



Type: Magazine Article

---

## The Truth of the Hexateuch

Editor(s): Rulon S. Wells

Source: *The Latter-Day Saints' Millennial Star*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (20 January 1898)

Published by: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Page(s): 45–48

---

**Abstract:** This article affirms the authenticity of the first six books of the Bible, quoting heavily from a Dr. Bartlett on the subject.

and promiscuous.' Remember, however, that the harem among the middle and upper classes almost always contains only one wife. And what material devotion and domestic happiness we everywhere found! The youths are as shy and as chaste as the maidens. As to flirtation, that is absolutely unknown. A man seldom sees the face of his wife until after his marriage. We have an idea that Mussul-women are merely pretty play-things—ravishingly beautiful they often are, but they are also intelligent, knowing the Koran by heart, and the most exquisite embroidery in the world comes from the harems. A striking characteristic of the women is their complete freedom from curiosity; even a mirror is seldom found in the women's apartments."

Mme. Loyson is no convert to Islam. She admits that the Christian religion as it should be is perfect, "but," she adds, "we are apostates; we do not live our faith, and we cannot, as things stand, claim any great superiority in practical morals over the Moslem world."—*Deseret News*.

### THE TRUTH OF THE HEXATEUCH.

THEORIES concerning the holy Scriptures are much like fashions; they change. Old ones give place to new, which in their turn become obsolete but amid the changes and variations, the Word of God remains, the ever unimpeachable witness to the eternal truth—a monument of the dealings of the Almighty with His children.

In late years learned criticism has been engaged with the first six books of the Bible, endeavoring to show that they are not what they purport to be, not an authentic history of one of the most important periods of the Hebrew race, but something on a par with Greek or Scandinavian mythology. To a close observer the arguments adduced for this supposition, notwithstanding their formidable array of alleged facts, resemble closely Mr. Donnelly's laborious plea for the Cryptogam in Shakespeare; that is they appear sublimely absurd, but they have gained ground gradually and perhaps also shaken the faith of many. The process of criticism applied to the "Hexateuch," it has been well understood, is a flank attack upon the Gospel of Christ, because it is a denial of His authority when appealing to the Law and Prophets as the Word of God. Hence the supreme importance of the controversy.

There is a change coming. Modern criticism has about exhausted its ammunition, and the other side is again claiming to be heard. Dr. Bartlett, ex-professor of Dartmouth college, has recently published a volume on the veracity of the Hexateuch, in which he defends the biblical theory of the first six books of the Bible against the modern critical attacks. His position, briefly stated, is that the date of the writing of those books must be close to the events themselves, because the minuteness of the narrative, as for instance in the account of the spies, the crossing of Jordan and various battles, cannot reasonably be accounted for on any other supposition. The portrayal of character, as for instance that of Joshua, is as much beyond the invention of late Judaism as it was above the common level of his own time, and finally the newly discovered documents prove that writing, in an elaborate form, was pre-



valent in Joshua's time, and add confirmation to the historical statements of the first books of the Old Testament. Among these ancient documents are the tablet found at Tel-el-Hesi in Palestine, and 320 tablets unearthed at Tel-el Amara in Egypt.

The *Literary Digest* of November 27, publishes a few extracts of the volume which are interesting. On the crossing of the Red Sea the author says:

"Extensive shoals extend far out in a south-easterly direction and a long, narrow sand-bank reaches toward them from the eastern shore, being at low tide a small channel some 780 feet wide and from three and a half to five and a half feet deep. But at high tide the width is about three miles, and the elaborate map of the Suez Canal company gives the difference between the highest and lowest known seas as ten feet and seven inches. Here are the conditions for the safe crossing of the Israelites and the drowning of the Egyptians. The statement of the Scripture narrative that the Lord 'caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all night' conforms to the fact mentioned by the travelers Wellsted, Schubert and Tischendorf—namely, the great effect produced on the height of the waters by a long-continued northeast or southeast wind in connection with the tide. . . . .

"Dr. Robinson makes a computation to show the feasibility of the passage of two millions, moving at the rate of only two miles an hour, within the allotted time; a dry space of half a mile or more would admit a thousand persons abreast, and a column two thousand in depth, two miles or more from front to rear; this would require an hour for the entire column to enter the channel, and two hours more to move over the distance of three or four miles, making, on this last supposition, two hours and a half in all. It may be added that if, on account of the flocks and herds, we suppose the time to be doubled, the interval between sunset and sunrise in April, being about twelve hours, would still allow ample time for the safe passage of Israel, and, when the waters were driven back in full volume for the destruction of the pursuing host. It would undoubtedly be a difficult movement to arrange and execute with such a great company as the Israelites, but a Moses or a Napoleon would be capable of effecting it."

The construction of the Tabernacle in the wilderness furnishes Dr. Bartlett another strong argument in favor of the early date of the books in which the record of the work is found. He says:

"Now as an actual record of a transaction of the times, a transaction of sacred and central significance to the chosen people, this single minuteness, and voluminousness of details is perfectly accounted for; but as an alleged fabrication of after-ages in regard to a fictitious affair a thousand years obsolete, it involves the supposition of a stolid and aimless industry and a laborious and superfluous trifling not credible in priest or layman.

