

The Documentary Hypothesis

Dr. Alan Branch

Herbert M. Wolf (1938 – 2002), long-time professor of Old Testament at Wheaton, correctly summarizes the current state of affairs concerning OT authorship when he says, “Most scholars do not believe that Moses wrote much of the Pentateuch, and many would argue that he wrote none of it.”¹ I want to give a detailed, accurate description of the Documentary Hypothesis so both the pastor and church member will be aware of it and have discernment when reading scholarly literature concerning the origins of the OT. Though quite widely accepted, I reject the Documentary Hypothesis and explain in these notes why I think “that dawg won’t hunt!” The Documentary Hypothesis is based on speculation and simply is not true.

Thomas Paine (1737 – 1809) was a deist with little regard for Christianity or the Bible. In *The Age of Reason* (1793 – 1794), he said the following concerning the authorship of Genesis:

Take away from Genesis the belief that Moses was the author, on which only the strange believe that it is the word of God has stood, and there remains nothing of Genesis but an anonymous book of stories, fables, and traditionary or invented absurdities, or of downright lies. The story of Eve and the serpent, and of Noah and his ark, drops to a level with the Arabian tales, without the merit of being entertaining; and the account of men living to 8 and 900 years, becomes as fabulous as the immortality of the giants of the mythology.²

Paine spent a great deal of time discrediting Mosaic authorship. He connects rejection of Mosaic authorship with rejection of Biblical authority. We can see that the issue of the authorship of the Pentateuch is not a minor one. Some well-meaning Christians have said, “Well, it doesn’t matter where Genesis came from or how we got it!” Actually, it matters a great deal because, as Old Testament professor Duane Garrett notes, the Documentary Hypothesis is fundamentally incompatible with belief in even a minimal historical core of the Pentateuch. Garrett says, “If the hypothesis is true, then the Pentateuch is essentially fiction.

¹ Herbert Wolf, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 70.

² Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason* (New York: G. N. Devries, 1827), 84.

Worse than that, it ³is a confused, self-contradictory fiction with no unified theological message.”⁴

Among Evangelicals and Southern Baptists, the term “Documentary Hypothesis” is often used as a synonym for “higher criticism” or “the Historical-Critical Method.” It is more accurate to say that the Historical-Critical Method is the major category and the Documentary Hypothesis is a subset. Historical Criticism refers to an approach to studying the Bible – both the OT and the NT – that means not simply the scientific investigation of biblical documents but a method that assumes from the start the critic’s right to pass judgment on the truth claims of the Bible. Thus, to interpret the Bible via the Historical-Critical method means almost by definition to acknowledge that it contradictions, thus the presupposition that the Bible is not totally reliable is one of the central operating principles of the system. The Documentary Hypothesis is a prime example of the Historical-Critical Method at work.

I. Precursors to the Documentary Hypothesis

The documentary hypothesis didn’t emerge “ex nihilo” in the mid-1800s. The Age of the Enlightenment is the origin of the Documentary Hypothesis, but even prior to that era other people in antiquity questioned Mosaic authorship.

A. People Who Questioned Mosaic Authorship in Antiquity

1. 2 Esdras (Ezra)

The apocryphal book 2 Esdras was the source of some early theories that the Pentateuch was edited and finished long after the time of Moses.

2 Esdras (or Second Esdras) is a Jewish Apocalyptic book which is composite in nature. It is included in the Apocrypha, though the Ethiopian Orthodox Church considered it Scripture. While precise dating of the book is difficult, many scholars believe the bulk of the book was written by a Jewish author late in the First Century AD. Chapters 1 & 2 appear to be written by a Christian with most scholars suggesting that the first two chapters were added to the original work sometime between the middle of the second century AD to the

³ Walter C. Kaiser and Moisés Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 236.

⁴ Duane Garrett, “The Undead Hypothesis: Why the Documentary Hypothesis is the *Frankenstein* of Biblical Studies,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5.3 (Fall 2001): 29.

third century AD (circa 150 - 250 AD?). The book was written in Hebrew, but the only extant copies are preserved in Latin. The most common theory about Second Esdras is that the author is trying to offer consolation to Jewish people following the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 AD.

In the book of 2 Esdras, Ezra is commanded by God to write copies of what apparently is the Law or the Old Testament (it's hard to tell for certain). So, God instructs Ezra to make copies of the law (See 2 Esdras 14:19 – 26). 2 Esdras 14:21 – 22 are important for our discussion, for here this non-Biblical work claims Ezra talks to God and says, “For thy law has been burned, and so no one knows the things which have been done or will be done by thee. If then I have found favor before thee, send the Holy Spirit into me, and I will write everything that has happened in the world from the beginning, the things which were written in thy law, that men may be able to find the path, and that those who wish to live in the last days may live

What does this quote from 2 Esdras have to do with issues regarding the source and authorship of the Pentateuch? Jerome (347 – 420) was a Biblical scholar and the driving force behind the Latin Vulgate. He was also somewhat weird: He did not take baths since he believed Jesus had already cleansed him! Anyway, this legend from 2 Esdras may have influenced Jerome because he suggested that at least the final form of the Pentateuch came from Ezra's time. In this way, even the great translator Jerome prepared the way for others to think Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch.

