

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 Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

seen by Origen, compared with those existing now, that the copies we possess have been changed from the originals, and that these copies were made by Samaritans, the wonder is that they have not been more tampered with. If, instead of the insertion or rejection of a *Jud* (Hebrew *Yod*) here, or a *Ba* (Hebrew *Vau*) there, we had found Samaritan words unknown to the Hebrew Lexicons in considerable numbers, it would not, under the circumstances, have been surprising; and as to the changes which are found, and which Gesenius considers as accommodated to Samaritan usage, he himself in the following words removes the force of any argument founded on them: "We may observe that in nothing do the manuscripts vary so much among themselves, some of them in many places retaining the pure Hebrew form where others incline to the native idiom, from which it is clear that the whole thing depends almost entirely on the pleasure of the scribes."¹

Of course, this reduces the objection or the criticism to nothing, especially when we bear in mind that the actual manuscripts in the hands of European scholars are not only few (eighteen in all are those collated in whole or in part by Kennicott), but all of them copies by Samaritan scribes in or near the fifteenth century.

In examining this classification, I have taken it mainly from Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," but have subsequently compared it with the original work, from which, in some cases, I have quoted directly.

There remains one more class to be considered.

SAMUEL GARRATT.



ART. IV.—THE GROWTH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.²

FROM time immemorial the Old Testament has been spoken of as a threefold compilation of Law, Prophets, and other Writings, a mode of regarding it which is at least as old as St. Luke's Gospel and the preface to Ecclesiasticus. It is hopeless to discover the origin of this designation, but it is also manifest that it is one which is so apparently appropriate as to be self-suggestive. For the difference between these several parts is independent of age, and is one of substantive matter. And yet, nevertheless, the difference, though marked and obvious, is not rigidly and exclusively exact, because there are portions of each section which manifest the peculiarities of the others. There are prophetic parts both of the Law

¹ Gesenius, "De Pent. Sam. Origin Indol. et Autoritate," p. 52.

² A paper read at the Exeter Church Congress, 1894.

and the sacred writings, and there are parts in the Prophets which are simply historical prose. That, however, which characterises all these divisions is their organic unity, which makes it impossible not to recognise them as a whole. We may speak of the Divine library of the Old Testament, and remind the English reader that the Bible of which he is so proud is nothing but *Biblia*, or a collection of books; but, for all that, the Old Testament is no less an organic whole than the Old and New Testaments are one Bible; and just as it is impossible to dissever the New Testament from the Old, or to deny its connection with it and its origin from it, so it is impossible by any process of dissection to disintegrate the Old Testament, and to resolve it into its component elements in such a way as to destroy its organic unity. The one is no less a fact than the other; and when you have broken up the several fragments and jostled them together, the skill of the operation may elicit our wonder and admiration, but it will not explain how it is that the parts are capable of forming a whole, or ever were supposed to do so. Because the fact that they can be so regarded is not due to any single writer, any more than it is to all the writers combined, but is the result solely of what they have written. The map may be dissected and broken up, but, after all, the pieces will form a map, and the map that they form is that of a well-known and recognisable country, and the form of the map was determined before it was broken up, and is not destroyed even by the process of dissection. The growth of the Old Testament, therefore, is a matter not so easy to determine as the ultimate form which that growth has assumed. The one is a matter of fact; the other—that is, the process of growth—must of necessity be largely a matter of hypothesis and conjecture.

There is a certain periodical which regales its readers by presenting them with portraits of celebrities in various stages of their existence from infancy to old age. On the supposition that the portraits so presented are facsimiles of originals taken at the time, the result is very interesting; but if the earlier ones are imaginary, the only result is that they amuse the reader, but may be very far from the truth. And certain it is that anyone who would try to depict Mr. Gladstone as he was seventy or eighty years ago without any contemporary sketch to draw from might most certainly *flatter* himself that he was illustrating the stages of his personal growth, but in all probability would do no more. Now, it stands to reason that unless we can come to some agreement as to the age of the several portions of the Old Testament, any investigations into the process and periods of its growth must be conjectural and delusive; and therefore it seems to me a safer plan to

indicate those points in the composition and growth of the Old Testament which we may be more or less certain in estimating, and in which age is not so much the determining element as is the substantive message and matter of the book or books.

