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ARTICLE IV.

THE FINAL CHAPTERS OF DEUTERONOMY.

BY THE REV. W. SCOTT WATSON, M.A.

THERE is a part of the Pentateuch which even the most conservative critic must rationally attribute to another pen than that of Moses. So evident is the fact of its presence, and so short its extent, that it is not generally necessary to make any allusion to it while writing in defense of the traditional view of the origin of the rest of the five books. We propose to examine this *addendum* and to determine its limits and authorship. We shall find that it is exactly similar to a closing chapter added to a modern autobiography to tell of the last moments and posthumous honors of the subject of the book, and that therefore the recognition of its existence in no way compromises the theory of the Mosaic origin of all that precedes it.

EXTENT.

There is much more unanimity in regard to the presence of an appendix to Deuteronomy than there is in regard to the amount of matter that should be embraced under that designation. Its beginning has been placed at Deut. xxxi. 1; at xxxi. 24; at xxxii. 44; at xxxiii. 1; and at xxxiv. 1.

A single reading of the thirty-fourth chapter should suffice to convince any person that it was not composed by the great lawgiver of Israel. It would be absurd to say that he himself wrote the account it gives of his death and burial, including the assertion that "the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of

weeping in the mourning for Moses were ended" (ver. 8). The record of the obedience given by the people to Joshua, and the statement that "there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses," also clearly imply the lapse of some time since the death took place. Should any one remind me that Moses was a great prophet, and assert that God was able to qualify him to write this chapter, I would reply, that if he could, he would not. The gift of prophecy was never given to falsify history. There is nothing in the text to show that we have before us aught else than a plain *post-eventum* narrative of actual occurrences. We have as much reason to look upon any other apparently-historical passage of the Old Testament as having been written in anticipation of the events as we have to consider this one in such a light. If we find prophecy here, it will be difficult to prove any part of the Bible strictly historical, and to show, for instance, that what is said about the patriarchs, the judges, and the kings refers to the past, and not to the still future.

When we come to consider the authorship of the thirty-third chapter, we find we must make a distinction between the composition of the blessing contained therein and the record of it. If we admit the truthfulness of the introductory verse, we must attribute the former to Moses—"And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death." Is there any reasonable ground for denying the correctness of this ascription that has come down to us from the remote antiquity?

The manner in which the lawgiver is referred to in verse 4 affords no proof that he was not the author. In many other places in the Sacred Scriptures (as well as in profane histories) we find the writers speaking of themselves in the third person; compare with this, for instance, the introductory verses of two of Balaam's parables (Num. xxiv. 3, 4, 15, 16) and the way in which the royal Psalmist puts prayers

for the king, i.e. himself, into the mouth of the people in Psalms xx. and xxi.

Wellhausen says: "According to the view of the poet of Deuteronomy xxxiii. the Israelites did not go to Jehovah to Sinai, but the converse; He came to them from Sinai to Kadesh: 'Jehovah came from Sinai and shone from Seir unto them; He lightened from Mount Paran and came to Meribath Kadesh.'" This is an unwarranted translation. The מְרִיבַת קֵדֶשׁ of Deut. xxxiii. 2 differs from the מְרִיבַת קֵדֶשׁ ("Meribah of Kadesh") of xxxii. 51, etc., both in the letters and in the vowel-points. (In the Samaritan Pentateuch, which has not the masoretic vowel-marks, there is even a greater difference in the letters, the two expressions being respectively מְרִיבַת קֵדֶשׁ and מְרִיבַת קֵדֶשׁ "Sinai," "Seir," and "Mount Paran" of verse 2 are each preceded by a מ which the critic translates by "from." Why did he not pursue the same course with the מ of מְרִיבַת קֵדֶשׁ instead of departing from it with the result of making a contradiction? The proper translation of the phrase is that given in the Revised Version, "from the ten thousands of holy ones [Marg., Heb. *holiness*]."

Here are two extracts, the first from Bleek, the second from Kuenen, which, while bearing directly on the question before us, also admirably illustrate the treatment of the professedly prophetic passages of the Old Testament that finds favor in certain quarters: "From the way in which (Deut. xxxiii. 13, 17) *Joseph* (Ephraim and Manasseh) is spoken of as being especially fortunate, we should be inclined to fix the date of the composition at a time when Ephraim was still predominant among all the tribes, therefore before the age of David. But by the saying about *Benjamin* (ver. 12) we are led to a time after the building of the Temple, for the purport of these sayings can only refer to a position of Jehovah's sanctuary in the territory of this tribe,

