

# 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 Expositor* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expositor-series-1.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expositor-series-1.php)

inmates of her own belief of what she was proclaiming, that the wealth which furnished them was an obstacle to an experimental knowledge of the Redeemer, and that, in the words of our Lord, as given by St. Matthew, who must also for the moment have become a democrat, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (Matt. xix. 24)? It may be well for us to ask ourselves questions such as these. The more sincerely and honestly we ask them, the more will it appear that there is truth, literal, although not to be mechanically interpreted, in those words which come to us from beyond the grave, "Child, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things, but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish."

WM. MILLIGAN.

*PROFESSOR W. R. SMITH ON THE OLD  
TESTAMENT.*

ALL readers interested in the subject will welcome the second edition of Prof. Robertson Smith's Lectures on "The Old Testament in the Jewish Church." Delivered originally in Edinburgh and Glasgow in the winter of 1881, where they were listened to eagerly by large audiences, they were published in the following spring, and at once took rank in the Biblical literature of this country as the standard introduction to an intelligent study of the Old Testament. Luminous, learned, and logical, addressed not to specialists, but to the educated public generally, these lectures carry the reader back from the Old Testament as we at present know it to the period of its growth, illustrating, with especial reference to its historical and legal sections, the manner in which it was gradually built up, and explaining

the character of its component parts. First (Lects. I.-V.), the lecturer takes a survey of the later period of the history of the Old Testament, the period of transmission, during which the text of the sacred books was exposed, from various causes, the operation of which is illustrated and explained, to corruption and error; then, after a chapter on the Growth of the Canon (Lect. VI.), and one on the Psalter (Lect. VII.), the reader is introduced to the earlier stages of its history, the period of its genesis, the period during which the historical books were in process of slow formation, and the different bodies of law now embedded in the Pentateuch were gradually assuming their present shape (Lects. VIII.-XIII.). The stages through which the Hebrew "direction," or *Torah*, passed, before it reached its present form, are illustrated and discussed; and the groups of laws contained in the Pentateuch are instructively compared, both with each other and with the historical books; the teaching of the prophets, and the position taken by them, are indicated in outline (Lect. X.); and the inconsistencies involved in the traditional view of the origin of the Pentateuch are forcibly exhibited. On questions of detail, a divergent opinion is sometimes tenable: to many, for example, it may seem that the author's denial (p. 303, etc.) of the legal obligation of sacrifice in pre-exilic Israel is expressed in too unqualified terms (see Exod. xx. 24f., xxiii. 14-19, xxxiv. 18-23, in the "First Legislation"); but, taken as a whole, his lectures are a masterly and cogent exposition, in their main features, of the critical view of the literature and history of ancient Israel, and of the grounds upon which it principally rests. Prof. Smith rightly emphasises (p. 314) the need of spiritual sympathy on the part of those who would properly understand the Bible; but he insists at the same time, not less rightly, that the Bible must be studied by historical methods; for revelation has itself been a historical process; and its course has been throughout con-

ditioned by the historical relations, and historical circumstances, of those to whom it was in the first instance addressed.

The present edition, in the main, does not differ materially from the first edition; but it has been improved in form, and contains some important additional matter. The Lectures are printed now in full octavo size; and the larger page has enabled the author to introduce at the foot of the text most of the notes placed formerly at the end of the volume, where they were liable to be overlooked. Here and there the phrasing of a sentence has been modified: but in general the text of the lectures has been unchanged; and the omissions do not probably exceed two or three pages. Of course bibliographical notes have, where necessary, been brought up to date. The most important places in which the text is either greatly expanded or altogether new, are pp. 92-103 (on the frequent anonymity of ancient Israelitish literature), 113-122 and 124-148 (illustrations, with reference to the LXX., of the composite structure of the historical books, and examples, partly expanded from pp. 419-422 of the first edition, of the historical method pursued by the Chronicler), 200-225 (on the compilation and date of the Psalter), 332-337 (on the complicated structure of the narrative in Exod. xix.-xxiv., xxxii.-xxxiv., as exemplifying the necessity of a critical examination of the several bodies of law contained in the Pentateuch), and the whole of Lecture XIII., pp. 388-430 (on the narrative of the Hexateuch). Of the shorter additions, the chief will be found on pp. 58-61, 67, 175f., 311 note, 365-7, 380f., 386f.; an additional line or two may also occasionally be noted elsewhere. The volume closes with an appendix of six notes (pp. 431-449), too long to be introduced conveniently at the foot of the page. Of these, B (Hebrew fragments preserved in the LXX., with particular reference to the curious quotation from—as can hardly be doubted—the Book of Jasher in

