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The authorship of the Pentateuch

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- The Authorship of the Pentateuch -

As Prof. Mitchell states in his "Introductory Lectures" - "It has from time immemorial been taught, and is already believed, that Moses wrote the Pentateuch substantially as it has been preserved in the Hebrew Scriptures" - But many have thought, as he further states, that "while Moses may have furnished more or less of the material of which the first five books of the Bible are composed, they must have been put into their present form by a later hand" -

and scholastic investigation of more recent times has endeavored to prove that Moses had very little to do with it, while some claim that the Pentateuch was not the work of Moses at all -

While it would be very interesting to examine fully the reasons that these men advance for not

accepting the Mosaic authorship. The time and space at our command will permit only a cursory glance at the grounds of such rejection -

1- The opponents of the Mosaic authorship affirm that from a literary point of view the Pentateuch cannot be the work of any one writer, least of all Moses, but that it is of composite origin formed by the combination of different writings which were themselves produced long posterior to the Mosaic age. A remarkable alternation was long ago observed in the words Elohim and Jahveh in the early chapters of Genesis. So frequently has our attention been called to these passages and this theory that we need only say that the prevailing theory among eminent European critics is that

There were two Elohist, a Jehovist, and a so called Deuteronomist; that the earliest of these writers wrote 4 or 500 centuries after the time of Moses, and that the latest perhaps a thousand years after the same date, recording such legends as had up to that time been received. Others admit the existence of such distinct writers, but dispute the dates assigned to them.

It is claimed that each of these writers has his own characteristic style and mode of thought by which the paragraphs and clauses belonging to him may be recognized and when these are singled out and put together they form as many distinct narratives or documents, which are nearly or quite continuous. The original sources can thus be produced, which combined by some editor or redactor,

constitute the Pentateuch as we now have it." The criteria by which these alleged documents are distinguished are of a subtle and complicated character, and the conclusions based upon them are to us questionable, but we cannot here discuss the merits or demerits of these theories.

Even allowing that the Pentateuch was compiled from antecedent documents, the age of these documents would still be an open question.

It has not been satisfactorily proven that they are post-Mosaic.

For all that has been proven, Moses might himself have been the compiler, or the compilation might have been made under his supervision and direction. And even though a few paragraphs could be proved to be post-Mosaic, this would only demonstrate that such paragraphs could not

has belonged to the Pentateuch as it came from the pen of Moses, not that the work as a whole did not proceed from him.

2. Another theory of authorship is found in the relation subsisting between the three codes of law which it contains, namely, that found in the Book of the covenant, which is the briefest, simplest and the most primitive; this was followed by the Deuteronomic law, which is more fully developed, and in turn by the Priest code, which is the most complicated and elaborate of all and therefore the latest in the series. It is maintained that these are so diverse in character and so inconsistent with one another in their respective positions that they cannot have originated at one time or have proceeded from any one

legislator: they must belong to distinct periods and represent successive stages in the growth of the national institutions.

Does the fact that these differences exist prove that more than one author wrote these laws? It is not strange that an author writing at different times and under different conditions and for different purposes should change his style to suit these different conditions. That the Book of the Covenant is so brief and elementary in matters of worship is because of its preliminary character.

It was intended simply to be the basis of God's Covenant with Israel, and not to develop in detail the duties growing out of that covenant.

That Deut. does not contain the minute ceremonial requirements to be found in Leviticus is no indication

That the latter is the subsequent development of a more ritualistic age.

It is simply because there was no necessity of repeating details which had already been sufficiently enlarged upon elsewhere. The Priest Code was for the guidance of the priests in conducting the ritual; Deuteronomy was for the people at large, to whom the great law-giver addressed his earnest warnings and exhortations as he was about to leave them. The differences and discrepancies alleged in these laws are for the most part capable of being satisfactorily harmonized. A few puzzles remain insoluble by us they are not more than might be expected in matters of so ancient date, so foreign to modern ideas and usages and concerning which we have so little information. They pro-

rather the greatness of the author
rather than a diversity and mul-
tiplicity of authors -

Many other theories are then against
the Mosaic authorship of which we
cannot now speak, all of which
can be successfully rebutted.

They all are of comparatively recent
origin and have absolutely no au-
thority save that given them by their
advocates, resting upon the unstable
foundation of general supposition.

To whom shall we go to find the
author of this wonderful collection
of books save unto the great prophet
and emancipator himself, sch-
ooled in all the wisdom of the Egypt-
ians, and guided by the unerring
hand of the omniscient Jehovah. To
him, the great general and law-giver,
must we look as have looked the
saints and sages of all ages for the

authorship of this remarkable Book of the Law -

1- Let us inquire what the Pentateuch says itself concerning its authorship - as we have already intimated the legal portion consists of three distinct bodies of law, each having its own peculiar character and occasion - The Book of the Covenant (Ex 20-23) embracing the Ten Commandments & is expressly said (Ex 24:4) to have been written by Moses and read in the audience of the people - The Priest code, relating to the sanctuary and ritual, is contained in the rest of Ex. ch's 25-40 (with the exception of three chapters relating to the sin of the golden calf) - is expressly declared in all its parts to have been directly communicated by the Lord to Moses. The Deuteronomic Code, embracing the legal

portion of the Book of Deut. which was delivered by Moses to the people in the plains of Moab, Moses is expressly said to have written and committed to the custody of the Levites (Deut. 31:24-26) - The entire law therefore, in explicit and positive terms claims to be Mosaic.

