

## The Textual Criticism of the Pentateuch.

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"Volebam in appendice critica omnes differentias inter Vulgatam Clementinam atque textum Hebraicum et Græcum lectoribus proponere. Colligens autem variantes lectiones magno cum stupore cognovi, appendicem criticam plus spatii occupaturam esse quam ipsum textum sacrum."—HETZENAUER (Preface, dated November 1, 1913, to "Biblia Sacra Vulgatæ Editionis," Ratisbon and Rome, 1914).

THE extract from Hetzenauer which I have placed at the head of this article draws attention to a phenomenon which is of dominating importance for the Old Testament text, and consequently—though this fact is not yet sufficiently grasped—for the literary, documentary, and historical criticism of the Bible. It is generally assumed and stated that the text of the Vulgate is practically identical with our received Hebrew—the Massoretic text. From this supposed identity inferences are drawn as to the history of the text, and on these, again, are built theories of composition and authorship. A recognition of the true state of affairs, which has hitherto been realized by comparatively few students, would dawn on most people as on Hetzenauer *magno cum stupore*, for it involves consequences that go to the root of our conceptions of most branches of Biblical study.

The general theory on which most modern writers have proceeded is that the Samaritan and the Septuagint are the surviving representatives of an unofficial recension, and that the text of Jerome and the other younger versions represent with the Massoretic text an official recension. As the Massoretic and Samaritan Pentateuchs do not differ among themselves very largely, this carries back the witness to the text to the point of separation of the Samaritan tradition from the Jewish. The date of this is unknown, and opinions vary as to the relative probability of *circa* 432 and *circa* 330 B.C.; but on either view the text was fixed with a considerable amount of

certainty at least some seven or eight centuries before the time of Jerome. As he was the great apostle of the *Hebraica veritas*, it is inconceivable on this theory that his text should differ materially from the common basis of Heb-Sam, and the fact that in reality it does so is destructive of the theory.

The usual view of the relations of the Samaritan and the other texts which has been outlined above rests largely on the issue of a great controversy which arose when the Samaritan Pentateuch became known in Europe. This was closed by a monograph of Gesenius on the subject which appeared in 1815, and was allowed to pass unchallenged till 1911, when the present writer pointed out the vices of his method in an article which was published in the *Expositor* for September of that year. As nobody has ventured to utter a syllable in defence of Gesenius's method in the controversy which has since arisen, it may be taken that even those who most ardently desire to uphold his view regard the fault as too palpable to be supported. For he only considered the relationship of the LXX. to the other two texts when these differed among themselves. With unimportant exceptions, he ignored the overwhelming number of cases in which the Greek differs from a consensus of the other two; and this is a most material factor in the comparison, especially as the Greek divergencies are sometimes of a startlingly recensional character. Hence his conclusions were unsound, and that part of the theory could not be upheld. The differences are of such a nature as to suggest that the text of Egypt, represented by the LXX., belonged to one recension, and the text of Babylonia and Palestine to another. As there are differences between the Palestinian and Egyptian texts in other books—notably Samuel and Jeremiah—of so striking a kind as to suggest that the books must have been long current in Egypt before the translation was made, it seemed natural to assume that the same explanation applied to the Pentateuch. The position which the Law has always held in Judaism and the appeals to it in Jeremiah make it very unlikely that the Jews who settled in Egypt in his time would not have had a

copy with them. It cannot be suggested with any sort of probability that they had an edition of Jeremiah, but none of the oldest and most revered portion of the canon—the Law. Nor is it intelligible that they should have read the prophet's writings, and not have read the authority to which he refers. There is therefore an antecedent probability that the Egyptian stream of textual tradition began its separate course in the time of Jeremiah—long before the Samaritan schism and its resulting text of the Pentateuch.<sup>1</sup>

Recent discussions have done very much to render this more probable, for the evidence of the Vulgate is of a singularly illuminating character. Some of the most striking of its divergencies in the text of the Law suggest that the ritual legislation has been heavily glossed by Temple commentators, who were naturally particularly interested in its interpretation, and that these glosses are incorporated in our present Hebrew. But the Vulgate lacks many of them, though they are present in the Samaritan, and in this the Vulgate is sometimes supported by the testimony of other parts of the Massoretic text itself, by Septuagintal witnesses, by internal evidence, and by the superior clearness of its readings and the fact that phrases and sentences which it lacks possess the characteristic marks of glosses. Some details which are too long for reproduction here will be found in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for October, 1914. The credit of having first drawn attention to the importance of the Vulgate to the critical controversy—albeit in another connection—belongs to Father Hugh Pope, O.P., who contributed a notable article, entitled "Where are we in Pentateuchal Criticism?" to the *Irish Theological Quarterly* for October, 1913. A recent attempt by Dr. John Skinner to answer Father Pope has resulted in complete failure, and it is now certain that the *Irish Theological Quarterly* article is destined to be one of the landmarks in the history of Old Testament criticism.

