

omits the words in verse 51). Professor Blass concludes that St. Luke's earlier copy had them. But when he came to write his second copy, he observed that the Ascension was already recorded in the Acts. He wished to fit the Gospel and the Acts together. And to do that and avoid repetition, he left the account of the Ascension out of his Gospel, retaining only the fuller form in

the Acts. That it was originally in the Gospel, Professor Blass believes to be proved by the fact that otherwise there is no explanation of the words, 'They returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.' But if it was in the Gospel originally, he cannot conceive anyone but the author himself omitting it.

The Holy City of Deuteronomy.

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Few propositions of biblical criticism have been more generally accepted by scholars than the one which identifies our Deuteronomy with the book of the law discovered in the temple. The conformity between the provisions now read in Deuteronomy and those dictated to Josiah by that strangely discovered guide, establish an inference which is uniformly supported by all that can be drawn from a narrower examination of the text.

And yet many who have read the literature of the subject must feel that there is something forced and difficult in the current critical explanation of the origin and earlier history of the book. There is indeed neither unanimity nor certainty manifested on the subject by critics, but, on the whole, two alternative hypotheses appear to receive attention. The earlier, that of fraud on the part of Hilkiab or of some patriotic syndicate represented by him, is, I imagine, the less favourably received of the two. To suppose that these priests and functionaries of the temple actually manufactured the work in secret, and then successfully foisted it upon contemporaries as a volume of antique authority, is almost unwarrantable. To say nothing of the benign and lofty spirit of the book, which is maintained throughout, and the numerous enactments which it contains regarding things indifferent to the priestly interest, or even inimical to them, as, for example, the concession of the right of private slaughter, it is difficult to believe that even in an age of ignorance, people should have submitted so completely to such an imposture. Criticism was then, as we may well believe, an unknown science, but we must consider that

the book of Deuteronomy was not a merely speculative work. It contained numerous provisions detrimentally affecting public and private vested interests of the period. It was, in fact, revolutionary in character, involving loss and inconvenience to many, and it need not be remarked that there is nothing which so readily awakens the critical faculty, even in uninstructed people, as an attempt upon their personal interests. If any doubts, therefore, were entertained as to the genuineness of the discovery, they would probably have been put forward as a ground of resistance, whereas the narrative in 2 Kings leaves it clear that no such impious suspicions were mooted.

The more modern supposition appears to be that the work was written by some (unknown) priest of Jerusalem in the reign of Manasseh, king of Judah. This enthusiast, finding the times unripe for the propagation of his views, was satisfied to leave his work secluded among the dusty archives of the temple, unread and unknown, to await the chance of future resuscitation. After his death, the temper of the age having progressed steadily in the direction which his prophetic insight had surmised, was at length ready to receive the long-deferred message, and just at the right moment a chance hand, rummaging among the literary treasures of the temple, lighted upon the fateful volume, brought it forth, and sped it upon its triumphant mission into the world.

In this charming hypothesis there is something indeed which attracts belief, and, filling as it does a gap in our knowledge by an idyllic conception so eminently agreeable to the poetical

ideas of our own time, we should be pleased, if possible, to accept it. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly a remarkable series of circumstances that is here indicated. For a book written in one age, and pushed aside as being unsuitable for national circumstances, to come at a long subsequent period to be exactly suitable for the altered times, while meanwhile its own contents had been without activity in the formation of public thought, is a thing quite unparalleled in literary history. But its accidental discovery just in the nick of time, when every circumstance was most favourable for its introduction, is truly extraordinary. Considered coldly and steadily in the light of common historical credibility, is it not a little forced and unsound? Are not our modern speculators, animated by the sublimity of the material in which they deal, sometimes tempted to the composition of critical midrash, according to new canons, yet almost as unhistorical as the old?

Of the numerous enactments contained in Deuteronomy one of the most remarkable, and politically by far the most important, was that which provided for the concentration of the worship of the whole people of Israel to a single shrine. The execution of this law, involving the suppression of all the other holy places throughout the land, becomes more intelligible if we suppose that the sanctuaries in the district of Judea were, with the exception of Jerusalem, all of a mean and village character. On the other hand, the great and famous temples of Northern Israel had already, a century earlier, suffered ruin and desecration at the hands of the Assyrians. In carrying out the behests of the law, it was therefore inevitable that the magnificent sanctuary of Jerusalem should be selected as the place intended by the lawgiver for the sole worship of Jehovah. At that time Jerusalem had no important rival within the land of Israel, and any other interpretation of the law was scarcely possible, even if we suppose that the convenience and self-interest of Josiah and his advisers and people had no influence in shaping the decision which they reached. Accordingly, when Josiah and his coadjutors proceeded to abolish all the other holy places in the land, even going the length of insulting and polluting the fallen glory of Bethel, and taught the people far and near to ascend to Jerusalem only upon their devout pilgrimages, they believed that in so acting they

were strictly discharging the requirements of the sacred text.

