

# 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 Expository Times* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_expository-times\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[Issue]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article].pdf

into action. And conspicuous above all is the family in Bethany, the sisters and the brother whom 'Jesus loved,' and whom we seem ourselves to know so well. He who knew what was in men knew their true hearts and pure affections, and the sincerity with which in that house He was revered as Master, loved as Friend, and believed in as 'the Christ, the Son of God, which cometh into the world' (11<sup>27</sup>). Here He found a ready welcome and a congenial home. Here it was joy to receive Him, to minister to Him, and

to sit at His feet and hear His word. Here were shed the precious tears of sympathy for human grief, and here was wrought the crowning miracle at the grave. To this door the Lord turned His steps when He came to die at Jerusalem, and under this roof, through the week of conflict and suffering, He had at night His last lodging upon earth. So then in this house at Bethany we can end our review of the Judæan ministry, and feel that, amid surrounding disappointments, we here find rest to our souls.

## A New View of Deuteronomy.

BY PROFESSOR THE REV. G. G. CAMERON, D.D., ABERDEEN.

IN his second volume of *Old Testament Theology* Professor Duff of the United College, Bradford, has given a new and peculiar explanation of the origin of Deuteronomy.<sup>1</sup> Years ago, Wellhausen, with characteristic confidence, announced that, to scientific critics, Deuteronomy no longer presented an unsolved problem.<sup>2</sup> His critical penetration, great as it is, did not foresee what was to be disclosed at Bradford. Either the great German savant made a mistake, or Professor Duff is not a scientific critic according to the Wellhausen standard.

The subject announced in the title of this second volume of *Old Testament Theology* is 'The Deuteronomic Reformation.' But the greater part of the book is used for a transcription (in English) of the Jehovistic and the Elohistie documents. The real discussion regarding the Book of Deuteronomy, which, according to Dr. Duff, was the 'Charter of the Reformation' under Josiah, is postponed, and will be given in another volume. In these circumstances, detailed examination of the solution of the Deuteronomic problem proposed by Dr. Duff is out of the question. The ground on which the opinion rests

has not been properly exhibited. The arguments by which it is to be supported still lie (largely) in the womb of the future. But the proposed explanation itself has been announced with sufficient distinctness. And it may be of some interest and advantage to direct attention to it at once. All that is intended in this paper is to state the impression—formed after a somewhat hurried reading of the book—regarding Professor Duff's proposed solution of a difficult problem.

To the critic the Book of Deuteronomy may be regarded either as a godsend or as a thorn in the flesh, according to the point of view. If the date of the book and the occasion of its production could be conclusively proved, the history of Israel might be more satisfactorily constructed (or reconstructed) than it has been in some of the books which have been recently produced. But for proof there is little else than conjecture, and conjectures are nearly as numerous as the critics. It is true that critical opinion is in substantial agreement as to the time when the Deuteronomic legislation became *operative*. But the exact date when the code was prepared, and the circumstances which led to its production, are matters of dispute, and, till this dispute is settled, the Book of Deuteronomy cannot be used with confidence in a scheme for the reconstruction of the history of Israel. Of the various opinions which have been propounded regarding the origin of Deuteronomy, it may be of some interest to place that of Ewald alongside of the new solution suggested by

<sup>1</sup> *Old Testament Theology; or, The History of Hebrew Religion*. Vol. ii. The Deuteronomic Reformation in Century VII. B.C. By Archibald Duff, LL.D., B.D., Professor of Old Testament Theology in the United College, Bradford, Yorks. London: Adam & Charles Black, 1900.

<sup>2</sup> *Prolegomena*, Eng. trans., 1885, p. 9.

Dr. Duff. According to both these critics the book was produced in another country than Judæa. In other respects their opinion differs widely. Ewald held that Deuteronomy was written in Egypt by an Israelite who had fled for safety to that country during the persecution by Manasseh. This explanation by the great German scholar is a mere conjecture, and lacks probability. That a work so important as Deuteronomy—a legislative code, intended to revolutionize the arrangements for worship in Israel—was written in Egypt by a person utterly unknown, and afterwards *accidentally* brought to the temple in Jerusalem, discovered there, and used in support of the reformation under Josiah, can scarcely be accepted as a reasonable solution of the Deuteronomic problem. If inspiration is of any value in the discussion, it is difficult to discover any real support for such a view.

