

**THE PENTATEUCH AND ITS
RELATION TO THE JEWISH
AND CHRISTIAN
DISPENSATIONS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649524624

The Pentateuch and Its Relation to the Jewish and Christian Dispensations by Andrews Norton
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Cover @ 2017

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ANDREWS NORTON & JOHN JAMES TAYLOR

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THE PENTATEUCH:

AND ITS RELATION TO

THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN DISPENSATIONS.

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LONDON:

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, ROBERTS, AND GREEN,

PATERNOSTER BOW.

1863.

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1864, 1862

1864

Ann. des Écarts Inliers

et de la Vallée

(H. C. 1862)

LONDON:

PRINTED BY WOODFALL AND KINDER,
ANGEL COURT BRINNER STREET.

PREFACE.

THE ensuing dissertation is reprinted from a long note appended to the second volume of the late Mr. Norton's elaborate work on the "Genuineness of the Gospels." More than twenty years ago the learned and pious author had adopted and published conclusions respecting the age and authorship of the Pentateuch, substantially identical with those which the appearance of Bishop Colenso's book has recently made the subject of so much eager discussion and hostile criticism. It has been thought that service might be rendered to the cause of religious truth, by bringing Mr. Norton's views once more in a separate form before the public. There must be some powerful reasons to recommend conclusions so much at variance with the popular belief, when we find them forcing themselves on the conviction of independent inquirers in different theological spheres, and, as in the case of the present essay, strenuously maintained by one whose whole cast of mind was cautious and conservative, and who had little sympathy with that German school of thought which is regarded in this country as the special hot-bed of critical heresies. Mr. Norton was by temperament disinclined to rash and daring speculation. His mind was essentially logical, and had been well disciplined by habits of exact philological research. That he was not hasty in giving

the results of his inquiries to the world, appears from his own confession, that he had committed to writing the substance of his views contained in the following pages, and kept them by him without any essential change in his conclusions, for more than ten years before he submitted them to the public eye. The opinions of such a man on a question of criticism, which lies remote from the popular apprehension and judgment, are entitled, it will be allowed, to a respectful consideration. He has approached this inquiry altogether from the religious side of his nature. His conclusion has been wrung from him not only by the irresistible demands of critical evidence, but even more by his profound reverence for Christianity, and his desire to free it from the disabling liabilities which he conceived an undue estimate of the history of the preceding dispensation had brought upon it. Indeed his devoted attachment to the New Testament seems at times to have made him almost unjust to the Old, and has occasionally involved him in over-subtle and almost sophistical distinctions to dissolve the bond of common ideas and beliefs which are usually thought to connect the two.

On the origin and composition of the Pentateuch and Joshua in the form in which we now possess those books, the views of the editor are in all essential points the same with those of Mr. Norton. Years ago they appeared to him an inevitable inference from the recorded history of the Israelitish commonwealth, and the traces which it exhibits of a gradual development both in its sacerdotal institutions and in the spiritual teachings of its prophets. But he must not be supposed to acquiesce in all the statements, or to sympathize with all the views, which Mr. Norton has interwoven with the exposition of his general theory. On one or two occasions he has ventured to ex-

press his dissent in a few brief notes subjoined to the dissertation. He thinks it right to state here in general, that he differs considerably from Mr. Norton in his conception of the source and working of the religious principle in man. He is unable to persuade himself that the whole of man's religious convictions and trusts depends entirely on the miraculously-attested mission of Jesus Christ, and on the simple apprehension by the understanding of the facts involved in that mission. With the sincerest acceptance of Christianity as the religion designed by God for the final healing of our collective humanity, he cannot believe that there has never been any true religion outside its historical forms; but thinks with Paul, and some of the early fathers, that a broader and more genial view of the spiritual nature bestowed on us by God, and the recognition of a divine impulse in those resistless aspirations after the infinite and eternal which characterize the higher thought of man in all religions and all literatures, are indispensable to an adequate appreciation of Christianity itself, and furnish no small portion of the evidence from which its own divinity must be inferred. Thus much the editor may have been permitted to say, to prevent misapprehension respecting himself. Mr. Norton's testimony on the subject of the following treatise is the more valuable, because it comes from a quarter not predisposed to conclusions which it has been found impossible to resist. His essay is here republished without the alteration or omission of a single word. Every man's system of thought forms a whole by itself. We cannot fairly judge of it without seeing it on every side. It would be an unpardonable wrong to the memory of the dead, to reproduce to the world a mutilated image of their ideas, because some of them may appear to certain individuals mistaken or injurious. Wherever the

original sources were readily accessible, the author's references have been verified; and the collation has furnished convincing proof of his habitual accuracy and conscientious thoroughness of investigation.

Although the views here avowed may seem startling and offensive to numbers who passively acquiesce in the traditional dogmas of an authoritative Protestantism, those who are at all acquainted with the history of theological opinion, past and present, know perfectly well that they are no novelty, and that men of undoubted piety and profound learning have entertained them. No great weight attaches to Gnostic theories in the second and third centuries, or to the opinions of some Manichæan sectaries in the Middle Ages, because their conclusions are known to have been founded on doctrinal pre-suppositions, and in no sense to have resulted from dispassionate criticism. But with the application of philological learning to theology after the Reformation, inquiry took a new and more healthy direction, and quite as freely, it must be confessed, among Catholics as among Protestants. Carlstadt, a contemporary of Luther, with his characteristic love of paradox, and without stating his reasons at length, declared as early as 1520 that Moses could not be the author of the Pentateuch. In the latter half of the same century Masius, a Catholic jurist, of Brussels, and the author of a commentary much esteemed by the learned on Joshua, avowed, in the preface to that work, his decided conviction that the Pentateuch in its present form was not the production of Moses, but of Ezra or some other later writer, who had modernized some of the ancient names. Hobbes, in his *Leviathan*, maintained that the Pentateuch was a work concerning Moses, not by Moses,—admitting, however, that he may have been the author of

passages of which it is expressly said that he wrote them. Isaac Peyrerius, a French Calvinist minister, who afterwards conformed to the Catholic Church, and died a Jesuit in 1676, in his remarkable work on the Pre-adamites (in which he endeavoured to show that Adam was only the ancestor of the Israelites, and not of the whole human race) advanced the theory that Moses had left journals of the passage from Egypt and written down particular laws, and had prefixed to these a history of the earlier ages, even of that which had preceded Adam; but that these Mosaic autographs had all perished, and that our present books were made up of extracts derived not even immediately from them, and put together at a much later period. Spinoza, the learned philosophical Jew of Amsterdam, in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, 1670, conjectured that the Pentateuch and the other historical books of the Old Testament were reduced into their present form by Ezra, who first wrote Deuteronomy and then the other four books of the Pentateuch, and attached Deuteronomy to them; and that what is defective and disconnected in these books, arose from the fact that Ezra was prevented by death from putting his last hand to the work, and that after his death it still underwent many alterations.

So far the controversy had been left very much in the hands of Jesuits and laymen. Towards the end of the seventeenth century appeared the celebrated *Histoire Critique du vieux Testament*, by the Père Simon, which gave a new impulse to critical inquiries. Simon ascribes to Moses himself the writing down of the Laws, but supposes that he had appointed certain public annalists, after the manner of the Egyptians, to record the contemporary history; and that out of the different memorials of these annalists, who wrote