

unity of authorship and it was not unnaturally felt that no one was so likely to have written it all as Moses, saving only of course the appendix at the end of containing an account of his own death. Certain it is at any rate that this became the accepted view in the Jewish church as far back as we have any means of tracing it. It is found in the Talmud. It was current in the days of Christ and his apostles, being received by them in common with all sects among the Jews, Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. It was firmly held even by the Samaritans who considered themselves the mortal enemies of the Jews and owned no other Bible than these five books. The legislation and the history contained in the Pentateuch are repeatedly referred to in the books of the Old Testament from Joshua down as Mosaic, as if it were a well-understood fact, and nowhere is there the slightest vestige of any variant tradition or any suspicion that the accepted view did not represent the truth. The book of the law is spoken of as being discovered in the reign of Josiah, but not as having been written at that time. Ezra reads the book of the law of Moses to the people and gives the sense, but nothing is said about his writing, revising or editing it in any way. It appears rather as a work already venerable from its age and acknowledged authority.

To-day, however, this simple theory of the origin of the Pentateuch no longer satisfies the demands of criticism. After a hundred years or more of serious investigation it claims to have established that while there is probably a small nucleus of the legislation Mosaic, the Pentateuch cannot possibly have been left by Moses in the form in which it stands now, that in fact it is not the work of any one man or of any one age, but the resultant of a succession of efforts to formulate the institutions and ideas which constituted the national life of the Jewish people. Criticism points out that there are contained in it three distinct codes of laws widely divergent from each other and asserts that these represent three stages in the historical development of the Jewish system, first the original covenant of Exodus embracing the decalogue, second the code of Deuteronomy representing the prophetic interpretation of this in the time of the later Kings of Judah, and lastly the more elaborate code of Leviticus which was simply an attempt made by priests during the exile to embody in permanent literary shape the unwritten sacrificial system that had grown up in the nation through long centuries of usage. It supposes that all these were incorporated after the Restoration in a