

Nor must we lose sight of the important truth for which individualism stands. Our own characters are, after all, the special field which God has given us to till, and which will remain untended if we neglect it. We belong to many social organisms, but there are aspects of our life in which we are what the law calls "corporations sole."



## Deuteronomy in Eastern Light.

BY THE REV. G. E. WHITE, D.D.

THE present writer has been for some years resident in Asia Minor, and has enjoyed intimate relations with all classes of the inhabitants, whether Mohammedan or Christian, whether clerical or lay. Such first-hand acquaintance with the East ought to be an advantage in the interpreting of the Old Testament. The Hebrew Scriptures were revealed to and through an Oriental people, and, in certain particulars at least, it is natural and inevitable that the religious standpoint, habits of thought, and forms of expression, characteristic of the Old Testament, should be more nearly represented by present-day life in the Orient than in the Occident. Indeed, many primitive ceremonies, which for Western Christians were superseded by the New Testament, are still in force in Eastern lands. Sacrifice is practised in every village around my home; there is some shrine almost "on every high hill and under every green tree"; there are abundant remnants of pre-Mohammedan and pre-Christian worship connected with sacred woods and waters, sacred food and drink, sacred men and seasons. The religious conversation of my white-turbaned Mohammedan friends—childish, deeply devout, often inconsistent—is strikingly like a page from the Pentateuch. As a result, I feel that I understand the Old Testament and sympathize with its writers better than formerly.

Having had occasion recently to make some special study of

the Book of Deuteronomy, it has been natural for me to use the Commentary by Professor Driver in the "International Critical" Series, and his "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament." With profound respect for the learning, ability and piety of the Oxford Professor, I cannot think that he has acquired all the facts that bear on the age and authorship of the Second Law. The standpoint of Deuteronomy is Oriental; the standpoint of Professor Driver seems to be Occidental. The two angles of vision are not greatly apart, but, if I am not mistaken, there is some real difference. I propose, therefore, to discuss certain points in Dr. Driver's argument on the date and authorship of Deuteronomy from the standpoint of residence in the Orient—not, I trust, in the spirit of controversy, but in the interests of truth. My quotations are taken from Professor Driver's Introduction to his Commentary, to which the page numbers refer.

The Professor's conclusions may be brought before us in his remarks: "The composition of Deuteronomy must thus be placed at a period long subsequent to the age of Moses" (xliv). "It belongs, most probably, either to the reign of Manasseh or to the early years of the reign of Josiah" (xlvi). "But upon the whole the laws of Deuteronomy are unquestionably derived from *pre-existent usage*" (lxi). My conviction is, on the other hand, that Deuteronomy contains a larger Mosaic element, and existed substantially in its present form earlier than is allowed by the scholarly commentator.

1. Professor Driver mentions it as a variation not favourable to Moses' authorship that "in i. 9-13 the plan of appointing judges to assist Moses is represented as originating with Moses himself," whereas "in Exod. xviii. 13-26 the plan is referred entirely to the advice of Jethro" (xxxv). I cannot tell what use of language is allowed or disallowed in England in such a case, but I know that in Turkey the same act or idea may be attributed, for example, to the King, a Councillor of State, a Viceroy, or even a local Governor, according to the connection, and with no thought of a contradiction.

2. A similar "discrepancy" is that in i. 22, 23, "the mission of the spies is represented as due entirely to a suggestion made by the people; in Num. xiii. 1-3 it is referred to a command received directly from Jehovah" (xxxv). This is still a common mode of speech in the East. To illustrate, the constitutional régime proclaimed in July, 1908, has been referred in common speech about equally to Allah and to the Young Turks, and no one supposes that, in recognizing the agency of the one, even in an exclusive form of words, he is debarred from recognizing the other.

3. In Num. xx. 12 "Moses is prohibited to enter Canaan, on account of his presumption in striking the rock at Kadesh"; in Deut. i. 37, 38, "the ground of the prohibition is Jehovah's anger with him *on account of the people*" (xxxv). An Oriental will fix the blame for a fault sometimes upon the party directly, and sometimes upon the party indirectly, responsible. The narrator emphasizes whichever view he has occasion to dwell upon at the time of speaking. Professor Driver argues that Numbers fixes the critical event in the thirty-ninth year of the Exodus, while in Deuteronomy it is plainly fixed by the context for the second year of the Exodus. He continues: "The supposition that Moses, *speaking in the fortieth year*, should have passed, in verse 37, from the second to the thirty-ninth year, returning in verse 39 to the second year, is highly improbable" (xxxvi). I reply that, to one familiar with Oriental habits of thought and language, this would not seem at all improbable. I often hear narratives of similar illogical construction from educated Turks. In reviewing a series of events, in describing a complicated process or a scene with several actors, they frequently disregard the strict sequence of events, and group their actors somewhat like the figures in a picture deficient in perspective. This is unsatisfactory to the Occidental sense of order and proportion; but, if one is to understand Oriental utterance to the full, he must strive to put himself *en rapport* with the speaker. He is not justified in demanding from his Eastern friend what the latter never professed to give.

