

OUTLINES OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

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Outlines of Old Testament Theology by C. F. Burney

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C. F. BURNEY

**OUTLINES OF OLD
TESTAMENT
THEOLOGY**

Oxford Church Text Books

Outlines of
Old Testament Theology

BY

THE REV. C. F. BURNEY, M.A.

FELLOW, LECTURER IN HEBREW, AND LIBRARIAN OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE
OXFORD; EXAMINER IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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PREFACE

THE position which is taken in the following chapters with regard to the composition and date of the Old Testament Books, as explained in the Introduction, is that which is generally adopted by Old Testament scholars at home and abroad. Among writers who are members of the Church of England the reader may be referred to Prof. Driver, in his works as cited in this Text-book (*cf.* especially p. 1); Prof. Sanday, *Inspiration*, Lectures iii.-v.; Prof. Kirkpatrick, *The Doctrine of the Prophets*; Prof. Ryle, *The Early Narratives of Genesis*, etc.; Mr. Otley, *Aspects of the Old Testament*: among Scottish writers to Prof. A. B. Davidson, the author of commentaries on Job and Ezekiel in the *Cambridge Bible for Schools*, etc.; and Prof. G. A. Smith, the author of commentaries on Isaiah and the Minor Prophets in *The Expositor's Bible*, and *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land*: and generally to the articles on Old Testament subjects in Dr. Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*. Among Roman Catholic churchmen who adopt the same position may be mentioned the Abbé Loisy, in *Les Études Bibliques*, and Baron F. Von Hügel, *The Historical Method and the Documents of the Hexateuch*, and *The Church and the Bible* (see *Dublin Review*, April and October, 1895).

Further study of the Theology of the Old Testament may be made with great profit in Dr. Schulz's *Old Testament Theology* (English trans. 1892), and in many of the articles in the new *Dictionary of the Bible* above mentioned.

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OUTLINES OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

COMPOSITION AND DATE OF THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

As a preliminary to the proper subject of this Text-Book, it is necessary to indicate, in brief outline, the principal results of the historical criticism of the Old Testament Literature which will be presupposed.

A discussion of the methods by which these results have been reached, or of the grounds upon which they rest, would here be out of place; and the reader is therefore referred to Dr. Driver's *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* for all questions which concern the date, authorship, and structure of the Old Testament books. The following sketch represents nothing more than a short statement of a few of the main points upon which there is a general consensus of opinion among Biblical students.

The Hexateuch.—The Pentateuch is not the composition of a single author, written and completed in its present form at the commencement of Israel's national life, but consists of several documents of very various ages, finally welded together at a relatively late date. These documents, which run through all the Pentateuch books except Deuteronomy (which stands apart), are found to have their due continuation in the Book of Joshua, so that, for the purpose of accurate statement, it is reasonable to include this latter book with the preceding group, and to speak of the *Hexateuch*. Analysis of the books of the Hexateuch (exclusive of Deuteronomy) divides the narrative into two broad divisions, the one of which is often termed the *Prophetical narrative*, the other the

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Priestly narrative. As the *Prophetical narrative* is certainly by far the earlier in date, we will deal with this first.

The name 'prophetical' is used mainly in contradistinction to that of the other narrative, in which the priestly tone of thought is strongly apparent. The narrative cannot, however, be said to have been written with any very marked and specific religious purpose; except in so far as it presents us with the ancient traditions which surrounded the sacred sites and local sanctuaries of Palestine.

Further examination of the *Prophetical narrative* appears to have proved that it is not the work of one author, but itself consists of two narratives. The one of these, as mainly characterised by the use of the Divine Name Jehovah, is general called the *Jehovistic narrative*, and cited by the symbol J; the other, as using for the most part the name *Elohim*, is styled the *Elohistic narrative*, and cited as E.

Most critics regard J as the work of a writer belonging to the kingdom of Judah, about the middle of the ninth century B.C.; E as composed by a writer of the Northern Kingdom about a century later—the middle of eighth century B.C.

The two narratives appear to have been welded together, perhaps in the earlier part of the seventh century, by a redactor who is generally cited by the symbol JE.

J and E may be regarded as embodying elements which are of great antiquity, and which present the earliest traditions of the Hebrew race.

The Priestly narrative is written from the standpoint of a jurist rather than from that of an historian. History is dealt with mainly in so far as it illustrates the origin of Israel's religious institutions—the Sabbath, the prohibition of tasting blood, circumcision, and so forth. The writer has a very strongly marked phraseology, and certain set expressions are found to recur time after time in his narrative, no pains being spared to secure the minutest accuracy of statement, as in a legal document. While J and E concern themselves but little with legal enactments, containing merely the Decalogue (Ex. xx. 1-17 E), the short code of laws known as 'the Book of the Covenant,' designed to

regulate the life of a community living under simple conditions, and devoting itself chiefly to agriculture (Ex. xx. 22—xxiii. 33 J), and the so-called 'second Decalogue' (Ex. xxxiv. 11-26 J), the Priestly narrative, on the other hand, is responsible for the whole of the large body of laws which are found elsewhere in Exodus, in Leviticus, and in Numbers, with the exception of a special code in Leviticus which bears close affinity to the Priestly narrative.

This narrative is therefore generally termed *the Priestly Code*, and is cited by the symbol P.

The special code in Leviticus to which reference has just been made is embodied in chaps. xvii.-xxvi., and, though in many respects closely akin to P, it is distinguished by a peculiar phraseology, and by the marked emphasis which it lays upon the duty of *holiness*, both moral and ceremonial. This latter characteristic has earned for it the title of *the Law of Holiness*, and it is therefore generally quoted as LH or H.

It cannot be reasonably disputed that P, as we know it, is not earlier than the end of the period of the Exile. The tone, standpoint, and phraseology of the document may be noticed as colouring other writings which follow upon this period, while in the works of earlier times there is not a trace of them. H seems to be rather earlier than P, and exhibits close affinities with the book of the prophet Ezekiel, who lived at the commencement of the Exile.

Between J and E on the one hand, and P and H on the other, stands the Book of *Deuteronomy* (cited as D), which is allowed on all hands to have been the Book of the Law discovered in the Temple by the high-priest Hilkiah in the eighteenth year of King Josiah (a. c. 621), as recorded in 2 Kings xxii. The Deuteronomic code holds a middle position between J's 'Book of the Covenant' and the Priestly code with the 'Law of Holiness.'¹

¹ Upon the inter-relationship of the three codes the reader is recommended to consult the introduction to Dr. Driver's *Deuteronomy (International Critical Commentary)*, pp. iii. ff., where will be found a synopsis of the various laws arranged in parallel columns.