

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php

FRANZ DELITZSCH AND AUGUST DILLMANN
ON THE PENTATEUCH.

OLD TESTAMENT students are now in possession of two distinctly formulated replies to the theories which were advanced by Reuss and Vatke fifty years ago and have been, during the last twenty years, reconstructed as well as fortified by the researches of Graf, Kuenen and Wellhausen. One¹ of these replies, published in the autumn, comes from the eminent Christian theologian and Hebraist, Dr. Franz Delitzsch, the other² from the famous Semitic philologist, Dr. August Dillmann. Other men of learning and piety have been working in the same field and for similar ends. Nowack's *Hosea* contains some arguments of considerable cogency directed against the presuppositions of Duhm's *Theology of the Prophets*. König's *Hauptprobleme der Israelitischen Religionsgeschichte* (already rendered into English) is a far more valuable contribution towards the same result. And among American auxiliaries in so profoundly important a polemic, Prof. Ives Curtiss, in his *Levitical Priests*, as well as Prof. Bissell and Prof. Green, have in different ways rendered useful service. What reply worth naming has yet appeared from any Englishman?

It is my business to speak of the valuable addition to critical and exegetical scholarship given to the world by Prof. Franz Delitzsch in his recent Commentary on Genesis. It will also be instructive to compare the matured results of inquiry of the veteran Hebraist of Leipzig with those of the distinguished Semitist of Berlin.

Fifteen years have elapsed since the previous edition (the fourth) of Delitzsch's valuable Commentary was published. These years have been momentous in their bearing upon

¹ *Neuer Commentar über die Genesis von Franz Delitzsch.* Leipzig, 1887.

² *Kurzgefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch zum A. T. Numeri, Deuteronomium und Josua.* Von Dr. August Dillmann. Leipzig: S. Hirzel. 1886.

the study of the Old Testament. Two factors of great importance have, during this interval, come into prominence, and decisively influenced the mental attitude of Biblical exegetes. The first factor involves the investigations of Kuenen and Wellhausen, pursued with marvellous persistence, research and ingenuity, and stated, especially by the latter in his *History of Israel* (1878), now called *Prolegomena* (1883), with great clearness and force. The results, as presented by Wellhausen in the sketch of the "History of Israel" contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, are obviously subversive of Biblical authority; and when we turn to the history recently published by Stade, a disciple of the same school, we find the early periods of Old Testament history reduced to a heap of ruins, and the records honeycombed with wholesale historical inventions designed to support a prescribed religious system and ritual. Prof. Ives Curtiss has already in previous numbers of THE EXPOSITOR (February, 1886; November, 1887) described Wellhausen's theory of the growth of the Pentateuch, and the general tendencies which characterize the investigations of this school of research. To these articles we shall meanwhile refer the reader.

The second factor is *Assyriology*. The appearance of the first edition of Schrader's *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament* was nearly contemporaneous with the issue of the former edition (the fourth) of Delitzsch's Commentary on Genesis. Cuneiform investigation had at that time fallen on evil days. It was regarded with great suspicion by German scholars, a suspicion which lurks in Germany to this hour. No doubt this was largely due to premature conclusions,—to misreadings and consequent misunderstandings of the complicated ideographic and phonographic script of Babylonia and Assyria. But the fresh discoveries of George Smith and Horm. Rassam, and the publication of a portion of the remarkable series of Izdubar-legends, gave

