

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

ART. III.—THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH.

PART II.

GESENIUS not only, in the first part of his dissertation, threw no light on the age and origin of the Samaritan Codex, but was conscious of the fact, and made no attempt to hide it. His serious work is the second part of the book, in which he examines the various readings of the Codex, with the object of showing that it was a recension inferior to the Jewish, and more recent, and useless in a critical point of view. By a minute investigation and classification of the variants, he satisfied himself that, according to critical rules, they were subsequent to, and less authoritative than, those of the present text, and that, judging by prevalent views of Hebrew literature, they were æsthetically inferior. All which might be true, whatever its age and origin. Only if, as he admits may have been the case—if Moses really wrote the Pentateuch, and the two codices date back to the division of the kingdom, what learned trifling to discuss the grammatical inaccuracy and literary inferiority of the Israelitish scribes of Jeroboam's day! In a literary point of view, he is considered by the writers in Smith and Herzog to have been triumphantly successful, but to have left the more important question of age and origin entirely unsolved.

And yet the supposed success of Gesenius in settling the questions of priority and taste has been transferred to the other question, which he is admitted on all hands to have left undecided, and respecting which he does not himself claim to have done anything more than make a guess. The great men who lived before the rise of the modern criticism, as represented by Kennicott, felt no uncertainty about the matter, as I shall show later on. But by this strange fallacy Gesenius is supposed to have disproved the traditional age and origin of the Samaritan Pentateuch, because successful in showing that it was a later revision than the Jewish (which no one who thinks it the Israelitish in contrast with the Jewish Torah can doubt), and that the variations were pedantically grammatical, or ungrammatical, or not in good taste. Yet such has been the case, and the result has been a surprising amount of ignorance as to the actual facts of the case.

We may use Professor Ryle's words to express the common state of mind and knowledge on this subject.

"The Canon of Scripture," he says, "recognised by the Samaritan community, even down to the present day, consists of the Pentateuch alone. It has been very generally and very naturally supposed that the Samaritan community received

their Torah, which, save in a certain number of comparatively unimportant readings, is identical with the Jewish Torah, from the renegade Jewish priest of the name, according to Josephus, of Manasseh, who instituted on Mount Gerizim a rival temple worship to that on Mount Moriah."¹

To the statement of Josephus as to the time of the institution of the Samaritan worship and of the expulsion of the renegade priest, Professor Ryle objects, preferring to identify these events with those a century before, recorded by Nehemiah, in whose time, therefore, he places the origination of the Samaritan Pentateuch. Then it was that, according to him, this Codex commenced. And the distinction between the two codices he states as consisting of "a certain number of comparatively unimportant readings." The actual number of various readings is 6,000.² Of the importance or unimportance of some of these I hope in a future paper to give the reader the opportunity of forming his own opinion, when we have finished examining the origin and date of the Codex, and come to consider the variants and the objections made to them by Gesenius.

The present popular supposition—Professor Ryle claims for it nothing more—is that the Samaritans obtained their Codex when they built their temple and instituted their worship, in the days of Alexander the Great according to Josephus, or in Nehemiah's day, which he thinks is more probable.

Assuming, which is the postulate required by all the critics of the modern school, that we have no external evidence as to the origin and age of the Codex, what are we to think of the probability of either of these two forms of the general supposition? In the Book of Nehemiah we read a good deal of those who subsequently became the Samaritan nation, but we do not find any mention of a temple on Mount Gerizim; and, on the other hand, we do find in the Book of Ezra that these adversaries of Judah were well acquainted with the history of Israel, most anxious to be looked upon as belonging to the same stock and to worship in the same temple. There is no great probability that at that time there was any other change among them than that of increased hostility to the Jewish people.

And on the other hand, if Josephus is correct—and the expulsion of a Jewish priest may very likely have happened more than once—it is evident enough, considering the state of feeling at that time between Jew and Samaritan, that nothing is less likely than that the Israelites would then for the first

¹ "Canon of the Old Testament," p. 91.