Perhaps that part of the Old Testament about which there is least room for difference of opinion is that of the three Prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The integrity, indeed, of Zechariah may be open to question, but all three Prophets flourished, and are known to have done so, in the century or century and a half after 520 B.C. So far, therefore, we have solid ground to stand upon. What, then, is the testimony of these Prophets of the fifth and sixth century B.C. to the religious standard of their time? What was the spiritual growth of the Old Testament when they lived? Haggai bears unmistakable witness to the prescriptions of the Levitical code and to the office of the priests in applying them. Zechariah bears witness to the indignation of the Lord against Jerusalem for threescore and ten years; he speaks of it as a well-known fact. He says also: "The Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem"; that "the Lord shall dwell in the midst of Zion," and that "many nations shall be joined unto the Lord"; and he speaks of the coming of "the branch." All this is in the undoubted part of the Prophet's writings. Malachi bears witness to the observance of the Levitical law; he speaks of the covenant with Levi, and says that the Lord hateth divorce. He charges the people to observe the law of Moses in terms which imply that the fifth book of the law was regarded as by him, and he ends with the promise of the return of Elijah.

This, therefore, is a fair specimen of the growth which the Old Testament had attained when the last of the Prophets closed his mission. What, then, does this presuppose? It presupposes the existence of the Books of Kings, without which we should know nothing of Elijah, and the promise of his return implies something mysterious about his departure. The Temple worship, according to the prescriptions of Leviticus, which were undoubtedly in vogue, is presupposed. The mention of "the branch" by Zechariah recalls an earlier promise of Jeremiah, as that does the knowledge of hopes connected with the line of David, notwithstanding the failing condition of his throne. These three Prophets, moreover, are unintelligible without the presence of that in the national consciousness which implies familiarity with very special treatment on the part of God, and a very deep conviction of a national destiny. The writings of the post-Captivity Prophets would have been unmeaning and impossible had there not been

a corresponding preparative literature going before them, and a history analogous to the literature and capable of producing it. For instance, there had been a national calamity known as the Exile in Babylon, and, for some reason or other, it was regarded as enduring for seventy years, and was so spoken of by Jeremiah at its commencement, as well as by Zechariah at its close. It is certain, however, that Jeremiah was not the first of the Prophets, and that in this respect he merely followed in the wake of Micah, who said that "Zion should be ploughed as a field and Jerusalem become heaps"; and of Isaiah, who told Hezekiah that his treasures should be carried to Babylon, and his sons be eunuchs in the king's palace there. Isaiah also had certainly been preceded by Amos and Hosea, and possibly also by Joel. Hosea, however, is so full of allusions to the earlier history, and manifests so deep an acquaintance with the earlier national literature, that he must have had it in his possession, or must have been instrumental in producing it, which latter is a preposterous supposition. Hosea, also, is pervaded with one overpowering conviction—that, namely, of Israel's conjugal unfaithfulness—which implies not only his belief in the existence and reality of a relation between the people and the Lord, for the earliest intimation of which we must go back to the time and language of the Second Commandment, but also a knowledge on the part of the people that this conception was not the creation of the Prophet, but was based on facts of which their national history was the witness.

We may readily grant that the age of the several books recording these facts is uncertain and cannot be determined, and consequently the tracing of the process of growth must be more or less conjectural; but the point is, that here are the several books, and this is their relation to one another. The Chronicles may have been compiled in the third century—I do not say they were, but it is certain that they appeal to numerous authorities and throw much light on the national history. We may reject their statements or not, as we please, in certain details, but the broad features of the history, confirmed as they are by those of Kings, which must have been written at least two centuries earlier, are indelible and unalterable, and they are such as to form a running commentary on the works of the Prophets, though it is as manifestly improbable that they were written for that purpose as it is that the Prophets wrote to illustrate the record of the history. This is a mark of the organic unity to which I have referred.

Now, the growth of the Old Testament, in the present state of popular opinion, is a matter on which we must speak with great reserve, and until we are more agreed about it we cannot

with any certainty trace the process of growth; but the growth of a tree—that is to say, its present condition of shape, beauty, and magnitude—is something altogether different from the process by which it grew, and the several stages of its growth. But the growth of the Old Testament is like that of a tree—we can take note of its present condition, but the reconstruction of it at the various stages of its growth is a matter of pure conjecture, more especially when some call the bulk of the Psalms Davidic, and others Maccabean; when some regard the Pentateuch as the work of Moses and others as largely the work of Ezra; and others, again, in defiance alike of tradition and dramatic propriety, will have no Pentateuch at all, but only a nondescript and amorphous Hexateuch. The growth of the Old Testament is not like that of an architectural edifice, where the several stages are clearly marked by recognised and well-known distinctions of style, and where the unity of the original design is checked and modified by successive builders, and the final result is something very different from the original conception; but it much more resembles the natural growth of a tree, where, notwithstanding the essential diversity of stem, and branch, and leaf, and flower, and fruit, there is manifest one definite purpose from the beginning, and one and the same living impulse at work throughout, till the result is what we see in the full-grown tree. And it is an obvious fact that in the Old Testament, prophet, psalmist, and historian alike bear witness to a common national history and a common national faith—to a common relation to God—to common hopes and aspirations, and the uniform consciousness of failure and inability to realise them. And, apart altogether from our being able to fix the date of these various compositions, this is the definite and distinct message which they bear.