an enormous impetus to the study of Assyrian. Fresh syllabaries were brought to light, and a great number of new texts were published in the successive volumes of the *Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia*, edited by Norris, Geo. Smith, and Theoph. Pinches. The knowledge of Assyrian thus came to acquire a more definite form and the grammar to be more thoroughly understood. The assaults made by Wellhausen and Gutschmid upon the validity of these results were successfully repelled by Prof. Schrader. Assyriology began to be pursued with ardour at Leipzig, Göttingen and Berlin. One of the most eminent Assyriologists in Germany is the son of the writer of the *New Commentary on Genesis*. Prof. Friedrich Delitzsch, author of *Assyrische Lesestücke*, and of the interesting monograph on the site of Paradise, enjoys a high and well-earned reputation as the head of an important school of Assyriology at the same university where his father bears so honoured a name. One only needs to glance over the pages of the work that now lies before us in order to perceive that the Assyriologist has made the results of his manifold labours available for the purpose of illustrating the text of Genesis. Unfortunately the infirmity of over-haste detracts somewhat from the merit of some of the productions of the younger scholar, especially in his more recent works. These faults have been exposed in the reviews from a competent hand which have from time to time been published in these pages, and also in an exhaustive article by Nöldeke which appeared about a year ago in the *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, and in which the writer examines Fried. Delitzsch's *Prolegomena to a New Hebrew-Aramaic Dictionary*. We note therefore with satisfaction that the combination again put forth in that work, of the Hebrew אַבְרָךְ (Gen. xli. 43) with the Assyrian official title *abarakku* is not accepted in the *New Commentary on Genesis* (see p. 469). The identification of the Biblical Paradise with

the Babylonian lowland Kar Duniaš, propounded with so much ingenuity in *Wo lag das Paradies*, is apparently approved on page 89, although on a previous page a long array of argument is devoted to the altogether irreconcilable hypothesis which combines גִּיחוֹן with the river Nile. In our opinion Delitzsch's interpretation of the passage is obscured by making קְדָמַת (Gen. ii. 14) = מִקְדָּם, i.e. "eastward," whereas the LXX. (κατέναντι) here give the clue to the correct rendering of the word both in its present connexion and in other places (iv. 16; 1 Sam. xiii. 5; Ezek. xxxix. 11). Turning to other passages, we find that in Gen. i. 5 the "day" is still interpreted by Delitzsch in an æonic sense, on the simple ground that a solar day is out of the question, since the heavenly bodies were regarded by the narrator as not created till the fourth day. On the other hand, there is substantial agreement between Delitzsch, Dillmann and Schrader, as against the views of Fried. Delitzsch and Haupt (and probably Sayce also) that the Biblical accounts of Creation and the Flood originated from the Exile period, and were due to direct Babylonian influence. The grounds for placing the origin in times long anterior have already been discussed by Dillmann in his famous essay on the *Source of the Primitive Traditions of the Hebrews* (see Delitzsch's *Commentary*, p. 41). Most students will regret the loss of the learned dissertations by the Arabic scholar, Consul Wetzstein (pp. 561, foll.), which enriched the fourth edition (1872) of Delitzsch's *Commentary*; but they will welcome with great satisfaction the important contribution by Fried. Delitzsch upon "Ellasar," at the close of the present edition. In the interpretation of the much-discussed עַר יְבֵא שִׁלָּה in Gen. xlix. 11 we are glad to see that Delitzsch, in common with Dillmann, does not give way to the false tradition of Versions and Targums, or to the novelties of modern emendators.

But we are compelled by limitations of time and space to

pass from exegetical details to another subject of absorbing interest. How does Delitzsch stand in relation to the problems of the Pentateuch and the views of Graf, which have acquired so great an ascendancy in Germany? On this subject we would willingly have seen a fuller and more detailed exposition than is vouchsafed to us in the short space of twenty-four pages in the Introduction. It is true that we have the series of essays in Luthardt's *Zeitschrift*, viz. "The Critical Studies on the Pentateuch," and "Original Mosaic Elements in the Pentateuch," to fall back upon. But a toilsome search through back numbers of the *Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft* makes heavy demands on the student's time, and to me it is most unsatisfactory to be referred to "Suggestive Jottings" in the *Sunday-School Times of Philadelphia*, a periodical which I have never seen. On behalf of a continually increasing circle of students in England and Scotland, and more especially in America, we would venture to suggest to the author that his essays on Pentateuch criticism contributed to *Luthardt's Zeitschrift*, as well as those recently contributed to *Saat und Hoffnung*, should be collected in the form of a "Separat-Ausgabe." This has been done by Wellhausen for his own essays on the composition of the Hexateuch, and a similar volume of collected essays by the scholar and divine of Leipzig would be sure to have a ready sale. Providence owes us this counterpoise.