<sup>1</sup> See further "The Pentateuchal Text: A Reply to Dr. Skinner." London: Elliot Stock. I hope to deal with Dr. Skinner's most recent criticisms in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for January, 1915.

The conclusions suggested by a comparison of the texts are, therefore, that the Massoretic and Samaritan Pentateuchs are descended from the recension in use in the Temple; that the Vulgate comes from a copy which, while belonging in general to this recension, had not incorporated all the notes and comments which had been embodied in the Temple manual, and so helps us back to an earlier text; and that the Hebrew of the Septuagint—*i.e.*, the text of Egypt—branched off at a much earlier date. These conclusions are confirmed by other considerations. The story of the Samaritan schism is intimately connected with one Manasseh, who was the son and brother of Jewish high-priests, and had officiated at the Jerusalem altar. He had married a daughter of Sanballat. The narrative in Josephus, which is our main authority, distinctly connects the schism with the desire of Manasseh and Sanballat to have in their family a high-priesthood similar to that which was the chief dignity in the Jewish nation of that period. It is obvious that in such circumstances Manasseh would model the ritual and the Pentateuch, which was to be the authority for that ritual, on the Temple manual. The basis on which he would work would undoubtedly be a copy of the recension in use in the Temple of his own day. Hence the close resemblance between the Samaritan and Massoretic texts in all ritual matters; hence, too, the divergence of the Vulgate, which has been less affected by the Temple text, though descended from the Babylonian-Palestinian branch of the tradition. It will be seen that, if this view is sound, a careful and scientific study of our authorities will in many cases enable us to go behind the text of the second Temple, and work back to the text of Jeremiah's day. Having regard to the discovery of the Book of the Law in his time, we should be able to attain to a very pure form of whatever was included in that book. It was doubtless a very old volume, dating, perhaps, from the time of Solomon, and may not have been removed by many copies from the original autograph.

There are many corollaries of the utmost importance to the

view outlined above. While our extant Hebrew manuscripts mostly reflect the Massoretic text, it is known that some of them come from non-Massoretic sources, and confirm the ancient versions in numerous readings. Unfortunately, the collations on which we have to depend were for the most part made in the eighteenth century, and do not satisfy the requirements of modern scholarship. It is greatly to be wished that fresh collations, or possibly, in the case of the more important manuscripts, facsimiles, might be published. Kennicott, in speaking of the subject, quotes Jablonski to the following effect: "Incredibile dictu est, in veteribus codicibus ad Masoræ leges reformandis, quam isti se operosos præstiterint. Multa ibi literarum millia jugulata videas, nec fere pauciora superne vel in ventre literarum addita." It seems certain that a rich harvest awaits the scholarship of the future in this direction; and it seems hard that, while the Samaritan Pentateuch is thought worthy of a sumptuous new edition, nothing adequate should be done for the Hebrew Bible. The idea of such an edition should be to select those manuscripts which differ most from the Massoretic text, and to publish a thoroughly scientific collation of them, proceeding on the lines of the larger Cambridge Septuagint, and not on those of Ginsburg or Kittel. The Karaite manuscripts in the British Museum should be included in such a work. The last great massacre of variants was due to the final triumph of the Massorettes, and included readings good, bad, and indifferent. Much labour will have to be expended, and the material will have to be filtered through many minds, if we are to secure the best text of the Bible possible on the Hebrew materials that survive.

Another result of this view is to assign much greater importance to the variants of the ancient versions, and to give an intelligible account of the frequent superiority of their readings. I cannot but think that textual studies must produce a far more intelligible picture of the ancient history of Israel, and consequently make the Bible a more potent religious instrument. We live in an age which does not love the unintelligible, and the clearer and more vivid the ancient records become, the

greater will be their appeal to the modern mind, and the firmer the religious grasp that they can exercise. I believe that the result of such studies must be to make the Biblical books far more suitable instruments for developing the religious perceptions of our generation than they are in their present form. Indeed, all history, properly understood, shows the writing of God's finger.

Another consequence is the complete shattering of the theories of composition and authorship which have been based on the Massoretic text. Of the problem of the Divine appellations in Genesis it is impossible to speak within the limits remaining to me; and those who wish to study this matter further must be referred to my other publications on the subject, and to the reply to Professor König which begins in the October number of the *Bibliotheca Sacra*.<sup>1</sup> But it is not merely Astruc's famous clue that is affected.<sup>2</sup> In further investigations even in the field of the Divine appellations, I have found that textual criticism abrogates current notions of the development of Old Testament theology, and when the field is extended all sorts of other supposed criteria of authorship are found to be worthless. The long lists of words supposed to be characteristic of various sources which the documentary critics are so fond of parading must undergo the most profound modifications, for in many instances they are due to late glossators. There never was much cogency in the so-called literary argument, because any number of redactors and the most improbable divisions had to be postulated to get it to work at all, and even then it was

<sup>1</sup> See also an interesting article by Professor Nathaniel Schmidt in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* for March, 1914 (vol. xxxiii., part i., pp. 25-47), which only came into my hands after this article was written. The views it advocates, while not identical with those here presented, show how a section of the higher critics are moving towards sounder positions than those from which they started. I would most heartily endorse the closing words of his article: "Science is not concerned about the maintenance of any theory. Its most urgent demand upon its votaries in this field at present is that methods of textual criticism, at least as rigorous and exact as those recognized and employed in the elucidation of other Biblical books, shall be applied also to the study of the Pentateuch" (p. 46).

