. 15 and xxviii. 60) be quoted as a warning to a people who were just going into captivity at Babylon, or had just returned from thence? Surely the horrors that were fresh in their memory would have been far better calculated to furnish the salutary lesson of obedience. There have been enumerated in this book nearly forty allusions to ancient Egypt and the circumstances of Israel in connection with that country, and not one reference is traced to Assyria and Israel's bondage there. It is but a feeble criticism advanced by one of the most prominent leaders of the modern school that the writer very successfully imitated the style and surroundings of the Lawgiver whose name he assumes. We have the high authority of one of the most popular writers of this century that a man may call his house an island if he likes; so some may be found who call this subterfuge criticism, but it certainly is neither common-sense nor truth.

Another incidental argument may be gathered from the fauna of the desert. No higher authority on matters connected with the natural history of Bible lands can be cited than that of Canon Tristram. In his address at the Church Congress of 1890 he said :

In the lists of animals there occur nine in Deuteronomy which do not appear in Leviticus. Of these, five or six at least, probably more, are creatures which do not, and never could have, lived in the rich valley of the Nile, or in wooded or hilly Palestine. They are not named in Leviticus, because, immediately after the Exodus, these antelopes and desert denizens were strange to the Israelites. But after thirty-nine years had been passed in their haunts, they must have been familiar with them all. Is it conceivable that any writer of the later monarchy should have inserted in his catalogue animals which he could never have seen or known but by report? What could Hilkiah or Jeremiah have known of the desert? The Jews were neither travellers nor curious observers of nature. It seems impossible that the list could have been compiled at any other period or in any other place than when and where it purports to be, just before the entrance into the Land of Promise.

As an expansion of the argument from natural history, we may refer to a proof proposed in a former paper. Attention may be called to the tree of which the ark was made. "And I made an ark of *Shittim* wood," says the author of Deuteronomy, x. 3. This is in exact accordance with Ex. xxv. 10. What was this tree? It appears always (with one exception, Isa. xli. 19) in the plural form. The woodwork of the tabernacle and its furniture was framed from this tree, which is one of the species of acacia that abounded in Egypt and the Sinaitic peninsula. At the first mention of this tree, however, in Ex. iii. 2, it bears a different name, it is called *Seneh*, which is translated in our versions "bush." Now this word is Egyptian, not Hebrew, in origin; it is found in papyri of the nineteenth dynasty, a period about contemporaneous with Moses. There is only one other place in Scripture where this word is found, and that is in Deut. xxxiii. 16, which is a clear reference to the above Divine manifestation, in the blessing pronounced by Moses over the descendants of Joseph, "the blessing of Him that tabernacled in the bush." *Seneh* and *Shittim* are both names of the same tree, but the former is Egyptian and the latter a Hebrew translation, or perhaps transliteration of it, for some are of opinion that the original word *sent* or *sunt* was converted into *shittah* by the dropping of the sound of the letter which is represented by *n*. However this may be, the word was one that belonged to the old Egyptian language, which in some way became popularized among the Hebrews in the well-known form of *Shittim*, which is preserved throughout the sacred books from those early days downwards. Could, we may ask, the ancient word *Seneh* have been revived or brought into use at a late period of Israel's history, when we are told that they were fast losing even their own Hebrew tongue and lapsing into an Aramaic dialect? No word can bear with it a plainer history, or fix more accurately the date of its use and disuse. It would be natural enough in the mouth of the Israelites just come out of Egypt, where the name of a common tree was familiar, and its corruption into the other form would follow easily the ordinary fate of words in frequent use, but to resuscitate the foreign word, and that in its archaic form, in the days of the exile would be a perfect incongruity and contrary to all philological experience.

