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PENTATEUCHAL
CRITICISM TODAY

T. DESMOND ALEXANDER

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PENTATEUCHAL CRITICISM TODAY:

A Guidebook for Beginners

T. Desmond Alexander

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since at least the 3rd century AD the term Pentateuch (derived from the Greek *pentateuchos* 'five-volumes') has been used to denote the first five books of the Bible (*i.e.*, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Jewish tradition has favoured the designation Torah, usually translated as 'law', although 'instruction' would perhaps be more accurate. Penned originally in Hebrew, the books of the Pentateuch were already important texts by at least the 4th century BC, and over the years they have had a significant influence upon the religious outlook of Jews, Christians and Moslems. In spite of this, most people today have only a passing familiarity with their contents, and much within them is likely to strike the modern reader as strange and/or incomprehensible.

What follows is not an introduction to the contents of these five books; for this the reader should consult the present author's book, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998). This booklet seeks rather to familiarise first or second year university students with contemporary academic approaches to the Pentateuch, and to offer a critique from an evangelical perspective. After almost a century of relative stability, Pentateuch Criticism is currently in a state of turmoil as various theories vie with each other in an attempt to dethrone the Documentary Hypothesis as *the* explanation for the process by which these books were composed. Naturally, it is not possible in booklet-form to do justice to all that has been said, and the present writer is conscious of the limitations of what follows. Nevertheless, it is hoped that this contribution may provide a stimulus to further study.

Before focusing on the Documentary Hypothesis, it may be helpful to survey briefly how the Pentateuch has been approached in the modern period. During the past two hundred and fifty years scholarly research on the Pentateuch has developed around four main methods: *source* criticism; *form* criticism; *traditio-historical* criticism and *literary* criticism. Since each method addresses a specific set of issues, it is important to understand how they differ from each other. Moreover, as we shall observe, the rise of each method signalled a new stage in the study of the Pentateuch.

Source criticism

Source criticism was the first of these four methods to be employed, and it has established itself as a major tool in Pentateuchal Criticism. This method, which to some extent originally came into being by chance, seeks to uncover the *literary* sources which may have been used in the composition of the books of Genesis to Deuteronomy. Although pushed into the background by other methods during most of the twentieth century, it continues to exercise considerable influence particularly in relation to the exegesis of the Pentateuchal books and scholarly reconstructions of the history of ancient Israel. In chapter two we shall trace the development of this method from its origins in AD 1753 through to the end of the 19th century, by which time there evolved the influential *Documentary Hypothesis* of Graf, Kuenen and Wellhausen. For the present it is sufficient to note that this hypothesis proposes that four distinctive source-documents were combined over a period of five or six centuries to produce the Pentateuch as we now know it, the end of this process coming in the 5th century BC.

Form criticism

Following the almost universal acceptance of the Documentary Hypothesis, biblical scholars turned, not surprisingly perhaps, to consider the *oral* phase which was thought to lie behind the source-documents. Pioneered by Hermann Gunkel in the early decades of the 20th century, a new methodology arose, subsequently termed form criticism. This approach sought to analyse the Pentateuchal material into different categories on the assumption that each had its own particular life setting (technically known as *Sitz im Leben*). By identifying the form of a particular passage, it was thought possible to recover the historical context in which the material was composed. Fundamental to the development of this method was the belief that Genesis consisted of numerous short episodes which originally circulated both orally and independently of each other. Only at a much later stage were these oral compositions brought together and committed to writing, eventually creating the four source-documents from which the Pentateuch was composed. A fuller description of this method comes in chapter three.

Traditio-historical criticism

Having determined (a) the earliest oral forms of the Pentateuchal material, and (b) the four main source-documents, the next stage in the history of Pentateuchal Criticism was to describe the process by which the former were combined to produce the latter. Since this method was interested in the *history of the traditions* underlying the Pentateuch, it was designated traditio-historical criticism. Two of the main scholars associated with the development of this approach are Gerhard von Rad and Martin Noth. Regarding their contribution, see chapter three.

The preceding three methods all focus on the process by which the Pentateuch was composed. Form criticism identifies the earliest oral stage, traditio-historical criticism describes the process leading up to the formation of the longer written source-documents, and, finally, source criticism explains how the source-documents were brought together to create the Pentateuch as we now have it. In subsequent chapters we shall outline in more detail the use and results of these methods, at the same time evaluating the success of each in achieving its objectives.

Literary criticism

The past twenty years have witnessed the introduction of a new method of viewing the Pentateuch, known as literary criticism. While interest remains strong in uncovering the process by which the Pentateuch was composed, many scholars either have or are gradually recognising the need to comprehend the Pentateuch in its final form. This shift in emphasis entails a switch from a diachronic ('through time') to synchronic ('at the same time') reading of the text. Instead of locating portions of the text in different historical periods, literary criticism seeks to understand the Pentateuch as a coherent, unified work composed at one specific point in time. Literary criticism recognises that the Pentateuch cannot be understood solely on the basis of the components that have been used in its construction; the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts. As Robert Polzin rightly observes:

> Traditional biblical scholarship has spent most of its efforts in disassembling the works of a complicated watch before our amazed eyes without apparently realising that similar efforts

by and large have not succeeded in putting the parts back together again in a significant or meaningful way.[1]

Two further dimensions of literary criticism ought to be noted. First, the designation literary criticism embraces a wide range of differing approaches that may be used to interpret texts (*e.g.*, structuralism; deconstruction; reader–response). It is worth remembering that many of these approaches have been developed by scholars primarily interested in the study of modern literature. Second, some proponents of literary criticism adopt a very ambivalent attitude towards historical issues. They are primarily interested in the text alone, viewing questions concerning the growth of the text and its historical context as irrelevant to their particular approach. While there may be a place for adopting an a-historical reading of some texts, it needs to be asked if this is really appropriate for the study of the Pentateuch.

In theory, the four methods outlined above are complementary, asking different questions of the Pentateuch. In practice, however, literary criticism, by revealing more clearly the way in which the biblical text is constructed, has challenged many of the results obtained by the other methods. For this reason, literary criticism has had a major impact upon the study of the Pentateuch, and continues to do so. Nevertheless, the results obtained by the other methods still enjoy substantial support. Consequently, as we move into the 21st century, the academic study of the Pentateuch is marked by a greater diversity of opinions than possibly at any stage in the modern period. What follows, therefore, makes no claim to be a comprehensive description of all current views; rather it is designed (a) to explain how the present state of affairs came into being, (b) to evaluate some of the more influential contributions, and (c) to offer some tentative suggestions as to how Christians may best approach the Pentateuch as an important theological text.

Acknowledgement: Some of the material in chapters two and four of this booklet first appeared in the author's book, *Abraham in the Negev: A Source-critical Investigation of the Genesis 20:1–22:19* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1997). The discussion of the Passover in chapter three, incorporates some material from the author's article, 'The Passover Sacrifice' in R.T. Beckwith and M. Selman (eds.), *Sacrifice in the Bible* (Carlisle/Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Baker, 1995) 1–24. I am grateful to

[1] R. Polzin, "'The Ancestress of Israel in Danger" in Danger', *Semeia* 3 (1975) 82–83.

Paternoster Press for their kind permission to reproduce this material here, in modified form.

2 THE RISE OF THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

In this chapter we shall survey, briefly and somewhat selectively, the development of source criticism, as applied to the Pentateuch, from the period of the Enlightenment to the end of the 19th century. This historical overview provides an important introduction to the topics which we shall explore in more detail throughout the rest of this booklet. It will also help us understand more clearly some of the different directions being pursued in contemporary discussions.

The origin of source criticism as a critical method may be traced back to the middle of the eighteenth century.[2] From somewhat unusual beginnings it became the dominant tool for the study of the Pentateuch. Undoubtedly, this development owed much to the new climate of intellectual freedom, associated with the Enlightenment, which permitted the questioning of traditional views. Although the source criticism of the Pentateuch developed largely through a slow process of evolution, with new ideas being introduced and refined, it is possible to distinguish a number of distinctive stages. These are helpful in highlighting various models which may be used to explain the process by which the Pentateuch was composed (see pp. 19-20).

The Older Documentary Hypothesis

In 1753 a leading French medical professor Jean Astruc (1684–1766) published in Brussels a work entitled *Conjectures sur les mémoires originaux dont il paraît que Moyse s'est servi pour composer le livre de la Genèse*, in which he argued that Moses had compiled Genesis from older documents. Astruc made three important observations regarding Genesis: (a) certain events are recorded more than once (*e.g.*, the creation; the flood); (b) God is designated by the names Elohim and Yahweh;[3] (c) certain events are reported before other events, although chronologically they occur later. These observations suggested to Astruc that Genesis

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[2] For a fuller history of Pentateuchal Criticism up to the 1960s, see R.J. Thompson, *Moses and the Law in a Century of Criticism since Graf* (VTS 19; Leiden: Brill, 1970).

[3] In most modern English versions of the Bible, Elohim is translated as 'God', and Yahweh as 'Lord/LORD'. In older versions, the divine name Yahweh occasionally occurs as Jehovah. For consistency the terms 'Yahweh', 'Yahwist' and 'Yahwistic' are used throughout this historical survey even when writers under discussion use 'Jehovah', 'Jehovist'and 'Jehovistic'.

was composed of older records, and so he proceeded to 'decompose' Genesis. In one column, which he termed A, he placed those passages which used the divine name Elohim.[4] Next to this first column he placed a second, B, containing passages employing Yahweh.[5] However, it soon became apparent that two columns would not suffice. A third column, C, was introduced for those passages which (a) were repetitions of events already included in both columns A and B, and (b) did not employ any divine designation. To this column Astruc assigned with certainty only two verses (7:20, 23). Other passages which did not contain the name of God still required attention. When Astruc noticed that the remaining passages recorded events foreign to the history of the Hebrew people, he placed them in a fourth column, D.[6] With regard to this final column, Astruc thought it unlikely that it once formed a continuous document; rather it consisted of fragments from other minor documents. Finally, Astruc was unable to assign certain verses to any particular column. These verses he felt could be common to two or three of the original documents (Gn. 7:24 to A, B and C; Gn. 9:28, 29 to A and B). Astruc proposed that Moses had originally placed these four columns side by side, but unfortunately a later copyist mistakenly combined them together, and so created the continuous narrative which now constitutes Genesis.

Some fifteen years after the death of Astruc, Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827) published his *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*.[7] In the second volume (1781) of this three volume work Eichhorn investigated the authorship and composition of the biblical books. Concerning Genesis he maintained the orthodox view of Mosaic authorship; indeed, he argued that Moses was particularly well suited to be the author. Moses, however, had employed older written records, and Eichhorn held that it was possible to discern in most of Genesis elements of two distinct

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[4] Gn. 1:1 – 2:3; 5:1–32; 6:9–22; 7:6–10,19,22; 8:1–19; 9:1–10,12,16,17; 11:10–26; 17:3–27; 20:1–17; 21:2–32; 22:1–10; 23:1–20; 25:1–11; 30:1–23; 31:4–27; 31:51 – 32:2; 32:24 – 33:16; 35:1–27; 37:1–36; 40:1 – 48:22; 49:1–28.

[5] Gn. 2:4–26; 6:1–8; 7:1–5,11–18,21; 8:20–22; 9:11,13–15,18–27; 10:1–11:9; 11:27 – 13:18; 15:1 – 17:2; 18:1–19:28; 20:18 – 21:1; 21:33–34; 22:11–19; 24:1–67; 25:19 – 26:33; 27:1 – 28:5; 28:10 – 29:35; 30:24 – 31:3; 31:48–50; 32:3–32; 33:17–20; 38:1–30; 39:1–23; 49:1–28.

[6] Gn. 14:1–24; 19:29–38; 22:20–24; 25:12–18; 26:34,35; 28:6–9; 34:1–31; 35:28–36:43.

[7] Leipzig: Bey Weidmanns Erben und Reich, 1780–83.

documents. These documents could be distinguished (a) by the divine epithet employed, and (b) by repetitions in the text. Apart from certain minor modifications Eichhorn followed the division suggested by Astruc, although he asserted that he was not influenced by Astruc.[8]

A further significant development in the source analysis of Genesis occurred in a work by Karl David Ilgen (1763–1834) which was published at Halle in 1798, entitled *Die Urkunden des jerusalemischen Tempelarchivs in ihrer Urgestalt als Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Geschichte der Religion und Politik.* Ilgen, the successor of Eichhorn at Jena, suggested that Genesis comprised seventeen individual documents. These were, however, composed by merely three authors, two of whom used the divine name Elohim, whereas the third employed the epithet Yahweh. Ilgen referred to them by the terms *Sepher Eliel Harischon* (First Elohist), *Sepher Eliel Haschscheni* (Second Elohist) and *Sepher Elijah Harischon* (First Yahwist). He concluded that the First Elohist was responsible for ten sections of Genesis, the Second Elohist for five sections and the Yahwist for two sections. Ilgen's contribution was important in that he was the first to forward the idea that more than one author used the divine name Elohim.

The position adopted by Astruc, Eichhorn and Ilgen for the source analysis of Genesis is sometimes referred to as the *Older Documentary Hypothesis.* This particular approach represents the earliest phase of the source criticism of the Pentateuch. The conclusions reached by these early critics were based mainly upon a consideration of the book of Genesis alone. Apart from the early chapters of Exodus, no attempt was made to extend the theory to include the other books of the Pentateuch. Furthermore, as a methodology source criticism arose more by chance than by design. It was the presence of particular phenomena in Genesis that led Astruc, Eichhorn and Ilgen to propose the existence of earlier literary sources, and these same phenomena continued to form the basis of future scholarly research. Consequently, from its inception the source analysis of the Pentateuch has relied heavily upon the presence in Genesis of differing names for God and apparently duplicate accounts of the same events.

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[8] *Cf.* T.K. Cheyne, *Founders of Old Testament Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1893) 23.

The Fragmentary Hypothesis

The initial phase of source criticism was followed by a second which differed in two important aspects. (1) Attention was no longer focused solely on Genesis. The Pentateuch as a whole became the object of source analysis, and this was to have an important bearing on future studies. (2) It was argued that the sources were of such a fragmentary nature that they could not be viewed as documents. The idea that Genesis was composed from extensive documents was rejected. As a result, the Older Documentary Hypothesis gave way to the *Fragmentary Hypothesis*.

The earliest exponent of the Fragmentary Hypothesis was a Scottish Roman Catholic priest called Alexander Geddes (1737–1802). In 1792 he published in London the first volume of a work entitled, *The Holy Bible, or the Books accounted Sacred by Jews and Christians, otherwise called the Books of the Old and New Covenants, with various readings, explanatory notes and critical remarks.* This volume contained a new translation of the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua. Later, in 1800, he published another book on the Pentateuch, *Critical Remarks on the Hebrew corresponding with a new translation of the Bible.* In both of these works Geddes rejected Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Instead he argued that the Hexateuch ('six-volumes'; *i.e.*, Genesis to Joshua) had been composed by an editor, living in Jerusalem during the reign of Solomon, who had combined together numerous fragments. These fragments, he suggested, originated from two separate circles of tradition, one of which used the divine name Elohim, the other Yahweh. Geddes was influenced in favour of a fragmentary explanation of the sources by what he observed concerning the legal codes in the latter part of the Pentateuch. These, especially by their independent and self-sufficient nature, supported the idea that various fragments, rather than extensive documents, had been combined together to form the Pentateuch as we now have it.

The position adopted by Geddes was developed by Johann Severin Vater (1771–1826) in his *Commentar über den Pentateuch* (vols 1–2, 1802; vol. 3, 1805). Vater regarded the book of Deuteronomy as the nucleus around which the Pentateuch had been constructed. He separated it from the other books of the Pentateuch, and argued that certain differences between the regulations in Deuteronomy and Leviticus could only be explained by positing multiple authorship. These differences chiefly concerned the relationship between priests and Levites, and their respective incomes. Vater then proceeded to discover some thirty-nine fragments which were used in the compilation of the Pentateuch shortly

prior to the exile. He also equated part of Deuteronomy with the law-book found in the time of Josiah (2 Ki. 22).

Partial support for the Fragmentary Hypothesis came from Wilhelm Martin Lebrecht de Wette (1780–1849), a scholar who was to play a significant rôle in the development of critical thinking on the Pentateuch. In his doctoral thesis of 1805, *Dissertatio Critico-Exegetica qua Deuteronomium a prioribus Pentateuchi libris diversum alius cujusdam recentioris auctoris opus esse monstratur*, de Wette proposed that Deuteronomy had been composed in the time of king Josiah (*c.* 621 BC) and was to be equated with the Book of the Law mentioned in 2 Kings 22. This view of Deuteronomy was to become very influential in future discussions. Later in his *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (vol. 1, 1806; vol. 2, 1807), de Wette developed further his thinking on the Pentateuch. Having already placed the origin of Deuteronomy in the reign of Josiah, he considered the dating of Leviticus. On the basis of its legislation he concluded that it did not originate in the time of Moses. At the earliest Leviticus could be dated to the reign of Solomon. He also argued that the cultic history recorded in the books of Joshua and Chronicles was unreliable, and so could not be used to reconstruct the development of cultic practices. De Wette maintained that the oldest sections of the Pentateuch came from the time of David, and later editors drew upon these fragments in order to compile the whole Pentateuch. While maintaining a fragmentary approach to the rest of the Pentateuch, de Wette rejected the position of Geddes and Vater as regards Genesis. He suggested that in Genesis, and as far as Exodus 6, one main Elohistic document had been supplemented by sections from a Yahwistic source, or perhaps several such sources. This view of Genesis was to find substantial support among later scholars. Finally, it should be noted that de Wette revised his thinking on the composition of the rest of the Pentateuch, and in the final two editions of his *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die kanonishcen und apokryphischen Bücher des Alten Testament*[9] he rejected the Fragmentary Hypothesis.

The Supplementary Hypothesis

In 1823 Heinrich Georg August Ewald proposed that the Hexateuch was composed of an Elohistic work which formed the *Grundschrift* (basic

[9] 5th ed. Berlin: G. Reimer; 1840; 6th ed.; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1845.

document).[10] The compiler of this original Elohistic document had incorporated into it older sections, *e.g.*, the decalogue and the Book of the Covenant. Subsequently, this Elohistic document was paralleled by one employing the divine name Yahweh. Eventually this later Yahwistic source, along with certain other material, was incorporated into the original Elohistic document. This theory has become known as the *Supplementary Hypothesis.*

In 1836 Friedrich Bleek published a work on Genesis, entitled *De libri Geneseos origine atque indole historica observationes quaedam contra Bohlenum,* in which he argued that a Yahwistic editor during the period of the early monarchy supplemented an earlier Elohistic document (the *Grundschrift*). Significantly, Bleek viewed this Yahwistic editor as the compiler of Genesis. He also maintained that the Yahwistic supplements were from a parallel document. Later, during the reign of Josiah a further redaction of the Pentateuch occurred when the compiler of Deuteronomy gave the Hexateuch its present form.

In his *Geschichte des Volkes Israel bis Christ*[11] Ewald modified his earlier position by arguing that within the Pentateuch there were sections which could not be assigned to the Elohistic, Yahwistic or Deuteronomic documents. Ewald proposed that there were two Elohistic sources, one of which he designated the Book of Origins because of its concern to explain the origins of the Sabbath, circumcision and bloodless meat. These two continuous Elohistic sources were combined and later supplemented by the work of the Yahwistic redactor (or editor). By adopting this position, Ewald combined the approaches of the Older Documentary Hypothesis and the Supplementary Hypothesis.