Dr. Duff also holds that the author of Deuteronomy lived beyond the bounds of Judæa, and that the bringing of the book to Jerusalem, and its discovery there, were, to all intents and purposes, matters of accident. He says that the Jews found the book 'lying unnoticed in their temple.' And then he adds: 'Quite possibly, when Sargon ruined Samaria, a hundred years before, someone escaped to Jerusalem carrying the book, either as a chance bit of saved wreckage, or as a dearly loved treasure. Was it the writer himself who fled and saved it? It was someone who let it come ultimately to the Zion temple and to the storehouses and library there' (pp. 25, 26). As between these two views the degree of probability is in favour of Ewald's. It is not at all improbable that Jewish fugitives, desirous of escaping death at home, sought safety in the country where, long before, their fathers had been held in bondage. Egypt was not hostile to Judah in the days of Manasseh. And some of these fugitives—pious members of the O.T. Church—may very well have recorded in writing their thoughts regarding the miserable condition of Israel in their day, and their hopes for the future. The difficulty is to believe that such a book as Deuteronomy arose in this way, especially if (as critics very generally hold) its most distinctive legislation was intended to abrogate an important prescription for worship which had been in force, with divine approval, till that time.

Dr. Duff's view is that while Deuteronomy

became the charter of Josiah's reformation, the promotion of a reformation in Judah was very far from being the aim of the author. He belonged to the northern kingdom, and wrote his book before that kingdom was overthrown. His object was to centralize worship in the northern kingdom, and to make Shechem the central sanctuary. [The volume is supposed to have made its way to Jerusalem, and to have been found there in the manner already indicated.] But, apparently, Shechem was to be the central sanctuary not merely for the northern tribes, but for all Israel. Around it the hopes of the chosen people should gather. The promise given to the world in Israel should have fulfilment through Shechem. Dr. Duff does not say this in so many words; but does the following sentence suggest anything less than this?—'It (Deuteronomy) was written, we hope to show, as an emendation of the Elohist's Moab Code, with the hope of erecting Shechem into the sole sanctuary and centre of all government.' Alas for the writer's hope! 'It was used to make of Zion such a centre and sanctuary' (p. 491).

What Dr. Duff's views are regarding the authority of Holy Scripture—inspiration, and such-like questions—forms no part of the subject in hand. But it may be fair to assume that, if inspiration and authority are admitted in any real sense, Deuteronomy is not the least worthy of the Old Testament books to be regarded as inspired and authoritative. It was written with a view to the centralization of worship. And Dr. Duff admits that centralization was in the air in the eighth century B.C., a hundred years before Josiah's reformation: 'The eighth century B.C. was pervaded with this tendency [towards centralization of worship]; and all Hebraism, including northern greater Israel as well as the southern little Judah, was on the way towards such a plan of centralization' (p. 25). Was there nothing more than a tendency? Hezekiah's reformation took place about the time when the unknown fugitive from the northern kingdom 'let Deuteronomy come to the Zion temple.' That reformation has received scant justice at the hands of the critics. If the Old Testament record regarding Hezekiah, and the procedure he adopted in the work of reformation, is substantially trustworthy, a mere tendency of the time is not sufficient to explain the action of so pious a king. Did Hezekiah, perchance, peruse the book brought by the fugitive from the north,

and use it (not the advice of Isaiah) in support of a movement for centralization a century before Josiah? And has Dr. Duff, through this new view of his, shown how the difficulty connected with Hezekiah's reformation may be removed?

