

and scanty allusions to events which, though told in a single paragraph, took a generation to accomplish.

There is evidence on the surface of the book, that if not absolutely the oldest, it is one of the oldest historical documents in existence. Possibly the Papyrus Rolls laid up in the British Museum, may date from the age of the early Pharaohs; and some have claimed for certain sacred books of India and China an exceedingly remote antiquity; but when it comes to be a question of detailed and collateral evidence, there is far more to support the extreme antiquity of Genesis than there is to give them the precedence in this respect. The simple structure of the original Hebrew; the absence of words which are known to have come into use at a later date; the remarkably elemental sense in which words are employed, and the special application of a certain form of the personal pronoun for different genders, together with allusions to geographical lines which had become obliterated in the time of the prophets; these circumstances, among others, point to an age, when writing, as an art, was comparatively undeveloped, and literature, as we understand it, unknown. In general, the age of a writer may be detected by incidental references to habits and events, which have become already known as existent within a given epoch. Those who are familiar with Homer, know how his unreflecting allusions to persons, places and customs furnish materials, out of which critical historians have constructed their respective theories as to the date of the Iliad. The silence of the book of Genesis with respect to institutions and persons and places which figured in the age of the Jewish Kings and prophets, is eloquent evidence of its hoary, venerable character; while its references are clearly to matters prior to the historical era of the Eastern World. It is true that here and there we find passages, such as Gen. xxxvi. 31, in which there seems to be a manifest anachronism as compared with the current topics treated of; and certain parties have not been slow to spring to the conclusion that these passages are palpable proof of an authorship during the prophetic era. But in the face of all the countervailing evidence of a more early authorship, it is most reasonable to refer such passages to an editorial pen of later date, which, wisely or unwisely, offered incidental explanations, and formed historical connective links when occasion seemed to require it. The propriety of this view is borne out by the well established fact that Ezra did render to the Jewish nation the important service of collecting and arranging their sacred books.

The authorship of the book of Genesis has been generally ascribed to Moses. The fact that Moses was the appointed leader and instructor of Israel, just at the time when they were assuming the distinct form of an independent nationality, and when the theocratic institutions of the Old Dispensation were being settled, renders it highly probable that he would see the necessity of showing to the people their historical connexion with the chosen men of old. His acknowledged skill in all the learning of the age clearly qualified him for rescuing such valuable historical links from the uncertain hand of oral tradition. The value of the