In his Introduction to the *New Commentary* Delitzsch makes it clear that his position in relation to Old Testament problems is in the main the same as it has ever been, and that the Bible, as the literature of a Divine revelation, is not permitted to suffer the loss of veracity and to be robbed of its historic presuppositions and groundwork. It is here that the commentator exhibits the strong side of his genius. He is more than scholar; he is also a divine. He dwells in two worlds. The world of Semitic philology

is obviously quite familiar to him. As a Talmudist and as an Arabist, Franz Delitzsch has long shown himself well equipped at every point. But he is more than all this—he dwells in the greater world of spiritual ideas. The centre of his thought is Christ and His Resurrection. Let us hear his own words: “We are Christians, and our attitude therefore towards Holy Scripture is different from what it is towards the Homeric poems, the Nibelungenlied, or the records of Assurbanipal’s library. Since Holy Scripture is the book containing the documents of our religion, our relation to it is not simply scientific, but intensely moral and charged with responsibility. We shall interpret Genesis as theologians, and moreover as Christian theologians, *i.e.* as the confessors of Jesus Christ, who is the Alpha and Omega of all God’s ways and words.” And the relation of Faith to Criticism is indicated in well-chosen words: “The Christian as such accepts the Pentateuchal history and, generally speaking, Holy Scripture, as a unity involving one spirit, thought, and aim; and this unity consists really in all that concerns our salvation and the history of its foundation; it is lifted far above the results of critical analysis. It is true that criticism, when it separates the unity into its original independent constituent parts, appears to threaten and throw doubt upon the essential oneness of Holy Scripture. Criticism, therefore, must always remain unpopular. Our Churches take no interest in it, or rather are repelled by it. In fact, there is a kind of criticism which hacks the Pentateuch to pieces like a *corpus vile* with the dissecting knife, so as thoroughly to spoil the taste for analysis, not only on the part of Christian laity but of Christian scholars. But analysis has its incontestable rights; from a scientific standpoint it is indispensable. . . . If in the labyrinth we hold fast to the single truth *Christus vere resurrexit*, we have in our hands the clue of Ariadne, and we shall find our way out of the maze.”

The characteristics which distinguish Delitzsch's present exposition of the critical problems of the Pentateuch, as compared with his opinions in 1872, are as follows: (1) A more complete acceptance of the results of Hupfeld's laborious investigations respecting the true character of the so-called Later-Elohistic. (2) The recognition of the true relation of this writer to the Jehovist Prophetic document into which the Later Elohistic fragments became merged. (3) The independence of the Jehovist document and the Grundschrift or fundamental document is now adequately set forth. (4) A far more important characteristic of Delitzsch's present critical standpoint is his modified acceptance of the position of the Grafian school in its reference to the Priestercodex. In other words, the Jehovist records are anterior to the Priestercodex. "Moreover, as my eighteen critical essays on the Pentateuch, in *Luthardt's Zeitschrift*, 1880-81, clearly show, the recent revolution in Pentateuch-criticism has influenced me to this extent, that I now perceive that the writer whose account of Creation begins the Pentateuch does not precede the narrator of the story of Paradise, but comes after him. I am of opinion that the historical development of Law, and the literary process out of which the Pentateuch in its present form has arisen, continued in operation till post-exilic times. Nevertheless my conception of this process is profoundly different from the modern conception." In our own opinion Christian theologians of every type, who recognise that Israel lived as a nation upon earth and subject to its mutable conditions, will have to admit that the repeated operation of the legislative and redactional process till the exilic and post-exilic period was inevitable, unless they are prepared to uphold the paradox that the Pentateuch legislation scarcely had any practical relation whatever to the ever shifting conditions of Israel's national and social life.¹ That the

¹ This does not exclude the possibility that portions of that legislation re-

Tôrôth both in form and substance were Mosaic, *i.e.* constructed on the Mosaic groundwork, is the presupposition which underlies the entire legislative scheme. Indeed we hold that the principle of centralization dates from the Mosaic era.