2. Valentinus – Gnostic

Valentinus (circa 100 - 160 AD) was a Gnostic teacher whose came from Alexandria to Rome. Typical of other Gnostic systems, Valentinus believed a “demiurge” was the god of the Old Testament and was not the same God of the New Testament. Based on his Gnostic cosmology, Valentinus denied the authenticity of certain portions of the law and prophets, especially those portions that disagreed with his system!

3. Ibn Hazam – Muslim

Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Sa‘īd ibn Hazm (994 – 1064, mercifully Ibn Hazam for short!) was a Muslim scholar based on Cordova, Spain (remember, at one point the Muslims ruled Spain). Ibn Hazam is the fiercest and probably most significant Muslim critic of the reliability of the Bible. One of his

accusations is that the biblical Ezra is responsible for corrupting the Old Testament text. Paradoxically, while the majority of Muslim writings tended to praise Ezra, criticism of him predates the rise of Islam, and the use of the motif of Ezra as corrupter is a fascinating story of borrowings and adaptations between and within different faith communities and traditions. Ibn Hazam apparently got the idea that Ezra is to blame for a corrupted Old Testament from the 2 Esdras story mentioned above. The highly exalted role for Ezra indirectly becomes the basis for Ibn Hazam's charge that Ezra created a new Torah when the original was lost during the Israelites' Babylonian Exile.

At this point, students should be aware of the general approach that Muslims have towards the Old and New Testaments. Muhammad claimed that in their original forms, both the Old and New Testaments taught the same things he was teaching. Since a detailed study of the Old and New Testaments clearly shows a very different story and theology than Muhammad's, Muhammad's answer was that both the texts of the Old and New Testaments had been hopelessly corrupted and, therefore, everybody should read the Qur'an since it came straight from Allah via Muhammad in an uncorrupted form.

E. J. Young summarizes Ibn Hazam's influence and says: "Ibn Hazam of Cordoba, Spain, in defending Islam as the true faith sought to show that the Bible was not the word of God. He complained of [about] the anthropomorphic representations of God, and maintained the Bible taught polytheism. Further, he thought that he found erroneous statements and errors in chronology, and he attributed the authorship of many statements in the Pentateuch to Ezra."⁵

B. Thomas Hobbes

Hobbes (1588 – 1679) was an English philosopher. Concerning his religion, he was either a "proto-Deist" or a thoroughgoing materialist depending on the person critiquing him. Hobbes' major work was titled *Leviathan* (1651). A great deal of the *Leviathan* addresses Scripture and Hobbes appears to have a dim view of miracles. Hobbes defended the view that Moses wrote selected sections of the Pentateuch attributed to him but he also argued that most of the Pentateuch was written long after Moses.

⁵ E. J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964; reprint 1989), 116.

C. Benedict Spinoza

Benedict Spinoza (1632 – 1677) was a Dutch, Jewish philosopher who advocated various pantheistic ideas. His philosophy “denied supernatural occurrences as well as orthodox beliefs based on biblical revelation.”⁶ His most famous work was *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670). In this work, he argued that Moses could not have been the author of the Pentateuch since Moses is referred to in the third person *he* as opposed to the first person *I*. Furthermore, Spinoza argued that Moses could not have recorded his own death. According to Gleason Archer, “Spinoza therefore proposed Ezra as the final composer of the Torah. Although this suggestion was largely ignored in his own generation, it constituted a remarkable anticipation of the final formulation of the Documentary Hypothesis by Graf, Kuenen, and Wellhausen in the latter half of the nineteenth century.”⁷

D. Richard Simon

Richard Simon (1638 – 1712) was a French, Catholic priest. In 1682, he published *Histoire Critique Du Vieux Testament (Critical History of the Old Testament)*. He claimed the stories of creation in Genesis 1 & 2 contradicted each other (a claim often repeated today). He also asserted the use of “God” (Elohim) in Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 indicated some difference with Genesis 2:4 –3:24 which uses “LORD God” (Yahweh Elohim). Then, Simon asserted even more difference with the simple title “LORD” in Genesis 4:1ff.