The New Documentary Hypothesis

The Supplementary Hypothesis, however, did not gain many adherents. This was probably due to the impact made by an alternative theory proposed by Hermann Hupfeld (1796–1866). In his *Die Quellen der Genesis und die Art ihrer Zusammensetzung von neuem untersucht*[12] Hupfeld

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[10] H.G.A. Ewald, *Die Komposition der Genesis kritisch untersucht* (Braunschweig: L. Lucius, 1823).

[11] 7 vols. Göttinger: Dieterich, 1843–59 ET of vol. 1, London, 1869.

[12] Berlin: Wieganat und Grieben, 1853.

returned to a purely documentary explanation for the composition of Genesis, rejecting the idea of later supplements. While Hupfeld reverted to the approach first suggested in the Older Documentary Hypothesis, he also incorporated the results of subsequent studies. His theory was based primarily on the book of Genesis. Underlying Genesis, he suggested, there were three independent continuous sources; two of these employed the divine name Elohim, whereas the third used Yahweh. These documents were combined together to form Genesis by an editor who exercised considerable freedom in his use of the sources. Hupfeld called the older of the Elohistic documents the *Urschrift* ('original'). Significantly, two-thirds of the total *Urschrift* came in the initial nineteen chapters of Genesis and resembled closely the Elohist of Astruc and Eichhorn. With Genesis 20 the *jüngerer* or *second Elohist* commenced, and in the subsequent chapters of Genesis it was the more dominant of the two Elohistic documents. Concerning the *Urschrift* Hupfeld noted that it had a particular interest in priestly matters; later this document became known as the *Priestly* or P.

In 1854 Eduard Riehm obtained widespread support for the earlier view of de Wette that Deuteronomy had been composed independently of the other books of the Pentateuch.[13] When Hupfeld's theory of the composition of Genesis was extended to include the whole of the Pentateuch, Riehm's conclusions were incorporated. This resulted in the view, sometimes designated as the *New Documentary Hypothesis*, that the Pentateuch was composed of four documents which were combined by a redactor. Concerning the dating of the sources it was proposed that they should be placed in the order: Urschrift or First Elohist (P); Jüngerer or Second Elohist (E); Yahwist (J);[14] Deuteronomy (D).[15]

The position advocated by Hupfeld gained support from a number of scholars. Two scholars in particular deserve special mention. A student of Hupfeld, Edward Böhmer, carefully separated the text of Genesis into

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[13] E. Riehm, *Die Gesetzgebung Mosis im Lande Moab* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1854).

[14] The siglum 'J' is derived from the German spelling 'Jahve'.

[15] *Cf.* W.M.L. De Wette, *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die kanonischen und apokryphischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (8th ed. revised by E. Schrader; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1869).

the three sources, P, E, and J.[16] Böhmer also offered an alternative dating of the sources. He placed the *Urschrift* (P) in the reign of David, the Yahwist (J) in the time of Elisha (9th century) and the Second Elohist (E) in the reign of Jeroboam (*c.* 793–53 BC). Finally, during the reign of Josiah (*c.* 639–09 BC) these documents were combined by a redactor. In 1869 Theodor Nöldeke provided, in his *Untersuchungen zur Kritik des Altes Testament*,[17] what was to become accepted as the definitive outline of the *Urschrift* P. However, in contrast to Böhmer he dated the *Urschrift* to the period shortly after the reign of Solomon.

The Documentary Hypothesis of Graf, Kuenen and Wellhausen

The assertion of the New Documentary Hypothesis that the Pentateuch was composed of four documents found general acceptance. However, a further development was to occur which modified the theory significantly. Although most scholars were prepared to accept the division of the Pentateuch into four documents, doubts were expressed about Hupfeld's dating of these sources. Eventually, a new theory regarding the order of the documents was formulated and propagated chiefly through the labours of three scholars, Karl Heinrich Graf, Abraham Kuenen and Julius Wellhausen. As a result the new theory is sometimes referred to as the *Documentary Hypothesis of Graf, Kuenen and Wellhausen* (hereafter referred to as the Documentary Hypothesis).

In his *Die geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testament: zwei historisch-kritische Untersuchungen* (1866) Graf adopted the view of de Wette that Deuteronomy was from the time of Josiah. By comparing the cultic legislation contained in the rest of the Pentateuch with that of Deuteronomy, Graf observed that the JE[18] legislation was earlier than D, whereas the P material was later.[19] Like de Wette, he also rejected the

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[16] E. Böhmer, *Das erste Buch der Thora* (Halle, 1862).

[17] Kiel: Schwers'sche, 1869.

[18] The designation JE is used here to denote the document formed when the sources J and E were combined by a redactor.

[19] Graf was influenced by his teacher Eduard Reuss. According to J. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (London: SCM, 1992) 7, 'Reuss pointed out that the pre-exilic prophets betray no familiarity with the Mosaic legal system, and that the ritual law in particular, closely related as it is to Ezekiel, could not have originated earlier than the exilic period (6th century B.C.).'

historical witness of the book of Chronicles to the cultic institutions. Concerning the composition of the Pentateuch, Graf initially maintained a type of supplementary hypothesis, arguing that the narrative sections which composed the *Urschrift* of Genesis were early. However, Graf's views were criticised by various scholars with the result that in 1869 he adopted a modified form of the New Documentary Hypothesis; in contrast to Hupfeld, Graf dated the *Urschrift*, or First Elohist (P), after Deuteronomy. Support for Graf's position came from the Dutch scholar Abraham Kuenen (1828–91). In 1869–70 he published a work, entitled *De Godsdienst van Israël*, in which he also argued that Hupfeld's *Urschrift* ought to be dated to the post-exilic period.

Fullest expression of the new hypothesis came, however, from Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) who propagated it with remarkable skill and conviction. His views appeared first in 1876–77 in a series of offprints for the *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, entitled 'Die Composition des Hexateuchs'. These were later reprinted in the second volume of *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*.[20] In 1878 there appeared Wellhausen's *Geschichte Israels I*[21] which was published in future editions under the title *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*.[22] Relying on the work of the scholars who preceded him, Wellhausen argued cogently that the Pentateuch was composed of four distinct documents.[23] The earliest of these was the Yahwistic source, J, which he dated to the ninth century BC. The next document was the Elohistic source, E (eighth century BC). Subsequently these two sources were combined by a Yahwistic editor. Later, in the time of Josiah, the book of Deuteronomy D was composed.[24] This first edition of Deuteronomy was subsequently expanded by the addition of narrative, homiletic and legal material. Since this additional material showed a

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[20] Berlin: G. Reimer, 1885.

[21] Berlin: G. Reimer, 1878.

[22] ET, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885).

[23] Apart from being influenced by previous works on the source analysis of the Pentateuch, Wellhausen was also strongly influenced by the philosopher Hegel into adopting a tripartite view of Israelite religion. Consequently, he believed that the Pentateuchal sources reflected three distinctive stages: (1) nature religion; (2) propheticism; (3) Judaism. *Cf.* Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 11–12.

[24] For a critique of this dating of Deuteronomy, see G.J. Wenham, 'The Date of Deuteronomy: linch-pin of Old Testament criticism' *Themelios* 10 (1985) 15–20; 11 (1985) 15–18.

knowledge of JE but not P, Wellhausen concluded that JE and D were combined before P was added. Then during the fifth century BC the Priestly document P (Hupfeld's *Urschrift*) was composed. Finally, it too was combined with the earlier material. By so ordering the sources Wellhausen produced the now famous sequence J, E, D, P.

Throughout Europe Wellhausen's views were generally well received. In his native Germany most scholars quickly adopted his approach. In Holland Kuenen propounded the views of Wellhausen in his *Historisch-Critisch Onderzoek naar het Onstaan en de Verzameling van de Boeken des Ouden Verbonds*.[25] In France E. Reuss, who many years earlier had influenced Graf, supported the new theory in his *L'Histoire sainte et la loi*,[26] and in Britain William Robertson Smith became an important advocate of the new theory.[27] Indeed the influence of the new hypothesis was such that by the year 1890 the views of Graf, Kuenen and Wellhausen gained almost total acceptance in the world of biblical scholarship.

Models for explaining the composition of the Pentateuch

Before proceeding to consider in more detail various aspects of the Documentary Hypothesis, we should observe briefly how the stages identified above reflect three different models by which the composition of the Pentateuch may be described.

The *documentary* theories may be thought of as viewing the Pentateuch like a cord which is made up of several coloured stands. Woven together, these strands run throughout the Pentateuch, with occasionally one colour being more dominant than the others. Since each strand has its own distinctive features, it is possible to distinguish it from the rest. In the case of the Documentary Hypothesis, the process by which the cord was formed initially involved two strands being combined, to these another strand was added, and then later yet another.

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[25] 2nd ed.; vol. 1, Leiden: P. Engels en zoon, 1885. ET, *An Historico-critical Inquiry into the Origin and Composition of the Hexateuch* (London: Macmillan, 1886; based on 2nd ed. of *Historisch-Critisch*).

[26] Paris: Libraire Sandoz et Fischbacher, 1879.

[27] *Cf. The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1881); *The Prophets of Israel* (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1882).

In contrast to the rope-model of the Documentary Hypothesis, *fragmentary* theories view the Pentateuch like a chain composed of assorted links. These links are made from different types of material and may vary greatly in their size and shape; some, however, may share common features. The Pentateuch was created when these links were joined together. An important aspect of this approach is that the Pentateuch may be viewed as having been composed of sections (or blocks) of material which originally had nothing in common. These were subsequently joined end to end in order to create a longer work.

The third model, corresponding to *supplementary* theories, views the Pentateuch as a ball of coloured modelling-clay which is stretched out to form a rope. The rope is then broken and pieces of clay of another colour are added. This process is repeated, with several different colours being used. As a result the finished rope has one dominant colour supplemented by others.

All these models seek to explain the existence within the Pentateuch of features which convey either a sense of unity or diversity. As we shall observe later, although there can be little doubt that diverse materials have been brought together to form the Pentateuch, it is also apparent that the narrative is more unified that many scholars allow.

Distinctive vocabulary

For source criticism to work, it is necessary to have definitive criteria by which source-documents can be clearly distinguished from each other. Fundamental to uncovering the source-documents is the assumption that each author has his/her own style of writing. Since it is not always possible to define a writer's literary style with precision, vocabulary provides the best index by which to determine authorship. As we have already observed, it was the unusual distribution of the divine names, Yahweh and Elohim, which first prompted scholars to discern the presence of two sources in the book of Genesis. Beginning here, source critics proceeded to develop vocabulary lists for each of the main source-documents.[28]

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[28] Examples of such lists may be found in various works. In particular, see S.R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (9th ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913) 116–59.

While in theory vocabulary is a very suitable criterion for distinguishing sources, in practice complications exist.

(1) The presence of a particular word or phrase in various passages need not indicate a common source-document; this could be due to the fact that all the relevant passages address the same subject. For example, the expression 'with all your heart and with all your soul' is generally taken to be characteristic of the D source, occurring within the Pentateuch only in Deuteronomy 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10.[29] All, however, come in exhortatory speeches addressed by Moses to the Israelites as they prepare to enter the promised land of Canaan. The context clearly determines the presence of this expression. Moreover, the lengthy speeches in Deuteronomy represent one of the few places where Moses addresses at length the people of Israel using his own words; elsewhere he more often mediates God's words to the Israelites. In the light of these observations, it is reasonable to conclude that the expression 'with all your heart and with all your soul' is indicative of a particular individual speaking in a distinctive context. This hardly justifies its use as a criterion for source analysis.

(2) Two words taken by source critics to be synonyms and, consequently, assigned to separate sources, on closer inspection may be found to have slightly different connotations; this in turn may account for the use of one term in preference to the other in certain contexts. For example, the geographical name Horeb is frequently said to be indicative of the E sources; the other sources use 'Sinai'.[30] Yet, from a study of how both words are used in the Pentateuch, it is apparent that Horeb refers to a broad region, within which lies a smaller area known as Sinai. On this basis the use of the term Horeb in Exodus 17:6, for example, is determined by geographical considerations rather than the presence of the E source.

(3) A survey of all the supposedly distinctive vocabulary reveals that on occasions words taken to be typical of one source occasionally come in passages assigned to another source. This clearly undermines completely the usefulness of the term for distinguishing source-documents. Even if just one exception is noted, what guarantee can a source critic have that

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[29] The only other OT occurrence of this phrase is Jos. 22:5, where the text is alluding back to Moses' exhortation to the Israelites.

[30] Driver, *Introduction*, 82, 119.

another exception does not exist? For example, the expression 'land of Canaan' is normally taken to be typical of the P source (*e.g.* Gn. 12:5; 17:8).[31] Yet, its presence in various verses which may be attributed to either J or E (*cf.* Gn. 35:6; 42:5, 7, 13, 29, 32; 44:8) clearly undermines its usefulness as a P criterion.

(4) An element of circularity exists in the use of vocabulary to determine sources. On the basis of various occurrences a term may be viewed as typical of a particular source-document. A further occurrence of the same word may come in a passage which on other grounds might be thought to belong to a different source. In such a situation, the verse or phrase containing the term is likely to be viewed as an interpolation, and the word retained as a criterion for source analysis. However, it would surely be much more appropriate to conclude that in these circumstances the term should not be used for source analysis; the one passage in question may indicate that the term is not unique to one source.

These observations draw attention briefly to the practical difficulties inherent in trying to recover the source-documents of the Pentateuch on the basis of distinctive vocabulary. Given the special significance of the divine names in this regard, we shall consider them in more detail.

The divine names in Genesis

The divine names have been widely acknowledged as one of the main criteria for the source analysis of the Pentateuch, although strictly speaking, as we shall observe, their use should be confined to the whole of Genesis and the first few chapters of Exodus. Their significance is underlined by the fact that two of the Pentateuchal sources are designated after them, the Yahwistic (J) and the Elohistic (E). With good reason Redford remarks that this criterion 'has become virtually an article of faith among Biblical scholars'.[32]

Evidence supporting the claim that the peculiar arrangement of the divine names in Genesis is due to sources comes from a few significant passages: Genesis 4:26; Exodus 3:5–15; 6:3. Of these Exodus 6:3, which is

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[31] *Cf.* J. Skinner, *Genesis* (ICC; 2d ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1930) 289.

[32] D.B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37–50)* (VTS20; Leiden: Brill, 1970) 108.

assigned to the Priestly Writer, is generally understood to state that the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did not know God by the name Yahweh: 'I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as El Shaddai, but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known to them.' Although it is not expressed explicitly, Exodus 3:13–15, ascribed to E, may imply that the name Yahweh was only first revealed to Moses. Thus, in the early chapters of Exodus the E and P sources apparently affirm that the patriarchs of Genesis were not familiar with the divine epithet Yahweh. This, it is suggested, is supported by the observation that 'Yahweh' never appears in the E and P material preserved in Genesis. In marked contrast, the J source introduces the name Yahweh right at the beginning of Genesis, and the importance of the name is indicated in Genesis 4:26: 'At that time men began to call on the name of Yahweh.' Only by dividing Genesis into sources, so it is argued, is it possible to reconcile the apparently conflicting statements found in Exodus 6:3 and Genesis 4:26.[33]

This interpretation of the evidence, however, creates an intriguing problem. Since the time of Wellhausen it has been customary to view J as the oldest of the Pentateuchal sources. Yet, if J existed prior to E and P, why did these later sources state that the patriarchs did not know the name Yahweh? Were the authors of E and P not already aware of the fact that the patriarchs knew God as Yahweh? In its present form, the Documentary Hypothesis offers no satisfactory explanation for this problem.

Although doubts have been expressed in the past about the validity of the criterion of divine names,[34] it is still widely viewed as an important guide to the sources underlying the Pentateuch, and especially the book of Genesis. Nevertheless, it is now acknowledged that a purely

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[33] For an outline of various attempts to harmonise the Exodus statements about the origin of the name Yahweh with the presence of the epithet in Genesis, see G.H. Parke-Taylor, *Yahweh: The Divine Name in the Bible* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1975) 18–62. The difficulties presented by Ex. 6:3 are discussed in T.D. Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev: A Source-critical Investigation of Genesis 20:1 – 22:19* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997) 90–101.

[34] *E.g.*, U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1961) 15–41; M.H. Segal, 'El, Elohim, YWHW in the Bible', *JQR* 46 (1955) 89–115.

'mechanical application' of this criterion is unsatisfactory.[35] This is so for a number of reasons. (1) Whereas Yahweh is a personal name, Elohim is a common noun. While there are many occasions in Genesis where it is possible to interchange these terms, there are contexts which permit only the use of Elohim as a common noun meaning 'deity'.[36] (2) There are some obvious instances where the use of a particular divine name is determined by the context. For example, in Genesis 3:1–5 the serpent and the woman use the designation Elohim, rather than Yahweh Elohim, which is used elsewhere throughout Genesis 2:4–3:24. As his adversary, it is hardly surprising that the serpent avoids using God's personal name Yahweh. (3) 'The name for God is not as stringent a criterion for J as it is for P (or E)'.[37] Given that in E and P the divine name Yahweh was first revealed to Moses, we would clearly not expect to find 'Yahweh' appearing in E or P passages occurring in Genesis. There is, however, no reason why Yahweh should not appear in E or P narratives describing events after the revelation of this new name to Moses; indeed, we would expect this to be the case. Similarly, there is no reason why the epithet Elohim may not be present in any J passage.[38] Thus, strictly speaking, in Genesis only the presence of 'Yahweh' in a text can be viewed as a decisive indicator for source analysis; the presence of Elohim in a particular verse does not automatically require that it should be assigned to either E or P. (4) An examination of biblical material outside of Genesis reveals that 'variation in the name for God is certainly possible in a literary unity.'[39] The presence of both divine names in a single passage does not necessarily imply that two separate accounts have been combined. It is possible for one author to use both divine epithets. (5) We should be alert to the possibility that the biblical texts may have been modified as a result of editorial activity. Thus, for example, J. Skinner argues, supporting the Documentary Hypothesis, that the presence of

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[35] C. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984) 579; cf. R.N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch* (JSOTSS 53; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987) 63–72.

[36] *E.g.*, Gen. 9:26; 17:7, 8; 24:3, 7, 12, 27, 42, 48; 26:24; 27:20; 28:13(x2),21; 31:5, 19, 29, 30, 32, 34, 35, 42 (x2),53 (x2); 32:10(x2); 33:20; 35:2, 4; 43:23(x2); 46:1, 3; 50:17.

[37] Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 579.

[38] *Cf.* Skinner, *Genesis*, l–li.

[39] Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 579; cf. Segal, 'El, Elohim and YHWH', 94–97; Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 67–68.

Yahweh in 22:11, 14; 28:21; 31:49 is 'due to the intentional action of a redactor.'[40] (6) It is not inconceivable that in some instances a divine name was changed merely by accident in the transmission of the Genesis text. We cannot be completely certain that the Massoretic Text preserves accurately the arrangement of the divine names following the amalgamation of the supposed sources J, E and P. This possibility is supported by the different textual traditions found in the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint.[41] All these observations underline the danger of adopting a purely mechanical application of the divine names criterion for source analysis.

In spite of these difficulties, the idea that Genesis is composed of sources which use different divine names still attracts support, and many scholars appear content to accept the Documentary Hypothesis explanation for the distribution of the divine epithets in Genesis. As Westermann observes, 'none of the attempts to explain the variation in the name for God in another way have (sic.) so far led to any convincing result.'[42] While this may be so, the criterion of divine names cannot, in the light of the facts observed above, be relied upon to provide a definitive source analysis of Genesis.