But here it must be noted that there was centralization before the days of Hezekiah,—centralization, not as Dr. Duff finds it in E under the law of Ex 20<sup>24</sup>,—in a form which supplies a basis for the Deuteronomic legislation (p. 480), but actually realized in the history of Israel. Centralization created a difficulty of a very serious kind to Jeroboam I. at the formation of the northern kingdom; cf. 1 K 12<sup>26ff.</sup>: 'And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up (R.V.m., "ye have gone up long enough") to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one (R.V.m., "each of them"), even unto Dan.' In these words it is obvious that a general practice is referred to. And an important question must be answered. Why should these northern tribes—the most northerly—go up to Jerusalem to worship, if centralization had not yet been prescribed? There were localities within the northern kingdom whose connexion with the early history of the chosen people constituted a claim to the reverence of the tribes such as Jerusalem could not present, and rendered it all but certain that, if the law of worship did not require centralization, these places would be found in the foremost rank of local sanctuaries. Is it in the least degree likely that the proud tribe of Ephraim, so jealous of the position it claimed for itself, would have gone to Jerusalem if the services of the Cultus might, with equal propriety and legality, have been performed at Bethel or Shechem—places within the borders of the tribe? The importance of this centralization for the life of the chosen people may be inferred from Jeroboam's conviction that, if it was persevered in,

the maintenance of his newly formed kingdom would prove a hopeless task. Not less significant is the testimony of Scripture that, in his method of dealing with this difficulty, Jeroboam sinned and made Israel to sin (cf. 1 K 12<sup>30</sup> 13<sup>34</sup> 14<sup>16</sup> 15<sup>30, 34</sup> 16<sup>2</sup>, 2 K 17<sup>21</sup>).

According to Dr. Duff, the object of the author of Deuteronomy was to erect Shechem into the sole sanctuary and centre of all government. Why Shechem? No doubt Shechem was well known in connexion with the ancestral history of Israel. It was a place of importance to Abraham, the first of the Patriarchs (cf. Gn 12<sup>6</sup>).<sup>1</sup> Abraham having entered Canaan from the east, made his way across the country to Shechem. The intervening plain supplied pasture for his flocks. Ebal and Gerizim formed noteworthy landmarks towards which the march was directed. Jacob, coming from the same quarter in the east, took the same path to the west, and settled for a time in the neighbourhood of Shechem. His stay here brought little credit to him or his. The patriarchal connexion with Shechem was not free from reproach. Other places had a more honourable patriarchal record, and might have been fitly thought of as a centre for the religious praxis of the people. Still, Shechem was closely bound up with the early patriarchal history; and it was brought into special prominence at the close of the life of Joshua. It was here that he delivered his farewell charge to the tribes of Israel (Jos 24<sup>1ff.</sup>). The situation was as suitable as could have been chosen for such an occasion. 'The view from Mount Ebal virtually covers the whole land, with the exception of the Negeb. All the four long zones, two of the four frontiers, specimens of all the physical features, and most of the famous scenes of the history are in sight.'<sup>2</sup> The land was not wholly conquered at Joshua's death. But conquests had been made on every side. And the last words of the great leader to the men who had followed him from victory to victory were appropriately spoken at a place of which the memory was sacred, and from which so extensive a view of the land was obtained. But where is the evidence that Shechem was intended to serve

<sup>1</sup> Does Dr. Duff mean that the transaction reported in Gn 15<sup>1-5</sup> took place at Shechem? cf. p. 480b.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. Geog. of the Holy Land*, by Professor G. A. Smith, D.D., LL.D., F.C. College, Glasgow, pp. 120<sup>ff.</sup>; cf. the promise to Abraham at Bethel (Gn 13<sup>14ff.</sup>).