Let the Books of Moses be written when they may, it is undeniable that all the writers of the Old Testament are, so to say, pervaded with the consciousness of the law of God. The possession and knowledge of this law has made them what they are, and has differentiated them from all other writers. Even if it could be proved, which is the *ne plus ultra* of hypothesis, that the Exodus was mythical, certain it is that prophet, psalmist, and historian are possessed, as it were, with the personal memory of it. The recollection of bondage in Egypt, and the memory of deliverance therefrom, is engraven in the national consciousness and expressed in the national literature, and the effects of it, we may say, are stamped on the national character. The various writings are manifestly the production of various ages. It is not the process of growing that we can detect, but only the mature result in the thing

grown. All the writers are animated by one spirit, possessed by one conviction, inspired by one hope. The spirit is one which works from within outwards, and therefore exhibits itself in various forms; the conviction is the special relation in which God stands to Israel in consequence of His special election of the Fathers, as witnessed by a long series of events, and the hope is the inextinguishable hope of a glorious future in store for the nation. Unless these features can be obliterated from the Old Testament, it will ever remain what it is—a combined literature and history, replete with promises and aspirations, in themselves inexplicable, which no process of dissection or disintegration will destroy or explain, any more than it will reveal the principle of their growth. For even if we could arrive at any satisfactory conclusion *how* they were formed, we should still have to determine *why* they were thus formed. And this is the problem.

I may conclude with certain principles that seem to me to be valid and sound. There are certain known post-Captivity writings, such as Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther and Chronicles, which stand out in marked distinction from the others. We may certainly claim an earlier date for all the other books, except possibly some few of the Psalms. Amos and Hosea are manifestly writers of the eighth century B.C. From the evidence of their works we may reasonably infer that much of the early history had been recorded, and presumably in the form in which it has come down to us. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel speak for themselves as to date, except so far as the traditional death of Isaiah is adopted as the model for the treatment of his writings, and these writers all presuppose a knowledge of the early history for which they are presumably indebted to the same sources as ourselves.

I do not touch on the vexed question of the Pentateuch, firmly as I am convinced and strongly as I feel about it; but this we may say, that unless the Fourth Commandment has been greatly altered both in Deuteronomy and Exodus, and unless it was not originally included in the Decalogue, either of which conditions is absurd, we may be certain that the first chapter of Genesis was in existence when it was given, and to whom may it be so reasonably referred as to "that shepherd who first taught the chosen seed—In the beginning, how the heavens and earth rose out of chaos"? and if the first chapter, who shall say how many more? And, lastly, to whom can we so reasonably look as to the chief actor in the Exodus for our knowledge of the incidents of that deliverance, and for those of the wanderings, continually as their minute accuracy is being revealed by the course of modern discovery; while for

the bulk of the national history, its graphic and life-like character points very clearly to the contemporaneous sources for the narrative. More than this we cannot certainly discover, but must rely only on hypothesis and conjecture, which, however fascinating and seductive, we are forbidden to mistake for science or the foundations thereof.

As to this, at least, we may be certain and sure, that the Old Testament existed before the New, and that whatever the unknown secret of its growth, it possessed sufficient vitality to prove the germ out of which sprang the New Testament, with its yet more glorious, luxuriant, and beneficent growth of foliage, flower, and fruit.

STANLEY LEATHES, D.D.



ART. V.—EVOLUTION AND THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD.

PART II.

IT will be in the mind of those who may have perused the preceding pages that we considered such hypotheses, with respect to the introduction of the Divine Fatherhood into the normal course of evolutionary development, as seemed to exhaust the possibilities of the case. The conclusion at which we seemed to arrive by a process of logical reasoning was that none of these hypotheses would bear examination; that they carried on their surface their own confutation. One last desperate resource remained, in the assumption that the Divine Parentage belongs not so much to the race as to the individual; that in each human birth a fresh miracle occurs, and a distinct Divine intervention constitutes the new-born infant directly a child of God. I endeavoured to show that such a hypothesis is wholly out of harmony with the first principles of evolutionary science, and that our Author, if he accepted it, would be involved in this curious inconsistency, that while inveighing against a theological habit of rejoicing in "gaps," he himself would be under the necessity of postulating a "gap" in the history of each individual man as the very condition of his being a *real man*. It is needless to point out that such a postulation would be equivalent to an abandonment of the theory of evolution, and a reversion to the discarded theory of a direct creative act as originating the human species. Nay, more wonderful still, it would involve such a creative act as necessary, not for the production of the species, but of each individual contained within it. This is surely to be