Doublets

Alongside vocabulary, the source analysis of the Pentateuch has relied heavily upon the idea that the text contains duplicate accounts of the same events, often described as 'doublets'. These fall into two main types. (1) The same event may be described in two quite separate episodes. Thus, for example, there are two accounts of Abraham pretending that his wife is his sister (Gn. 12:10–20; 20:1–18; a similar incident involving Isaac comes in Gn. 26:1–11). In each episode Sarah is

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[40] Skinner, *Genesis*, l–li. See also the suggestion of G.J. Wenham, 'The Religion of the Patriarchs', in A.R. Millard and D.J. Wiseman (eds.), *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives* (Leicester: IVP, 1980) 157–88, that the name Yahweh was inserted into the Genesis material by a Yahwistic redactor. For a critique of Wenham's position, see Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev*, 93–96.

[41] For a fuller discussion of the textual evidence, see J. Skinner, *The Divine Names in Genesis* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914). The SP differs from MT in some 9 cases (7:1, 9; 14:22; 20:18; 28:4; 31:7, 9, 16a; 35:9b). The LXX manuscripts preserve over 60 readings where the divine names differ from the MT.

[42] Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 578.

taken by a foreign ruler and only after divine intervention is returned to Abraham. According to the Documentary Hypothesis, Genesis 12:10–20 represents J's version of this event, and Genesis 20:1–18 is E's version. (2) Some doublets involve a single episode which is dissected into two separate accounts. Thus, for example, it is argued that the Flood Narrative in Genesis 6–9 is an amalgam of two versions, one deriving from J and the other from P. The existence of doublets is an important factor in support of the Documentary Hypothesis, for they indicate that the different source-documents used in the composition of the Pentateuch parallel each other in terms of contents.

Space does not permit a detailed critique of all the supposed doublets found within the Pentateuch.[43] It is the present writer's experience that under close inspection many of these doublets do not support the existence of once independent, parallel sources.[44] Thus, for example, the account of Sarah's abduction by Abimelech in Genesis 20, presupposes that the reader is already familiar with a similar incident that has occurred previously. Without a prior knowledge of the events described in Genesis 12:11–15, it is impossible to make sense of Genesis 20:2. This strongly suggests that the account in Genesis 20 was composed as part of a document that already contained the material in Genesis 12:10–20 (or something very similar). This observation argues against a *documentary* solution to the presence of these two incidents in Genesis; possibly Genesis 20 was composed as a supplement to an already existing document. When, however, all the source-analysis criteria are considered in Genesis 12:10–20 and 20:1–18, it is highly likely that both episodes were composed by the same writer.[45]

The issues involved in determining the presence of true doublets within the Pentateuch are complex. Occasionally the arguments are so finely balanced that it is difficult to be confident that parallel source-

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[43] For a fuller list of 'doublets' of both types, see R.E. Friedman, 'Torah (Pentateuch)', *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6:609.

[44] For a much fuller discussion of the main doublets found within the Abraham narrative in Genesis 11:27–25:11, see Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev, 32–69.*

[45] See Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev*, 32–51.

documents existed. This is certainly the case with regard to the Flood Narrative.[46]

In the preceding paragraphs we have focused on distinctive vocabulary and doublets. While these represent the mainstays of the Documentary Hypothesis, other criteria are often discussed (*e.g.*, contradictions; theological outlook). The latter, however, are of much less importance in terms of supporting the Documentary Hypothesis, for they do not automatically support the existence of parallel source-documents. It should also be noted that these other criteria were recognised only after the various sources were isolated using distinctive vocabulary and doublets.[47]

Implications for the history of Israelite religion

An important aspect of the Documentary Hypothesis is the impact that it has had upon the study of Israelite religion. No longer was the Pentateuch viewed as providing evidence of religious practices dating from before the period of the monarchy. Rather it consisted of four source-documents, J, E, D and P, dated respectively to the 10/9th, 9/8th, 7th and 6/5th centuries BC. Since each source supposedly provided a snap-shot of the religious customs being practised at the time of its composition, it was possible by comparing them to see how Israelite religion evolved from the 10th century through to the 5th century BC[48]. The impact of this development can be seen, for example, in the modern assessment of the history of Passover.[49]

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[46] The arguments for and against the source-analysis of the Flood Narrative are debated in a series of articles by G.J. Wenham and J.A. Emerton: *cf.* Wenham, 'The Coherence of the Flood Narrative', *VT* 28 (1978) 336–48; Emerton, 'An Examination of Some Attempts to Defend the Unity of the Flood Narrative in Genesis', *VT* 37 (1987) 401–20; 38 (1988) 1–21; Wenham, 'Method in Pentateuchal Source Criticism', *VT* 41 (1991) 84–109.

[47] For a much fuller critique of the criteria used in support of the Documentary Hypothesis, see Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 43–131

[48] For this reason Wellhausen's influential study was entitled, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Edinburgh: Adam & Charles Black, 1885).

[49] For a fuller discussion, see T.D. Alexander, 'The Passover Sacrifice', in R.T. Beckwith and M. Selman (eds.), *Sacrifice in the Bible* (Carlise/Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Baker, 1995) 1–24.

By comparing Exodus 23:15–16 and Exodus 34:18–22 (both J) with Deuteronomy 16:1–17 (D) Wellhausen concluded that in ancient Israel there were three main feasts: Unleavened Bread, Weeks and Tabernacles/Booths.[50] On the basis of their earliest titles (Unleavened Bread, Harvest and Ingathering, as reflected in Ex. 23 and 34) they were clearly agricultural in origin, probably taken over by the Israelites from the Canaanites. Furthermore, because the J sections of the Pentateuch never mention it, the Passover could not have existed when J was composed.[51] Wellhausen then suggested, on the basis of Deuteronomy 16:1–8 (D), that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were amalgamated about the time of Josiah's reforms in 621 BC. Prior to this they were totally unconnected. Subsequent developments, as revealed in the Priestly Writer's portrayal of the Passover (as found in Ex. 12:1–20, 28, 43–49; 13:1–2; Lev. 23:5–8; Nu. 9:1–14; Nu. 28:16–25), confirmed this major innovation.[52] By concluding that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were unrelated prior to about 620 BC, Wellhausen overturned the long-standing tradition, highlighted especially in Exodus 12–13, that both originated as commemorations of the Israelite exodus from Egypt. So cogent were his arguments for the original independence of the Passover and Unleavened Bread that Wellhausen's work heralded a new era in the study of the early history of these sacred feasts.

If the Passover was unconnected to the Feast of Unleavened Bread prior to the time of Josiah, how did it originate and what form did it take? For his part, Wellhausen suggested that the Passover developed in a pastoral, rather than an agricultural setting, as the offering of the first-fruits of sheep and cattle.[53] Expressing gratitude to God for fruitful flocks and herds, it was the oldest of the feasts and was not tied to any particular time in the year. Although the offering of first-fruits originated in Israel's nomadic past, it was only rarely observed during the early monarchy; hence it is not mentioned in the Book of the

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[50] *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, 83–120.

[51] To support this idea Wellhausen, *Prolegommena*, 85, n. 1, emends the expression *hag happasaḥ* 'feast of the passover' in Ex. 34:25, to *haggi* 'my feast' on the basis of Ex. 23:18.

[52] *E.g.*, the precise dating of the Passover; more exact specifications regarding the offerings.

[53] The inadequacy of this reconstruction is highlighted by M. Haran, 'The Passover Sacrifice', in *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (VTS 22; Leiden: Brill, 1972) 94–95.

Covenant[54] (Ex. 22:29–30). It was revived in Judah after the fall of the northern kingdom in 721 BC, to be amalgamated almost a century later with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Only at this stage was the name *pesaḥ* 'Passover' introduced.

Other writers, accepting the validity of Wellhausen's general approach, revised substantially his picture of the Passover's origin. G.B. Gray sought to isolate various ancient features of the Passover by focusing on its later customs.[55] He concluded that the Passover was originally observed by nomadic Israelites on the night of the full moon nearest the spring equinox. In its earliest form it consisted of a sacrificial meal in which the entire victim was eaten raw, with the blood still in it.[56] This custom was later modified; the victim was now cooked and its blood smeared on the door posts. The blood ritual had an apotropaic purpose; it was intended to protect those within from some power outside by providing a 're-inforced closed door'. With the centralisation of sacrificial worship in Jerusalem in 620 BC, the practice of smearing the blood on the door was abandoned; the sacrificial meal alone continued to be observed.

According to R. de Vaux, the Passover began as the spring-time sacrifice of a young animal, not necessarily the firstborn, by nomadic or semi-nomadic shepherds in order to guarantee the prosperity of the flock.[57] It

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[54] The expression 'Book of the Covenant' comes in Ex. 24:7 and refers to the material contained in Ex. 20:22 – 23:33. This is generally acknowledged to be some of the oldest material in the Pentateuch; see J.W. Marshall, *Israel and the Book of the Covenant: An Anthropological Approach to Biblical Law* (SBLDS 140; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993).

[55] *Sacrifice in the Old Testament: its theory and practice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925) 337–382.

[56] Gray, *Sacrifice*, 368, observes that in Ex. 12:9 and 12:46 it is forbidden to eat the victim raw, or to break any of its bones. He concludes, 'A legal prohibition is commonly directed against what is, or has been, actual practice. It has therefore been inferred that at one time the Paschal victim was eaten raw, and that the bones, having been broken and pounded for the purpose, were eaten as well as the flesh.'

[57] R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: its life and institutions* (2d ed.; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1965) 484–93. He appears to follow L. Rost's comparative study of the customs of nomadic Arabs, 'Weidewechsel und altisraelitischer Festkalender', *ZDPV* 66 (1943) 205–16; reprinted in L. Rost, *Das kleine Credo und andere Studien zum AT* (Heidelberg: Quelle & Meyer, 1965) 101–12. The relevance of Rost's study has been queried by B.N. Wambacq, 'Les origines de la *Pesah* israélite', *Biblica* 57 (1976) 206–24. In particular he notes that the

occurred prior to the tribal migration, and required neither a priest nor an altar. An important feature of the feast, which took place at the full moon, was the smearing of blood on the tent-poles in order to drive away evil powers. Various features of the later Passover celebration reflect its nomadic origin:

> The victim was roasted over a fire without any kitchen utensils; it was eaten with unleavened bread (which is still the normal bread of Bedouin to-day), and with bitter herbs (which does not mean vegetables grown in the garden, but the desert plants which Bedouin pick to season their food). The ritual prescribed that those eating it should have their belts already fastened, sandals on their feet (as if they were going to make a long journey on foot), and a shepherd's stick in one hand.[58]

Before the Israelite settlement of Canaan, the Passover was a common feast celebrated at the central sanctuary of the tribal federation. With the decentralisation of cultic worship, after Israel's occupation of Canaan, it became a family feast. Much later, as a result of Josiah's decision to have all cultic worship centralised in Jerusalem, it reverted to a common feast.

Recently, the speculative nature of such histories has been highlighted by J. Van Seters. On methodological grounds he rejects these attempts to reconstruct the Passover's origin through either the backward projection of later features or the use of comparative customs.

> For all its ingenious reconstructions the disadvantages of the traditio-historical method are considerable. Since it speculates about the shape of the pre-literate tradition its theories cannot be falsified by an appeal to the present texts. There is also no way to make any judgement between radically different proposals and thus theories about the cult have greatly proliferated. Furthermore, those who follow this method have never demonstrated by comparative literature that tradition-

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blood rite among nomadic Arabs concerns their arrival and settlement in a new location, whereas the Passover ritual in Ex. 12 focuses on the Israelites' departure from Egypt.

[58] R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 489.

history is anything but a completely artificial construction of biblical scholars.[59]

Because they cannot be substantiated, traditio-historical theories about the Passover's origin must be treated with the utmost caution. They clearly do not provide a very secure foundation upon which to base our investigation of the sacrificial nature of the Passover. (For a fuller discussion of the traditio-historical method, see pp. 39-46.)

Although Van Seters affirms emphatically the priority of source analysis for uncovering the true history of the Passover, he rejects Wellhausen's approach on a number of specific points. (1) He is convinced that the J material should be dated to the period of the exile, making D the earliest source, with J coming midway between D and P. (2) Whereas Wellhausen maintained that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were first amalgamated in Deuteronomy 16, Van Seters views all the references to Unleavened Bread in Deuteronomy 16 as later additions. (3) He supports the view of J. Halbe that the Feast of Unleavened Bread did not originate as an ancient Canaanite agricultural festival.[60] Rather he dates it to the exilic period when the eating of the Passover sacrifice could no longer be observed due to the destruction of the temple; the eating of unleavened bread became the basis of a substitute festival. (4) He reassigns some of the material in Exodus 12–13 to different sources; 12:29–39 and 13:3–16 come from J; the remaining verses (12:1–28 and 13:1–2) are the product of P.[61]

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[59] J. Van Seters, 'The Place of the Yahwist in the History of Passover and Massot', *ZAW* 95 (1983) 169–70.

[60] J. Halbe, 'Erwägungen zu Ursprung und Wesen des Massotfestes', *ZAW* 87 (1975) 325–34. Among the reasons listed by Halbe, the following are the most convincing: (a) the month of Abib (March–April) is too early for a harvest festival; (b) it is strange that a harvest celebration should be marked by the eating of unleavened bread; (c) a seven-day festival is hardly likely to have occurred at the beginning of the harvest; (d) a special reason, the exodus from Egypt, has to be provided for celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread; this is not so for the true harvest feasts of Harvest (Weeks) and Ingathering (Tabernacles/Booths).

[61] Van Seters' source analysis may be compared with the more traditional position adopted by S.R. Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, 28. He assigns Ex. 12:1–20, 28, 37a, 40–51; 13:1–2 to P, Ex. 12:29–30 to J, Ex. 12:31–36, 37b–39,42a to E, and Ex. 12:21–27; 13:3–16 to JE.

In the light of these considerations Van Seters proposes the following reconstruction of the Passover's history. The Passover, as reflected in the earliest source D, was a one day festival in the spring at a local sanctuary. After the slaughter of an animal from the flock or herd, there was a meal, eaten at night without unleavened bread. D restricted the celebration of the festival to a central sanctuary, and introduced the idea that it was a commemoration of the exodus. About a century and a half later, with the destruction of the temple, it was no longer possible to celebrate the Passover. As a result the Feast of Unleavened Bread was instituted by J as a substitute. This new feast, however, lasted for a week, and prominence was given to the eating of unleavened bread, the one significant element retained from the Passover celebration. With the restoration of the temple after the exile further modifications occurred, as witnessed in P. The revived Passover celebration was combined with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This, however, presented a problem for Jews living in the Diaspora. How could they, far removed from the sanctuary, participate in the new combined feast? To resolve the problem each household was sanctified by means of a blood rite: 'A small animal could be slaughtered as a sacrifice, its blood used to purify the house, and the animal cooked in such a way as to resemble an offering by fire.'[62] To legitimise this activity the Priestly Writer created the aetiology of the blood rite of the exodus story.[63]

The contrasting proposals of Wellhausen and Van Seters highlight the variety of reconstructions which are possible for the history of the Passover. Their differing conclusions depend heavily upon the source analysis of the relevant Pentateuchal passages and their dating in relation to one another. Since space does not permit us to critique in detail here these differing views of Passover, several observations must suffice.

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[62] Van Seters, 'The Place of the Yahwist', 180–81.

[63] This proposal raises a number of problems. The smearing of blood on the door posts is mentioned only in connection with the original Passover night in Egypt. There is no hint that the blood was used in this way during subsequent commemorations of the Passover. In view of the uniqueness of the original occasion, the Exodus narrative hardly provides a suitable aetiology for justifying the adoption of this practice on future occasions. Furthermore, would the Priestly Writer have supported a practice which involved the offering of sacrifices by non-priests? Finally, van Seters offers no evidence of it having been practised in the exilic or post-exilic period, and no explanation as to why it ceased, presumably soon afterwards, to be observed.

First, at the present time the whole question of the source analysis of the Pentateuch is in a state of flux. As we shall discover in chapter four, the once assured results of the Documentary Hypothesis no longer enjoy widespread acceptance. Recent studies have challenged both the validity of the criteria used to distinguish sources and the order in which they should be dated. In the light of these developments we should be wary of reconstructing the history of the Passover on the basis of source-critical theories which lack widespread support.

Second, in the past it has generally been assumed that if a Pentateuchal source shows no knowledge of a custom or practice, that feature did not exist when the source was composed. Yet, conclusions drawn from the silence of the text may prove unwarranted. Two factors make this likely. On the one hand, some passages about the Passover are exceptionally brief (*e.g.*, Ex. 34:25; Lev. 23:5; Nu. 28:16). The absence of particular details may be due entirely to the succinct nature of the material.[64] On the other hand, if two sources have been combined, specific details in one source may be omitted for editorial reasons.[65] This is especially relevant regarding the narrative in Exodus 12–13, which is generally taken to be composed of two, if not more, sources. Little allowance is made for the fact that the editor(s) who combined the supposed sources may have deliberately omitted details already present in one source in favour of parallel details found in another of the sources. For example, while J alone mentions the use of a basin for catching the blood and of hyssop for smearing it on the door-posts (Ex. 12:21–27), we should not suppose that P's silence about these matters means that he had no knowledge of them. We must allow for the possibility that some material became redundant when the sources were combined.[66] Unfortunately,

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[64] This difficulty is not helped when scholars deliberately remove evidence from a passage on the basis that it is a later interpolation.

[65] The source analysis of the Flood Narrative in Genesis 6–9 illustrates this possibility. Although the Yahwistic material contains no reference to the building of the ark, it clearly presupposes that one was constructed. If the present account is the product of J and P material having been combined, the editor has adopted the P version of the ark's construction in preference to that of J.

[66] As Haran, 'The Passover Sacrifice', 88, observes, 'The J passage (Ex. xii 21–27) in no way contradicts the description given in P. ... Both refer to the same happening, only neither of them embraces all the details, which means that they actually complement each other.' Indeed, such is the unity of the present narrative that Van Seters assigns all of Ex. 12:1–28 to P.

we have no way of knowing how little or how much material has been lost in the editorial process.

In the light of these observations it is apparent that the task of reconstructing the history of the Passover will continue to present a major challenge, even if scholars arrive at a new consensus regarding the source analysis of the Pentateuch. Two factors, however, suggest that greater reliability should be placed upon the present account of the Passover's origin in Exodus 12–13.

First, almost every passage which refers to the Passover associates it with either the Feast of Unleavened Bread or with the eating of unleavened bread.[67] Although Wellhausen and Van Seters maintain that the two feasts were originally unconnected in J and D respectively, their arguments are not convincing. M. Haran has demonstrated, *contra* Wellhausen, that J knew of both feasts, and there is no reason to delete the term *pesaḥ* 'Passover' in Exodus 34:25.[68] Nor is it necessary to remove, as Van Seters suggests, all references to Unleavened Bread in Deuteronomy 16.[69] Given the unanimity of the biblical tradition, there are surely good grounds for believing that both feasts were united from their inception. The evidence to the contrary is not compelling.

Second, all the Pentateuchal sources link the Passover with the Israelite exodus.[70] The assumption that later writers created an historical aetiology is not supported by the evidence. No alternative explanation for the designation *pesaḥ*, Passover, has gained widespread support, and

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[67] Only two passages mention the Passover without making any reference to unleavened bread: Num. 33:3, a brief chronological remark, and 2 Ki. 23:21–23, a short description of the Passover celebrated by Josiah. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are linked in Ex. 12:1–13:16; 23:15–18; 34:18–25; Lev. 23:5–6; Dt. 16:1–16; 2 Ch. 30:1–21; 35:1–19; Ezr. 6:19–22. Passover and the eating of unleavened bread are associated in Ex. 12:1–13:16; Ex. 23:18; Ex. 34:25; Nu. 9:2–14; Nu. 28:16–17; Dt. 16:1–8; Jos. 5:10–11; Ezk. 45:21.