as a central sanctuary for the tribes of Israel in Canaan? No doubt Deuteronomy, which prescribes centralization, points to Mount Ebal as the site of the sanctuary where the people—met in solemn assembly—were to listen to the blessings and the cursings (Dt 27<sup>1ff.</sup>, cf. Jos 8<sup>30ff.</sup>). According to Dr. Duff, Shechem is mentioned as a great sanctuary by the Deuteronomists: <sup>1</sup> ‘They’ (the Deuteronomists) ‘never mention Zion or hint at it in any remote way’ (p. 25). Professor Smith (*Hist. Geog.* p. 334<sup>n</sup>), to whom Dr. Duff refers in this connexion, calls attention to the same fact: ‘That the only sanctuary mentioned by the Book of Deuteronomy should be the capital of Samaria, is surely an element to be taken into consideration of the question whether that book arose out of an agitation in favour of a central sanctuary at Jerusalem. If it did, it is strange that Ebal is so honoured, while Jerusalem is not once mentioned.’ Quite so. But if the date of Deuteronomy should turn out to be pre-Davidic—not to say Mosaic—any reference to Zion or Jerusalem as a central sanctuary would create an inexplicable anachronism. To hint at the possibility of a pre-Davidic date for Deuteronomy will, no doubt, be ridiculed by advanced critics at present. But Dr. Duff has brought the date a century nearer David than Wellhausen allows. And who can tell what the next critic may discover and disclose? If the mention of Zion or Jerusalem in a pre-Davidic Book could only cause perplexity, it is, to say the least, surprising that there is no reference, direct or indirect, to the ecclesiastical and religious position of Zion in a book which (leaving out of account, for the moment, Dr. Duff’s view, and following that most commonly accepted) was written in Judæa (or Egypt?) in the days of Manasseh or Josiah. No doubt the book is written in the name of Moses, and professes to belong to the Mosaic period. But critics tell us that Semitic peoples were familiar with books of that kind. Accordingly, those to whom this book was addressed, whose religious and moral life it was intended to influence, quite understood the situation. Criticism proceeds on that assumption. So let it be. If, however, the people were familiar with literary productions of this kind, would they have expected the writer to

take such pains to cover up his tracks, and to conceal the period to which he actually belonged? Perhaps they would. It is not for us dull-witted Occidentals to conjecture how an Oriental people would deal with such a case (always excepting our critics with imaginations). But to return to the view of Dr. Duff,—the subject in hand,—it occurs to our Western common sense that the acceptance of the new Deuteronomic legislation in Jerusalem would not be likely to be furthered by the selection of the capital of the apostate Jeroboam (cf. 1 K 12<sup>26</sup>) as the sanctuary at which the worship of Jehovah was to be centralized.

But was it Jehovah-worship that was to be centralized at Shechem? The calf-worship set up by Jeroboam and not suppressed by the house of Jehu (cf. 2 K 10<sup>29</sup> 13<sup>2</sup> etc.) was the state religion at the time when, according to Dr. Duff, Deuteronomy was written. Of this worship Bethel was the centre (cf. 1 K 12<sup>32, 33</sup> 13<sup>1</sup>, Am 7<sup>10-13</sup>). Presumably, the intention of the author of Deuteronomy was to use the book for a reformation of religion—as it was afterwards used in Jerusalem. Shechem (not Bethel; was the latter too closely identified with Jeroboam’s idolatry?) was to be made the central sanctuary for Israel, and the centre of all government. In other words, the hopes of Israel, and of the world, were to gather about the rebellious house of Jeroboam, not about the house of David. Does Dr. Duff mean that? Is his conception of Jewish history, with its Messianic promise and New Testament fulfilment, such that a successful effort at reformation in the northern kingdom would have made Shechem the centre of religious life and the source of spiritual instruction for the world? No doubt the effort failed. But that does not meet the difficulty. The position assigned in the record to the house of David must be fairly dealt with. Isaiah (not to refer to other statements at present), near the beginning of his public ministry,—most probably before the date that Dr. Duff would claim for Deuteronomy,—declared that Zion was the seat of Jehovah’s universal dominion, and that the *Torah* for the world was to proceed from it (Is 2<sup>1-4</sup>, cf. Mic 4<sup>1-4</sup>). If Dr. Duff’s view of the origin of Deuteronomy is correct, an unknown author—and reformer—in the northern rebellious kingdom endeavoured to gain for Shechem what, according to Isaiah, belonged to Zion. The Book of Isaiah is, in many respects, a remarkable one.

<sup>1</sup> Note the expression. The book is not by a single author. The number of hands engaged in the composition will probably depend on the subjectivity of the critic.