4. Deut. i. 46 ; ii. 1, 14. "It seems impossible to harmonize the representation contained in these passages with that of Numbers ; according to Num. 14, etc., the thirty-eight years in the wilderness were spent at Kadesh ; according to Deuteronomy they were spent *away* from Kadesh" (xxxvi). But if this view proves anything it proves too much. It proves that the editor of Numbers or the editor of Deuteronomy was either a knave or a fool : he was a fool if he could not fairly master and state the historic facts which he relates ; and he was a knave if he wilfully recorded what was untrue. But I submit that neither Numbers nor Deuteronomy proceeds from the hand of a knave or a fool. It is only fair to allow good faith to all the writers concerned in these Scriptures, whose religious influence has been so great. If their manner of expressing themselves is different from ours, so much the more is it incumbent upon us to put ourselves into an attitude of sympathy with them. The requirements of both Numbers and Deuteronomy would be met by interpreting their language to mean that the Israelites wandered in the desert, with Kadesh as their base ; and if this is not the historical solution, we can wait for the point to be cleared up. We need clearer evidence than has been shown to make us believe that in a question of this sort anyone who shared in the composition of the Pentateuch either ignorantly or wilfully misstated historical facts. They are men of sound, strong character who can give us writings like these.

My response to several of Professor Driver's arguments would be essentially the same. Whether Moses fasted on the first or third ascent of the Mount, whether his intercession followed one of these visits or another, whether the ark was made before or after his third return from the mountain—these inconsistencies in detail are just such as I habitually hear from the highest official exponent of Mohammedanism with whom I am on terms of intimacy. The main facts are all there, the main principles never change ; but in my friend's presentation the details often are grouped and regrouped differently. That is the way his mind works. It is possible—nay, probable—that

not all of the minor inconsistencies in the Pentateuch will ever be cleared up; but the cause of truth would not be served by importing Occidental theories alien to Oriental facts.

5. Passing to the consideration of the laws in Deuteronomy in comparison with JE, Professor Driver notes a variation concerning a daughter sold by her father as a bondwoman. As I understand the Exodus law (chap. xxi. 2-11), though Professor Driver seems to overlook the point, such a maiden enters the house as a wife, and she is not to be thrust out. A man-servant or a woman-servant is on a wholly different footing, and may go when his or her term of service is done. Professor Driver says of the variation: "It is, however, at once explicable upon the supposition that the law of Deuteronomy springs from a more advanced stage of society than the law of Exodus, and regulates usage for an age in which the father's power over his daughter was less absolute than it had been in more primitive times, and when it was no longer the custom (see Exod. xxi. 8, 9) for a Hebrew girl to be *bought* to be the wife of her master or of his son" (xxxvii). But if this interpretation were correct, the Book of Deuteronomy could not be written even yet. To *sell* a girl is the common idiom used by Turks, Circassians, Armenians, and others, now, when she is given in marriage; and her disposal in marriage is always reckoned to belong to her father. The fact is, unless I am wrong, that there is no contradiction here between Exodus and Deuteronomy, because the variant point introduced by Exodus is not touched by Deuteronomy at all.

6. "In Exod. xxi. 13 the asylum for manslaughter (as the connection with v. 14 appears to show) is Jehovah's *altar* (*cf.* 1 Kings i. 50, ii. 28); in Deuteronomy (chap. xix.) definite cities are set apart for the purpose" (xxxvii). Any sanctuary in the East is an asylum, its security varying with the degree of awe attaching to it. One would expect Jehovah's altar to be a place of refuge, whatever other cities had been set apart for the same purpose. A person realizing himself to be in danger would take refuge at the nearest safe place. The Armenians in time of massacre fled to their churches, as Adonijah and Joab

fled to Jehovah's altar, and it showed how fiercely the Armenians were pursued by the Turks, that they perished, as did Joab, in their sanctuaries.

This point is really an argument for the early origin of Deuteronomy, for, if when it was written the Temple in Jerusalem had been for long generations the chief asylum of the hunted malefactor, some direct or indirect recognition would have doubtless been given to it along with the cities appointed by name. How it would strengthen the critical contention for the late composition of Deuteronomy if only there were one instance of the word Jerusalem in the book, or one unquestioned reference to the Temple of Solomon, or one name such as Samuel, or David, or Jeremiah!

7. Professor Driver alleges that "in Exod. xxiii. 10 ff. the provisions of the sabbatical year have a purely agricultural reference; in Deut. xv. 1-6 the institution is applied so as to form a check on the power of the creditor" (xxxviii). But in Exodus the reason is specified as one of mercy to the poor and the beasts, which in Oriental eyes amounts essentially to the same thing with checking the power of merciless creditors.