² Herzog, "Real-Encyclopädie," B. xiii., s. 349.

time receive their law from the Jews, or that they could have built their temple and instituted sacrifices in accordance with a law of which they knew nothing.

The historical evidence is wholly in favour of the Samaritan temple having been built in the time of Alexander the Great. Josephus must have had the Book of Nehemiah under his eye, and could hardly have made so great a mistake. It is evidently impossible that the Samaritans should have first received the Torah in Alexander's time; but if, contrary to the historical evidence, we suppose, with Professor Ryle, that the Samaritan Codex was merely that used by the Jews in Nehemiah's day, its variations, as we shall see more distinctly later on, are in the enormous majority of cases inexplicable; and the fact of the Pentateuch alone being received by them could, as Professor Ryle himself shows, be only accounted for on the wild imagination which he adopts, that "at the time when the Samaritan worship was instituted, or when it received its final shape from the accession of Jewish malcontents, the Canon of the Jews at Jerusalem consisted of the Torah only."¹

Either of these views is impossible. The writers in Smith and Herzog are right, in their point of view—that of the so-called higher criticism—in treating the question as insoluble; which it is, if these are the only suppositions, and if there is really no historical evidence available.

Kennicott, and the learned men who agreed with him, did not so think. The evidence exists. In this investigation we take for granted the truth of Holy Scripture as an historical record. On this assumption, the historical evidence as to the age and origin of the Samaritan Pentateuch is complete. If we reject this assumption the question is insoluble. It requires for its solution that assumption, which is in itself a strong proof of the correctness of the assumption. Nor is the general truth of the history contained in the Books of Kings denied by any of the critics, however much its evidence on this matter is ignored. But if Scripture history, and especially that contained in 2 Kings xvii., is true, the Samaritan Pentateuch has an antiquity far beyond that of the Samaritan nation. If the prophets of Israel knew the facts of their own day and the history of their own times, the ten tribes had God's written law; and the age when these prophets wrote is not questioned. The writings of the Israelitish prophets and the Books of Kings contain the evidence required. And if this be so, the unity and antiquity of the Samaritan Pentateuch, and *a fortiori* of the Jewish Pentateuch, rest on an impregnable basis of historical fact.

¹ "Canon of the Old Testament," p. 93.

According to writers such as Wellhausen, not only the Pentateuch did not exist among the ten tribes when in their own land, but it did not exist at that time among the two. Of three parts into which they decompose what they call the Hexateuch (that is, the Pentateuch and Joshua), the earliest part, to which they give the name of the "Jehovist," Wellhausen thinks to have been written shortly before the ten tribes were carried into captivity; the second part, Deuteronomy, he supposes to have been written just before Josiah's reign, or in it, and to have been presented to him as a newly-discovered work of Moses; the third and last part, or "Priests' Code," containing a large part of the ceremonial law, he assigns to about a hundred years after the Babylonian Captivity, veiled under the name of Moses in order to give it currency among the people.¹ Driver speaks very indefinitely as to the date of what he calls J E,² but none of these critics, any more than Gesenius, allow that the Pentateuch existed in the days of Jeroboam and Rehoboam either in Judah or Israel. Not only the view respecting the Samaritan Pentateuch held by Kennicott and a long list of learned men, but also the belief common to Christians and Jews in all ages, including that age in which our blessed Lord Himself lived, that there were five books written by Moses, and in existence from his day downward, is absolutely inconsistent with the alleged results of the criticism of the modern school. Those results, it must not be forgotten, are purely subjective. The facts are all against them. The monumental evidence is against them. And so also is this Samaritan Codex, which is consistent, as we shall see, with Hebrew history as recorded in our Bibles, and explained by it, but on the unproved hypotheses of modern critics avowedly an unsolved mystery.