A curious circumstance in this connexion is the fact that Jerusalem is nowhere mentioned or indicated in the text of Deuteronomy. The remarkable circuitous phrase which repeatedly occurs in our copies, 'The place which Jehovah shall choose out of all your tribes to set His name there,' is capable of any desired geographical construction, and is unintelligible in a volume in which every other provision is expressed with a clearness of detail and an emphasis of reiteration which leaves nothing to ambiguity.

Have we any grounds for reconsidering the judgment of the zealous monarch? Is it possible that he may have been mistaken in understanding Jerusalem as the sole place of authorized worship intended by the author of the book? And are we justified in overlooking a remarkable and almost unmistakable geographical indication which occurs in the text itself, and appears to be entirely at variance with the exegesis adopted by the pious king?

Jerusalem, at all events, could not have been contemplated from the dramatic standpoint of Moses, which is an essential part of the text, without gross impropriety, since the historical fact was too well known, that from the time of Moses until the time of King David, Jerusalem had been inaccessible to the Israelites as a place of worship. On the other hand, the intermediary position of Shiloh, which is only found in post-exilic documents, and appears to have been hit upon for the purpose of giving completeness and continuity to the theocratic system of history, does not seem to have occurred to the author of Deuteronomy.

If now the reader will take the trouble to compare carefully the relations between 12¹⁻¹⁴ and 27¹⁻⁷ of our present text of Deuteronomy, he will find it difficult to avoid the conclusion that Mount Ebal rather than Mount Moriah was in the mind of the lawgiver, and the holy city of his imagination Shechem rather than Jerusalem.

The reference to Mount Ebal contained in the above passage, striking as it is, is not indeed perfectly decisive, since it may be urged that Moses, in commanding sacrifice to be made there, thinks only of a single occasion. Ever afterwards, the tribes are to repair to 'the place which Jehovah should choose out of all their tribes to set His name there'—a different place, namely, and still

unnamed. But why this mysterious circumlocution? Why not clearly name the place intended, and have done with ambiguity? Especially in view of the crystal clearness with which the other enactments of the code are expressed. We have already acquitted the priests of Jerusalem of the charge of having fabricated the book for their own ends. But can we as easily clear them of the minor vices of textual intermeddling, emendation, alteration, interlineation, and the like? Supposing that the text, when first unrolled before the astounded eyes of Hilkiah and his associates, did actually contain a sufficient number of allusions to render unmistakable the identification with an obsolete religious centre in Northern Israel, it was indeed in the nature of things that they should have felt these allusions to be a serious hindrance to the future usefulness of the book. A trifling erasure, on the other hand, which had the effect of adapting the work to modern requirements, sat lightly on the conscience of persons unbiassed by the scrupulosity of a literary training, and, as we know, few of the extant writings of antiquity have escaped from such acts. For the rest, they could well be satisfied to leave in the text an ambiguous expression, to which the exigency of the times might safely be trusted to give point.

The meagre historical notices which we possess concerning that far-off age render it perilous for us to depart so freely from received tradition, but it must be remembered that the heresy of the later Samaritans, whose traditions are also well worth attention, consisted almost precisely in this very interpretation, with the slight and readily explicable substitution of Gerizim for Ebal. At the time when Josiah reigned, the deportation of Northern Israel was already a century old. In the place of the ten tribes, an assortment of unclean foreigners had been introduced, and now formed the predominant bulk of the population. These people, whom we must consider to have been for the most part poor, at least on their first introduction into the land, and of low type,—the slaves and offscourings, in fact, of the densely populated districts in the region of Babylonia,—were regarded with abhorrence by the indigenous races into whose midst they were flung. Without noble families or leisurely classes, without local attachment or political influence, they formed indeed a striking contrast to the proud and restless people whose territories they had been sent to occupy. In the hands of

such a people the once renowned worship in the sanctuaries of Northern Israel—still maintained after a fashion—had fallen upon evil days. The sacred rites of these holy places, now imperfectly performed by men of unholy origin, ignorant of the minutæ of antique prescription, and racially ineligible for their important functions, became a mere travesty of religious service as remembered by men of the ancient race, who considered the former glory of these sacred places. In such a state of matters, there was only one great sanctuary left which men of true Israelitish birth and manners could contemplate without repugnance, that one, namely, which, after having for ages occupied a foremost place, now on the downfall of its rivals asserted a solitary and enhanced dignity—Jerusalem.

