Theodoret and the Law Book of Josiah.

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IN the last volume of the Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Professor Nestle has called attention to the fact that several of the Church Fathers identified the law book, found in the reign of Josiah and referred to in 2 Ki. 22, with Deuteronomy. He mentions three: Jerome, Procopius of Gaza, and Chrysostom. It is entirely unnecessary to repeat the details presented by Professor Nestle. However, his suggestion that other references along the same line might be found in the Patristic literature led the writer to investigate further. The search did not prove entirely futile, for in the commentary of Theodoret on the Second Book of Kings, known as "Questiones in Librum IV Regnorum," the following passage was found under Interrogatio LIV: ὁ δὲ ἐγγόνος τῆς ἀκραν ἡσκήσεν ἄρετήν, καὶ τοῦ προγόνον Δαβίδ ἐκτήσατο τὴν εὐσέβειαν. καὶ πρῶτον μὲν τὰ θεατεῖα δεόμενα τοῦ θεοῦ νεὼ πάσης ἐπιμελείας ἥξιωσεν. ἐπείτα τῶν θεῶν λογίων ἀκούσας, τῶν ἐν τῷ Δευτερονόμῳ κειμένων, καὶ τὴν ἑσθήτα διέφρηξε, καὶ ἐπὶ πλείστον ἔθρηησε, καὶ μαθεῖν τὸ πρακτεύον περὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν ὁλων ἐξήγησεν.

This passage has apparently escaped the notice of investigators, as Holzinger, although giving a quotation from Theodoret, makes no allusion to it in his chapter entitled "Geschichte der Kritik," § 6, where he discusses the apparent traces of later critical views in the writings of the Church Fathers.

While Theodoret was a member of the celebrated Antiochian school of exegesis that rendered the cause of sound hermeneutics such signal service, it would be a serious historical anachronism to infer from the above quotation that he had even an inkling of the modern critical theory. Much less had he any conception of the part Deuteronomy and the narrative of 2 Ki. 22 would play in the documentary hypothesis. Notwithstanding this, it is of interest to know that Patristic testimony and modern scholarship agree in regard to the limits of the ἐθιμήσιον found in the reign of the godly Josiah.

1 ZATW., 1902, pp. 170, 312. 2 Migne, Patrolog., vol. 80, p. 794. 3 Holzinger, Einleitung in den Hexateuch, pp. 25 ff.
5. Once more: the most striking characteristic of this revival of Josiah’s reign was honour for the word of God. It hardly seems possible that the “Book of the Law” could have been utterly lost for years, and that the very remembrance of it should have become a dim tradition. Then the king gathers together all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and reads in their ears all the words which have so awakened him. He renews his covenant with God; he carries out more completely the work of reformation which he had begun, destroying every idol, and restoring the worship of the true God in every part of his kingdom. The Book of Joshua (Hebrew: ספר יהושע — ספר Yehoshua) is the sixth book in the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament, and is the first book of the Deuteronomistic history, the story of Israel from the conquest of Canaan to the Babylonian exile. It tells the campaigns of the Israelites in central, southern and northern Canaan, the destruction of their enemies, and the division of the land among the Twelve Tribes, framed by two set-piece speeches, the first by God commanding the conquest.

The Book of Joshua (Hebrew: ספר יהושע— ספר Yehoshua) is the sixth book of the Bible. It tells the story of Joshua and the Israelites as they march into Canaan, conquer its inhabitants, and prepare to establish themselves as a nation. It is most famous for its dramatic description of the Battle of Jericho. In Jewish tradition, the Book of Joshua is the first of the books of the “Prophets,” although in terms of its literary content it is not a book of prophecy but a King Josiah called for a time of national repentance. The Law was read to the people of the land, and a covenant made between the people and the Lord: “The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant. (2 Kings 23:3). Many reforms followed. The temple was cleansed from all objects of pagan worship, and the idolatrous high places in the land were destroyed. (2 Kings 22-23) Josiah motivates his kingdom to repent from their wicked ways by reading from the Book of the Law. (2 Kings 22-23) Josiah motivates his kingdom to repent from their wicked ways by reading from the Book of the Law. Small - (360p, 168.2MB). Unless otherwise indicated, individuals may post material from the Gospel Media portion of this site to another website or on a computer network for their own personal, noncommercial use. This right can be revoked at any time and for any reason. Organizations and legal entities desiring to use material from Gospel Media may request permission from our Permissions page. For more information about using and sharing Church media, check out our FAQ page.