"This is not all. Such a specification of details involves an amount of accurate knowledge of historic facts not supposable, yes, not possible, in any late writer of fiction. In fact, in the earlier part of the present century such scholars, not merely as Von Bohlen and Vater, but even De



Wette, could declare that the construction of the tabernacle and the priests' garments implied a cultivation of the arts and an abundance of costly materials which we could not expect of the Israelites when they left Egypt, and that the whole description of the tabernacle therefore belongs, not to history, but to fiction. This bold statement now shows the impossibility of its being a fiction. It was in their day necessary even to argue the case with the most learned men that the art of writing was practiced so early as the exodus. It is undoubtedly safe to say that from before the time of Ezra the priest till well on in the present century no human being could have ventured on such a detailed account of the materials and processes without blundering at every turn. . . .

"It remained for the explorers of the present century to find ample evidence of all this skill prevailing in Egypt, at and long before the time of the exodus. The very finest of fine linen has been found there. Spinning and weaving by hand is delineated in the paintings, and bright colors were employed. The whole process of working gold is delineated in the tombs at Beni Hassan as early as the twelfth dynasty; goldsmiths are often mentioned, and even 'the chief goldsmith to the king.' . . .

"Now for any writer in the after-ages, eight hundred or a thousand years later, to pass safely through all these liabilities to mistake, snares, and pitfalls at every step, maintaining his accuracy even in the minutest points of difference between the lands and the ages and circumstances, and with no collection of antiquarian books or museum to guide him, there can be no hesitation in saying it is absolutely out of the question."

On the question of the deluge the author seems to be a little more timid. He proves that a tradition of that great cataclysm has been found in not less than eighty-seven widely scattered tribes or races, and more than half of this number on the American continent, yet he argues against the universality of the flood, suggesting that it may not have covered any greater area than Palestine.

A great many biblical scholars have taken the same view, because they believe that to be the less difficult to account for. To others it is altogether unsatisfactory. How could the water for about a year cover a small area of land without seeking its level and in so doing forming rapids and cascades the irresistible force of which would have made a floating craft an impossibility? And then again, if the flood were not universal, what necessity was there for building an ark at all, since emigration to some neighboring highland would have answered the purpose better?

The difficulties of believing in a universal flood are rather fancied than real. Michaelis in his comments on Genesis suggests there that in the interior of the earth's crust must be vast cavities, filled with water, being in fact oceans much larger as to the volume of water than any on the earth's surface. He believes that there is communication between the oceans and these immense subterranean reservoirs, and that the latter by electric forces might be made to "boil over," forcing the vast deep to overflow and in comparatively short time submerge the earth's entire surface. When the forces that drove the oceans beyond their bounds



ceased to operate, the water would again gradually subside to the recesses below. This grand theory seems to be in perfect harmony with the narrative in Genesis and contains, as far as known, nothing contrary to the geological science.

### DIED.

WADSWORTH.—At Ogden, Utah, December 11, 1897, James Wadsworth. He was born in Manchester, England, March 22, 1810. He joined the Church about the year 1840, and in November, 1841, emigrated to the United States. In 1850 he went to Utah.

BULLOCK.—At Ogden, Utah, October 19, 1897, Henrietta Rushton Bullock, wife of the late Thomas Bullock. She was born at Leek, Staffordshire, England, February 13, 1817. She was a faithful Latter-day Saint. Three sons and three daughters survive her; and her living grand-children and great-grand children number seventy-five. When she crossed the ocean a hurricane took every sail and finally the main mast was left only a stump. The vessel began to sink, when the captain came into the cabin and said: "Say your prayers, we are going to the bottom." All clasped their loved ones in their arms and fell on their knees, when a mighty cry for deliverance arose from the mouths of the Saints. While still at prayer the vessel began to rise again and sailed on. The captain said their prayers had saved them.

WHEELER.—At South Cottonwood, Utah, December 20, 1897, Ann Walker Wheeler. She was born April 4, 1827, at Hereford, England, went to Utah in 1853. She leaves eight children and twenty-one grand-children. One son is now on a mission to Alabama.

ATWOOD.—In Salt Lake City, Utah, December 21, 1897, Deborah Norris Atwood. Deceased was born at Bristol, England, February 12, 1838, and went to Utah, in 1872.

SHAW.—In Salt Lake City, Utah, December 22, 1897, Alice, daughter of the late Joseph and Mary Shaw. She was born May 24, 1846, near Bury Bridge, Lancashire, England.

WRIGHT.—At Ogden, Utah, December 29, 1897, William H. Wright. Deceased was born March 11, 1827, in Birmingham, England. He joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when seventeen years of age, went to America in 1854 and to Utah in 1859. He was one of the leading business men of Ogden, an active worker in the Sunday School cause, and was respected by all who knew him. He leaves a wife and nine children. One son, Elder William C. Wright, is laboring as a missionary in the London Conference.

BRIGHTMAN.—At Kempton, Bedfordshire, England, January 2, 1898, Milly Brightman, wife of John Brightman. She was born in the parish of Marston, Bedfordshire, England, July 12, 1824. She was baptized July 3, 1855, and continued a faithful member of the Church the remainder of her life. For the past thirty-five years her home has been open to the missionaries, and her name is well known to many who have returned to Zion.

### C O N T E N T S.

The Book of Mormon Confirmed	... 33	Arrivals	... 41
Liverpool Conference	... 39	Releases and Appointments	... 41
Editorials:		Credit to Brigham Young	... 42
Convention of Presidents	... 40	A Miraculous Cure	... 42
Progress of the Church	... 40	Experimenting with the Churches	... 43
A Veteran Church-Member	... 41	A Good Word for Islam	... 44
Editorial Note	... 41	The Truth of the Hexateuch	... 45

EDITED, PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY RULON S. WELLS, 42 ISLINGTON,  
LIVERPOOL!

FOR SALE ALSO IN ALL THE CONFERENCES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN GREAT BRITAIN.