[68] 'The Passover Sacrifice', 96–101.

[69] *Cf.* J.G. McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* (JSOTSS 33; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984) 99–123; Alexander, 'The Passover Sacrifice', 11–14.

[70] Among all the references to the Passover in the Pentateuch, only in Lev. 23:5–6 is there no mention of the exodus. Apart from Ex. 12:1 – 13:16, the two events are linked together in Ex. 23:15; 34:18; Nu. 9:1; 33:3; Dt. 16:1, 3, 6.

although scholars have expressed reservations concerning the explanation given in Exodus 12–13, it is by far the most suitable.[71]

Conclusion

In the opening section of this chapter we surveyed the chain of developments that led to the formulation of the Documentary Hypothesis towards the end of the 19th century. We next considered the two main criteria used to isolate the source-documents thought to underlie the Pentateuch, focusing in particular on the divine names. Finally, we observed how the Documentary Hypothesis has had a telling impact upon the history of Israelite religion, radically challenging the traditional understanding of the Pentateuch. Only a limited critique of various aspects of the Documentary Hypothesis has been offered here. In chapter four we shall observe more recent developments, some of which have seriously challenged the validity of the Documentary Hypothesis. Before doing so, it is necessary to consider the impact of both form and traditio-historical criticism upon the study of the Pentateuch.

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[71] H.-J. Kraus, *Worship in Israel: A Cultic History of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966) 45–46; *cf.* J.B. Segal, *The Hebrew Passover from the earliest times to A.D. 70* (London Oriental Series 12; London: Oxford University Press, 1963) 95–101.

3. GOING BEHIND THE DOCUMENTS

Following the widespread acceptance of the Documentary Hypothesis as *the* definitive description of the source-documents underlying the Pentateuch, a few scholars began towards the end of the 19th century AD to consider the pre-literary stage in the growth of the Pentateuch. This was to lead to the development of two new methods of studying the OT texts: form criticism and traditio-historical criticism. Of significance is the fact that these methods sought to project backwards from written texts to oral accounts. This, however, compared with source criticism, involves a greater degree of speculation, for we can never hope to recover the original oral forms of the Pentateuchal material. At best we might recover a written report of what was said. Unfortunately, however, we would still have no way of confirming that this accurately reflected all that was said. Of these two methods form-criticism was the first to be developed.

Form-criticism

The scholar identified with pioneering form-criticism is Hermann Gunkel. He sought to go beyond the work of earlier source critics by examining the development of the Israelite traditions in their oral stage. To achieve this he introduced a method of research now generally known as form-criticism (*Formgeschichte*), although Gunkel himself referred to it as *Gattungsforschung* (research into literary types) or *Literaturgeschichte* (history of literature).

In his approach Gunkel broke free from the limits imposed by the older source-critical method which had restricted scholars to examining the growth of the Pentateuch at the purely literary level. Stressing the part played by oral transmission, Gunkel sought to write a history of the pre-literary development of the traditions underlying the Pentateuch, and in particular the book of Genesis.

In his commentary on Genesis,[72] first published in 1901, Gunkel set out his reasons for believing that the narratives in Genesis had originally circulated orally. Firstly, he noted that the book of Genesis consists of numerous episodes, which appear to have been collected together to

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[72] *Genesis: übersetz und erklärt* (3d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910); ET, based on 3d ed., *Genesis* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997).

form a longer narrative. Secondly, he argued that these episodes represented short, separate stories which he called *Sagen* (legends, fables, myths, tales; sing. *Sage*). In Gunkel's opinion any piece of narrative which belonged to the category of *Sage* must have been transmitted orally. Three important features distinguished a *Sage* from other forms: (a) unlike real 'history' (Geschichte), a *Sage* has a poetic tone; (b) a *Sage* recounts supernatural or incredible events; (c) the subject matter of a *Sage* differs from that found in historiography; whereas, for example, the former may focus on family affairs, the latter is interested in national events. As these features reveal, Gunkel distinguished '*Sagen*' from 'history'. He believed that within an ancient society story-telling initially involved the use of *Sagen*, short oral accounts, and only later did this primitive form develop into 'history' writing. While the material compiled in Genesis belongs to the earliest period within the evolution of Israelite society, the books of Samuel and Kings, for example, reflect a much later phase. This distinction between *Sagen* and 'history' confirmed for Gunkel his belief that the material in Genesis originated orally.

Gunkel, however, not only argued that Genesis was composed of short episodes which had once circulated orally; he also sought to date the individual episodes. S.M. Warner summarises well Gunkel's approach:

> His [Gunkel's] argument was simple. The more primitive (ancient) a society was, the less moral, ethical, and spiritual awareness it would possess. Thus, for example, he believed that the older stories, lacking in religious sophistication, had a "naive" (p. L) way of mixing the religious and profane elements within their narratives, while later stories emphasized only the religious element. He similarly thought that all those stories about the patriarchs which revealed them as flesh and blood people, warts and all, had to be earlier than those which emphasized only their religious qualities (p. LI). He also believed that the way in which the patriarchal stories depicted theophanic events could be used as an indicator of their age (p. XLII). Later, more sophisticated people would take offence at any story which could take seriously the idea that a deity would reveal itself in the flesh. In the same way the age of the narrative could be revealed from the extent to which it dissociated the deity from its sanctuary. Older stories could only depict a deity with influence in the area immediately surrounding its sanctuary. Later stories allowed

> a deity a far greater freedom of movement and influence (pp. XLII–XLIII).[73]

In both his general approach and in his dating of the individual episodes, Gunkel relied heavily upon a developmental theory of history in which things evolve from being simple and primitive to being complex and sophisticated. As Warner observes, the fallacy of such a contrast between primitive and modern people has been noted by those engaged in the study of 'primitive' societies in Africa and elsewhere; even so-called 'primitive' peoples have very elaborate and involved societies. As regards Genesis, the narrative techniques used in the writing of the book reflect the work of an author (or authors) who employed well developed literary skills.[74] It is a mistake, therefore, to think of the material in Genesis as 'primitive'.

Fundamental to Gunkel's approach is the belief that the episodes in Genesis were composed orally. While this assumption is commonly made, it remains to be clearly demonstrated. In spite of attempts to define the nature of oral material, we have no way of showing that even one episode in Genesis was composed orally. As Warner observes,

> At present we see no reason to assume that the narratives of Genesis bear any close resemblance to orally transmitted data at all. If biblical scholars wish to argue such a thesis, they must develop new criteria with which to establish it.[75]

Warner's comments highlight one of the main unresolved issues as regards the study of the Pentateuch. Our knowledge of the oral stage is likely to remain minimal for years to come, and theories based upon it rest upon uncertain foundations.[76]

In time Gunkel's form-critical approach was adopted and developed by other scholars, mainly in Germany. Albrecht Alt produced influential

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[73] S.M. Warner, 'Primitive Saga Men', *VT* 29 (1979) 329.

[74] *Cf.* M.A. Fishbane, 'Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle (Gen. 25:19–35:22)', *JJS* 26 (1975) 15–38.

[75] Warner, 'Primitive Saga Men', 335.

[76] For a fuller critique of form-criticism, see Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 133–85.

studies on the religion of the patriarchs[77] and Israelite law.[78] In the former he sought to explain the evolution of Israelite religion prior to the time of the monarchy, and in the latter he distinguished between two main types of law found in the Pentateuch; casuistic (If a man...) and apodictic (Thou shalt [not]...). Alt's approach had a profound influence on his students Gerhard von Rad and Martin Noth, both of whom were instrumental in establishing a new method, known as traditio-historical criticism.

Traditio-historical criticism

We have already noted how source criticism seeks to determine the documents underlying the present text of the Pentateuch, and form criticism concentrates on the initial oral stage of the individual episodes. Traditio–historical criticism attempts to explain what happened between these two stages. It aims to account for the process by which the once independent oral episodes were united together to form those documents which according to the Documentary Hypothesis comprise the Pentateuch.

Although presented as a form-critical study, von Rad's book, *Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch*,[79] was influential in establishing the traditio-historical method. Von Rad suggested that J was composed along the lines of an outline of Israel's history contained in early credal forms used in cultic celebrations. Examples of these early credos are preserved in Deuteronomy 6:20–24; 26:5b–9 and Joshua 24:2b–13. Von Rad isolated in these credos three main themes: (a) Aramaean origin; (b) rescue from Egypt; (c) possession of the land. According to von Rad, these credos were first used in cultic worship related to the Festival of Weeks held at Gilgal during the initial period of Israel's settlement in Canaan. For von Rad's thesis to be valid these credos must have existed prior to the composition of J. However, the evidence points in the

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[77] *Der Gott der Väter*, Stuttgart, 1929; reprinted in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israels I* (München: C.H. Beck'sche, 1953) 1–78. ET in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966).

[78] *Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Recht*, 1934; reprinted in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israels I* (München: Beck'sche, 1953). ET in *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966) 80–132.

[79] BWANT 24; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1938; ET, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966) 1-77.

opposite direction. In each instance the credo occurs in a passage which is normally dated later than J. It is, therefore, impossible to prove that J was based on such credal confessions.

Von Rad's general approach was developed more fully by Noth in his study, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch*.[80] Noth presented his aim as follows:

> The chief task ...is to ascertain the *basic themes* from which the totality of the transmitted Pentateuch developed, to uncover their roots, to investigate how they were replenished with individual materials, to pursue their connections with each other, and to assess their significance.[81]

In order to determine the history of the traditions used in the Pentateuch Noth accepted the usual source analysis of the Documentary Hypothesis. However, he proposed that on account of the similarities between J and E they must have derived from a common origin or *Grundlage* 'foundation' (G). Thus, where J and E contain similar elements it is possible to trace the influence of G.

Noth modified von Rad's position by arguing that five major themes could be uncovered in J:

(a) guidance out of Egypt

(b) guidance into the arable land

(c) promise to the patriarchs

(d) guidance in the wilderness

(e) revelation at Sinai

Noth proposed that these themes were brought together to form the framework of J. Various factors suggested that the themes were originally unconnected. For example, the theme of 'guidance out of Egypt' presupposes entry into the land of Canaan from the west. In contrast 'guidance into the arable land' assumes that the land of Canaan

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[80] Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1948; ET *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

[81] *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 3.

is invaded from the east. According to Noth these two themes arose in different groups of people.

Although Noth viewed these five themes as having circulated independently, he believed that they were united at an early stage in Israel's history when the separate tribes joined together in what Noth described as an *amphictyony*. This term is used to describe an association of twelve (or six) tribes in ancient Greece and Italy who met at a central shrine for worship. The tribes had the responsibility of maintaining the shrine and did so on a monthly or bi–monthly rota. Noth suggested that the Israelite tribes were associated in the same way around a central shrine, and that this bound them together. After the amphictyony was formed the distinctive traditions of the separate tribes were combined together to form the five main themes which comprised the *Grundlage* (G).

Various assumptions underlie Noth's approach. He assumes that the bulk of the Pentateuch originally circulated orally. He also accepts the source analysis of the Pentateuch as proposed in the Documentary Hypothesis. As we have noted both of these are currently disputed issues.

Noth also assumes that the earliest narrative traditions were short and concise; later traditions did not exhibit the same brevity of form. Thus, for example, he views Genesis 24 as late due to its discursive style. Again this is an assumption which modern scholars reject. Length cannot be a guide to age. Unfortunately, Noth's whole approach relies heavily upon his being able to distinguish early from late traditions.

Another of Noth's assumptions is worth mentioning. He believes that in the process of oral transmission stories may change their main characters. In particular, less well-known individuals may be replaced by better known figures. This idea lies at the very heart of Noth's view of Moses. Although Moses is the main character in the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy, Noth maintains that he had no connection with the stories when they were first told, and that he was only introduced at a later stage. He argues, for example, that Moses did not appear in the earliest traditions about the Israelites coming out of Egypt as recorded in the first half of the book of Exodus. In the earliest traditions it was the elders (*cf.* Ex. 3:16, 18; 4:29) and foremen (Ex. 5:6–19) who negotiated with Pharaoh. To support this thesis, Noth holds that Exodus 5:3–19 represents the most original tradition concerning the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. Since Moses does not appear in this scene – v. 4

which mentions Moses is designated a later insertion – Noth concludes that he had no part in the earliest tradition of the people leaving Egypt. Similarly, in the making of the covenant at Sinai, the presence of Moses was not part of the original tradition. Here also Moses has been introduced in place of the elders of the people. Noth offers no detailed arguments as to why Moses was introduced into these traditions. He merely assumes that this was the process by which the traditions developed. Finally, we should note that for Noth the most authentic element concerning Moses was the account of his burial.[82]

Whereas in Germany scholars like von Rad and Noth developed their form and traditio–historical criticism within the framework of the Documentary Hypothesis, a different approach was adopted in Scandinavia. The origins of this alternative approach can be traced back to the studies of S. Mowinckel on the Psalms,[83] H.S. Nyberg's emphasis on the importance of oral transmission prior to the exile,[84] and the negative reaction of P. Volz[85] and J. Pedersen[86] to the Documentary Hypothesis. By combining the views of these various scholars a new methodology for the study of the Pentateuch suggested itself, the leading exponent being I. Engnell.[87]

While Engnell referred to his approach as the traditio-historical method (*tradition-historisk metod*) on account of similarities with the *überlieferungsgeschichtliche Methode* used in Germany, it is important to

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[82] For a fuller critique of Noth's work, see R.N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 185–98.

[83] *Psalmenstudien II. Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie* (Kristiania: J. Dybwad, 1922); *Psalmenstudien III. Kultprophetie und prophetische Psalmen* (Kristiania: J. Dybwad, 1923).

[84] *Studien zum Hoseabuche* (Uppsala: A.B. Lundequistska, 1935).

[85] *Der Elohist als Erzähler: Ein Irrweg der Pentateuchkritik?* (BZAW 63; Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1933).

[86] 'Die Auffassung vom Alten Testament', *ZAW* 49 (1931) 161–81; in this article Pedersen expressed his rejection of the Documentary Hypothesis; *cf.* 'Passahfest und Passahlegende', *ZAW* 52 (1934) 161–75.

[87] *Gamla Testamentet I* (Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelses, 1945); *idem* 'Methodological Aspects of Old Testament Study', *VTS* 7 (1960) 13–30.

note that the two approaches are not identical.[88] Engnell rejected the idea that one could discover separate literary sources underlying the present text. He maintained that Genesis to Numbers was composed by a Priestly Writer who drew on both pre-exilic and post-exilic material. By rejecting the possibility of pre-exilic literary sources Engnell was obliged to dismiss the Documentary Hypothesis. Oral strata replaced literary sources.

The attempts of Engnell and other Scandinavian scholars to dismiss the usual source analysis of the Pentateuch by emphasising the oral transmission of the traditions have gained little support. However, the oral versus written distinction continues to influence some source-critical studies.[89]

The limitations of traditio-historical criticism illustrated

Traditio-historical criticism seeks to recover the process of composition which lies behind the source-documents. Since extra-biblical texts provide no direct evidence, scholars have had to reconstruct this process from the text of the Pentateuch as finally composed. This, however, opens the door to a wide variety of theories. Something of this may be observed by considering how several prominent scholars have approached the short passage in Genesis 14:18–20 featuring Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek.[90]

The following observations are normally made regarding Genesis 14. (a) It is generally accepted that the chapter as a whole does not come from one of the main source-documents, J, E, D or P; there are no clear criteria by which to identify it with one of these sources. (b) The style of vv. 1–11 differs somewhat from that found in vv. 12–24. (c) Abraham's meetings with the king of Sodom is interrupted by the unexpected arrival of the previously unmentioned king of Salem, Melchizedek. This has led many

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[88] *Cf.* R. Rendtorff, 'Traditio-historical Method and the Documentary Hypothesis', *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 5 (1969) 5–6.

[89] *Cf.* J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1975).

[90] The discussion which follows relies heavily upon J.G. McConville, 'Abraham and Melchizedek: Horizons in Genesis 14', in R.S. Hess, P.E. Satterthwaite and G.J. Wenham (eds.) *He Swore an Oath: Biblical Themes from Genesis 12–50* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Baker/Paternoster, 1994) 93–118.

scholars to suggest that vv. 18–20 are a later addition to the text, v. 17 having originally been followed directly by v. 21.

To explain the make-up of the chapter C. Westermann suggests that the three sections come from separate periods in Israel's history.[91] Section 1 (vv. 1–11[12]) is analogous to ancient near eastern accounts of military successes. Section 2 (vv. 12–17, 21–24) is a narrative of liberation, similar to those found in the book of Judges, in which a hero rescues people from foreign oppressors. Section 3 (vv. 18–20) comes from the time of the first temple (*i.e.*, before 587 BC) and was told to encourage the bringing of tithes to Jerusalem. In support of this, Westermann observes that (a) Salem is another designation for Jerusalem (see Ps. 76:3–a psalm of Zion), and (b) the name Melchizedek resembles that of Zadok, a high priest in the time of king David (*cf. e.g.*, 2 Sa. 15:24–29). Westermann dates the final form of the story to the post-exilic period due to the elevation of Abraham to the position of a world–figure; this conforms to a pattern found in the books of Judith and Daniel.

In his reading of Genesis 14 J.A. Emerton links Melchizedek with David and sees the insertion of vv. 18–20 as designed to support the claim of David to rule over the Israelites and other peoples of Canaan.[92] Like Melchizedek, David is king over Jerusalem. Emerton, however, rejects links between Melchizedek and Zadok. He also rejects the suggestion that the purpose of the narrative was to encourage the bringing of tithes to Jerusalem.

A third approach is offered by J. Van Seters.[93] He dates the Melchizedek incident to the post-exilic period to a time when the priesthood of the second temple aspired to royal office. He finds evidence for this in the claim of the Hasmonaeans to be both kings and "high priests of God Most High".

A helpful critique of these three views is provided by J.G. McConville.[94] As regards the purposed analogies for the first two sections of Genesis 14, McConville highlights the inadequacy of the parallels

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[91] Westermann, *Genesis 12–36* (London: SPCK, 1985) 198–99.

[92] Emerton, 'The Riddle of Genesis xiv', *VT* 21 (1971) 403–39.

[93] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 296–308.

[94] J.G. McConville, 'Abraham and Melchizedek: Horizons in Genesis 14', 93–118.

suggested. The campaign account cannot be easily identified with a specific form of ancient near eastern material. The proposal that the second section resembles hero–liberation accounts found in the Book of Judges is also questionable. The similarities are very superficial and Abraham's actions do not parallel those of judges like Gideon or Samson. Moreover, the Genesis context presents Abraham as a figure of some standing, and it is not surprising to find him having contact with kings (*cf.* Gn. 12:10–20; 20:1–18; 21:22–34); elsewhere the inhabitants of Hebron call him a 'prince of God' (Gn. 23:6).

Regarding Genesis 14:18–20 McConville rejects the traditio-historical explanations of Westermann, Emerton and van Seters. The post-exilic setting suggested by van Seters is highly unlikely. Would a post-exilic author introduce a tradition about an ancient Canaanite priest-king in order to support the claims of Jewish priests? Nor is the narrative particularly appropriate to encourage the bringing of tithes to Jerusalem, as proposed by Westermann. Likewise, Emerton's suggestion that it was intended to justify David's rule over both Israelites and non-Israelites is also dubious; David is more likely to be associated with the warrior Abraham, than Melchizedek.