1 Kings viii. 53, LXX.), C (the sources of Ps. lxxxvi.), E (the fifty-first Psalm), are repeated from the first edition, the only addition being a paragraph at the end of Note B, on the interesting notice of Aphek preserved in Lucian's recension of the LXX., in 2 Kings xiii. 22. Notes A, D, and F, are new. In the first of these the author defends his view against Wellhausen, Kuenen, and Budde, that in 1 Sam. xvii. 1-xviii. 5 the LXX. preserves a more original text than the Hebrew, and does not merely represent a text which has been abbreviated from harmonistic motives. Note D is a criticism on some of Prof. Cheyne's positions in his *Origin of the Psalter*, in particular on the Maccabæan date (which has also had the support of many earlier writers) of Pss. xliv., lxxiv., lxxix., lxxxiii. Note F is on the development of the ritual system between Ezekiel and Ezra.

In the additional pages on the Psalms, Prof. Smith incorporates the main conclusions reached by him in his article *Psalms*, in the 9th edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1886). Though not categorically denying the existence in the Psalter of pre-exilic, or even of Davidic, Psalms, he rightly treats the great majority of Psalms as reflecting the spirit of the post-exilic period. Having demonstrated, from internal evidence, the number of stages involved in the redaction of the present Psalter, he shows that the Korahite and Asaphite Psalms (Pss. xlii.-xlix. ; Pss. l., lxxiii.-lxxxiii.) were in all probability the hymn-books of two Levitical choirs or guilds who had charge of the Temple-psalmody between the time of Nehemiah and that of the Chronicler (*i.e.* c. 430-330 B.C.), a period which would also, he remarks, agree with the character and contents of at least many of these Psalms, and consequently be suitable for their composition.<sup>1</sup> The Maccabæan date of Pss. xliv., lxxiv., lxxix., lxxxiii., is questioned by Prof. Smith, on ac-

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Smith does not speak in detail respecting individual Psalms. Ps. xlv., however, is treated by him as pre-exilic (p. 439).

count of the difficulty which he finds in reconciling it with their position in the Elohistie Psalter (*i.e.* in the group of Psalms xlii.-lxxxiii., marked by the preponderance of the name *Elohim* above *Jehovah*), the compilation of which must have been completed, he urges, before the Maccabæan age. He is disposed consequently to refer these Psalms to the reign of Alexander Ochus (B.C. 359-339), when a great rebellion took place in Phœnicia and other western parts of the Persian empire, for complicity in which it is known that many Jews were taken captive into Hyrcania,<sup>1</sup> and when, it is *conjectured*, Jerusalem and the Temple may have suffered in the manner alluded to in Pss. lxxiv., lxxix. The conjecture is an attractive one; but in the scantiness of our information respecting this, as respecting many other periods of post-exilic Judaism, the point is one on which we must be content to remain in uncertainty.<sup>2</sup> The Third Collection (Pss. xc.-cl.), Prof. Smith points out, must have been formed after the Second Collection (Pss. xlii.-lxxxiii.) had been revised by the editor who substituted *Elohim* for *Jehovah*; hence its compilation will not be earlier than the Greek period: while it is not, of course (p. 212), to be assumed that all the Psalms in this Collection were written in this period, their contents, in the majority of cases, agree with such a date, and some (especially Pss. cxiii.-cxviii., cxlix.) manifestly reflect the enthusiasm evoked by the great victories of the Maccabees, which culminated in the rededication of the Temple, B.C. 165. Thus the collection of Pss. xc.-cl., and the completion of the whole Psalter, belong to the early years of the Maccabee sovereignty. The two collections of Davidic Psalms in Books I. and II. (Pss. iii.-xxxii., xxxiv.-xli.; Pss. li.-lxv., lxviii.-lxx.) will have been compiled first, though not earlier than the return from