But so is the Book of Deuteronomy. The latter reveals the mind of God as distinctly as the former. And if the Bible has any just claim to be an authoritative Book, the question of authority is raised here. Dr. Duff, no doubt, will settle the matter fairly between the unknown Israelite who does his best for Shechem, and Isaiah who supports Zion.<sup>1</sup> But it is not easy to conjecture his line of argument. It might, of course, be urged that the northern tribes cut themselves off from the inheritance of the promise which was connected with the house of David. If there were any evidence in support of that opinion, it is not easy to see how Dr. Duff could avail himself of it. Because his Deuteronomist (omitting, for the moment, the plurality of authors) is the successor of the Elohist. Deuteronomy is an emendation of the Elohist's Moab Code (Ex 21-23). Indeed, that Moab Code (as Dr. Duff calls it) may be regarded as the Elohist's Deuteronomy.<sup>2</sup> But the Elohist document as given by Dr. Duff in this volume closes with 2 S 7, which definitely assigns the Messianic promise and inheritance to the house of David (cf. pp. 449-451). The somewhat remarkable attempt on the part of the Elohist's successor, in the Book of Deuteronomy, to transfer to Shechem and the rebellious kingdom in the north what his leader had assigned to David and his successors in Judah, requires explanation, and the explanation will be looked for with interest.

Deuteronomy, according to Dr. Duff, failed in its purpose in the northern kingdom. There is no evidence that a book of this kind, produced in Israel while the kingdom was still standing, was ever heard of either at Shechem, or at any sanctuary of the ten tribes. But it is assumed that someone (Who? Should we not have some information about a person employed in so important a work?) brought the book to Jerusalem, and gave it to those who had charge of the books in the Zion-temple. Afterwards, its contents

<sup>1</sup> On this point it may be worth while to recall our Saviour's words to the woman of Samaria—a native of the district so highly honoured by Dr. Duff: 'Ye worship that which ye know not; we worship that which we know: for salvation is from the Jews' (Jn 4<sup>22</sup>).

<sup>2</sup> P. 396. The original Deuteronomy (Ex 21-23). N.: 'The original Book of the Covenant, which is indeed the original Elohist Deuteronomy,' etc.

having become known; it was made the charter of Josiah's reformation. That is to say, a book, written for the express purpose of setting Shechem in opposition to (rather, one should say, over) Zion as the centre of religious instruction for the world,—and having failed in that purpose,—was accepted in Zion as a properly-accredited code, and used to overthrow a divinely sanctioned law of worship which had been in force since the time of the Exodus from Egypt. Now the Jews of Jerusalem either knew or they did not know the author of this book and the occasion of its production. If they did not know, is there any likelihood that such a work would have been accepted as an authoritative legal document, and used to effect a revolution in the religious practice of the chosen people? To critics, the Jews of Jerusalem are much too like a nose of wax. But these Jews must be reckoned with. They were as truly men of like passions with ourselves in the days of Josiah the king, as in the days of Jesus the Christ. And it needs more than conjectures or assertions to produce the conviction that the contemporaries of Jeremiah in Jerusalem were overawed by a document which abrogated a sacred practice sanctioned by Moses and continued since his time,—which proposed to exalt Shechem over Zion,—and of which the author was absolutely unknown. If they did know who wrote this book and why it was written, the authorities in Jerusalem went purposely past their own teachers, and abrogated the ancient prescription as to the place of worship on the authority of a teacher of the rebellious kingdom; and this, although the book in which that teacher's instructions were engrossed had utterly failed in the purpose for which it had been written a century before, and appears to have been saved—as a piece of wreckage might be saved—when the northern kingdom was swallowed up by the Assyrian Empire.

It is more than doubtful whether the leaders of Judah would use a book with such a history for the important work of Josiah's reformation. And it is not likely that a book worthy of the authority claimed for the books of Holy Scripture was brought to bear on the life of the Church in the manner suggested. Dr. Duff's explanation of the origin of Deuteronomy is not the most probable that has been offered. This volume does not settle the controversy.