Adopting a different approach to Genesis 14 McConville makes the following observations. (1) In Genesis Abraham is commonly portrayed as a figure of some importance. Outside Genesis 14, he encounters foreign rulers: Pharaoh of Egypt and Abimelech of Gerar. The inhabitants of Hebron also acknowledge his special status. It is not surprising, therefore, that in Genesis 14 he should have dealings with two other kings, the kings of Salem and Sodom. (2) McConville notes the importance of Genesis 14 in the development of the Lot/Sodom motif which is prominent in Genesis 13 and 18–19. (3) McConville argues that the Melchizedek incident, while interrupting the narrative flow of Genesis 14, is not an intrusion. Various links exist with the surrounding text. Melchizedek knows that Abraham has won a victory (v. 20). Abraham's refusal to be made rich by the king of Sodom (v. 23) involves a word-play with the term for 'tithe' in v. 20. When Abraham refers to "Yahweh, El-Elyon, creator of heaven and earth", he echoes the expression used by Melchizedek in v. 19.

On the basis of these observations McConville proceeds to ask, what effect does the inclusion of the Melchizedek incident have on our reading of the chapter? He observes that Abraham's meetings with the kings of Salem and Sodom provide two contrasting pictures of how

Abraham might take possession of the land of Canaan. With the king of Sodom the emphasis is upon human strength; it is through the exercise of military power that one comes to possess what belongs to others. The king of Salem, however, gives a very different answer. Abraham's victory is a gift from God (v. 20). By giving a tenth of the booty to Melchizedek Abraham acknowledges the truthfulness of what he has said. Abraham underlines this by refusing to accept anything from the king of Sodom. Thus, the Melchizedek incident is significant for it implies that Abraham will receive the land as a gift from God, and not by using his military muscle.

Several general comments may be made in the light of the preceding discussion. First, by its very nature traditio-historical criticism may give rise to conflicting theories concerning the process by which a text was composed. This underlines the speculative nature of traditio-historical criticism. Second, in the past many scholars have been quick to offer traditio-historical explanations for features in the text which they have been unable to explain by other means. While traditio-historical reconstructions may occasionally appear to solve perceived difficulties within a text, we should always be alert to the possibility that other explanations may yet be forthcoming. As we have observed with regard to Genesis 14:18–20, the synchronic reading proposed by McConville makes excellent sense of the text as it stands, without recourse to a traditio-historical reconstruction.

4. THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS UNDER THREAT

The Documentary Hypothesis has dominated the source criticism of the Pentateuch throughout most of the twentieth century. For many scholars the theory has been so convincing that it is merely assumed and used as the base line for further research on other issues. Some scholars, however, have continued to investigate the literary origins of the Pentateuch and have, as a result, proposed modifications of different kinds, while others have rejected completely the Documentary Hypothesis. We shall now consider these modifications and rejections.

Modifications to the Documentary Hypothesis

Given the complex nature of the Documentary Hypothesis it is hardly surprising that various modifications to it have been proposed during the last hundred years. To a large extent these have arisen out of more detailed investigations of the individual sources and their relationship to one another. Even among those who accept the basic tenets of the Documentary Hypothesis there are many differences of opinion; for example, it is common for scholars to disagree over the assignment of individual verses or passages to a particular source. No attempt shall be made here to explore all these differences. Rather, we shall focus on some of the more significant ways in which some scholars have sought to modify the Documentary Hypothesis.

The J source[95]

Once it was accepted that the Pentateuch was composed of four main sources, and the extent of these sources agreed upon, it was only natural that questions should be asked about the composition of the individual sources. Wellhausen himself drew attention to this question by noting that in the early chapters of Genesis J displayed inconsistencies.[96] This suggested that J was composite in nature, and if this were so, then it ought to be possible to determine the sources underlying it. (Similar

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[95] A fuller survey of the J source is provided by A. de Pury, 'Yahwist ("J") Source', *ABD* 6.1012–20.

[96] *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testament* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1899); first published as 'Die Composition des Hexateuchs', *Jahrbücher für Deutsche Theologie* 21 (1876) 392–450, 531–602; 22 (1877) 407–79.

views were expressed by Wellhausen about E and P.) A variety of studies have focused on the composite nature of J.

In 1883 K. Budde in his *Die Biblische Urgeschichte (Gen. 1–12, 5)*[97] argued that the J material in the early chapters of Genesis consisted of two documents, J^1 and J^2, which were combined by an editor J. Budde's views were extended in 1885 by C. Brunston to include the whole of the Pentateuch.[98] Gunkel also maintained that the J material was composite.[99] He limited his views, however, to the Primeval History[100] and the Abraham narratives. Whereas in the Primeval History J was composed of two documents, J^e and J^j, in the Abraham narratives J consisted of two collections of traditions, J^a and J^b, which originated from the regions of Hebron and Beersheba respectively.[101] On the relationship of these latter two traditions Gunkel held that J^b supplemented J^a.

In 1912 R. Smend, in his *Die Erzählung des Hexateuch auf ihre Quellen untersucht*,[102] gave fuller expression to the view that the Hexateuch contained not one but two J documents, J^1 and J^2, which were the oldest sources used in the compilation of the Hexateuch; he placed the documents in the sequence J^1, J^2, E, D, P. Support for Smend's approach came from O. Eissfeldt who reverted to the idea of two J documents combined by a later editor.[103] Eissfeldt, however, referred to J^1 as the 'Lay source' (*Laienquelle*) which he denoted by the symbol L; as the name suggests this source has little interest in cultic or priestly affairs. Having designated J^1 as L, Eissfeldt was able to label J^2 as J. The position

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[97] Giessen: J. Ricker, 1883.

[98] 'Les deux Jehovistes', *Revue de Theologie et de Philosophie*, 18 (1885) 5–34, 499–528, 602–37.

[99] *Genesis übersetzt und erklärt.*

[100] The term 'Primaeval History' is often used to describe the material in Genesis 1:1 – 11:26.

[101] Skinner, *Genesis*, 240–42, followed the view of Gunkel, but labelled the sources J^h and J^b.

[102] Berlin: G. Reimer, 1912.

[103] *Hexateuch Synopse* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrich, 1922); support came also from W. Eichrodt, *Die Quellen der Genesis von neuem untersucht* (Giessen: A. Topelmann, 1916).

advocated by Eissfeldt was followed by G. Fohrer.[104] However, Fohrer rejected the designation 'Lay source' because he considered the document to have a theology as developed as J or E. Instead he referred to it as the Nomadic source (*Nomadenquelle*) N. Since Fohrer dated it later than J, but earlier than E, the sequence of the sources became J, N, E, D, P. The view that J is not completely homogeneous has also been advocated by R. Kilian.[105] In a detailed investigation of the pre-priestly Abraham traditions Kilian sought to demonstrate that the author of J employed both written and oral sources which he shaped according to his own theological outlook. Other scholars who oppose the concept of a single J source will be considered later in this chapter (see pp. 57-63). Yet, while some scholars discovered sources underlying J, it must be recognised that the majority of scholars continued to view J as a unified source.[106]

Although Wellhausen argued that J was the earliest of the four main sources, he remained somewhat vague regarding the nature and date of J. While he believed that J was an author (*Schriftsteller*), Gunkel, subsequently, proposed that J was merely a collector and editor of existing traditions. It was left to von Rad to propose that J was a theologian of some brilliance who, during the 'golden-age' of Solomon (*c.* 950–930 BC), produced a history of Israel which included the following elements: primaeval history, patriarchal stories, Joseph, Moses, exodus, Sinai, conquest. While von Rad saw J as extending into the book of Joshua, Noth believed that the final part of J was lost when the Tetrateuch ('four-volumes'; *i.e.*, Genesis to Numbers) was linked to the Deuteronomistic History (see pp. 51-53). Although Noth modified aspects of von Rad's approach (see pp. 40-43), he strongly supported a 10th century date for the composition of J. The significance of J as the

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[104] *Überlieferung und Geschichte des Exodus* (Berlin: A. Topelmann, 1964); *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1970).

[105] *Die vorpriesterlichen Abrahamsüberlieferungen* (BBB 24; Bonn: Hanstein, 1966).

[106] Driver, *Introduction*, 116–26, provides a description of the vocabulary, style and grammar of J. For a discussion of the theology of J, see H.W. Wolff, 'The Kerygma of the Yahwist', *Interpretation*, 20 (1966) 131–58; P.F. Ellis, *The Yahwist. The Bible's First Theologian* (London: G. Chapman, 1969); W. Brueggemann and H.W. Wolff, *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975).

earliest biblical writer of importance is developed in a number of recent works.[107]

Since 1970 there has been a sustained attempt to dissociate J from the Solomonic 'enlightenment'. H.H. Schmid suggested that various features pointed to a date for J well after the time of Solomon: various J texts display deuteronomistic ideas; J reflects a time of national crisis, not success.[108] On the basis of a detailed study of the Abraham narrative van Seters also argued that J should be dated later. It is noteworthy, however, that his late J is not completely identical in content to the J source of the Documentary Hypothesis. (Van Seters' approach is discussed more fully on pp. 40-42). According to van Seters, J is to be dated to the exilic period, being post-deuteronomistic, but pre-Priestly. The idea of dating J late is also advocated by M. Rose who argues that J was composed as a 'prologue' to the Deuteronomistic History (Dt.–Ki.).[109] Rose maintains that various J texts show signs of having been composed after the corresponding episodes in the Deuteronomistic History. It must be recognised, however, that these proposals to date J late are not entirely homogeneous. They also require that the Documentary Hypothesis be substantially revised.

The E source

Of the various documents believed to underlie the Pentateuch, the source E has probably received the least attention from scholars. However, various writers have considered in detail the extent and nature of E, and its relationship to J. Prior to 1890 Kuenen had already suggested that E was composite in character.[110] He proposed that E comprised two documents, E^1 and E^2. E^1 originated in the northern

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[107] *Cf.* R. E. Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1987); R. Coote and D. Ord, *The Bible's First History* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989).

[108] *Der sogennante Jahwist: Beobachtungen und Fragen zur Pentateuchforschung* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976).

[109] *Deuteronomist und Jahwist: Untersuchungen zu den Berührungspunkten beider Literaturwerke* (ATANT 67; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981); *cf.* A.D.H. Mayes, *The Story of Israel between Settlement and Exile: A Redactional Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (London: SCM, 1983) 141.

[110] *An Historico-critical Inquiry into the Origin and Composition of the Hexateuch* (London: Macmillan,1886) 248–62.

kingdom during the eighth century BC. A century later E^1 underwent a revision in the southern kingdom and was expanded by the inclusion of new material, E^2. Kuenen's position was subsequently adopted by C.H. Cornill[111] and O. Procksch.[112] Generally, however, scholars have rejected the view that E is composite in character.

In 1930 Sigmund Mowinckel questioned the concept of an independent E document.[113] Instead, he viewed E as supplementing and expanding earlier traditions. Later, in *The Two Sources of the Pre-deuteronomic Primeval History (JE) in Genesis i–xi*,[114] Mowinckel proposed that the pre-P material in Genesis 1–11 was composite, and identified the sources as J and E.[115] Prior to this most scholars had maintained that there was no E material in Genesis before chapter 15. Mowinckel subsequently revised his opinions on the extent of E and suggested that while it was present to a limited extent in the Pentateuch, it was absent from the primaeval history, the Jacob and Joseph stories and Exodus 1–15. [116] Rather than refer to JE, Mowinckel spoke of J^v (J variatus) because he regarded J as having been supplemented by material which had circulated mostly in oral form.

Another major challenge to the existence of an independent E document came from P. Volz and W. Rudolph. In a joint study on Genesis, *Der Elohist als Erzähler: Ein Irrweg der Pentateuchkritik?*[117] Volz and Rudolph questioned the existence of a continuous E document. Examining the first thirty-five chapters of Genesis, Volz concluded that there was a basic J narrative, mainly a collection of earlier traditions, which was subsequently expanded by E and P material. According to Volz, neither E nor P had existed as independent documents, a conclusion supported

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[111] *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (2d ed.; Freiburg: Mohr, 1892).

[112] *Das nordhebräische Sagenbuch. Die Elohimquelle* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1906).

[113] 'Der Ursprung der Bil'amsage', *ZAW* 48 (1930) 233–71.

[114] Oslo: J. Dybwad, 1937.

[115] G. Hölscher, *Die Anfänge der hebräischen Geschichtsschreibung* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1942), followed Mowinckel in suggesting that E occurred in the primaeval history.

[116] 'Erwägung zur Pentateuch Quellenfrage', *Norsk Theologisk Tidssdrift* 65 (1964) 1–138; *cf. Tetrateuch-Pentateuch-Hexateuch* (BZAW 90; Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1964).

[117] BZAW 63; Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1933.

by the lack of substantial narrative material from these sources. Volz also assigned to J sections which had previously been designated E or P, *e.g.*, Genesis 22 and 23. Rudolph, concentrating on the Joseph narrative, concluded that there was no need to posit an independent E document for this part of Genesis. He rejected the criterion of divine names by arguing that whereas the author used Yahweh in narrating the story, his characters used El-Shaddai and Elohim when speaking in Palestine and Egypt respectively. In a subsequent work on the books of Exodus to Joshua, Rudolph again challenged the idea of a continuous independent E document.[118]

More recently the existence of a parallel E source in the Joseph narrative has come under attack from various scholars. R.N. Whybray has argued (a) that the obvious literary qualities of the narrative cannot be adequately explained by supposing that the final account was produced by the conflation of two earlier parallel sources, and (b) that von Rad's dating of the story to the early monarchy excludes the possibility of two sources being combined.[119] This latter argument presupposes an acceptance of von Rad's contention that the Joseph story is an example of wisdom literature, a view not accepted by all scholars.[120]

In his book, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37–50)*, D.B. Redford investigates the Joseph story in considerable detail. Demonstrating the literary qualities of the narrative, he argues, like Whybray, against dividing the account into separate J and E sources. Nevertheless, Redford does discover two sources underlying the present

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[118] *Der 'Elohist' von Exodus bis Josua* (BZAW 68; Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1938).

[119] 'The Joseph Story and Pentateuchal Criticism', *VT* 18 (1968) 522–28. Whybray restricts himself to discussing the position adopted by G. von Rad, 'The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom', in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966); first published as 'Josephsgeschichte und ältere Chokma', *VTS* 3 (1953) 120–27; *cf.* von Rad, *Die Josephsgeschichte* (Biblische Studien 5; Neukirchen: Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1954). Von Rad considered the Joseph narrative, which he termed a 'novel', to be an example of wisdom literature from the period of the early monarchy.

[120] *Cf.* J.L. Crenshaw, 'Method in Determining Wisdom Influence upon "Historical" Literature', *JBL* 88 (1969) 129–42; D.B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37–50)* 100–105; G.W. Coats, 'The Joseph Story and Ancient Wisdom: A Reappraisal', *CBQ* 35 (1973) 285–97. Whereas Crenshaw and Redford reject von Rad's position, Coats favours a wisdom background for Genesis 39–41, which he terms a 'political legend'.

story. He suggests that an original 'Reuben'–version of the Joseph story was subsequently expanded by a 'Judah'-version. However, he rejects emphatically the idea that this 'Judah'–version existed as an independent account paralleling the 'Reuben'–version.

G.W. Coats has also subjected the Joseph story to a thorough investigation in his monograph *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context of the Joseph Story*.[121] Like Redford and Whybray, he questions the traditional source analysis of the story. However, he is much more emphatic than Redford in asserting the unity of the narrative. Redford's suggestion that the story was expanded by a later author is rejected. For Coats, the Joseph story is an 'artistic masterpiece'. On the question of authorship and date Coats remains cautiously undecided, although he does not exclude the possibility that the story was composed by the Yahwist during the time of Solomon.

Another recent objector to the concept of a parallel E narrative source is C. Westermann. In his massive commentary on Genesis,[122] he argues that E never existed as a separate source in the Abraham narrative. Yet, although Westermann rejects the idea of an E document, he accepts that other traditions apart from J and P were incorporated into the final form of the Abraham narrative. Thus, he views Genesis 20:1–18 and 21:22–34 as supplements to the main J narrative.

In spite of a growing body of opinion against viewing E as an independent source paralleling J, various scholars still defend the traditional Documentary Hypothesis understanding of the E source. A.W. Jenks rejects the suggestion that E narratives were produced as 'deliberate corrective supplements to J'.[123] Support for the view that E was once an independent source is offered by R.E. Friedman,[124] who argues (a) that during the process of being combined with J, much of the beginning of E was lost, and (b) some E material in the books of Exodus to Numbers has been wrongly assigned to other sources, especially J.

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[121] CBQM 4; Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976; *cf.* Coats, 'Redactional Unity in Genesis 37–50', *JBL* 93 (1974) 15–21.

[122] *Genesis: A Commentary*, 3 vols. Minneapolis/London: Augsburg/SPCK, 1984–87.

[123] A.W. Jenks, 'Elohist', *ABD* 2.479.

[124] 'Torah (Pentateuch)', *ABD* 4.619; *idem*, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1987).

Consequently, E has mistakenly been perceived as shorter and more fragmentary than J. Friedman concludes that 'E is a well-represented source, originally continuous prior to its being combined with J, and that E and J are approximately equal in quantity of text now preserved in the Pentateuch.'[125]

From this brief survey it is obvious that scholarly opinion is divided over the extent and nature of the E source. While some scholars still maintain the traditional Documentary Hypothesis view of E as a continuous literary source paralleling J, there are a growing number who question the validity of this position.

The D source

In many ways the D source stands apart from J, E, and P. Whereas the latter sources are found running throughout the books of Genesis to Numbers (and possibly also in Joshua according to some early source critics), D is confined largely to the book of Deuteronomy. R.E. Friedman, for example, observes that 'the joining of D with JEP required little more than moving the accounts of the promoting of Joshua and the death of Moses to the end of Deuteronomy.'[126]

While the early proponents of the Documentary Hypothesis suggested that the book of Joshua ought to be considered in conjunction with the Pentateuch, this view was challenged in 1943 by Noth who proposed that the book of Deuteronomy was the first part of a larger literary work, which included the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. This account of Israel's time in Canaan was designated by Noth a 'Deuteronomic History'; subsequent writers have preferred the title 'Deuteronomistic History', retaining the term 'Deuteronomic' for the book of Deuteronomy itself. According to Noth, an exilic author (*i.e.*, the Deuteronomist) took over an already existing law-code (most, but not all, of the book of Deuteronomy) which had been composed in the time of Josiah; here Noth adopts the usual Documentary Hypothesis' dating of the D source. Adding an historical introduction (Dt. 1:1-3:29) to the Deuteronomic law-code, the Deuteronomist created the opening book of his History. Since the Deuteronomistic History concludes with the account of king Jehoiachin's release from prison in 562 BC (2 Ki. 25:27-

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[125] 'Torah (Pentateuch)', *ABD* 4.619.

[126] *Ibid*, *ABD* 4.618.