<sup>2</sup> "Astruc's clue may prove to be worthless, yet the distinction in style and thought remains" (Schmidt, *loc. cit.*).

a mass of subjectivity. But even such cogency as it could be supposed to possess is entirely destroyed by textual criticism. Moreover, many of the supposed contradictions and chronological difficulties are found to be due either to marginal notes that have accidentally got into the text, and are often lacking in one or other of our ancient authorities, or to the accidental corruption of one or more letters which can often be detected with the same aids, or to the erroneous resolution of abbreviations (real or supposed), where again we may have old witnesses to the true reading. This last cause is not yet sufficiently appreciated by students of the Old Testament, but the evidence of extant manuscripts as well as of versions shows that it is extremely important, and stress is rightly laid on it in Ginsburg's Introduction. It is extremely unfortunate that the Old Testament introductions in use in this country mostly take no account whatever of textual criticism, and that no manual on this subject has yet appeared.

Before passing away from the corollaries to the general view of the textual history taken above, mention should be made of one very fascinating line of inquiry which it suggests. How far does the Vulgate represent a new translation by Jerome, and how far does it incorporate earlier Old Latin renderings of the Septuagint? It is true that Jerome was the great apostle of the *Hebraica veritas*, but he also professed to incorporate much older work; and, for the book of Daniel, G. Hoberg has shown in his "De Sancti Hieronymi ratione interpretandi" that this is so. In the preface to the latest edition of the Vulgate, an extract from which stands at the head of this article, Hetzenauer writes, "Nam 'Hieronymus pro timida sua natura, inquit Cornill, non satis energice manum immisit et tradita sæpe intacta reliquit, etiam ubi ea falsa esse cognovit' ad offensionem populorum vitandam," quoting from Cornill's "Einleitung," 1913, p. 315.<sup>1</sup>

If this be so, it follows that in many instances the text of

<sup>1</sup> The passage will be found on p. 534 *et seq.* of the English translation, "Introduction to the Canonical Books of the Old Testament."

our printed Vulgate is really the Old Latin—with or without modifications—and the Old Latin is a translation from the early Septuagintal text, before Origen and the other later editors had taken any systematic steps to bring it into accord with the Hebrew of their days. Further, Jerome antedates even our oldest Greek manuscript of the LXX., so that both in the type of text that he represents and in actual date he is presumably often our earliest witness to the Septuagintal text where no quotations have been preserved by Philo or other earlier authorities. The difficulty is to know how much is Jerome and how much is Old Latin; but comparison of his readings with the apparatus of the larger Cambridge Septuagint should make it possible to do much work in this direction. Surely English scholarship should find here a thoroughly congenial field of research. The work of the Cambridge University Press has put the materials within easy reach of all who have the training and inclination and some leisure to give to the task of studying and restoring the best text of the Bible now attainable, and the great English tradition of textual criticism should inspire many able workers.

In conclusion, attention should be directed to one other branch of textual criticism that still has a great future. The narratives and laws of the Pentateuch are not at present in their original order, and internal indications as well as the references in other Biblical books often give us clues to the solution of the difficulties. This work is extremely puzzling and baffling, and it is necessary to have regard to numerous small indications. The best example of what I believe it to be possible to achieve in this direction is to be found in the discussion of the arrangement of certain chapters of Numbers on pp. 114-138 of my "Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism." The persistent attempt of the higher critics to ignore that discussion, unfortunately, makes it necessary for me to do everything in my power to draw attention to it. Other instances will be found in the "Origin of the Pentateuch." It seems to me that, if fresh minds could be induced to consider some of the remaining



problems of the Pentateuch in the light of these methods, great progress might easily be achieved. No one man can hope to notice every point, but advances might be made through the contributions of different workers ; and here again a fruitful field awaits those who are willing to devote study of the right kind to the problems. Renewed investigation generally shows that our difficulties are due to quite simple causes, and that the inevitable tendency to miss the obvious is responsible for much of our trouble. Once men free their minds from the thralldom of the higher critical theories, and approach the Pentateuch in a spirit of candid and scholarly investigation, they may hope to make discoveries that will remove the stumbling-blocks of many generations.

