

**THE WORLD BEFORE  
ABRAHAM ACCORDING  
TO GENESIS I.-XI.**

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The World Before Abraham According to Genesis I.-XI. by H. G. Mitchell

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**H. G. MITCHELL**

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## PREFACE

IN a recent issue of a popular religious weekly appeared the following : —

“ Kindly give the name of some book on Genesis which treats it from the view-point of modern scholarship.”

This item indicates a demand for commentaries on Genesis written in the light of the results of the most recent researches into its age and structure. The demand is really widespread, as any one in my position can testify ; but thus far little has been done in England or America to meet it. The editor to whom the above appeal was made, therefore, recommended a translation of Dillmann's work, which, though very valuable to those who are prepared to appreciate it, is too large, too learned, and too expensive for most students of the Bible. This state of things ought not to continue. A desire to do what I can to remedy it is my excuse for putting into print the following pages.

The first part of my book is devoted to the Pentateuchal question, which I have tried to discuss with perfect candor, and settle, for myself as well as my reader, in accordance with the evidence in the case. In the comments of the second part my object has been simply to interpret the text of the first eleven chapters of Genesis in the light of the theory adopted. The ideas thus

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presented are therefore not mine, but those which in a given case the author seemed to me to have intended to convey. If I have missed his meaning, I will cheerfully acknowledge my error and make any necessary corrections.

There are doubtless those who, at first, will feel that some of my results threaten their faith in the Scriptures. I can assure them that their anxiety is groundless, as they will discover, if they will consider: (1) that the essential element in these chapters is not the things narrated, but, as I have more than once elsewhere intimated, the religious ideas underlying them; and (2) that these ideas derive much of their importance to us from the fact that they represent stages more or less remote in the process by which God prepared his people, and through them the world, for the supreme revelation of himself in the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth.

A few words with reference to some of the details of my method.

In the matter of proper names it at first seemed to me best to follow the English Version; but, at the risk of being thought pedantic, I finally decided in the translation and the comments to give them forms that would represent their original pronunciation as nearly as possible with English characters. The scheme adopted is that most in vogue among Semitic scholars. Those who are not acquainted with it will note: that ' represents a letter practically silent, and ' one whose pronunciation resembles that of a forcible *g*; that *h*, *š*, and *š* (with dots under them) should also be strongly articulated; that the