30), the whole work must have been composed shortly after this date. Noth proposed that this 'History' was originally unconnected to the books of Genesis to Numbers. With the widespread acceptance of Noth's theory of a Deuteronomistic History, it became appropriate to speak of a Tetrateuch, rather than a Pentateuch. As a result, recent research on Deuteronomy has tended to focus mainly on its relationship to the books that come after it, rather than those that come before it.[127]

Noth's idea of a 'historian' who penned the books of Deuteronomy to Kings is taken up by Van Seters. In his study, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical Historical History*,[128] he argues that the Deuteronomistic Historian may be best compared with the Greek historians of the Persian period. Van Seters differs from Noth, however, in two significant ways. First, he believes that the Deuteronomistic Historian did not incorporate earlier compositions into his work, but, with little recourse to existing sources, relied mainly upon his own imagination. Second, he argues that J was composed after the Deuteronomistic History, an idea which has found support from a number of other scholars.[129]

The influence of deuteronomic/deuteronomistic thinking upon the books of Genesis to Numbers has also been argued by Schmid[130] and Rendtorff. Indeed, Rendtorff suggests that the final redaction of the Pentateuch was 'deuteronomically stamped', although he acknowledges that 'criteria for what is "deuteronomic"...have not yet been adequately worked out.'[131] Somewhat similar views have been expressed by T.B.

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[127] For a review of modern approaches to the Deuteronomistic History, see S.L. McKenzie, 'Deuteronomistic History', *ABD* 2:160–68; J.G. McConville, *Grace in the End: A Study of Deuteronomic Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1993); *idem*, 'The Old Testament Historical Books in Modern Scholarship', *Themelios* 22.3 (1997) 3–13.

[128] New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

[129] *Cf.* Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 225; Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 233–37; E.T. Mullen, *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations: A New Approach to the Formation of the Pentateuch* (SBL Semeia Studies; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 317–18. Van Seters develops this further in his books, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992) and *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus–Numbers* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994).

[130] *Der sogennante Jahwist.*

[131] *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*, 197.

Dozeman[132] and W. Johnstone[133] as regards the book of Exodus; both suggest that there is evidence of a major deuteronomistic redaction in Exodus, although they believe, unlike Rendtorff, that this was followed by a further priestly redaction. Deuteronomistic influence in the composition of Exodus is also noted by Blum.[134]

In spite of growing support (a) for finding deuteronomic/deuteronomistic influence in the Tetrateuch, and (b) for dating the compositon of the Tetrateuch after the Deuteronomistic History, the issue is far from settled. Other scholars have noted that many passages in Deuteronomy display clear signs of having been composed in the light of material found elsewhere in Genesis to Numbers. Thus, for example, M. Weinfeld argues that the Deuteronomic version of the Decalogue is based upon that found in Exodus 20, and Deuteronomy 7 presupposes Exodus 23:23–33.[135] Consideration must also be given to the views of those who argue that P must be dated earlier than D (see next section). J. Milgrom, for example, notes that D is often dependent upon P, but P is never dependent upon D.[136]

The P source

The P source has also come under close scrutiny in ways which resemble closely the discussion over the extent and nature of the E source. In 1924 M.R.H. Löhr argued that P never existed as an independent document.[137] Reverting to a type of fragmentary hypothesis, Löhr suggested that Ezra and his companions combined together various collections of narratives

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[132] *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology and Canon in Exodus 19–24* (SBLMS, 37; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 37–86.

[133] *Exodus* (OTG; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 75–86; cf. *idem*, 'Reactivating the Chronicles Analogy in Pentateuchal Studies, with Special Reference to the Sinai Pericope in Exodus', *ZAW* 99 (1987) 16–37; *idem*, 'The Decalogue and the Redaction of the Sinai Pericope in Exodus', *ZAW* 100 (1988) 361–85.

[134] *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (BZAW 189; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990).

[135] *Deuteronomy 1–11* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 242–319, 367; *cf.* R.G. Kratz, 'Der Dekalog im Exodusbuch', *VT* 44 (1994) 205–38.

[136] *Leviticus 1–16* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1991) 9–13.

[137] *Untersuchungen zum Hexateuchproblem: Der Priesterkodex in der Genesis* (BZAW 38; Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1924).

and laws to form the Pentateuch as we now have it. His position found support in the later work of Volz who also denied the existence of a separate P document.[138]

The unity of the P material was discussed in detail by von Rad in his book, *Die Priesterschrift im Hexateuch literarisch untersucht und theologisch gewertet*.[139] Von Rad proposed that P consisted of two parallel narrative strands, P^a and P^b, and an independent work comprising genealogical lists (*Toledothbuch*). Although P^b had a greater interest in priestly affairs than the less complex P^a, both works were sufficiently similar to allow themselves to be easily combined. This view, however, has received little support.

The existence of P as an independent document has also been questioned by I. Engnell.[140] He preferred to consider P as a compiler and editor of the books Genesis to Numbers. Although Noth agreed with Engnell that P ended in Numbers and not in Joshua as some scholars maintained, he accepted the traditional position that P was originally a separate document.[141] For Noth, P was a narrative history into which collections of laws and cultic regulations were later inserted.[142]

Support for Engnell's view that P never existed as an independent document has come from F.M. Cross. In an essay entitled 'The Priestly Work',[143] Cross concludes that, 'the Priestly strata of the Tetrateuch

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[138] *Der Elohist als Erzähler: Ein Irrweg der Pentateuchkritik?*

[139] BWANT IV. 13; Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1934.

[140] *Gamla Testamentet. En traditionshistorisk inledning* (vol. 1; Stockholm: Svenska kyrkans diakonistyreles bokförlag, 1945); *cf.* 'The Pentateuch', in *Critical Essays on the Old Testament* (London: SPCK, 1970) 50–67.

[141] *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1948; ET *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

[142] In Leviticus Noth assigned only chs 8–10 to the original P narrative. He regarded the Holiness Code (chs 17–26) as a later insertion into P. P is also limited to Genesis–Numbers by A Bentzen, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (7th ed.; Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad, 1967) 2.71.

[143] In *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) 293–325.

never existed as an independent narrative document.'[144] He proposes that towards the end of the exile the Epic (JE) tradition was expanded by a Priestly tradent, or possibly a narrow Priestly school, to provide 'the Tetrateuch in its penultimate form'. According to Cross, the lack of substantial P narratives throughout the Tetrateuch casts serious doubts upon the idea that P first circulated as an independent narrative document; what we know of P points to it being merely a revision and expansion of earlier material. R. Rendtorff adopts a similar position, arguing that the P material never formed an independent source, but was employed by a redactor to combine together various traditions.[145]

As regards the legislative material associated with P, it has become widely accepted that Leviticus 17-26 represents a separate source, designated the *Heiligkeitsgesetz* 'Holiness Code' (H).[146] While early critics believed that H was taken over by the Priestly Writer and incorporated into his work, Milgrom and I. Knohl have recently argued that P existed prior to H.[147]

Apart from difficulties over defining the exact nature of P, attention has also focused on the dating of the source. While most scholars have been content to accept a post-exilic date for P, allowing for the possible incorporation of some pre-exilic material, a growing number have attempted to date P considerably earlier. Y. Kaufmann was the first to argue at length in a series of articles and books that P was earlier than D

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[144] 'The Priestly Work', 324.

[145] R. Rendtorff, *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch* (JSOTSS 89; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990).

[146] This title was first proposed by A. Klostermann in 1893 and is now commonly used. For a survey of recent research on the Holiness Code, see the relevant article by H.T.C. Sun in *ABD* 3.254–57.

[147] J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 3–51; *idem*, 'Priestly ("P") Source', *ABD* 5.454–61; I. Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). Note, however, the proposal of Rendtorff ('Two Kinds of P? Some Reflections on the Occasion of the Publishing of Jacob Milgrom's Commentary on Leviticus 1–16', *JSOT* 60 [1993] 75–81) that the cultic material assigned to P should be distinguished from the narrative material normally associated with the same source, and the response of Milgrom ('Response to Rolf Rendtorff', *JSOT* 60 [1993] 83–85).

and not later, as Wellhausen maintained.[148] Substantial support for dating P early has come from A. Hurvitz who has compared in detail the 'instructional' vocabulary of P with that of the exilic book of Ezekiel;[149] differences suggest that P must be dated to the pre-exilic period. In the recent studies of Milgrom and Knohl these observations are developed further; H is dated towards the end of the 8th century BC, with P having been composed no later than 750 BC.[150] The impact of these new developments may be observed in the article by Friedman on 'Torah (Pentateuch)' in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. While in every other respect Friedman follows the Documentary Hypothesis as formulated a century ago, he dates P prior to D.

With all these proposed alterations to the Documentary Hypothesis, we must wait and see what their impact will be upon the scholarly consensus that develops during the next two decades. Alongside these modifications, however, scholars will also have to evaluate other recent developments which challenge strongly the very validity of the Documentary Hypothesis.

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[148] 'Probleme der israelitisch-jüdischen Religionsgeschichte', *ZAW* 48 (1930) 23–43; 51 (1933) 35–47; *twldwt h'mwnh hysr'lyt* (Tel-Aviv, 1937–1957). The first seven volumes of this eight volume work were condensed and translated into English by M. Greenberg in a book entitled *The Religion of Israel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960). Kaufmann's views exercised a considerable influence on subsequent Jewish scholarship; *cf.* S. Sandmel, *The Hebrew Scripture* (New York: Knopf, 1963); M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972). M. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978); *idem*, 'Behind the Scenes of History: Determining the Date of the Priestly Source', *JBL* 100 (1981) 321–333. A late date for P is also rejected by S.R. Külling, *Zur Datierung der "Genesis-P-Stüke"* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1964).

[149] A. Hurvitz 'The Evidence of Language in Dating the Priestly Code', *RB* 81 (1974) 24–56; *idem*, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel* (CahRB 20; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1982); *idem*, 'Dating the Priestly Source in Light of the Historical Study of Biblical Hebrew a Century after Wellhausen', *BZAW* 100 (1988) 88–99. For a recent critique of Hurvitz, see J. Blenkinsopp, 'An Assessment of the Alleged Pre-Exilic Date of the Priestly Material in the Pentateuch', *ZAW* 108 (1996) 495–518; *cf.* M.S. Smith, *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus* (JSOTSS 239; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) 165–71.

[150] See footnote 147.

Alternatives to the Documentary Hypothesis

The past hundred years has also witnessed a variety of studies critical of the Documentary Hypothesis. Initially, many of these originated from scholars, who, as a result of their conservative theological convictions, were hostile to a theory which challenged the long-standing tradition of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.[151] These attacks on the Documentary Hypothesis tended to be ignored or dismissed by the majority of biblical scholars. However, as time has progressed an increasing number of 'main-stream' scholars have joined this chorus of dissent. As a consequence during the last several decades criticism of the Documentary Hypothesis has been taken more seriously. Recent critics cannot all be dismissed as being theologically motivated in their opposition to the Documentary Hypothesis.

Winnett, Wagner, Redford and Van Seters

There have been few sustained attempts to produce an alternative source analysis for the Pentateuch. However, during the past fifty years a small group of North American scholars have proposed a new approach to the composition of the Pentateuch, focusing in particular on the book of Genesis. These scholars are F.V. Winnett, and his students, N.E. Wagner, D.B. Redford and J. van Seters.

In 1949 Winnett suggested that the books of Exodus and Numbers formed one source, the Mosaic Tradition, which was subsequently revised by P.[152] Since this source originated in the Northern Kingdom, Winnett, somewhat reluctantly, designated it J. Instead of four main sources in the Pentateuch he discovered only three: J, D, P. Later, Winnett developed his views on Genesis in an article entitled, 'Re-examining the Foundation'.[153] In this he divided Genesis into three main sections: the primeval history, the patriarchal narratives and the Joseph story. Following an opinion first expressed by J. Morgenstern,[154] he dated the J material of the primeval history to the early post-exilic

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[151] For a brief survey, see Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev*, 17–20.

[152] *The Mosaic Tradition* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1949).

[153] *JBL* 84 (1965) 1–19.

[154] 'The Mythological Background of Psalm 82', *HUCA* 14 (1939) 29–126.

period. In the Abraham cycle Winnett, developing a suggestion of S. Sandmel,[155] argued that the J material was supplemented by E in order to create a more favourable impression of Abraham. Viewed in this light, E could never have existed as an independent, parallel account of the life of Abraham. Winnett then proceeded to question the usual source analysis of the Jacob narrative, and concluded that the evidence in favour of an extensive E version of the story was extremely weak. As for J, Winnett believed that one could detect the use of both early and late material in its composition. To explain this, he suggested that an Abraham–Jacob cultic document (K) underwent two official revisions, the first of these was by E, and the second by 'Late J' who developed significantly the divine promises. In the Joseph story Winnett argued that a basic E story was supplemented by J material. These J additions, however, did not form part of a larger J narrative, but were merely a retelling of part of the E narrative. Winnett linked these J supplements with the J material of the primeval history and the J revision of the patriarchal narratives. However, he believed that the basic E Joseph story differed markedly from the E supplements to the patriarchal narratives, and so must be viewed as having different origins.

Wagner also offered an analysis of the patriarchal narratives along the lines suggested by Winnett.[156] For the Abraham narrative (Gn. 11:26–25:18) he concluded that the material usually assigned to J consisted of a basic J narrative which was later supplemented by a compiler E. This expansion by E occurred during the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Finally, the JE narrative was supplemented by C who developed the theme of divine promises to the patriarch. After considering Genesis 25:19–36:43 Wagner observed that the basic J narrative about Jacob appeared to have an Israelite origin, whereas the primary J material about Abraham came from Judah. He concluded that two J authors were responsible for these differences; J^a (Abraham) and J^j (Jacob). Wagner also maintained that there was no trace of E in Genesis 25:19–36:43. J^j, unlike J^a, was expanded only by C, a Judaean author from the sixth

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[155] 'The Haggada Within Scripture', *JBL* 80 (1961) 105–22. Sandmel rejects the idea of an ancient unified J document.

[156] *A Literary Analysis of Genesis 12–36* (University of Toronto, Ph.D. thesis: Toronto, 1965); cf. *idem*, 'Pentateuchal Criticism: No Clear Future', *Canadian Journal of Theology* 13 (1967) 225–32; *idem*, 'Abraham and David?' in J.W. Wevers and D.B. Redford (eds.) *Studies on the Palestinian World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972) 117–40.

century who was responsible for the pre-P form of Genesis. Finally, about 400 BC P supplemented C's work to produce the present book of Genesis.

Wagner's approach to Genesis 12–36 was extended by Redford, another of Winnett's students, to embrace the Joseph narrative (see p. 52). He cautiously suggested that the final redaction of the Joseph Story (his 'Judah'-version) might be equated with Winnett's 'Late J' or Wagner's source C.

By far the most significant attempt to produce a new source analysis for part of Genesis comes from John van Seters in his book, *Abraham in History and Tradition*. Through an investigation of the relationship between the wife/sister incidents in Genesis 12, 20 and 26, van Seters concludes that there were three important stages in the development of the Abraham cycle. Genesis 12:10–20 originally formed part of a pre-Yahwistic first stage which consisted of three episodes linked by a brief framework.[157] To this was added Genesis 20:1–17; 21:25–26, 28–31a, which Van Seters labels as a pre-Yahwistic second stage and equates with the source E. This material constituted a single unified story, originally following immediately after the account of Abraham's stay in Egypt (12:10–13:1). The third stage in the growth of the Abraham cycle involved the Yahwist (J) who added (a) brief secondary additions to the earlier material,[158] and (b) larger episodic units[159] which 'were skillfully incorporated into the older literary work with some new arrangement of the materials.'[160] The Yahwist's work was later supplemented by the Priestly author (P) who incorporated certain genealogical and chronological material,[161] as well as chapters 17 and 23. Van Seters identifies this as the fourth stage of development. The fifth and final stage in the growth of the Abraham cycle, the post-Priestly stage, occurred when chapter 14 was incorporated into the overall narrative.

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[157] Gen. 12:1,4a, 6a, 7, 10–20; 13:1–2; 16:1–3a, 4–9, 11ab, 12; 13:18; 18:1a, 10–14; 21:2, 6–7; however, all references to Lot were added at a later stage.

[158] Gen. 12:2–3, 6b, 8–9; 16:7b, 10, 11c, 13–14; 20:1a; 21:1.

[159] Gen. 13:3–5, 7–17; ch. 15; 18:1b–9, 15 – 19:38; 21:8–24, 27, 31b–34; ch. 22; ch. 24; 25:1–6,11; (ch. 26).

[160] Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, 313.

[161] 11:26–32; 12:4b–5; 13:6; 16:3b, 15–16; 21:3–5; 25:7–10.

Concerning the dating of these various stages, Van Seters argues that the important Yahwistic stage occurred during the time of the exile. Significantly, van Seters adopts a supplementary approach towards the composition of the Abraham cycle; rather than being composed of continuous parallel documents, it consists of one basic narrative supplemented by later additions.

Van Seters has supported his dating of J to the exilic period in subsequent writing.[162] In general his approach has been to reject the existence of pre-exilic sources while proposing that the Yahwist created the Tetrateuch largely from his own imagination (see p. 55).

Rendtorff and Blum

In 1969 R. Rendtorff drew attention to what he perceived to be an irreconcilable conflict between the Documentary Hypothesis and more recent developments in form criticism and traditio-historical criticism.[163] In particular, he argued that the existence of continuous J or E document in Genesis is excluded by the observation that there are within Genesis larger independent, literary units, such as the Joseph Story, the Jacob–Easu cycle and the Jacob–Laban cycle, that were produced by different 'authors'. More recently Rendtorff has renewed his attack on the Documentary Hypothesis in his book *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*.[164] Building on a number of important observations, Rendtorff contends that the time has now come to abandon the Documentary Hypothesis as the best way of explaining the composition of the Pentateuch. Various factors lead him to this conclusion. First, a survey of the relevant literature reveals that there is considerable disagreement among scholars regarding the precise formulation of the Documentary Hypothesis. What is often assumed to be a scholarly consensus is far from such, and the existence of diverse opinions clearly challenges the validity of the entire theory. Second,

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[162] *E.g., Prologue to History: The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis*, 1992; *The Life of Moses: The Yahwist as Historian in Exodus–Numbers*, 1994.

[163] R. Rendtorff, 'Traditio-Historical Method and the Documentary Hypothesis', *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 5 (1969) 5–11.

[164] JSOTSS 89; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990. Trans. John J. Scullion from *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch* (BZAW 17; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1977); *cf.* 'The "Yahwist" as Theologian? The Dilemma of Pentateuchal Criticism', *JSOT* 3 (1977) 2–10.

traditio-historical investigations of the Pentateuch have suggested that it is composed of a number of larger units which originally existed independently of each other (*e.g.*, the primaeval history; the patriarchal narratives; the account of the exodus from Egypt; the Sinai passage; Israel's stay in the desert; the occupation of the land). Rendtorff believes that it is impossible to reconcile the existence of these larger units with the concept of continuous documents that extend throughout the Pentateuch. Third, it is impossible to reconstruct from the material assigned to the Yahwistic and Priestly writers continuous, coherent documents. Fourth, there are inconsistencies in the use of linguistic criteria to assign material to a particular source. Various words and expressions generally taken to be typical of one source may also occur in passages assigned to one of the other sources. Fifth, it is questionable whether material as disparate in form as, for example, Genesis 12:10–20 ('brief' narrative style), 24:1–67 ('detailed' narrative style) and the Joseph Story ('novellistic' style) could have originated from the same source. Form-critical considerations would suggest that these passages derive from different settings, and, therefore, cannot be the product of a single author. Yet, all three narratives are normally assigned to J. In the light of these differing arguments Rendtorff views the Documentary Hypothesis as untenable.