While thus in the days of Josiah the balance of political importance turned undoubtedly towards the southern kingdom, and the successor of David might perhaps dream of a sway as extensive as his, in the earlier ages, while the kingdom of the ten tribes existed, the case had been very different. It is agreed by all that the kingdom of Northern Israel surpassed the kingdom of Judah in extent, in population, in military strength, in fertility, in commerce, and in civilization. The ten tribes associated and vied with the great Gentile world in a way impossible for the backward mountaineers of Judah. While the latter, secluded from the world, were nursing in silence a more portentous future, they were exercising a more brilliant activity in the present. It becomes in a manner a postulate, both on the ground of convenience and of dignity, that the greater people should require to have their religious centres within their own territory. Indeed, we find that this was actually the case, when Jeroboam erected two holy places, one at Bethel and one at Dan, in order that the people might not require to repair to Jerusalem upon their religious journeys. In the passage where this is narrated we may suspect that the Jewish author has exaggerated somewhat the importance of Jerusalem, since the attractions of that shrine, however magnificent, were in Jeroboam's time too recent to have taken deep root in the hearts of the people. It is possible that both Bethel and Dan, although renovated and adorned by the munificence of the new king, were both of them already ancient sanctuaries, and they may therefore already have possessed stronger claims upon the popular affection than Jerusalem commanded. The latter of the

two, however, by its inconvenient situation in the remote north, was not adapted to become anything more than a local shrine, and so far as we know never became more; while the former, by reason as it would seem of the licentiousness and foreign customs introduced into its worship, very early lost its hold upon the serious and old-fashioned part of the public.

Besides the famous sanctuaries which are named, generally with opprobrium, in the Old Testament, were there no others to which the pious of Northern Israel could betake themselves and join in a species of worship uncontaminated with the alluring abominations of Tyre and Egypt? The attractions of these novelties were the besetting evil of the religion of that day, but it is tolerably certain that they would not infect all the places of worship in the same degree. While some sanctuaries were deeply imbued with idolatrous practices, others would remain comparatively free from them. In proportion to the venerable antiquity and fame which an Israelitish place of worship possessed, would it oppose a strength of resistance to the encroachments of foreign influences, and maintain a stronger reminiscence of primitive manners, while the more modern and fashionable sanctuaries would yield more easily to external influences, having few traditions of their own to oppose to them. The strength and extent of the prophetic movement, when it broke out, show that the traditions of a more primitive form of worship had still been kept alive during the period when these more splendid shrines were most in vogue. But if such traditions were so strongly sustained during a long period, we must suppose that there were in the land of Israel a number of holy places capable of nourishing them, which did their work quietly and without ostentation, and were quite unworthy of that prophetic reprobation which has been meted to the high places in general.

It is, of course, a long step to assume that Shechem was such a place. For the age of the kings we have no evidence to show that Shechem possessed any religious standing whatever. The lack of evidence, in fact, precludes investigation. Shechem, at all events, was a large and important town, and since the holy places of these times were numerous, and usually formed the centre of a resident population (see Jer 2²⁸), it may well be

supposed that such an ancient and important city would possess a shrine of corresponding dignity. Furthermore, Shechem, of all the cities of Israel, was the one best suited to fit the dramatic propriety of the Mosaic authorship of the code; for Shechem had been one of the first of all the cities of the Canaanites to admit the Bene-Israel on terms of peace. In the age of the patriarchs, long, long ago, while the other cities of the land proudly stood aloof or waged cruel war upon the wandering Israelites, Shechem opened its gates to them and fraternized with them in the most liberal spirit, and that, too, not without detriment to themselves; as appears to be darkly symbolized in the cruel story of Simeon and Levi. Later, too, while the Israelitish power was not yet firmly established in the land, Shechem had with men and money supported the attempt of the able half-breed Abimelech to establish an Israelitish kingdom, and we might almost conjecture that the shrine of Baal-Berith, the Lord of Treaties, was one at which both races might meet on common ground to worship the same God under a common title.

In concluding, I may remark that, had the book of Deuteronomy been written subsequent to the calamity and deportation of the northern tribes, it would probably have contained some allusion to those events. On examination of the text, however, we find that such allusions are confined to the passages which critics have obelized as later additions. The body of the book contains no such notices, and we are therefore emboldened to assume that it had been written at least anterior to the time of Shalmanesar.

To complete our hypothesis, it is easy to conjecture that, at the time of these disasters, while the pride of the cities and temples of the Northern Israelites were being given to pollution and ruin by the pitiless invaders, an important and venerable book might well be carried for the sake of safety to a neighbouring shrine which still retained its inviolability, and there deposited against the possible return of the race whose arcana and secret wisdom it contained. They never returned, and the precious volume lay neglected in the dust for many years, until a chance discovery brought it once more to light, and to a more wonderful activity than it had ever before exercised.