The constituent elements of the Hexateuch according to Delitzsch's analysis may be tabulated thus :

I. "Fundamental" document, to which Gen. i.-ii. 4 *a* belongs. In its earlier form this is designated Q (with Wellhausen). This document became gradually extended as a work of priestly legislation, and in its enlarged form is called the Priestercodex, designated PC. It included among other portions of legislation, contained in the middle books of the Pentateuch, the body of laws Lev. xvii.-xxvi., called by Klostermann *Heiligkeitsgesetz*, designated HG, which is considered by Delitzsch to hold a middle position between Deuteronomy and the later legislation of the Priestercodex.

II. The Jehovist prophetic writer (J) with whose work the later-Elohistic document (E) was blended, forming J E.

III. The Book of Deuteronomy, called D. Chapters xii.-xxvi. are regarded as forming a complete work (p. 24). This book was edited by a writer penetrated by the spirit of the original document. This redactor is called Dt, and his hand is to be traced in other parts of the Pentateuch.

The original Mosaic elements in the Pentateuch are held to be the Ten Commandments, the Book of the Covenant, Exod. xxi-xxiii., which formed the groundwork of the Deuteronomic legislation; the list of stages, Num. xxxiii., as well as the poetical fragments in the Book of Numbers (vi. 24-26; xxi. 17, 18; x. 35, 36).¹ Deut. xxxii., xxxiii.,

remained inoperative for long periods. Indeed, Dillmann holds this to have been actually the case (*N. D. J.*, p. 666 *ad fin.*).

¹ On this see Delitzsch's articles "Urmosaïches im Pentateuch" in the *Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft*, 1882. Hefte iii. v. vi. vii. ix. and xi.

and even Ps. xc., are believed to come from the hand of Moses. Probably Delitzsch would agree with the argument used by Strack, that it is incredible that Israel, after their departure from Egypt, where an ancient priestly caste and priestly system existed, should have continued destitute of any written code of priestly law.

Of Dillmann's great exegetical works on the entire Hexateuch it may be said that, as compared with the work of Delitzsch, they are more exclusively philological in their standpoint. That Dillmann's theological position differs from that of the Leipzig scholar may be inferred from the mode of treatment pursued by the former; but to the Christian theologian his ultimate conclusions will have, for this very reason, a special evidential value of their own.

Dillmann is *par excellence* a Semitic philologist. Like his younger colleagues Nöldeke and Schrader (the latter were fellow-students at Göttingen), he was trained by the illustrious Ewald, probably the greatest Orientalist and Biblical exegete that Germany ever produced. The work by which Dillmann acquired enduring fame was produced in comparatively early youth, viz., his edition of the Book of Enoch in Ethiopic, followed by that of the Ethiopic Bible, and lastly by an Ethiopic Grammar which for the last thirty years has remained the recognised standard authority. The masterly series of commentaries on the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua (in the *Kurzgefasstes Exegetisches Handbuch* series) are absolutely indispensable to the Biblical scholar, and are unrivalled for learning, acumen, lucidity and conciseness. Every ray of light from the firmaments of archæology, philology, and Eastern travel is focussed, as though by a powerful lens, upon the Hebrew text. The signal characteristic virtue of August Dillmann is independence of judgment penetrated by strong common sense. Towards the fine-spun theories of the sceptical rationalist he is profoundly sceptical. In 1880 he wrote

respecting Wellhausen's theory of the successive editions of the various documents of the Pentateuch: "I can make nothing out of $Q_1 Q_2 Q_3$, $J_1 J_2 J_3$, $E_1 E_2 E_3$, and can only see in them hypotheses due to embarrassment." His critical standpoint is clearly and succinctly explained in the dissertation which closes his commentary on Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua.