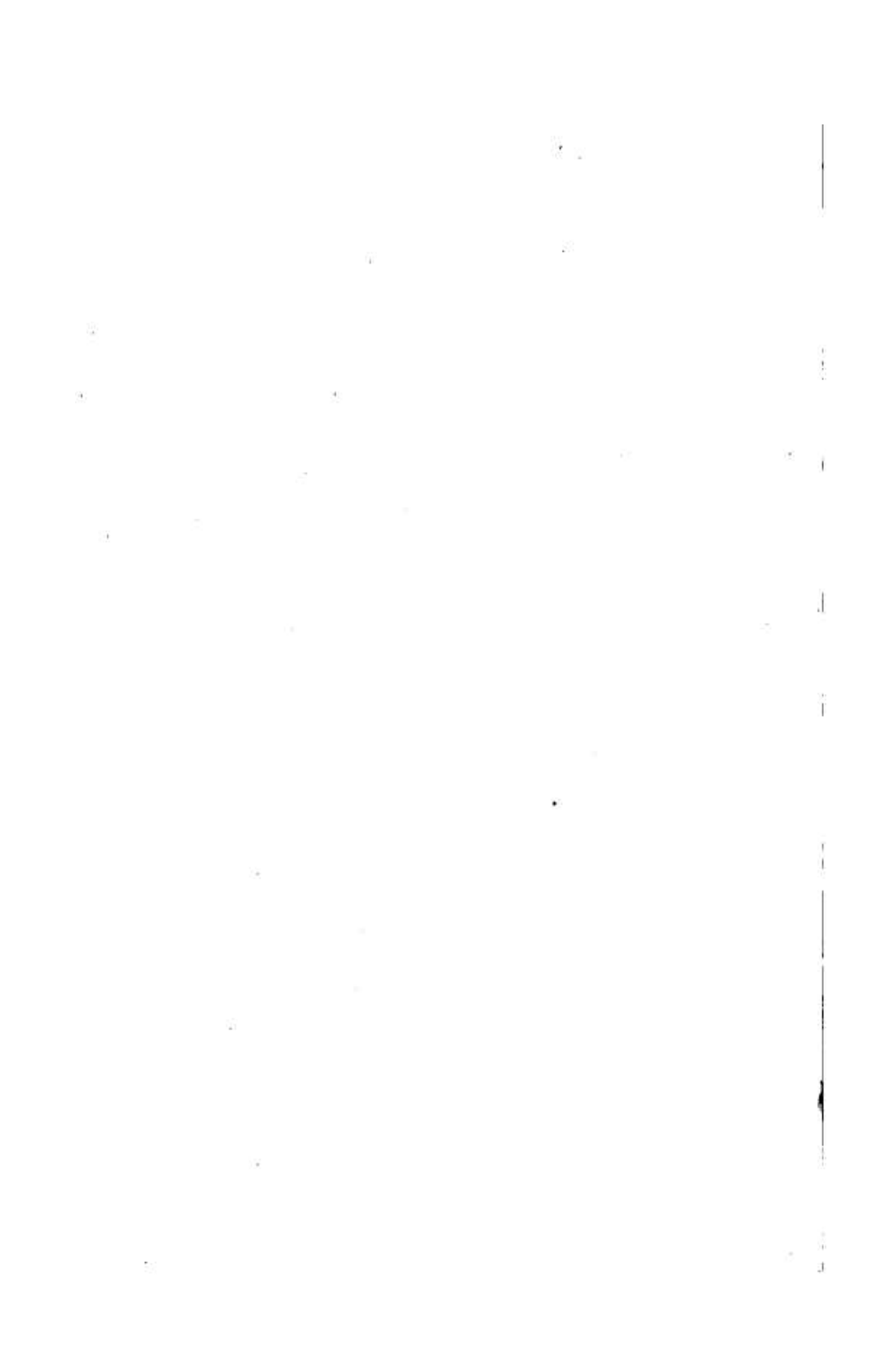
pronunciation of *s* does not differ from that of *s*; and that *bh*, *dh*, *ph*, and *th* have the sounds of *v*, *th* in *this*, *f*, and *th* in *thin*, respectively, while the *h* in *gh* and *kh* calls for a slight aspiration of the preceding letter.

The reader should observe that, in this, as in my previous books, where other authors are cited I use *see* and *compare* in different senses. Thus *See Dillmann* is intended to indicate that this author favors the view expressed, but *Comp. Dillmann*, that he holds a different opinion.

In grammatical matters I should have been glad to make use of the last English edition of Kautzsch's *Gesenius*; but, since the book is beyond the means of most students, I felt obliged to cite the second American edition, although it is a very faulty translation.

I have undertaken in this volume to discuss only eleven chapters. I may later finish the book of Genesis, unless some one better qualified for the work anticipates me. Meanwhile those who wish to continue their studies in this direction will find help especially in the commentaries of Dillmann and Delitzsch, and such works as Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* and Bacon's *Genesis of Genesis* or the Oxford *Hexateuch*. Those who read German should also consult the commentaries of Holzinger and Gunkel.\*