Turning from the law to the narrative we find two passages expressly attributed to the pen of Moses - After the victory over Amalek at Rephidim, the Lord said unto Moses (Ex 17:14) - "write this for a memorial in the book."

The fact that such an injunction was given to Moses in this particular instance seems to imply that he was the ^{proper} person to place on record whatever was memorable and worthy of preservation in the events of the time, and the language used "the book" may signify that Moses had

already begun the preparation of a connected narrative, which ended in the Pentateuch substantially as it has come to us. Again in Num. 33:2 - a list of the various stations of the Children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings is ascribed to Moses who is said to have written them out-going according to their journeys by the commandment of the Lord. And thus "the book" - grew naturally out of the experiences of the people whose leader and scribe the prophet was. And although the other portions do not expressly attribute the book to his hand, yet the whole plan and construction of the Pentateuch obviously prove that the history and legislation are alike integral parts of our complete work. Genesis and the First

of Exodus are plainly preliminary to the legislation that follows. The historical chapters of Numbers constitute the framework in which the laws are set, binding them all together and exhibiting the occasion of each separate enactment. If the legislation in its present form is, as it claims to be, Mosaic, the preparatory and connecting history must be incontrovertibly Mosaic also - and the entire Pentateuch, history as well as legislation, must be what we have already claimed, the production of Moses.

2 - That the Pentateuch was the production of Moses and his laws his was the firm belief of Israel from the beginning as shown in every part of the Old Testament.

The regulations adopted by the

Jews after their return from captivity were not recent enactments of their leaders, but the old Mosaic institutions restored (Ez. 3:2) - They built the altar and established the ritual "as is written in the law of Moses" After the completion of the new Temple they set priests and Levites to their respective service "as is written in the law of Moses"

Ezra is a ready scribe in the law of Moses - Ez. 7:6 - We read in Neh. 8:1, 18, when the assembly of the people is spoken of, that "the book of the law of Moses was read and expounded unto them day by day" - In the captivity Daniel refers to matters contained in the Pentateuch as "Written in the law of Moses" -

When David took the Ark to Zion it was "as Moses commanded" 1 Ch. 15:15 - Joshua was directed

"To do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded" Jos. 1:7 - Thus all through the Old Testament the Pentateuch is spoken of as a product of Moses, and the final injunction of the last of the prophets is - "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant which I commanded him in Horeb, for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments - Mal. 4:4 -

3 - We have seen that it was the opinion of the sacred historians of the Old Testament, without exception that the law of the Pentateuch - and therefore the whole Pentateuch - was regarded as the law of Moses, and that Moses was considered as the author of the books that bear his name. It is universally conceded that this was the traditional opinion, among not only the Jews of the

earlier but also the later periods -
This is corroborated in the New
Testament by abundant and ex-
plicit testimony -

The Pentateuch is by our Lord
called "the book of Moses" - Mt. 12:26 -
when it is read and preached the
apostles say that Moses is read
and preached - 2 Cor. 3:15 - Acts. 15:21 -

The Pentateuch and the books of
the prophets, which were read in
the worship of the Synagogue, are
called both by Christ and the
evangelists Luke (16:29, 31 - 24:27).
"Moses and the prophets" or "the law
of Moses and the prophets" - Luke
24:44 - Acts 28:23 - Of the injunc-
tions of the Pentateuch not only
do the Jews say when addressing
our Lord - "Moses commanded" -
(John 8:5) - but Jesus repeatedly
uses the same form of speech -

as testified by some of the evangelists - Matt 8:4, 19:7, 8 - Mk. 1:44-10:3 - Luke 5:14 - Of the Law in general Christ says - Moses gave the Law - John 7:19 - and the evangelist echoes - "The law was given by Moses" John 1:17 - and that Moses was not only the author of the law, but committed its precepts to writing, is affirmed by the Jews - Mk. 12:19 - and also by Christ - Mk 6:5 - who further speaks of him as writing predictions concerning himself - John 5:46, 47 - and in Mk. 10:45 He traces a narrative in the Pentateuchal history to Moses: - "and they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement and to put her away. But Jesus said unto them, for your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment" -

These, briefly stated are a few of

the arguments of a positive nature
for the Mosaic authorship of the
Pentateuchal Books -

They claim themselves to have come
from his hand; which claim is cor-
roborated by their adaptation in style
and character to their alleged origin.
They have been ascribed to him by
Old Testament statement and
unbroken tradition from his day
onward - To this fact of the mosaic
origin and authorship of the Pentateuch
the New Testament rises to bear
conclusive testimony, with the un-
questionable evidence of inspired and
authoritative teachers and the in-
fallible proof of our Lord Himself -

Therefore, to deny the Mosaic author-
ship of the Pentateuch is to reject the
testimony of the "holy men of old":
to deny the authority of the gospels
and impugn the infallibility of our

blessed Master himself -

On the testimony of such writers
our case must stand secure. We will not
rob the great prophet of the honor
conferred upon him by his God.

We will not question the authority
of the inspired Scriptures that join
in glad acclaim ascribing this
glory to Moses, nor will we deny the
authority and question the infallibility
of them "who speak as men speak"
But we, with all this galaxy of in-
spired writers will join in putting
the crown of authorship where it
belongs - upon the heaven-bathed
brow of the mighty prophet of Mount

Edwin Harvey Healdock