8. The omission of a sharp distinction between the priests and the Levites in Deuteronomy is one of the most difficult points in the relations between this book and the preceding books of the Pentateuch; but if there were no difficulties there would be nothing to discuss, no possibility of diverging views. This omission is apparently an argument for the early composition of Deuteronomy, for, save that the unworthy ambition of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, met its swift and terrible punishment, in general the clear distinction between the priests and the Levites as species and genus seems to have been more emphasized as time went on. If Deuteronomy had been composed far down the time of the monarchy, it would have been almost impossible to ignore distinctions which had become so clearly drawn. Orientals put all religious men, however, in one class, and all secular persons in another. The lines separating

various orders of religious men are by no means so marked as those which separate all religious classes from the world.

As for their maintenance, Professor Driver, discussing Deuteronomy and P, says: "Deut. xviii. 3 (the shoulder, the cheeks, and the maw, to be the priest's perquisite in a peace-offering) is in direct contradiction with Lev. vii. 32-34 (the breast and the right thigh to be the priest's due in a peace-offering)" (xxxix). Yes, but I have heard as flat contradictions from Mohammedan authorities, on the same subject and in a single conversation. In either case the shoulder, front or hind, is the chief part of the perquisite, and, as the hind-shoulder is better than the fore, one other piece is added with it, and two with the fore-shoulder. Shrine-keepers in Turkey, when asked about the sacrificial perquisites they habitually receive, make general answers, and seldom exactly repeat themselves. Piri Baba, my dervish friend, once summed it up for me by saying that, anyway, one who offers a sacrifice should give the representative of the *tekye* "a good piece of meat." In practice the obligation is often met by an invitation to the shrine-keeper to join the sacrificing-party at the convivial meal.

9. "Deut. xviii. 6 is inconsistent with the institution of Levitical cities" (xxxix). I cannot agree. The Levites were not serfs chained to the soil. Jeremiah had his home in Anathoth, but his ministry was in Jerusalem. Let us look again at the customs of modern dervishes. A dervish is attached to a *tekye*, a Mohammedan monastery, as his headquarters; but he often resides elsewhere for years together, as opportunity offers, leading some community in worship, giving religious instruction, and seeking his own sustenance. Similarly, the Levites had scattered cities assigned for their patrimony, but it seems to be contemplated that they will often reside for terms of religious service elsewhere as needed.

10. "In Deut. xii. 6, 17 ff., xv. 19 ff., the firstlings of oxen and sheep are to be *eaten by the owner himself* at a sacred feast to be held at the central sanctuary; in Num. xviii. 18 they are assigned absolutely and expressly to the priest" (xxxix). It is

suggestive in this connection to recall another remark of Piri Baba : " Strictly speaking, all the meat of a sacrifice belongs to the minister of the shrine ; but he may return as much of it as he thinks appropriate to the owner of the animal slain."

11. " In Num. xviii. 21-24 the tithe is assigned entirely to the Levites . . ." ; in Deuteronomy it is " in the third year to be applied to the relief of the poor " (xxxix). Dervishes and other religious men in the East are regarded as objects of charity, just as Levites in the Book of Deuteronomy are placed in the same category with the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. At harvest they go out to gather their *nasib*, or providential appointment, from thankful farmers, and they are often invited to the tables of the pious and prosperous.

12. " In Lev. xvii. 15 the flesh of an animal dying of itself (*nebetāh*) is not to be eaten either by the Israelite or by the 'stranger' ; in Deut. xiv. 21 it is prohibited for the Israelite, but permitted to the 'stranger' " (xxxix). I know how my venerable friend the Mufti of our city would give his official *fetwa*, or judicial decision, in such a case. He would say : " No son of the faithful should defile himself by eating that which dieth of itself. No ghiaour should do so, either ; but if he does—what can you do about it ?"

13. " In Exod. xii. 3-6 the paschal sacrifice is limited to a lamb ; in Deut. xvi. 2 it may be either a sheep or an ox " (xxxix). The custom of sacrificing in connection with prayers for rain every spring prevails in all our Turkish villages. Of two men from one village, describing to me their local ceremony within a few days of each other, one said, " We sacrifice an ox " ; the other, " We owe our saint two sheep." The fact is, they habitually offer sheep, as I subsequently learned ; but sometimes an ox is employed instead, just as with the Israelites of old.