This leads us to a kindred line of evidence derived from certain words and forms of words found in this book. It is well known that Hebrew was formerly written in the arrow-headed or Phœnician character, such as is seen on the Moabite Stone, and the one recently discovered at the pool of Siloam, and that this was exchanged for the square character now in

use some time after the exile. The exact date of this alteration is not known, though there are reasons for believing that it was at a later period than has generally been received; the process was very likely gradual. It was at this epoch in the history of the Old Testament text that the Scribes exhibited a great genius for caligraphy, and probably introduced, certainly accentuated, that special care and reverence for the letter of their Scriptures, for which the Jewish people have been celebrated ever since, and for which the Church of Christ owes them a vast debt of gratitude. It may be accepted as a certain truth that, although the shape of the letters was considerably modified and changed, the words themselves suffered little or no disturbance, as the purpose which the copyists had at heart was the preservation and perpetuation of the archives of their nation as they had come down to them from their fathers. If, therefore, there were in the ancient text any peculiar or distinguishing words or forms of words, or variations in grammar or spelling, these would be reproduced faithfully in the transcript. It will be at once apparent that evidence of this kind is of no small value in fixing both the date and the authorship of any literary relic. Philological weapons are held in high esteem by our critics, and it is not fair on their part to repudiate their use when inconvenient to them. Lists of words and forms peculiar to the Pentateuch generally, and to Deuteronomy in particular, may be consulted in most critical commentaries, such as those of Delitzsch, Keil, Wordsworth, and in the Dictionary of the Bible. One or two may be mentioned which commend themselves most readily to the English reader. It is said that the neuter pronoun "its" is not found in our language before the period of the later Stuarts; the masculine form "his" was in use previously for both the masculine and neuter, as may be seen throughout our Authorised Version of the Bible. Now, if we were to open a book and find this word, we should fix the date of its composition posterior to that period, and *vice versa* if we found it lacking and the other taking its place. To apply a similar test, in Hebrew  $הוּ$ , *hu*, signifies *he*, and  $הִי$ , *he*, signifies *she*, but in the Pentateuch the former word covers both genders, it signifies both *he* and *she*; but in all the other books of the Bible this form is restricted to the masculine, and the latter is employed for the feminine. The solitary form is, of course, a proof of antiquity, and this form is found in the feminine sense no less than thirty-six times in Deuteronomy, and as this use is confined to the Pentateuch, we have a proof that this book is of the same date as the residue, and that that date is an early one, and could not by any possibility be postponed to the period of the exile. Akin to this, the same Hebrew word  $נָעַר$ ,

*na'ar*, stands in Deuteronomy, as well as in the other books of the Pentateuch, for both *lad* and *lass*, with one solitary exception; but the feminine form נַעֲרָה, *na'arah*, is employed for that sex in all other parts of the Bible. This is another evidence of an early age. A word which must have been of frequent use among a nomad race signifying a *sheep*, presents the archaic form of כֶּשֶׁב, *keseb*, in this and the other Mosaic books, but in all others the two last letters are transposed כֶּבֶשׁ, *kebes*. Many other distinctive marks in the phraseology and verbiage might be adduced which go far to show that Deuteronomy is one of the five sisters which constitute the Pentateuchal family, and that the period which witnessed their birth is that which is denoted in the register of Israel's earliest records, and witnessed by the handwriting and signature of no other author than Moses.

This is but a brief sketch of a controversy of no small importance. The alteration of a date or ascription of a book to an author other than the one universally accepted may appear at first sight a matter of little moment, but it involves so much that must follow. If this book be an allegory, a myth, or an idealization, a drama, or a deception, or in plain speech, a forgery, perpetrated, though it may be, with the best intentions, why should not the other books of the Bible, Old and New Testament alike, be called into like question and doubt? It is mere mockery to profess loudly faith in the Incarnation, and then to cut away all the foundation on which the doctrine rests. If this book and the residue of the Pentateuch be reduced to dust and ashes in the fires of sceptical criticism, how can we believe and reverence the witness of Him who said, "Moses wrote of Me;" and "if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words"?

F. TILNEY BASSETT.



## ART. V.—NOTES AND COMMENTS ON ST. JOHN XXI.

### No. 3.

VER. 12. *Jesus says to them, Come, break your fast. None of the disciples ventured to question Him, Who art thou? knowing that it is the Lord. So Jesus comes, and takes the bread and gives it to them, and the fish in the same way. This was the now third manifestation of Jesus to his disciples, as risen from the dead.*

The fishes were numbered, and Peter's work was done.