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Ewald, *History*, v. p. 206.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. Cheyne's argument in reply may be seen in the *EXPOSITOR*, Aug., 1892, pp. 157ff.

the captivity. Although not generally so late in character as the Psalms in the Third Collection, they contain many Psalms which pre-suppose a date later in some instances than Jeremiah, in others than the exile. These two collections naturally represented to their compilers the oldest tradition of Hebrew psalmody; but there is no satisfactory evidence that the titles connecting them with David are derived by a continuous tradition from the time of David himself: in many cases, indeed, the titles not only assign to him Psalms which in no degree correspond with the situation in which he was placed, but they assign them to him in such a way as to prove "that they date from an age in which David was merely the abstract Psalmist, and which had no idea whatever of the historical conditions of his time." The description of the David of the Psalm-titles as the "abstract Psalmist" is a felicitous one. The belief that David was the author—we do not say of *some*—but of *all*—the Psalms ascribed to him by the titles, must spring from the time when the memory of the great king had been so idealised that the unhistorical conception of his character, which culminates in the Chronicles, was already in process of formation.<sup>1</sup> Individual Psalms, Prof. Smith does not dispute, may indeed be pre-exilic, but it is not these which give the tone even to Book I.—"whatever the date of this or that individual poem, the collection as a whole—whether by selection or authorship—is

<sup>1</sup> It must, however, remain an open question whether the title of *David* really means "written by David"; it may, for instance, have been intended originally to indicate that the Psalms to which it is prefixed were taken from a collection not *written* by David, but associated with his name on account of the manner in which they were used liturgically. As Prof. Smith remarks (pp. 223, 224), Nehemiah speaks of the singers using the "musical instruments of David" (Neh. xii. 36); and in the Chronicles, though mention is made 2 Chron. xxix. 30 of "the words of David, and of Asaph the seer," David is in point of fact brought far more closely into connection with the *music* of the temple than with the hymns which were sung there (see *e.g.* 1 Chron. xxv., 2 Chron. xxiii. 18, xxix. 27, Ezra iii. 10). The Hebrew preposition used merely expresses *belonging to David*,—not necessarily by means of authorship.

adapted to express a religious life, of which the exile is the presupposition. Only in this way can we understand the conflict and triumph of spiritual faith, habitually represented as the faith of a poor and struggling band, living in the midst of oppressors, and with no strength or help but the consciousness of loyalty to Jehovah, which is the fundamental note of the whole book" (p. 220). It may be questioned, perhaps, whether some of the Psalms bearing this character may not owe their origin to the persecutions under Manasseh, or to the troublous times to which Jeremiah bears witness; but that the great majority of Psalms in the existing Psalter, whether judged by a literary or a religious standard, proclaim their affinity with the later ages of Israelitish history, is a position that may be maintained without fear of contradiction.

On p. 138ff., Prof. Smith has some useful remarks on the characteristics of the later historical narratives of the Old Testament. He points out how, when we have two parallel narratives of the same transaction, it may generally be observed that in the older "the Divine Spirit guides the action of human forces without suppressing or distorting them," while in the later the representation of the supernatural element is more artificial—the narrative is dominated by that "mechanical conception of Jehovah's rule in Israel, which prevailed more and more among the later Jews, and ultimately destroyed all feeling for historical reality, and at the same time all true insight into the methods of Divine governance." This change of view, he remarks, was a corollary of the increased distance from which the later narrator viewed the events to be described. "It requires insight and faith to see the hand of God in the ordinary processes of history, whereas extraordinary coincidences between conduct and fortune are fitted to impress the dullest minds. Hence, when the religious lesson of any part of history has been impressed on the popular mind,