14. The laws relating to the place of sacrifice and the centralization of worship are among the hardest to reconcile with the other codes. I have this to say, however, that Oriental speech furnishes numberless examples of the use of a superlative for an emphatic positive—an exclusive statement when strong

emphasis is the thing desired. The speaker aims in the right direction, but, taken literally, he overshoots his mark. This is the habit of childhood, whether of an individual or of a race; but the parent is not deceived, and an exegete need not be. When the writer of Deuteronomy speaks of cities "fenced up to heaven," or says, "There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your cattle," or, "There shall be no poor with thee," are his words to be pressed in their literal significance, or taken as an emphatic general statement? A Scotch minister spoke after the manner of the Old Testament when, in referring to the funeral of Principal Rainy, he said: "The Scottish nation was there." This habit of speech should not be forgotten when considering whether the centralization of worship enjoined should be construed in an exclusive or a pre-eminent sense. The command to erect an altar and worship in Mount Ebal (xxvii. 1-8) is itself an exception to the general law. If Professor Petrie's ingenious argument is sound, and the Israelites on entering Canaan numbered some six hundred *tents* of fighting men, instead of six hundred *thousand*, it would be reasonable to appoint one pre-eminent place for worship, to which all the nation could frequently go up. It would hardly have been reasonable under the monarchy, and apparently was not attempted.

15. "In Deut. xvi. 22 we read: 'Thou shalt not set thee up a *mazzēbah* [obelisk], which Jehovah thy God hateth.' Would Isaiah, it is asked, if he had known of such a law, have adopted the *mazzēbah* (xix. 19) as a symbol of the future conversion of Egypt to the true faith?" (xlvii). The nearer in time Deuteronomy and Isaiah were to each other, the less likely they would be to take opposite views concerning the use of the obelisk. I have come to regard the obelisks, or pillars of ancient worship, as taking the place filled by pictures in the modern Oriental churches. At best they are characteristic and harmless; as commonly used in worship, they are an evil snare. Either view is possible, and so of the obelisk.

In these days, when evolutionary theories hold the ground,

it is hard for the student of religious history not to approach his subject with the prepossession that whatever is pure and high must of necessity be later than that which is syncretistic and debased. But the religion of people connected with Oriental Churches can sometimes hardly be distinguished as the Christianity of the New Testament. One, therefore, who knows and pities such Churches has a fair analogy to hand for the Old Testament view that the Hebrew religion was comparatively pure and elevated early in its day, and became degenerate and debased later, and that the work of Josiah's day was not formation, but reformation.

If, then, this line of argument is sound, and Orientalism, if the term be allowed, has its place in the interpreting of the Old Testament along with literary criticism and the strong independent glints of light thrown on the subject by archæology, it will ultimately be established that some of the discrepancies alleged by Professor Driver are no discrepancies at all, and others deserve far less importance than he attaches to them. The writer of Deuteronomy will then be rehabilitated as a decent person, fairly able to comprehend and state the facts. Reading the book in such light as I can gain from Oriental modes of thought and speech, I am more ready to take it in good faith throughout than is allowed by Professor Driver, less inclined to brand its affirmations as "representations."

The most important question for us is, not when Deuteronomy was composed in its present form, but whether we can rely upon it. We do not so much care whether a history of Rome was written by a contemporary of the events narrated, or compiled centuries later, provided only it give the history truly. But I would give more weight than I find in Dr. Driver's discussion to the triple statement of chapter xxxi., that Moses wrote some part of the book. What became of the original copy laid up by the side of the ark we do not know. It may have been lost in some convulsion, like many a copy of the New Testament or some one of the Gospels in later Christian centuries. But I might remind my readers how tenacious is the Oriental memory.

Very common men of my acquaintance, and of meagre general education, bear the title of Hafuz, because they have memorized the whole of the Koran, though its Arabic is a foreign tongue to them. The substance of Moses' addresses in the plains of Moab might thus easily have been handed on until the time when it was written down as it has been given to us. Evidently this was after the settlement in Canaan, for the phrase "beyond Jordan," used of the east side of the river, occurs seven times in the first four chapters, which form an introduction to the main body of the addresses. The closing chapters, also, are doubtless the work of the editor, while the words in chapter xxix. 27, 28, are an explanatory note added by some hand after the Captivity began. The absence of anything else indubitably connected with the monarchy leads me, trusting the writer as I have found reason to do, to suppose that the book would have been composed in its present form early in the occupancy of Canaan. I do not see that Professor Driver's view of the date and authorship of Deuteronomy can be reconciled with the view presented in the book itself, and, if I am not mistaken, it will ultimately be established that the book is trustworthy, and that its view of its own origin is essentially true.

One thing more, if permitted. The *contrasts* between Deuteronomy and modern Oriental thought and speech are quite as marked as comparisons. The spiritual content of the Second Law is as important in relation to its form as the meat of a nut is to the shell. Deuteronomy, in its present form, has been providentially given to us for our spiritual profit. It seems as different from the utterances of well-meaning Orientals of the present day as the Bible is from all other books, as Christ is from all other men.