While rejecting the idea that continuous parallel documents were used to compose the Pentateuch, Rendtorff offers an alternative explanation. Focusing on the divine promises found in Genesis 12–50, he concludes that it is possible to detect the redactional stages by which the patriarchal stories involving Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were united. He argues, for example, that one can discern different redactional phases on the basis of the expressions: 'to you'; 'to you and your descendants'; 'to your descendants'.[165] Yet, although Rendtorff's analysis of the divine promises is very detailed, and his reconstruction of the redactional process closely reasoned, the whole approach rests upon the highly questionable assumption that minor variations within the divine promise speeches reflect different stages of composition. Nowhere, however, does he allow for the possibility that these variations may have arisen due to factors other than editorial reworking. In many instances it is possible that minor differences are little more than stylistic variations of expression, a natural feature of everyday speech. Consequently,

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[165] *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch*, 55–84.

reservations must be expressed about the basis for Rendtorff's reconstruction of the editorial process by which the patriarchal stories were united.

Although Rendtorff's critique of the Documentary Hypothesis is trenchant, especially his arguments against the existence of continuous documents extending throughout the Pentateuch, a word of caution must be expressed. Rendtorff places considerable weight on the traditio-historical observation that the Pentateuch consists of larger units. However, he does not discuss the extent and content of these units; their general existence is assumed rather than proved. Furthermore, the supposition that they were originally independent requires investigation. Not only are some of the units more closely linked than Rendtorff allows, but it is also apparent that later units presuppose in a variety of ways the existence of earlier units (*e.g.*, Exodus 1–14 assumes a knowledge of the events recorded in the concluding chapters of Genesis in order to explain why the Israelites are in Egypt).

Rendtorff's rejection of the existence of J and E is developed further by his student E. Blum in a lengthy study, entitled *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*.[166] Focusing on Genesis 12–50, Blum argues for a process of composition that differs significantly from that proposed under the Documentary Hypothesis. In essence he rejects the existence of parallel sources in favour of a supplementary approach. Starting with material drawn from Genesis 25–33 he uncovers a story about Jacob (*Jakoberzählung;* 25:9–34; 27–33) which focuses on the importance of Bethel as a cultic centre and the theme of reconciliation between brothers. According to Blum, this narrative was composed in the northern kingdom to address the political situation that existed in the time of Jeroboam I following the break-up of the Solomonic kingdom. Sometime later, before the downfall of the northern kingdom, the *Jakoberzählung* was expanded by the addition of the Joseph story to form the *Jakobgeschichte* ('the history of Jacob'; most, but not all, of chs. 25–50), a biography of Jacob from birth to death. Subsequently, this narrative was further expanded by a Judaean author who wished to emphasise the importance of Judah; as a result chapters 34, 38 and 49, as well as 35:21–22a, were added.

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[166] WMANT 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1984.

After the collapse of the northern kingdom, the *Jakobgeschichte* was yet again expanded, this time by adding the Abraham–Lot story (chs. 13, 18–19). This new document, which was centred upon the divine promises found in 13:14–17 and 28:13–15, formed the first patriarchal history or *Vätergeschichte* (Vg^1). A new version of this history (Vg^2) was produced during the Babylonian Exile; built around the divine speeches in 12:1–3; 26:2–3; 31:11, 13 and 46:1–5a, Vg^2 focused on the topics of nationhood, territory and blessing. Other material reflecting a similar outlook was also added at this stage (*i.e.*, 12:6–9, 10–20; 16; 21:8–21; 22; 26).

In the post-exilic period an important redaction occurred at the hands of a Deuteronomistic editor who, apart from adding chapters 15 and 24, linked the patriarchal history to the rest of the Pentateuch. This was then followed by another revision, undertaken by a Priestly writer, which involved, as regards the book of Genesis, the creation of the *tôlĕdot* framework and the inclusion of various other texts (*e.g.*, ch. 17). While links with the Documentary Hypothesis are observable, particularly with the final stages of this process, Blum's reconstruction of the way in which the patriarchal narratives developed represents a major break with past approaches.[167]

To his credit Blum seeks to uncover the process of composition by undertaking a detailed study of the text itself; in so doing he avoids the more speculative type of traditio-historical research undertaken by Martin Noth. His approach, however, like that of Wellhausen, assumes that early and late material can be distinguished with considerable certainty, and this in spite of the material having gone through a number of significant redactional stages. Moreover, it is not clear that sufficient consideration has been given to the plots and themes which link the Genesis narrative together. Finally, regarding the Abraham narrative, Blum relies heavily upon Rendtorff's analysis of the divine promises, which, as we have noted above, rests upon highly questionable premises.[168]

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[167] Blum's observations of the patriarchal history have been extended to include the rest of the Pentateuch in his more recent study, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*.

[168] Regarding this Van Seters rightly observes, 'Rendtorff had concluded (to my mind on dubious grounds) that Gn. 13:14–17 contained the earliest form of the land promise theme. This is what really dictates Blum's choice of the Abraham–Lot stories as the earliest level of the Abraham tradition. Rendtorff's complex scheme of promises development governs the other levels of Blum's composition history as well. But if one cannot accept the arguments for

Whybray

In his book, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study*,[169] R.N. Whybray provides one of the most recent, detailed assessments of the Documentary Hypothesis. Focusing principally on the narrative sections of the Pentateuch, he evaluates (a) the presuppositions underlying the theory (*i.e.*, philosophical and religio-historical; linguistic; literary; cultural), (b) the criteria used to distinguish the different documentary sources (*i.e.*, language and style; repetitions, duplications and contradictions; differences of culture, religion and theology), (c) the application of the criteria, and (d) the rôle of the Redactors.

Among the more telling of Whybray's criticisms of the Documentary Hypothesis may be listed the following: (1) Proponents of the Documentary Hypothesis assume 'a consistency in the avoidance of repetitions and contradictions which is unparalleled in ancient literature (and even in modern fiction), and which ignores the possibility of the deliberate use of such features for aesthetic and literary purposes.'[170] (2) The Documentary Hypothesis often breaks up narratives into different sources, destroying their literary and aesthetic qualities, while at the same time creating texts which lack such qualities. (3) Variations in language and style need not result solely from the existence of different sources. They may arise equally well from 'differences of subject–matter requiring special or distinctive vocabulary, alternations of vocabulary introduced for literary reasons, and unconscious variation of vocabulary.'[171] (4) There is inadequate evidence to support 'the presence *throughout* each of the documents of a single style, purpose and point of view or theology, and of an unbroken narrative thread.'[172]

While many of the shortcomings of the Documentary Hypothesis highlighted by Whybray have already been noted by others, his work is noteworthy for two reasons. First, his rejection of the Documentary

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a multiplicity of levels in the non-priestly promise texts, then the whole scheme may be reconstructed in quite a different way' ('Review of E. Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*', *JBL* 105 [1986] 707).

[169] JSOTSS 53; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987.

[170] *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 130.

[171] *Ibid.*, 130.

[172] *Ibid.*, 130.

Hypothesis is not motivated by an underlying theological conservatism. Indeed, he concludes that the narrative sections of the Pentateuch were probably composed in the sixth-century by a single author who, while drawing upon some recent traditions, relied mainly upon his own imagination.[173] Second, Whybray offers a generally comprehensive assessment of the Documentary Hypothesis. While some issues are dealt with briefly, he demonstrates that the Documentary Hypothesis rests on unacceptable presuppositions, inadequate criteria for distinguishing the different sources, and a method of literary composition for which there is no analogy elsewhere.

Although Whybray's criticism of the Documentary Hypothesis is compelling, he nowhere attempts to demonstrate the literary unity of the Pentateuch by a detailed exposition of the entire text, or even part of it. Thus, while he may have gone some way towards demolishing the idea that the Pentateuch was composed of continuous, parallel documents, his study does not exclude the possibility of either a fragmentary or supplementary explanation for the composition of the Pentateuch.

Conclusion

As we move into a new millennium there can be little doubt that Pentateuchal Criticism is in something of a crisis. The opponents of the Documentary Hypothesis are no longer limited to those of a conservative theological outlook. While some scholars remain committed to the basic concept of the Documentary Hypothesis, others seek to modify it substantially, and still others are willing to approach afresh the whole issue of the composition of the Pentateuch. As Whybray has recently remarked:

> There is at the present moment no consensus whatever about when, why, how, and through whom the Pentateuch reached its present form, and opinions about the dates of compostion of its various parts differ by more than five hundred years.[174]

At this stage there is no telling how Pentateuchal studies will develop. However, until new evidence becomes available from extra-biblical

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[173] Whybray briefly restates this position in his more recent book, *An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

[174] *Ibid.*, 12–13.

sources, it is highly unlikely that scholars will be able to uncover with any certainty the process by which the Pentateuch was created.[175] For the present we can but hope that biblical scholars will learn from the shortcomings of their predecessors, and be more willing to acknowledge the tentative nature of their theories regarding how the Pentateuch came into being.

As regards future developments, the following issues ought to receive consideration.

1. Since the introduction of source criticism in the mid–18th century, the study of the Pentateuch has been dominated by diachronic considerations. As a result, considerable effort has been expended first on trying to explain how the Pentateuch was composed, and then on applying these results to shed new light on the history of Israelite religion. The diachronic methods have had such a bewitching effect that scholars, by and large, have ignored completely a synchronic reading of the text. Indeed, many scholars find it difficult to read the Pentateuch as a unified continuous narrative. Moreover, the impression is strongly given that such a reading is not merely naive, but involves reverting from a two dimensional view of the text to a one dimensional view. However, as we have observed, the diachronic methods are not completely satisfactory, and their hypothetical results possibly provide no better a picture of Israelite history and religion than that available from a synchronic reading of the Pentateuch. The time has come to take more seriously a synchronic approach, especially given recent progress in understanding how biblical narratives are constructed.[176]

2. The issue of historical accuracy must remain open. Recent studies have rightly highlighted the inadequacy of some attempts to support an

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[175] For a discussion of the problems surrounding the source analysis of Gn. 20–22 and Ex. 19–24, see Alexander, *Abraham in the Negev*, and *idem*, 'The Composition of the Sinai Narrative in Exodus xix–xxiv 11', *VT* (forthcoming in 1998).

[176] *Cf. e.g.*, J. Licht, *Storytelling in the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1978); R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1985); D.M. Gunn and D.N. Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: OUP, 1993).

early date for parts of the Pentateuch.[177] While this has had the effect of increasing historical scepticism towards the books of Genesis to Deuteronomy, it ought to be recognised that the dismissal of poor arguments for the historicity of these books does not prove that the Pentateuch records fiction rather than fact. Unfortunately, many scholars have become so acclimatised to dating the Pentateuchal material in the monarchic or post-monarchic periods, that attempts to date it earlier are generally dismissed without being given adequate consideration. Moreover, the nature of the material in Genesis to Deuteronomy makes it highly unlikely that we shall find reports of these events in the relative few contemporary non-biblical documents that have so far been uncovered by archaeologists. For example, the biblical narrative places the patriarchs in approximately the 21st to 19th centuries BC and portrays them as semi-nomadic herdsmen who may have engaged in limited agriculture. After almost four millennia there is little reason to expect that we shall uncover archaeological evidence that relates directly to their existence. In these circumstances, 'absence of evidence is not evidence of absence'. Unfortunately, some scholars exploit for their own reasons either the lack or inadequacy of the very limited evidence that is available. Such an approach is ultimately as defective as that which claims more than the available evidence supports.[178]

3. In spite of the long-standing tradition that the first five books of the Bible belong together, it needs to be recognised that they are intimately connected to the books which follow them. As it stands, Genesis to Kings forms a continuous narrative. This is apparent from both the overall picture provided, and the way in which individual books are linked together. Viewed as a whole, Genesis to Kings records selected events from the creation of the earth to the demise of the Davidic monarchy at the time of the Babylonian exile. Later books in the sequence presuppose that the reader is already familiar with those that have gone before. For example, the introductory verses of Exodus assume a knowledge of the Joseph story. References to the deaths of Moses and Joshua at the very

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[177] *E.g.*, T.L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives* (BZAW 133; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974); J. Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*. See also the series of articles in A.R. Millard and D.J. Wiseman (eds.), *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives* (Leicester: IVP, 1980), and more recently G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* (Dallas: Word, 1994) xx–xxviii.

[178] A very helpful and informative discussion of the whole subject of biblical historiography is provided by V.P. Long, *The Art of Biblical History* (Leicester: Apollos, 1994).

start of the books of Joshua and Judges respectively serve the purpose of linking these books with those immediately preceding.[179] Whatever the prior oral and/or literary history of the books of Genesis to Kings it is obvious that they have been deliberately linked together to form a continuous narrative. On the basis of content and language, we may with reasonable confidence assume that this material was brought together to form this continuous narrative shortly after 562 BC, the date of Jehoiachin's release from prison in Babylon (2 Kings 25:27–30).[180] Given the unity of Genesis to Kings, the composition of the Pentateuch must be discussed in conjunction with that of the books of Joshua to Kings.[181]

If the books of Genesis to Kings were produced as a literary unity in the 6th century BC, this naturally raises the issue of the sources used in their composition. Since extra-biblical evidence sheds practically no direct light on this issue, we are forced to address it from within the biblical text itself. Unfortunately, as we have observed concerning the Documentary Hypothesis, the task of recovering the sources underlying the Pentateuch is highly problematic. There are, nevertheless, specific statements that suggest the existence of different literary sources, many of which are directly associated with Moses.[182] Although this evidence has been generally discounted as insignificant by proponents of the Documentary Hypothesis, the time has surely come for scholars to reconsider it afresh, freed from the shackles of unwarranted presuppositions.

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[179] This short list of examples is far from exhaustive.

[180] For a recent defence of this dating based on linguistic considerations, see A. Hurvitz, 'The Historical Quest for "Ancient Israel" and the linguistic evidence of the Hebrew Bible: Some Methodological Observations', *VT* 47 (1997) 301–15.

[181] *Cf.* J.G. McConville, 'The Old Testament Historical Books in Modern Scholarship', *Themelios* 22 (1997) 3–13; *cf.* C. Westermann, *Die Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments: gab es ein deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk?* (Theologische Bücherei 87 AT; Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 1994). Westermann argues that there was a pre-Deuteronomistic narrative extending from Exodus to Kings which associated the beginning of the nation's history with the exodus from Egypt.

[182] *E.g.*, Gn. 5:1; Ex. 24:4, 7; 32:32–33; Nu. 21:14; 33:2; Dt. 31:9, 22, 24, 26; *cf.* Jos. 1:8; 8:31–32. For a helpful, evangelical critique of the issue of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, see G.Ch. Aalders, *A Short Introduction to the Pentateuch* (London: Tyndale Press, 1949).

5. WHY WAS THE PENTATEUCH COMPOSED?

While scholars have expended considerable energy in seeking to determine the origins of the Pentateuch, it has to be acknowledged that they have tended to ignore the question, why was the Pentateuch composed? Yet, this is as important, if not more so, than the issue of how the Pentateuch came into being. The 'why' question is also likely to be of greater interest to those who seek to read the Pentateuch from a theological perspective. What follows is a *tentative* step towards addressing this issue.

As we have observed, the Pentateuch cannot be easily separated from the books of Joshua to Kings. While Noth's theory of a Deuteronomistic History is not without problems, it highlights the close links that exist between the book of Deuteronomy and those books that come after it. Unfortunately, OT scholars tend not to read and comment on the books of Genesis to Kings as a unified narrative; attention is usually given to either the Tetrateuch/Pentateuch or the Deuteronomistic History. Those who do comment on Genesis to Kings as a whole are inclined to describe it as a record of the history of the people of Israel. This is implied by R. N. Whybray who remarks that the Pentateuch is 'a history of the origins of the people of Israel, prefaced by an account of the origins of the world', which may have been intended as a 'supplement (*i.e.* a prologue) to the work of the Deuteronomistic Historian, which dealt with the more recent period of the national history.'[183] According to C. Houtman, Genesis to Kings 'presents itself as a description of Israel's history from the perspective of its calling and its continual unfaithfulness.'[184] E.T. Mullen has recently proposed that the Tetrateuch was composed as a prologue to the Deuteronomistic History in order to provide 'a narrative foundation for the reformulation and maintenance of "Israelite" ethnic and national identity in the Second Temple period.'[185]

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[183] Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch*, 242.

[184] C. Houtman, 'The Pentateuch', in A.S. van der Woude (ed.), *The World of the Old Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) 200.

[185] *Ethnic Myths and Pentateuchal Foundations*, 327.

At first sight the idea that the books of Genesis to Kings were brought together to provide an account of Israel's history seems to be the obvious explanation for their redactional unity. Beginning in Genesis we trace the growth of Israel from the initial call of Abraham through to the establishment of his descendants as a nation in the land of Canaan. Years of struggle and frustration eventually give way to a time of stability and splendour during the reigns of David and Solomon. Thereafter, the nation's history is marked by decline, leading eventually to the overthrow of the kingdom of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians.

Central to the development of the theme of nationhood in Genesis to Kings are the divine promises announced to Abraham (strictly speaking Abram) in Genesis 12:1–3. These play a major role in linking together the books of Genesis to Kings by setting the agenda for most of what follows. Summoning Abraham to leave his family and homeland, the Lord promises, 'I will make you into a great nation' (Gn. 12:2). Several chapters later this promise of nationhood is developed more fully and confirmed by a covenant which focuses on two areas: numerous descendants (Gn. 15:1–6) and land (Gn. 15:7–21).

The divine promise of land is renewed with Abraham's immediate descendants, Isaac and Jacob (*cf.* Gn. 26:3; 28:13; 35:12; *cf.* 28:4; 48:4; 50:24). In Exodus God's promise of land to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is mentioned on various occasions (2:24; 6:4, 5; 13:11; 32:13; 33:1; *cf.* Lev. 26:42; Dt. 34:4), and there are several allusions to the covenant of Genesis 15 (Ex. 3:8,17; 13:5; 23:23; 33:2; in these passages the peoples of Gn. 15:19–21 are named; *cf.* Dt. 1:7; 7:1; 20:17). In the light of the specific references to slavery and release in Genesis 15:13–14, it is hardly surprising that this covenant features prominently in Exodus. Indeed, God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt is directly linked in Exodus 2:24 to his covenant with Abraham. Later, after the Israelites are punished for making the golden calf, the renewal of the Sinai covenant is once again based on the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob concerning land (*cf.* Ex. 32:13). Preparations for taking possession of the land are prominent in the book of Numbers. Occupation is delayed, however, through the unbelief and rebellion of the people. Nevertheless, after the death of all the adult Israelites who left Egypt, apart from Joshua and Caleb, the imminent fulfilment of the promise of land is anticipated in the later chapters of Numbers and the book of Deuteronomy. The books of Joshua, Judges and Samuel, up to the reigns of David and Solomon, record the gradual completion of this process.

The promise of land and its fulfilment clearly plays an important role in the books of Genesis to Samuel. The same is true as regards the promise of descendants, the other aspect of becoming a great nation. A recurring theme in the patriarchal narratives is God's role in overcoming the barrenness of the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel (Gn. 21:1; 25:21; 30:22–24). In the opening chapter of Exodus the remarkable increase of the Israelites causes resentment in Egypt and leads to the repressive policy of the Pharaoh (Ex. 1:6–10). Later, as the Israelites prepare to enter the land of Canaan, Moses acknowledges that the promise of Genesis 15:5 has been fulfilled: "The LORD your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as many as the stars of the sky" (Dt. 1:10; *cf.* Dt. 10:22; 28:62; Ne. 9:23). While the topic of population growth is less prominent in the books of Joshua to Kings, it is specifically noted that during the reign of Solomon "the people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore" (1 Ki. 4:20; *cf.* 2 Sa. 17:11).

Whereas the books of Genesis to Samuel describe the gradual fulfilment of the divine promise of nationhood to Abraham, Kings charts the reversal of this progress. Beginning with Solomon the narrative describes how the failure of both monarchy and people leads to the loss of territory and the deportation of many citizens. Of significance is the fact that these later events are anticipated even before the Israelites enter the promised land (*cf.* Dt. 28:64–68; 30:1,4). However, there are indications that the loss of land and population is not the final chapter in God's dealings with Israel (*cf.* Dt. 30:1–5; 1 Ki. 8:46–51).