Dillmann's critical theory respecting the Pentateuch may be briefly summarized as follows: He disagrees with Delitzsch as to the relative position assigned to the Grundschrift, *i.e.* the original edition (Q) of the Priestercodex. The Grundschrift, which he designates A, he places, it is true, later in time than the so-called *later-Elohistic* document (which he calls B). This latter work was of North-Israelite origin, and shows evident traces of an early date throughout its fragmentary remains (*N. D. J.*, p. 655 foll.). It must be confessed that there is a certain tone of hesitancy in Dillmann's discussion of the chronological relation of A to the Prophetic Jehovist writer (C). But his ultimate verdict is clearly and decisively stated (*N. D. J.*, p. 656 foll.), and has a considerable weight of evidence behind it.

Accordingly the order of the Hexateuchal documents is the following:—

B (Later Elohist) in the first half of the ninth century (*N. D. J.*, p. 621).

A (*Grundschrift*, Delitzsch Q) is placed about 800 B.C. This nearly coincides with the conclusions arrived at by Nöldeke nearly twenty years ago (*Untersuchungen*, p. 140).

C (Jehovist writer) who is evidently dependent on B. The latter was North-Israelite while C is Judaic, both documents being prophetic in style and thought. This document is placed in the middle of the eighth century.

D (The Book of Deuteronomy) in its original form included chaps. v.—xxvi., and not merely chapters xii.—xxvi.

Dillmann with most scholars assigns this to the age of Josiah.

The collection of A B C into one work is placed between 700 and 600 B.C., while the combination of A B C with D is attributed to the early part of the exile period (*N. D. J.*, p. 682). Towards the close of this period the series of Sinai laws existing as groups of Tôrôth, now found in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, were adopted into the entire work. These Sinai-laws (chiefly Lev. xvii.–xxvi.) are a very difficult problem to the critic. "One cannot infer from them a definite plan or thread of arrangement. One can only say that the Law of Holiness becomes in them a main consideration" (*N. D. J.*, p. 640). Moreover in analysing the middle books of the Pentateuch it becomes a very intricate task to determine which laws originally belonged to the document A (Priestercodex in its earlier form), and which stood outside this, and formed the loose array of Sinai laws which were evidently known to Ezekiel, and formed some of the material from which his prophetic scheme of the restored temple was constructed. Indeed, as one peruses pp. 637–643, p. 686 foll., one is tempted more than once to say as Horace said to Asinius Pollio, though with a different application of phrase,—

"Periculosæ plenum opus aleæ
tractas et incedis per ignes
suppositos cineri doloso."

Probably the most instructive and interesting portion of Dillmann's masterly analysis consists in his examination of the Book of Deuteronomy. He lays great stress upon its being the *prophetic* law-book, and the divergences between the Deuteronomic and Levitical legislation are to be explained from that very fact. The Book of Deuteronomy was not intended to be exhaustive; it was rather eclectic, and its eclecticism was due to the prophetic and hortatory

tendency which dominates its contents (see *N. D. J.*, pp. 311, 608). Both the Levitical and Deuteronomic legislation had common Tôrôth upon which they were based. Upon several important points Dillmann and Delitzsch are in full agreement. Among these we note that—

(1) Both lay stress on the fact that writing must have been practised in Israel long before the ninth century. Delitzsch is undoubtedly right in claiming that the Israelites carried the art with them from the land of Egypt. There is no reference to the employment of writing in the history of times that precede the Egyptian bondage.

(2) Both agree that the Pentateuchal legislation was ancient in origin, and that its constitutive elements are long anterior to the exile-period.

The weak points, as it appears to me, in Dillmann's work are—

(1) His insistence on the combination of A, B, and C into one work, prior to the introduction of Deuteronomy into the collection. Surely Wellhausen's contention upon this point has considerable force.¹ I can, for my own part, see no objection to the assumption of a combined prophetic work D B C, with which was united in later times (probably the exilic), a priestly document like A standing isolated and probably for several centuries hardly read or known. The arguments on pp. 675 foll. appear to me the least conclusive in the book. Indeed Dillmann's own remarks, p. 633, unconsciously tell against his own position.