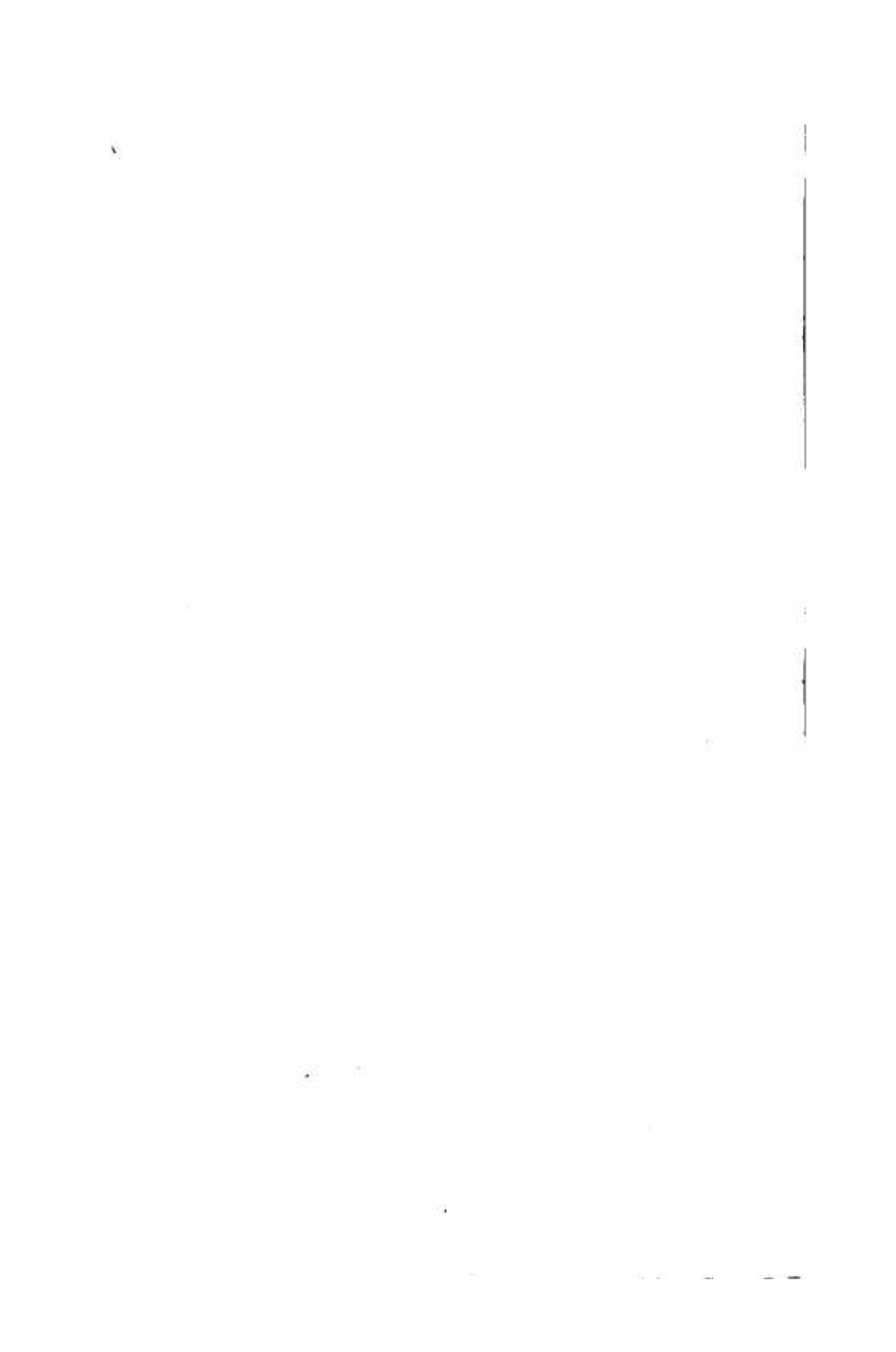
\* The introduction to Gunkel's book has recently appeared in English.





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## THE WORLD BEFORE ABRAHAM

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### THE PENTATEUCH

#### I. NAMES AND DIVISIONS

THE Pentateuch corresponds to the first of the three parts into which the Jews divide their Scriptures. Its Hebrew title is *Law*.\* In the later books of the Old Testament it is called, *The Book of the Law of Yahweh* (2 Chr. xvii. 9), *The Book of the Law of God* (Neh. viii. 18), *The Book of the Law of Moses* (Neh. viii. 1), *The Book of the Law* (2 Chr. xxxiv. 15), *The Book of Moses* (2 Chr. xxv. 4; comp. 2 Kgs. xiv. 6), *The Law of Yahweh* (2 Chr. xxxi. 3), *The Law of God* (Neh. x. 29/28), *The Law of Moses* (2 Chr. xxiii. 18), and finally, as above, *The Law* (2 Chr. xxxiv. 19).† The names given to it in the New Testament are, *The Book of the Law* (Gal. iii. 10), *The Book of Moses* (Mar. xii. 26), *The Law of the Lord, i. e., Yahweh* (Lu. ii. 23), *The Law of Moses*

\* תורה. The title of the other two parts respectively are: נביאים, *Prophets*, for Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets; and כְּתוּבִים, *Writings*, for Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

† The later books only are cited because, as will be shown in the proper connection, the "law" to which they refer probably is, while that referred to in the earlier books certainly is not, the Pentateuch.