among whose towns 'Jebusi, which is Jerusalem,' is quoted (Josh. xviii. 28). Besides, the sayings about Levi (ver. 8-11) point to a time when this tribe was in high estimation as the priestly tribe, but had incurred the enmity of those Israelites who were inclined to idolatry. There is nothing about Simeon, which one would expect between verses 6 and 7 (Reuben and Judah). This may be, perhaps, explained by the fact that this tribe, whose possessions, according to Josh. xix. 1, 9, were allotted among the possessions of the tribe of Judah, had become, in the course of time, quite lost among the latter tribe, and had been absorbed in it, so that the towns of Simeon are subsequently spoken of as towns of Judah (cf. 1 Sam. xxvii. 6; xxx. 30; 1 Kings xix. 3). But from the way in which the rest of the tribes are spoken of, we must assume that they still existed . . . and were, as a whole, in happy circumstances."¹ "The monarchy has long been established (ver. 5). Judah is separated from Israel, and aspirations towards a reunion are cherished (ver. 7). In verse 17 a warlike and victorious king, sprung from Joseph,—in all probability Jeroboam II.—is referred to. The verses on Levi (ver. 8-11) indicate a high estimation of the spiritual privileges of the tribe; even if, as we may well suspect, it was a Levite who uttered them, still we cannot place them earlier than the eighth century B.C.; and, indeed, if it were not that they are thrown into such an original form and must be judged in connection with the other sayings, they might even lead us to look for the poet in the same circles from which the Deuteronomist issued."² (Kuenen places the Deuteronomist in the reign of Josiah.)

If a person enter upon the subject of biblical criticism with the impossibility of prophecy as an axiom, it is evident

¹ An Introduction to the Old Testament (London: George Bell and Sons, 1875), Vol. i. p. 336.

² An Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin and Composition of the Hexateuch (London: Macmillan & Co., 1886), p. 240.

that a great part of the case is prejudged and that he must of necessity assign much of the Old Testament to a later date than that in which it claims, and is commonly believed, to have originated. The question of the reality of prophecy is too large a one for us to undertake a discussion of, and one also which I may safely assume the readers of the BIBLIOTHECA SACRA to have already considered. In the mouth of one who admits the fact of God having ever granted the gift of foreknowledge to a human being, such statements as those just quoted would be out of place. They would involve a serious fallacy, an entire begging of the question. They would presuppose the denial of the truthfulness and reliability of the Pentateuchal narrative, not only in the minor details, but also in the great outlines—a thing which must be proved, if a fact, and not assumed. If Moses was a historical character, and not a myth, it is inconceivable that any one who at all admits the possibility of prophecy can deny that he may have foretold the future in a parting benediction uttered in such peculiar circumstances as this one is asserted to have been. The great (human) deliverer, leader, and legislator of Israel was about to be separated from his people by death—when the soul is thus standing on the borders of two worlds we can perhaps most readily conceive as a time

“When the mind is filled with mystic lore,
And coming events cast their shadows before.”

In order to attempt to prove the post-Mosaic authorship of this blessing by the line of argument followed in the extracts given above, its non-prophetical character not only, but also its post-Mosaic date, is taken for granted. If the last utterances of Moses anticipated the future, there must have been subsequent events corresponding to and fulfilling them, and the finding of such facts recorded in history should not be considered as disproving the asserted authorship. It is not now required of us to determine the partic-

ular reference of each verse—the adverse critics have voluntarily undertaken that work, and the want of harmony among the results reached by the various members of the school affords a proof that we have before us a true prophecy, and not a *vaticinium post eventum*.

We conclude that there is no reason for supposing that we have in this blessing any other than the very words spoken by Moses as his last message to his people. Deut. xxxiii. 1 contains a positive ascription of them to that historical person, and it must be considered as truthful until the opposite is established. The *onus probandi* lies with those who dispute the fact. It is a fundamental principle of American law that a man should be treated as innocent until he is proved guilty.

While Deut. xxxiii. thus contains the last words of Moses, Moses is nowhere in the text said to have written them down. Spoken just before his decease, we can scarcely picture him as using a manuscript in their delivery, or as calling for a pen and ink after he had finished their utterance. The manner of designating the author in verse 1, "Moses the man of God," is a pretty certain indication of another hand. The expression seems to distinguish the writer from the speaker, and, as will presently be seen, to point to Joshua. The allusions to Moses in Ex. xi. 3; Num. xii. 3; and Deut. xviii. 15 are not parallel, and therefore afford no proof that we have here also a reference by the writer to himself. Moses' death is at least mentioned, if not also presupposed as already past, in the same verse; this, however, is only corroborative evidence, and is not of much force in itself, because of the fact that, according to Deut. xxxi., the leader of Israel had already been informed that the end of his earthly career was at hand. Nothing is lost by attributing the recording of this chapter to a second person. We evidently derive it from one who heard the delivery of the farewell. Even from merely natural causes the danger

of an erroneous report was reduced to a minimum, and if the recorder was divinely inspired, as is commonly believed by the church, it was entirely absent.