(2) Why place the Grundschrift in the bleak and drear soil of 800 B.C.? What were the special circumstances of that era which could have given birth to so remarkable a national product—remarkable in spite of its technical phraseology, its dry methodical style—remarkable because penetrated by so exalted a national consciousness, so pro-

¹ Wellhausen, "Composition des Hexateuchs," *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, 1877, p. 465 foll., 477 foll. See however *N. D. J.* p. 656 foll.

found a sense of Israel's greatness and destiny? These¹ are days when criticism (in the face of archæology), invents late origins for literary activity, and refuses to believe in the existence of a pure and exalted monotheism as well as ritual before the times of Amos and the Assyrian invasions of Palestine. And for that reason I fear I shall be thought guilty of impiety towards the Higher Criticism if I attempt to revive the opinion held by Ewald, that the Grundschrift dates from the age of Solomon.

I am led to this conclusion by the conviction that Israel's history and literature cannot be thoroughly comprehended or satisfactorily expounded, unless we occupy our minds less with a preconceived theory of the evolution of religious ideas and ritual, and fix our thoughts with closer attention upon the intimate connexion which has always subsisted between the internal, intertribal politics of Israel and her priestly, ritual system. The history of Israel is in truth a series of actions and reactions, and its onward march is by no means a straight course. We see centralization followed by decentralization and disintegration. And with political disintegration went hand in hand the prosperity and influence of her multiplied high places, with their debased popular and syncretic Jehovah-worship. The temple of Shiloh marks to a certain degree a centralizing tendency; and once more centralization seemed on the point of succeeding at the time when Solomon's temple was erected. That a programme-ritual and a programme-legislation based on the old Mosaic Tôrôth, should have been drawn up in that age of attempted consolidation, and wholly or in part incorporated in a great priestly historical work, and that it should have remained a *vox et præterea nihil* after the violent political

¹ Comp. the eloquent characterization of Ewald: "Auch sonst hört man durch das ganze Werk nirgends einen Laut von Verstimmung durch Leiden der Zeit, überall vielmehr glaubt man in ihm die ungetrübte ruhige Heiterkeit einer glücklichen Sabbatszeit des Volkslebens zu athmen." (*Gesch. Israels*, i. p. 113, comp. also pp. 142, 143.

explosion which immediately followed, is surely conceivable. How deeply the attempt to aggrandize Jerusalem and suppress Beersheba and Bethel would have been resented may be best illustrated by the instructive parallel which Prof. Sayce has recently furnished in his *Hibbert Lectures* (p. 89): "Babylonian religion remained local. It was this local character that gives us the key to its origin and history and explains much that would otherwise seem inconsistent and obscure. The endeavour of Nabonidus to create a universal religion for a centralized Babylonia was deeply resented by both priests and people, and ushered in the fall of the Babylonian empire." That the præ-exilic prophets say little about the Priestercode is thus easily explained. Enough is said or implied even in the narrow space of the Prophetic literature that preceded 700 B.C. to lead us to surmise that it existed, or at least that its contents were known. That nothing more is said is due to the fact that the prophets cared little for priests in an age when priests were notoriously corrupt (see Hosea *passim*), and paid slight heed to a ritual that was little other than priestly. They cared much more for the Divine Love—the Divine Moral Law and for human conduct. The præ-exilic prophets were practical men, not literary pedants, and lived in the presence of the stern facts of their own age. Hence they seldom directed their thoughts to a ritual-system, bound up with ideals of policy which were no longer possibilities and which were associated in the mind of every patriotic Jew with tragic memories of bad statesmanship, blighted aspirations, and irreparable political disaster. I have no space to speak of Ezra, the divinely inspired *διορθωτής*, who arranged the documents, and restored to them the true Mosaic type and idea.

OWEN C. WHITEHOUSE.