This brief survey reveals that the theme of nationhood plays a major role in linking together the books of Genesis to Kings. While in no way wishing to diminish the importance of this theme, it is paralleled by another concept which is as important, if not more so, for understanding the redactional unity of the books of Genesis to Kings. This parallel theme concerns a king through whom the nations of the earth will be blessed.

While scholars have long recognised the importance of the promise of nationhood in Genesis, they have failed, by and large, to observe that Genesis also focuses on a divinely promised royal 'seed'. This failure results, in part at least, from a general tendency to neglect the final form of Genesis in favour of source and form critical approaches. When, however, Genesis is viewed as a literary unity, there can be little doubt that it is especially interested in pointing towards the coming of a unique

king. Viewed against this background, the theme of kingship in the books of Exodus to Kings takes on a new dimension.

Although the promise of nationhood (*i.e.*, land and descendants) is a central feature of the patriarchal narratives in Genesis, it is not the only promise highlighted. The Lord says to Abraham:

> Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you, so that I may make you into a great nation and bless you and make your name great. Be a blessing, so that I may bless those who bless you, and curse the one who disdains you, and so that all the families of the ground may be blessed through you (Gn. 12:1–3; my translation).

This statement falls naturally into two halves, each introduced by an imperative. Whereas the first part focuses primarily on the promise of nationhood, the second centres chiefly on the blessing of others. The entire speech comes to a climax in the statement: 'so that all the families of the ground may be blessed through you.' The promise that Abraham will become a 'great nation' is probably best understood as part of God's plan to bless all the families of the ground.[186] Thus, the primary motive behind the call of Abraham is God's intention to bless, rather than curse, humanity. By commanding him to leave his homeland and be a blessing, God places the onus on Abraham to obey in order that the promises concerning nationhood and blessing may be fulfilled.

As we have already observed, the fulfilment of the promise of nationhood is later guaranteed through the divine covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 15. A further covenant is introduced in Genesis 17.[187] Most commentators, unfortunately, focus on the sign of the covenant, circumcision, without noting that the essence of this covenant

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[186] On the importance of the promise of blessing, see V.P. Hamilton, 'Genesis: Theology of', *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 4:667.

[187] While the covenant of ch. 15 focuses primarily on nationhood (land and descendants), the covenant in ch. 17 highlights Abraham's special status as regards the nations. Unfortunately, biblical scholars have tended to blur the differences between these two covenants, some viewing them as parallel accounts of the same covenant, preserved in different sources. For a fuller discussion of the Abraham narrative, see T.D. Alexander, 'Abraham Re-assessed Theologically: The Abraham Narrative and the New Testament Understanding of Justification by Faith', in R.S. Hess, P.E. Satterthwaite, G.J. Wenham (eds.) *He Swore an Oath*, 7–28.

lies in the promise that Abraham will be the 'father of many nations' (17:4–5). Since this promise is later associated with Sarah–'she will be the mother of nations' (17:16) – it is unlikely that it includes the nations descended from Abraham through his relationships with Hagar (*cf.* 17:20) and Keturah (25:1–4). The OT, however, is remarkably silent concerning the idea that Abraham would be the biological ancestor of different nations. In the light of this, we should observe that the Hebrew word *ãb* 'father' is sometimes 'used of a variety of social roles that carried authority or exercised a protective or caring function. It could be used of a prophet (2 Ki. 6:21), priest (Jdg. 18:19), king (1 Sa. 24:11), or governor (Is. 22:20–21).'[188] By taking *ãb* in this non-biological sense, we may understand Genesis 17:4–5 as stating that Abraham will be the 'father of many nations' not because these nations are his physical descendants but because he will be for them a channel of divine blessing.[189] As N.M. Sarna observes, the phrase 'father of many nations' 'has a more universal application in that a large segment of humanity looks upon Abraham as its spiritual father.'[190] This non-biological understanding of *ãb* 'father' is supported by the fact that Abraham is instructed to circumcise those who are not his offspring; this includes those born in his 'household or bought with money from a foreigner' (Gn. 17:12–13). This suggests that circumcision, and the covenant associated with it, was never intended to be a sign of racial purity. Later in Genesis the men of Shechem undergo circumcision in order to establish a bond of kinship with Abraham's descendants (Gn. 34:14–17). This makes their subsequent slaughter by Simeon and Levi all the more reprehensible.

Although all the male members of Abraham's household are circumcised, including Ishmael, the Lord emphasises that the covenant will be established with Isaac, and him alone; Ishmael is specifically

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[188] C.J.H. Wright, *ãb*, *NIDOTTE*, 1:219.

[189] This understanding of 'father' is probably reflected in the unusual comment that Joseph 'was father to Pharaoh' (45:8). Furthermore, when God blesses Jacob in 35:11, echoing an earlier blessing by Isaac upon Jacob (28:3), a distinction is drawn between 'a nation' and 'a community of nations' coming from him. The implication would seem to be that whereas many nations will be closely associated with him, only one nation will be directly descended from him.

[190] N.M. Sarna, *Genesis* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989) 124.

excluded in spite of being circumcised.[191] This introduces an important distinction between those who may enjoy the benefits of this covenant and those through whom the covenant will be established. Whereas the former includes all who are circumcised, the latter appears to be restricted to a single line of descendants. On this we shall have more to say below.

The Abraham narrative moves towards an important climax in Genesis 22. After testing Abraham's obedience by demanding that he sacrifice his much loved son Isaac, the episode concludes with a divine oath (Gn. 22:16–18). This speech corresponds closely with the initial divine speech in Genesis 12:1–3, framing the main section of the Abraham narrative. This oath possibly also marks the ratification of the covenant announced in Genesis 17.[192] As it stands the Lord's proclamation to Abraham falls into two distinctive parts; whereas the first half affirms that Abraham's 'seed' will become very numerous, the second half asserts that Abraham's 'seed' will defeat his enemies and mediate blessing to the nations of the earth. While each half of the oath refers to 'seed', syntactical considerations strongly suggest that in the second half, in contrast to the first, the term 'seed' denotes a single descendant of Abraham.[193] In other words, God swears that the nations will be blessed through one of Abraham's descendants rather than through all of them collectively. Moreover, this individual will be victorious over his enemies.

This emphasis upon a single descendant takes on special significance when viewed against the whole of Genesis. Several distinctive literary features reveal that the book of Genesis traces the development of a unique line of 'seed' beginning with Adam and ending with Jacob/Israel

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[191] *Cf.* Gn. 21:12. A similar pattern may be observed concerning Esau and Jacob. The covenant is established with Jacob, but not Esau. The importance of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as successive recipients of the divine promises is reflected in the way they are mentioned together in later passages.

[192] *Cf.* T.D. Alexander, 'Genesis 22 and the Covenant of Circumcision,' *JSOT* 25 (1983) 17–22.

[193] *Cf.* T.D. Alexander, 'Further Observations on the Term "Seed" in Genesis', *TB* 48 (1997) 363–67; this builds on J. Collins, 'A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman's Seed Singular or Plural?' *TB* 48 (1997) 139–48.

and his twelve sons.[194] One of these features is the *tôledot* formula ('These are the generations of ...')[195] which, in part, functions like the lens on a zoom-camera by focusing attention on a single individual and his immediate descendants. Used in conjunction with the linear genealogies found in Genesis 5 and 11, the *tôledot* formulae enable the Genesis narrative to follow the progress on a unique family line which includes Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Linked to the *tôledot* formulae in terms of purpose is the Hebrew word *zera'* 'seed' which is a keyword in Genesis; it occurs throughout Genesis 59 times compared to 170 times in the rest of the OT. Genesis draws attention to the existence of a distinctive line of 'seed' which begins with Seth, the third son born to Adam and Eve (*cf.* Gn. 4:25), and concludes with Perez, the son born as a result of Judah's extraordinary relationship with Tamar (Gn. 38:27–29).[196] Throughout Genesis, and especially in the patriarchal narratives, special care is taken to establish the identity of the one through whom this line of seed shall be traced; occasionally this results in the first-born son being passed over in favour of a younger sibling.[197]

When due attention is given to the *tôledot* formulae and the keyword *zera'*, it becomes evident that the book of Genesis in its final form anticipates the coming of a royal saviour through whom God's blessing will be mediated to all the nations of the earth. The existence of such an individual is first intimated in Genesis 3:14–15 when the Lord God comments to the serpent:

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[194] *Cf.* T.D. Alexander, 'From Adam to Judah: The Significance of the Family Tree in Genesis', *EQ* 61 (1989) 5–19; *idem* 'Genealogies, Seed and the Compositional Unity of Genesis', *TB* 44 (1993) 255–70.

[195] Gn. 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2.

[196] The significance of Perez as the one through whom the line of 'seed' will be continued is marked by several features. By interrupting the account of Joseph's life, priority is given to the birth of Perez and his twin brother Zerah. Morever, the special attention given to the motif of 'seed' in 38:8–9, and the subsequent account of Tamar's extraordinary actions in order to secure the continuation of the line of 'seed' suggests that the birth of Perez is significant. This is possibly also indicated by the manner in which Perez 'breaks out' of his mother's womb prior to his twin brother Zerah.

[197] Seth takes priority over Cain (Gn. 5:3), Isaac over Ishmael (Gn. 21:12); Jacob over Esau (Gn. 27:36).

> Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel. (NIV translation, altered slightly.)

Although modern trends in OT scholarship have led many writers to reject the idea that the 'seed of the woman' refers to an individual, the case for such an interpretation remains strong,[198] especially if one takes into account Collin's recent observations on the syntax of Genesis 3:15.[199] While Genesis 3:15 does not explicitly state that this individual will be of royal status, W. Wifall notes interesting links with various expressions found in 'royal' Psalms, and these he takes as indicating a Davidic or royal background to Genesis 3:15.[200]

The linear genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11 trace the 'seed of the woman' to Abraham, through whom God promises to bless all the families of the ground (Gn. 12:1–3). This same promise probably underlies the covenant of circumcision and the idea that Abraham will be the 'father of many nations'. Although this covenant is made first with Abraham, it is clearly orientated towards the future, and the Lord states that it will be established with Abraham's 'seed' 'for the generations to come' (Gn. 17:7); the establishment of this covenant is linked specifically to Isaac. Later, as we have already observed, the Lord swears an oath to Abraham, presumably in Isaac's presence, that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through his 'seed' (Gn. 22:18). The fulfilment of this

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[198] *Cf.* T.D. Alexander, 'Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis', in P.E. Satterthwaite, R.S. Hess and G.J. Wenham (eds.) *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts* (Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Baker/Paternoster, 1995) 27–32.

[199] J. Collins, 'A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15)'.

[200] According to W. Wifall, 'David is addressed as God's "anointed" or "messiah" (Ps 89:21, 39; 2 Sam 22:51) whose "seed" will endure forever under God's favour (Ps 89:5, 30, 37). As Yahweh has crushed the ancient serpent "Rahab" (Ps 89:11), so now David and his sons will crush their enemies in the dust beneath their feet (Ps 89:24; 2 Sam 22:37–43)... In Ps 72:9, the foes of the Davidic king are described as 'bowing down before him' and 'licking the dust.' In the familiar 'messianic' Psalms, God is described as having placed 'all things under his feet' (Ps 8:6) and will make 'your enemies your footstool' (Ps 110:1)' ('Gen. 3:15 – A Protevangelium?' *CBQ* 36 [1974] 363).

divine oath, which is unique within the Pentateuch, also lies in the future.

The Abraham narrative clearly builds on the divine promise given in Genesis 3:15 regarding the 'seed of the woman' overcoming the 'seed of the serpent'. The motif of blessing which is very prominent in Genesis 12:1–3 stands in marked contrast to that of cursing which dominates the divine judgements announced in Genesis 3. In addition, the 'royal' nature of the line of seed becomes more explicit within the Abraham story. At the outset this is reflected in the promise that Abraham's name will 'become great'.[201] Although he is nowhere designated a king, Abraham is presented in various episodes as enjoying a status similar to that of contemporary monarchs (Gn. 14:1–24; 21:22–34; 23:6). Furthermore, it is significant that the Lord promises Abraham that 'kings will come from you' (Gn. 17:6; *cf.* 17:16).

The theme of royalty is less evident in Genesis 25–36. Isaac, like his father Abraham, enters into a covenant with Abimelech, king of Gerar (Gn. 26:26–31). Upon his return from Paddan Aram, Jacob receives the divine promise that 'kings will come from your body' (Gn. 35:11). The existence of a future monarchy in Israel is also suggested by the brief comment in Genesis 36:31, 'These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned.'

In marked contrast, kingship is important in the account of Joseph's life, being the dominant motif in the two dreams which he experiences (Gn. 37:5–11). Although his brothers, filled with jealousy and hatred, remark, 'Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?' Joseph's father 'kept the matter in mind'. In spite of the brothers' attempt to rid themselves of Joseph, he later emerges from an Egyptian prison to become second only to Pharaoh in authority over the kingdom of Egypt (Gn. 41:39–43). Ironically, when some years later Joseph's older brothers travel to Egypt, the narrative records how they bow before him with their faces to the ground (Gn. 42:6). In due course, however, Joseph reveals his identity to them, and remarks how God has made him 'father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt' (Gn. 45:8; *cf.* 45:9, 26).[202]

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[201] *Cf.* G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (Waco: Word, 1987), 275–6; V.P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) 372–3.

[202] Joseph's description of his position in Egypt appears to be overly stated.

Although the account of Joseph's life dominates Genesis 37–50, when in old age Jacob gathers his sons around him to tell them what will happen in days to come (*cf.* Gn. 49:1), it is noteworthy that kingship is associated with the descendants of Judah (*cf.* Gn. 49:8–12), and not Joseph (*cf.* Gn. 49:22–26). While the poetic language of Genesis 49 makes it possible for differing interpretations to be placed upon Jacob's remarks, viewed against the book of Genesis as a whole these verses clearly point to a powerful future ruler to whom the nations will submit in obedience.[203] In the light of this the earlier description of the birth of Judah's son, Perez, takes on added significance, for this is clearly the continuation of the line of seed through whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed.[204]

The account of the Israelites' divine deliverance from bondage in Egypt and their journey towards the promised land dominates the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy. While the theme of kingship surfaces only rarely in these books (*e.g.*, Nu. 24:17–19; Dt. 17:14–20), it becomes much more prominent in Joshua and Judges. These books anticipate the establishment of a monarchy in Israel by focusing on the divine provision of spirit-empowered deliverers. Although those appointed by God as leaders fulfil many of the tasks of a king, they are prohibited from creating royal dynasties, as highlighted in the story of Gideon's son, Abimelech (Jdg. 9:1–57). The picture in Judges of ever increasing moral and spiritual decline comes to a climax in the final four chapters of the book. Significantly, these are framed by the refrain, 'in those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit' (Jdg. 17:6, 21:25; *cf.* 18:1; 19:1).

The books of Samuel describe the appointment of Saul as the first king of Israel. However, due to his own shortcomings he is soon replaced by David, the youngest son of Jesse, a descendant of Judah.[205] When David is eventually enthroned as king over all Israel, he established Jerusalem as his capital, and transports to there the ark of the covenant. This event

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[203] *Cf.* Alexander, 'Messianic Ideology in the Book of Genesis', 32–37. In passing, we should also observe that the reign of this destined king will be marked by a time of abundant fruitfulness, a sign of divine blessing.

[204] The continuation of the line of 'seed' is a dominant theme in Genesis 38.

[205] The significance of David's ancestry for the fulfilment of the divine promises announced in Genesis is highlighted in the book of Ruth; *cf.* E.H. Merrill, 'The Book of Ruth: Narration and Shared Themes', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142 (1985) 130–39.

symbolises David's commitment to serving the Lord. The Lord then makes a covenant with David in which he promises to establish David's dynasty for ever (2 Sa. 7). While David succeeds in delivering the Israelites from their enemies, his reign is marred by his failure on various occasions to obey God. The reign of David's son Solomon provides an interesting picture of the kind of rule which God intends to establish through the promised 'seed' of Abraham. Unfortunately, Solomon fails to remain loyal to the Lord and the kingdom is partitioned following his death, with the house of David keeping control over only the region of Judah. Throughout the book of Kings God's promise to establish David's dynasty for ever stands in tension with his warning that he will punish the disobedience of David's descendants. Eventually, Kings records the destruction of the Jerusalem temple and the removal of king Jehoiachin to Babylon. While this marks the end of the Davidic dynasty's rule over Jerusalem, the final episode in the book of Kings focuses on the release of Jehoiachin from prison, an event that possibly anticipates better times to come.

The preceding survey reveals, if somewhat sketchily, that the books of Genesis to 2 Kings focus as much upon the divine promise of a royal saviour as they do upon nationhood.[206] Yet, in spite of its importance, the pledge of a royal saviour remains unfulfilled by the end of Kings. In saying this, however, some progress towards fulfilment occurs as the line of 'seed' introduced in Genesis is traced through to the creation of the Davidic dynasty (*cf.* Gn. 38:1–30; Ruth 4:18–22). Furthermore, following the establishment of David as king over Israel, God makes a covenant with him confirming that through his royal line the nations of the earth will be blessed (2 Sa. 7:5–16; 1 Ch. 17:4–14).[207] As the book of Kings reveals, however, the cumulative disobedience of David's descendants appears to thwart the fulfilment of God's promise to bless the nations. There are, nevertheless, strong indications in Kings that the

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[206] Although the promises of nationhood and royal saviour are distinctive, it would be a mistake to divorce them from each other.

[207] For a fuller discussion of the Davidic covenant and in particular the expression "and this is the law of mankind" (2 Sa. 7:19), see McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985) 21–35. O.P. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980) 33–34, notes that the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem is linked by David to the covenant promised to Abraham (1 Ch. 16:15–18). Further links between David and Abraham are discussed by R.E. Clements, *Abraham and David* (London: SCM, 1967).

removal of the house of David from the throne in Jerusalem is not the end of the story. Although God punishes with complete justification the sins of David's descendants, the hope remains that there will yet be a 'son of David' through whom the nations will experience God's favour.

Since the books of Genesis to Kings, as a coherent narrative, cannot have existed prior to the exilic period, the events of the exile may well have been catalytic in bringing these books together into a continuous account. This does not automatically mean, however, that the tradition of a divinely-promised royal saviour originated after 587 BC. The eighth century prophets were already familiar with this idea; we see it reflected, for example, in the final chapter of Amos and in Isaiah 7–11. From a different perspective, it is worth observing that it would require an author of exceptional genius and religious optimism to compose these books *ab initio* after the demise of the Davidic monarchy and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.

Viewed from this perspective the books of Genesis to Kings take on a new dimension in terms of their importance for understanding the development of messianic ideology within the OT. For the Christian this is important in the light of NT claims that the coming of Jesus Christ fulfils what is written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms (*e.g.* Lk. 24:44; *cf.* Mt. 5:17; Lk. 24:27). Although human curiosity will undoubtedly prompt scholars to ask, how was the Pentateuch composed? it is vitally important that we should not lose sight of the question, why was the Pentateuch composed? While the 'how' question is never likely to be answered with complete certainty, the 'why' question directs us to the one who is the source of all true knowledge.[208]

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[208] I am deeply indebted to James McKeown, David Palmer and Paul Williamson for reading an early draft of this booklet and offering constructive criticisms concerning it. Naturally, they cannot be held responsible for any shortcomings that remain.

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