A new commentary on
Genesis

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A NEW COMMENTARY
ON
GENESIS.

BY
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LEIPZIG.

Translated by
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VOL. I.

EDINBURGH:
T. & T. CLARK, 38 GEORGE STREET.
1888.

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FIFTEEN years have elapsed since the fourth and last appearance of this Commentary. Among my various scientific performances I have always had but a very slight opinion of this. I was therefore the more rejoiced at being able to make another attempt at a possibly improved execution of this task. The results of incessant labour, subsequent to 1872, are deposited in this fifth edition. The exposition is now proportionably carried out in conjunction with the translation of the text, the analysis more thoroughly effected according to the previous works of Wellhausen, Kuenen, and especially Dillmann, while various alterations of arrangement have made the volume, thus shortened by many sheets, a more serviceable compendium and book of reference. Nevertheless, the praise of full and complete scholarship will still be withheld from it. For the spirit of this Commentary remains unaltered since 1852. I am not a believer in the “Religion of the times of Darwin.” I am a believer in two orders of things and not merely in one, which the miraculous would drill holes in. I believe in the Easter announcement, and I accept its deductions.

I have explained my standpoint in an “Episodic lecture on Genesis,” printed in the 23rd annual series (1886) of the Journal Saat auf Hoffnung, of which I am the editor. I have done so still more thoroughly in twenty-four papers on Gen. i.–Ex. xx., which have appeared under the title of Suggestive Jottings, in the Philadelphia Sunday-School Times (Dec. 18, 1886, to June 4, 1887), while to my eighteen papers on the criticism of the Pentateuch in Luthardt’s
Zeitschrift (twelve in the annual series for 1880 and six in that for 1882), has been added a nineteenth, entitled, “Tanz und Pentateuchkritik” (in the series for 1886). I state this for the sake of those who might care to read more of me than the introduction to this Commentary furnishes.

What author is spared the sad experience that his joy at the completion of a work is quickly disturbed by that perception of defects which follows in its track? It can hardly be permitted me to send forth a fresh revision of this Commentary. May the Lord animate younger theologians to retain what is good in it and to produce what is better!

FRANZ DELITZSCH.

LEIPZIG, July 1887.

TRANSLATOR’S NOTE.

To this Preface of the author (revised for the English edition by himself) it must be added, that while preparing the translation, the translator has been favoured by Prof. Delitzsch with such numerous improvements and additions, that it may be regarded as made from a revised version of the New Commentary on Genesis.

The abbreviations *DMZ.* and *KAT.*, so frequently used in the work, stand respectively for *Deutsche Morgenländischen Zeitung* and (Schrader’s) *Keilinschriften und das alte Testament.*
INTRODUCTION.

CRITICISM at present fixes the date of the main bulk of the Pentateuch, the so-called Priest Codex, together with the Law of Holiness, which has so striking a relation to Ezekiel, at the time of the captivity and the restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah. The Book of Deuteronomy however presupposes the primary legislation contained in Ex. xix.–xxiv. and the work of the Jehovistic historian. Hence we cannot avoid relegating the origin of certain component parts of the Pentateuch to the middle ages of the kings; and, if we continue our critical analysis, we find ourselves constrained to go back still farther, perhaps even to the times of the Judges, and thus to tread the soil of a hoar antiquity without incurring the verdict of lack of scientific knowledge. Even those who insist upon transferring the conception of the account of the creation in Gen. i. 1–ii. 4, and of the primeval histories, which are of a form homogeneous with it, to the post-exilian period, do not, for the most part, deny that they are based upon subjects and materials handed down from long past ages. For the most part, we repeat; for there are even some who think that these primeval histories, e.g. the account of the Deluge, were not brought with them by the Terahites at their departure from Chaldea, but first obtained by the exiles in Babylon from Babylonian sources, and remodelled in Israelite fashion. Under these circumstances, and especially on the threshold of Genesis,—that book of origins and primeval history,—it will be a suitable preparation for our critical problems to attain to historical certainty as to how far the art of writing reaches back among the people to whom the
authorship of Genesis belongs, and as to the date at which the beginnings of literature may be found or expected among them.

It is a self-understood fact that writing originally consisted of ideographic signs (figures of things), and that these were partly figurative signs (representations of what was meant) and partly symbolical signs (emblems of what was meant). Picture writing is the beginning of all writing, not only in Egypt, but also in ancient Anahuaec. The Babylonio-Assyrian cuneiform writing likewise bears evident traces of having been originally a picture writing. Nowhere however is the progress by which the invention of writing was developed so perceptible as in the Egyptian hieroglyphics. The cuneiform never advanced beyond the stage of syllables. Even in the Persian cuneiform of the first kind, the transition from syllable to letter writing was not as yet so complete that the former did not still encroach upon the latter. Egyptian writing, on the contrary, exhibits a matured alphabet of twenty-six letters, and we see plainly how an advance was made in the department of phonetic signs (signs of sound) from those denoting syllables to those denoting letters. The invention of writing came to perfection by the discovery of the acro-phenician principle, and J. Grimm and W. von Humboldt will be found to be right in regarding the invention of the alphabet as the world-famed act of the Egyptians. But when Egyptian writing had distinguished separate letters, one advance had still to be made. For even after letters became fixed signs of sounds, the use of pictures of things, partly per se, partly as determinatives, was continued as a means for the expression of thought. It was the Semites perhaps, as Stade (Gramm. § 18) conjectures the Hyksos, who on the one hand derived their knowledge of writing from the Egyptians, and on the other settled the supremacy of the acro-phenician principle by remodelling and simplifying the alphabet contained in the Egyptian system of writing. Although a secondary relation of the Semitic letter signs of sound to the Egyptian (hieroglyphic or hieratic) could not be shown