The careful study of Kings and Chronicles makes it quite inconceivable that the knowledge of the Pentateuch should have been confined to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. In David's days the sacred Scriptures must have consisted mainly of the Pentateuch and perhaps the Books of Joshua and Judges. The Book of Job was, I have no doubt, then part of the Divine Canon, but its nature and subject made it at that time, as is even now the case, the study of the few rather than of the many. The Books of Joshua and Judges have so much connection with each other that, in spite of the forcible separation the critics wish to make between them, we may

¹ "Prolegomena sur Geschichte Israels," s. 9, 51, 423, 424, where Wellhausen says that the "Priests' Code" "was published, and introduced B.C. 444 as the Mosaic law, a hundred years after the Exile."

² Driver, "Literature of the Old Testament," p. 117.

look upon them as closely united, and can hardly consider them as having come into existence before the time of the last of the Judges, Samuel. They must have stood on an entirely different footing in the estimation of their contemporaries from the five books of Moses. It was of these David spoke as "the law." The Pentateuch was at that time practically the Bible of the people, the Book of the Law.

When the ten tribes were severed from the two they had an equal right to the sacred literature of the nation. Probably they read all that existed. But there was a distinction. Samuel's connection with the Davidic dynasty was such that they could not regard his writings with satisfaction. The two books bearing his name were naturally hateful to the people who revolted from David's grandson. And if he wrote Joshua and Judges, they would not be likely to hold them in the same veneration in which they held the five books of Moses. These were as much to them as to Judah and Benjamin. It is the fact of their having the law and not observing it with which their prophets reproach them. In a prophecy to the ten tribes Hosea says (viii. 11, 12): "Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin. I have written to him the great things of My law, but they were counted as a strange thing." In Ephraim as well as in Judah the written law existed. In the first verse of the same chapter it is against "the law" they are said to have transgressed. The references to the Pentateuch are continual (Hosea xi. 1; xii. 3, 4, 12, 13; xiii. 5). It is the same in Amos (iii. 1; v. 25, 26) and in Micah (vi. 4, 5; vii. 15, 20). Not only had the ten tribes the Pentateuch, the "law" which God had given them, in writing, but they were so well acquainted with it that their prophets could take for granted the fact that their many altars were inconsistent with it (Deut. xii. 13, 14), and assume their acquaintance with the histories of Jacob's birth, his prayer at Bethel, his wrestling with the angel (Hosea xii. 3, 4), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Amos iv. 11), of the forty years in the wilderness (Amos v. 25), and of the coming up out of Egypt (Amos ii. 10; iii. 1), and the existence of the ceremonial law, with which their practices are compared (Amos iv. 4, 5) and contrasted.

In the history we find the same thing. It was evidently because of what was written in the Pentateuch that Jeroboam fixed on Bethel, "the house of God," as the centre of the idolatrous worship of Jehovah (1 Kings xii. 33). For the same reason he made Shechem, close to Gerizim, the capital of his new kingdom (1 Kings xii. 25). It was there that the law had been engraved on stones and the blessings pronounced on Israel. Both the resemblances in the ritual he instituted

to that in the temple at Jerusalem, and the differences were evidently consciously made in obedience to or violation of a known law, according to the dictates of political expediency (1 Kings xii. 26-33).

The complaint made in the history against Israel is the same as that made by the prophets—their forsaking the law, which if they had not possessed they could not have broken (2 Kings xvii. 12, 13): "For they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets. Notwithstanding, they would not hear." During this period, according to modern critics, up to the time when Israel was carried away captive, the Pentateuch did not exist, either in Israel or in Judah. Of the three layers of what Wellhausen calls the "Hexateuch," which he distinguishes as the "Priests' Code," "Deuteronomy," and the "Jehovist,"¹ he holds that the "Priests' Code" was written a hundred years after the exile,² with the purpose of representing itself as having been written during the wandering in the wilderness, and concealing under a veil the real truth as to its date and origin;³ concealing it, that is, from the Jewish laity. Wellhausen, of course, says nothing about the Samaritan Pentateuch. He could not have been more silent about it if there had been no Kennicott, no Gesenius, no Kohn. But it is in some part of these hundred years that all who do not with Kennicott believe in the Codex originating in Jeroboam's time—all who do not believe in the Mosaic origin of the Jewish Pentateuch—have to place the date and origin of the Samaritan Pentateuch. Is it possible to conceive that this book—this "Priests' Code," composed B.C. 444, should first have deceived the Jews, and then have been foisted by them on their hereditary enemies, the Samaritans, as the law revealed to Moses? The supposition is incredible. But the real fact is plain enough when we read the admonitions of the prophets and the statements of history respecting the ten tribes and their possession of the law. The law had been given to their fathers, and they broke it. "They rejected His statutes" (2 Kings xvii. 15). "They left all the commandments of the Lord their God" (verse 16). And for this reason "was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day" (verse 23).