The last two chapters of Deuteronomy are the full extent of the appendix. The statements in xxxi. 9 and 24 *seq.* do not prove that the work of Moses had been finished before they were penned. They contain references to the immediate future which are very different from what has been objected to in the case of xxxiv. They are only such slight anticipations as are common, and even necessary, in legal documents, to tell the final action taken in regard to them, or that of which they treat. The beginning of the appendix cannot be placed before xxxii. 44, for Moses is distinctly stated (xxxii. 22) to have *written* the song contained in xxxii. Verses 44-52 of chapter xxxii. are so closely connected with what precedes, and form such an appropriate conclusion to Moses' work, that it is unnecessary, and would be entirely arbitrary, to assign them to any other hand than his from whom came the previous part of this book. Deuteronomy is a unit up to xxxiii. 1, but at that point a change of authorship is evident.

AUTHOR.

Who wrote this appendix? I answer, Joshua, the intimate friend of Moses, and his successor in the leadership of Israel.

Deuteronomy xxxiv. fittingly closes the Pentateuch. Its proper place is before the first verse of the following book, and therefore it is natural to conclude that it was written before the latter. Joshua was the person best qualified to give it to us, as far as we are aware; and there is no reason apparent why he should have been passed over. We know that he was a writer of sacred scripture (Josh. xxiv. 26). In one of the older tracts of the Talmud (Baba Bathra, fol. 14b) a small part of the Law, viz., eight verses or short par-

agraphs, as well as the book which bears his name, are attributed to him.

Joshua lived long enough after the death of Moses to write the words about a prophet in verse 10, and was doubtless sensible that he was far inferior to his great master. As to the occurrence of the word נָבִי, "prophet," 1 Sam. ix. 9 does not prove that it could not have been used by Joshua. The verse only states that there had been a linguistic change between the time of the incident mentioned in the context and the recording of it, רָאָה, "seer," being the popular term at the former date, and נָבִי, "prophet," at the latter. We are not there told what word was used to designate the same office in the time of Moses. Because we know that one change had taken place in the people's vocabulary between the early days of Saul and his historian certainly affords no justification for asserting that no change could have taken place in the long period between Joshua and Saul. The statement that "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (ver. 6) would be more appropriate a comparatively short time after the burial than after the flight of a few centuries. It might be strange that the grave of a great hero was not known soon after his death; but if his contemporaries had no knowledge of it, it would scarcely be expected that men of later generations would be wiser in the matter. This declaration is therefore an indication that the account was written at no very distant date after the disappearance of Moses.

Joshua could of course have made the reference to the tribal limits found in verse 2, but the mention of Dan in verse 1 requires some consideration. The question, whether there were two towns of that name, one of which was so known before the exodus from Egypt, need not be raised here. In Josh. xix. 47 and Judg. xviii. 27 *seq.* we read of the capture of Leshem or Laish by a party of Danites and

the changing of the name of the place to Dan, "after the name of Dan their father." The date of the victory is not stated more exactly than in Judg. xviii. 1; but what chronological data the text affords, do not necessitate assigning it to a time subsequent to the death of Joshua. The story about an Ephramite and his concubine follows that about Dan in the narrative in the Book of Judges, and the events apparently (cf. Judg. xix. 1) took place in the same order. The unpleasant incident occurred while Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, was the chief priest (Judg. xx. 28); but from Josh. xxii. we learn that Phinehas had reached that dignity during Joshua's lifetime (cf. Josh. xxiii. 1). On the way to Laish the Danites robbed a man of his household gods, and, according to Judg. xviii. 31, "they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh"—we know that the sanctuary was located there in the time of Moses' successor (Josh. xviii. 1). They also took from Micah the person who was serving as his private priest, "Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses" (Judg. xviii. 30). Gershom was born while Moses was dwelling in the land of Midian (Ex. ii. 22) and Jonathan therefore almost certainly before the entrance into Canaan, yet the latter is spoken of as a נער, "youth." (Joshua lived for about thirty-two years after the crossing of the Jordan.)

A more positive indication of the authorship of this appendix is found in the expressions "Moses the servant of the LORD" of xxxiv. 5 and "Moses the man of God" of xxxiii. 1. Neither of these phrases occurs in the preceding part of the Pentateuch, the nearest approaches to the former being in Ex. xiv. 31; Num. xii. 7, 8, and Deut. iii. 24. In the Book of Joshua the words "Moses the servant of the LORD" are used more than a dozen times, and are found both in the narrative matter and in speeches attributed to Joshua (i. 1, 13, 15; viii. 31, 33; xi. 12, etc.). The other

expression also was known in his day, for Caleb referred to "Moses the man of God" in addressing him (Josh. xiv. 6). A natural inference from these facts is the unity of authorship of the two chapters and the following book.

As to the time when Joshua wrote Deut. xxxiv., the indications already noted point to a late period in his life near its close. Josh. xxiv. 26 contains a final authentication of that person's literary productions similar to what Moses wrote in Deut. xxxi. As simple and as satisfactory a supposition as any we can make is that, on the occasion there referred to, when he gave the rest of his work its final form, he added this chapter to the Pentateuch and also, if it had not been previously affixed, the thirty-third chapter.