there is always a tendency to re-shape the story in such a way as to bring the point out sharply, and drop all details that have not a direct religious significance." This was especially the case with the Old Testament, which, "taken as a whole, forms so remarkable a chain of evidence, establishing the truth of what the prophets had taught as to the laws of God's government upon earth." Religious students of the past "concentrated their attention in an increasing degree, and ultimately in an exclusive way, on the explanation of events by religious considerations." Hence, particularly after the establishment of the post-exilic theocracy, the tendency asserted itself more and more to view Israel's past as "a mechanical sequence of sin and punishment, obedience and prosperity." Of course, in the Rabbinical literature of post-Biblical times, the tendencies inchoate in the later parts of the Old Testament are much more pronounced, and the mechanical view of God's dealing with men is greatly intensified and exaggerated. Prof. Smith illustrates the difference between the earlier and later Biblical histories from the Chronicles, showing that where, as is sometimes the case, the Chronicler contradicts, for instance, the Book of Kings, a sound historical judgment cannot but give the preference to the older source; while, where some difference of usage between his own time and that of the old monarchy is concerned, a modified and partial value can only be regarded as attaching to his authority. The historian must discriminate in his use of his materials; for "the practice of using the Chronicles as if they had the same historical value as the older books has done more than any other one cause to prevent a right understanding of the Old Testament and of the old dispensation" (p. 148). In this view of the historical value of the Chronicles, the author adopts substantially the same attitude as that taken by Prof. Francis Brown, of New York, in his excellent Lectures on the Historical Books of the

Old Testament, delivered by him recently at Mansfield College.

Lecture XIII. deals with the narratives of the Hexateuch. Here Prof. Smith shows that the strength of the present position of Pentateuch criticism is much increased by the fact that two independent lines of inquiry, the literary and the historical, have converged to a common result. "The historical method compares the institutions set forth in the several groups of law contained in the Pentateuch with the actual institutions of Israel, as attested by the historical books and the prophets: the literary method compares the several parts of the Pentateuch with one another, taking note of diversities of style and manner, of internal contradictions or incongruities, and of all other points that forbid us to regard the whole work as the homogeneous composition of a single writer." These two methods are in large measure independent of one another; literary differences, being the more obvious, were the first to attract the attention of scholars; and in fact the literary analysis of the Pentateuch, in all its broader features, was practically completed before the results gained began to be fully studied under their historical aspects. The appreciation of the fact that the great strata of laws embodied in the Pentateuch are not all of one age, but (though in some instances overlapping) correspond generally to three stages in the development of Israel's institutions, which can still be recognised in the narrative of the historical books, is rightly described by him as the most important achievement of Old Testament criticism. Illustrations follow of the results gained by the two methods indicated. The prophetic and the priestly narratives in Exodus-Numbers are compared, and it is shown how a distinct character and aim prevail in each: the former exhibit the oldest traditions respecting the history of the Mosaic Age, the interest of the latter is legal. "The priestly writing,"

Prof. Smith says, "is only in form an historical document ; in substance, it is a body of laws and precedents having the value of law," attached to a thread of history which is so slender that it often consists of nothing more than a chronological scheme, and a sequence of bare names. Our author does not here emphasise so fully as he might do, and as other passages in his volume<sup>1</sup> make it evident that he holds the antiquity of elements included in the institutions of the Priests' Code ; but he is right in maintaining that these institutions acquired an increased value in the post-exilic age, and became then "the necessary and efficient means of preserving the little community of Judaism from being swallowed up in the surrounding heathenism," and of "maturing among the Jews those elements of true spiritual religion out of which Christianity sprang" (p. 420 f.).<sup>2</sup>

S. R. DRIVER.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* p. 382 f. : "Though the historical student is compelled to speak of the ritual code as the law of the second Temple, it would be a great mistake to think of it as altogether new. Ezekiel's ordinances are nothing else than a reshaping of the old priestly Torah ; and a close study of the Levitical laws, especially in Lev. xvii.-xxvi., shows that many ancient Torahs were worked up, by successive processes, into the complete system as we now possess it." The subject is one on which misapprehensions are apt to prevail ; and we are inclined to regret that our author, whose studies in Semitic Religions entitle him to speak here with some authority, has not expressed himself more particularly upon it.

<sup>2</sup> On the pædagogic character of the Law, comp. also the remarks on pp. 315-317 (in the first edition, pp. 312-316). In the age for which it was designed "the dispensation of the Law became a practical power in Israel. . . . It gave palpable expression to the spiritual nature of Jehovah, and, around and within the ritual, prophetic truths gained a hold in Israel such as they never had before. That the Law was a Divine institution, that it formed an actual part in the gracious scheme of guidance which preserved the religion of Jehovah as a living power in Israel, till shadow became substance in the manifestation of Christ, is no theory, but an historical fact, which no criticism as to the origin of the books of Moses can invalidate."