¹ "Prolegomena sur Geschichte Israels," s. 12.

² *Ibid.*, s. 424.

³ *Ibid.*, ss. 9, 10.

In this seventeenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings we are told how, after the captivity of the ten tribes, the Samaritan history commences by the deportation of populations from other conquered nations to fill the vacant land. "The King of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria and dwelt in the cities thereof" (2 Kings xvii. 24). The Israelites were taken away, and instead of them large numbers from many heathen nations were removed by an arbitrary act of the Assyrian king from their own homes and put in possession of the lands and houses of the ten tribes, who were transported into other countries. This mingled population was subsequently called, from the country in which they live, "Samaritans," and, indeed, are so called in 2 Kings xvii. 29. They knew nothing of the worship of the Lord God of Israel. Each of these nations had its own gods, and they brought their gods with them.

The Lord, we are told, sent lions among them, which slew some of them, and they rightly attributed this calamity to its true source, though in expressing the fact to the King of Assyria they showed their ignorance of the God of all the earth by saying that it had happened to them "because they knew not the manner of the God of the land."

On this the King of Assyria gave a command to send them one of the priests who had been brought away captive from Samaria. "Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the Lord."¹ And is it for a moment conceivable that the Israelitish priest should have gone to teach these heathen people how to serve the Lord, and not have taken with him the Book of the Law, which, as we have seen, the ten tribes possessed, and were reproved for breaking? It must be remembered that the Israelites before their captivity, apparently ever since Elijah's time, had worshipped the Lord (2 Kings vi. 10, 27, 33; viii. 19; x. 16, 31; xiii. 4, 5, 14; xvii. 2), although not rightly, for they persisted to the end in following the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, and using in the worship of the Lord the idolatrous symbol of the golden calf at Dan and Bethel, instead of joining in the appointed services at Jerusalem, thus not only breaking the second commandment, but consciously running counter to the twelfth chapter of

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 28.

Deuteronomy. It was true of Jehu's subjects as well as of Jehu himself, that they "took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel" (2 Kings x. 31), which, as God said by Hosea, He had written unto them, and which forbade the worship of any graven image (Exod. xx. 4, 5) and the offering sacrifice except in the place which "the Lord should choose out of all their tribes to place His name there" (Deut. xii. 13, 14).

It is not likely that the priest whom the King of Assyria had taken from Samaria and sent back there was of the family of Aaron. In all probability he belonged to the priesthood which Jeroboam had consecrated out of his own heart. And it is equally unlikely that he would have taken back with him such a book as the Book of Job or such writings as the Books of Samuel or the prophecies of Hosea and Amos and Micah, which could not but be distasteful to an Israelitish priest of Bethel, and that he should not have taken back the Pentateuch, on which, however incorrectly, their ritual was based, and which contained all that had been distinctive of Israel as a nation.

What follows the passage already quoted from the seventeenth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, Wellhausen, though without mentioning the Samaritan Pentateuch, tries in part to get rid of. Verse 30 to verse 41 is by no means necessary to the proof of what has been already pointed out as so probable as to be almost certain, that the Samaritans received the Pentateuch from this priest whom the King of Assyria sent back; but it states it in express terms. Wellhausen attributes verse 34, beginning with the words "and after the law," to verse 41 to a different writer, and supposes him to forget, while inserting them, what he is writing about.¹ There is no reason for so doing, except to avoid the inconvenient admission that what the priest did was to bring them the Pentateuch. "So they feared the Lord, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places" (following in this the example of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, to which the priest who taught them could make no objection), "which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. They feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from them. Unto this day they do after the former manner; they fear not the Lord, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the Lord commanded the children of Jacob,

¹ "Die Composition des Hexateuch," s. 299.

whom He named Israel, with whom He made a covenant;" which is then recited, after which the passage concludes with the statement that though the same commandments and ordinances which had been given originally to Israel had been brought to them, they had not been obeyed. "Howbeit, they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner. So these nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images, both their children and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day."

This is the history of the Samaritan Pentateuch. It is the book which the Israelites had always possessed, after as well as before the separation of the two kingdoms; and the Samaritans received it from the Israelitish priest whom the King of Assyria sent to teach the immigrants he had settled in Samaria how to serve the Lord.

Waiving all questions of inspiration, it only requires the acceptance of the Books of Kings as true history to explain perfectly what to the critics of the new school has been made by their own speculations an insoluble mystery, the age and origin of the Samaritan Pentateuch. It was plain enough to Kennicott, and is plain enough to anyone who considers it with a mind free from the unproved theories of modern criticism. It is clear enough when the Samaritans received the Pentateuch, and from whom, and clear enough, also, why they possessed the Pentateuch only. It is remarkable that they did not possess the Books of Joshua and Judges; but if Samuel had anything to do with those books, that would be a sufficient explanation, whereas that the Samaritans, if they received the Pentateuch when commencing the worship on Gerizim, should not have received the Book of Joshua, containing as it does the fulfilment of the command to bless the people from Mount Gerizim, would be unaccountable indeed.

The origin and age of the so-called Samaritan Pentateuch is thus plainly taught us in the historical books of Scripture. It was the Law which the ten tribes retained when they revolted from the house of David, and which one of their priests brought with him when sent back from Assyria to teach the Samaritans how to serve the Lord. This is the judgment arrived at by Kennicott, as will be shown subsequently, since whose time we know, from the admissions already quoted from Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible" and Herzog's "Real Encyclopædie," no new information on the subject has been obtained. The character and worth of the variants is quite a different question, and this will have to be considered in future papers. It is a much more interesting question than is sometimes supposed, and will well repay investigation. This is the object of

Gesenius's classification, which it will be necessary to examine carefully.

The term "Samaritan Pentateuch," which is also used for the Samaritan translation of the Pentateuch,¹ is a doubly misleading expression. For the future I shall venture generally to call it what it is proved from Scripture to be—the Israelitish Codex of the Five Books, in contradistinction to the Jewish Codex, which we possess in our Hebrew Bible as corrected and punctuated by the Masorites; but as the one has passed through the hands of the Masorites, and the other through that of the Samaritans, the terms Masoretic Codex and Samaritan Codex have also their use.

On the importance of this double transmission of the five Books of Moses from the time of Jeroboam it is hardly necessary to say a word. If we have a Codex which has been in continuous existence from the time of Jeroboam, whether better or worse than that in Jewish synagogues, more or less grammatical, improved or debased, unchanged from that time or altered here and there to suit the circumstances of different ages, matters comparatively little. If that is true—and I venture to say that Kennicott was quite justified in considering the proof complete—there is an end to all notion of one part of the Pentateuch having been written in Josiah's time, and another part near the time of the Exile, or later. Solomon had it before the division of the kingdom, and David had it, and his words about the law of the Lord refer to it; and no one who admits this much will doubt that it is still earlier in its origin, or, in words which ought by themselves to have been sufficient to carry conviction, "that the law was given by Moses."

SAMUEL GARRATT.



ART. IV.—THE DOCTRINE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

PART II.

THEN (ii.) as to the language of Reformed theology. Its standing of this side of the separation being known and notorious, we may well bear with sayings which on the other side would certainly mean dangerous error. Accordingly, we need not be startled to find in the Directory of the West-

¹ Petermann's "Pentateuchus Samaritanus" is a reprint of the translation; "De Pentateucho Samaritano," by Kohn, is the monograph already referred to with respect to the Codex.