E. Jean Astruc

Jean Astruc (1684-1766) was a noted French physician and medical innovator who helped initiate a critical approach to OT authorship. His father was a Protestant minister who converted to Catholicism. Astruc published his *Conjectures About the Original Memoirs Which it Appears Moses Used to Compose the Book of Genesis* (mercifully referred to simply as *Conjectures*) in 1753. Astruc published the book anonymously at the time to avoid criticism and it is the only book on theology he ever wrote. He noted that while Genesis 1 referred to God as *Elohim*, Genesis 2 used the name *Jehovah* (Yahweh). Thus, he concluded that these represented two different sources combined by Moses or a later editor. Astruc distinguished between two main documents: A, in which God

⁶ R. J. VanderMolen, “Spinoza, Benedict de,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed., Walter A. Elwell, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 1133.

⁷ Gleason Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, revised (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 89.

was called Elohim, and B, in which God was called Yahweh. He also suggested ten other fragmentary sources in Genesis. According to Astruc, Moses had arranged all these sources in four separate and parallel columns, and it was only later scribes who fused these four columns into one, giving us our Genesis.⁸ Most literature today points to Astruc as the grandfather of the Documentary Hypothesis.

F. Johann G. Eichhorn (1753 – 1827)

Johann Eichhorn was German Protestant theologian who was a professor at Jena from 1775 – 1788 and a professor at Göttingen from 1788 – 1827. Among many works, his most famous was *Introduction to the Old Testament (Einleitung in das Alte Testament)* (5 vols., 1780–1783). Basically, Eichhorn applied Astruc’s approach to Genesis to the entire Pentateuch. Much like Astruc, Eichhorn divided Genesis and the first two chapters of Exodus into the “J” (Jahwist) and “E” (Elohist) sources. He discussed the possibility of finding sources behind Leviticus as well. He argued that there are two different flood stories that have been combined into one inconsistent narrative. These two “flood” sources supposedly correspond to the J and E sources. Wolf says, “At first Eichhorn asserted that Moses was the one who edited these sources, but the later editions of this *Introduction* ruled out Mosaic involvement.”⁹ Students need to remember that in German, “Yahweh” is spelled “Jahweh,” thus the “J” source.

G. Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780 – 1849)

Wilhelm de Wette was a German theologian who expanded on the nascent idea of “J” and “E” sources and suggested an additional “D” source for Deuteronomy. So, now the theory was “JED.”

H. Hermann Hupfeld (1796 – 1866)

In 1853, the German scholar Hermann Hupfeld published *Die Quellen der Genesis (The Sources of Genesis)*. Gleason Archer refers to Hupfeld’s work as a sort of “Copernican Revolution” for the Documentary Hypothesis. He divided the E source into E1 and E2. What he called “E1” roughly corresponds with what later scholarship would call the “priestly” source or “P” and his “E2” source is now simply called “E”. For Hupfeld, E1/P was the *grundschrift* (“basic document”).

⁸ Much of this summary of Astruc is from Eamonn O’Doherty, “The Conjectures of Jean Astruc, 1753,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 15 (July 1953): 300 – 304.

⁹ Wolf, *The Pentateuch*, 73.

The correct order of the documents for Hupfeld was PEJD. Hupfeld's four source theory would be refined and modified by Julius Wellhausen.

II. Philosophical Influences Preparing the Way

In addition to people who were critical of the text of the Pentateuch, some important philosophical ideas in the 1800s also served as the foundation for the Documentary Hypothesis.

A. Georg Hegel (1770 – 1831)

Hegel proposed what is now known as “the Hegelian Dialectic”: The theory posits a logical progression of thought from “thesis, antithesis, to synthesis.” In many ways, Hegel was proposing a philosophy of history which claimed history moved *dialectically*.¹⁰ For Hegel, each thesis was opposed to a contradictory antithesis and resulted in a synthesis.

In many ways, the Hegelian dialectic is a rejection of the law of non-contradiction. Moral absolutes also disappear in Hegelian systems of thought. Wolf summarizes how Hegel applied his dialectic to religion: “According to Hegel the development of religion was a three stage process: (1) a natural phase [thesis], in which God and nature are in some way equated; (2) a phase in which God was considered to be personal spirit [antithesis]; (3) a phase in which God is regarded as infinite spirit.”¹¹ Hegel's dialectical view of history and religion was then applied specifically to the history of Israel. It was suggested a “settled” agrarian mentality was set in opposition to the nomadic pastoral life. Likewise, the priestly argument for the importance of ritual was seen as opposed to the antithesis of the prophetic call for justice and mercy to all.¹² As we will see, the Hegelian dialectic was applied to the History of Israel as well.

B. Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882)

Charles Darwin published *Origin of Species* in 1859 with later revisions: He argued forcefully that all things in nature are the result of random time and chance combined with fortuitous changes at important points. Everything is the result of evolution:

¹⁰ The word “dialectic” can mean the art or practice of arriving at the truth by the exchange of logical arguments.

¹¹ Wolf, *The Pentateuch*, 75.

¹² Walter Kaiser, Jr., *The Old Testament Documents: Are They Reliable Relevant?* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2001), 54.

Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely, the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is a grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved.¹³

The Three Big Ideas in the *Origin of Species* are:

1. Species are not immutable. Species appeared through a process of descent with modification.
2. This evolutionary process can be extended to account for all or nearly all the diversity of life because all living beings have a common ancestor, perhaps a microscopic ancestor.
3. This vast process was guided by natural selection.¹⁴

Darwin borrowed Malthus' economic theories and applied them to biology. Darwin said:

The struggle for existence amongst all organic beings throughout the world, which inevitably follows from the high geometrical ratio of their increase, will be considered. This is the doctrine of **Malthus**, applied to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms. As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive; and as, consequently, there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be naturally selected.¹⁵

As we will see, Darwin's evolutionary ideas were quickly applied to Old Testament studies: Just as plants and animals evolved from primitive to more complex forms, so to the OT evolved from primitive animism to an ethical monotheism.

¹³ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (New York: A Mentor Book / New American Library, 1958; 1859), 450.

¹⁴ This summary of *Origin of Species* is from Phillip Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 15-16.

¹⁵ Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*, 29.

C. Hegel, Darwin and the Documentary Hypothesis

1. Wilhelm Vatke, Hegel, and The Documentary Hypothesis

Johann Karl Wilhelm Vatke (1806 – 1882) applied the Hegelian dialectic to the Old Testament. Wolf explains: “Vatke arranged the biblical materials to fit this scheme: (1) judges and early monarchy (thesis); (2) the prophets and later monarchy (antithesis); (3) the post-exilic period (synthesis). The Pentateuch came under stage 3, when Israel’s legislation was formally institutionalized.”¹⁶

2. Darwin and the Documentary Hypothesis

Darwin’s evolutionary theory took the academic world by storm soon after his *Origin of Species* was published in 1859. In Germany, academics began to apply evolutionary ideas to the history of Israel. Basically, the argument was that Israel’s religion evolved from a primitive animism to a more sophisticated ethical monotheism. As a side note, some Old Testament scholars argue that many aspects of Israel’s religion were borrowed from Zoroastrianism which Israel encountered during the Babylonian exile.

III. Graf and Wellhausen

Throughout the early 1800’s, lots of German theologians danced around with various ideas concerning rejecting Mosaic authorship of the Old Testament. These various ideas were crystallized together by Graf and Wellhausen. Many of Wellhausen and Graf’s conclusions about the structure and origin of the OT, which rocked the religious world around 1870, were not new, but represented more of a refinement of what had already been said. In order to respond to the hypothesis, it is necessary to define it clearly. Dr. Branch recognizes that with all the Ds, Es, Ps flying around, a student may feel he or she needs a scorecard to keep things straight! So, just remember that four “sources” for the Pentateuch had been identified prior to Graf and Wellhausen:

- J: “Yahwist” (Remember, “Yahweh” starts with a “J” in German.)
- E: “Elohist” for *Elohim*
- P: “Priestly” Source
- D: “Deuteronomist” Source

¹⁶ Wolf, *The Pentateuch*, 75.

A. Karl Graf (1815 – 1869)

Graf was a professor of French and Hebrew. His major work was *Die geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (1866). Graf had studied under a teacher named Eduard Reuss (1804 – 1891). From 1830 – 1870, ideas concerning the sources behind the Pentateuch were being debated, revised, and argued among Old Testament scholars in Germany. Most German theologians seemed convinced that several sources lay behind the Pentateuch and that editors had pulled all these different sources into unified narrative. Ideas were flying back and forth and the situation was very fluid. This can make it difficult to follow the development of Graf's thought. Here's what you need to know: Graf's ideas changed throughout his life concerning how many sources are supposedly in the Pentateuch and which of these sources is the oldest.

Reuss believed that the "Elohists" (E) document was the latest rather than the earliest of the sources for the Pentateuch. Remember, up to around 1860, most liberal German scholars were suggesting three sources for the Pentateuch – J, E, and D. Following the lead of Hupfeld and others, Graf said that actually "E" represented two sources – "E1" and "E2." The content of "E1" contained Levitical laws and was dated to the time of Ezra (circa 450 BC). "E2" was thought to be some older material in Genesis. The main thing you need to remember is that the hypothetical "E1" soon became known as "P" for "Priestly" material. We saw this earlier with Hupfeld.

Most of the scholars initially believed that E1/P was older than J. Graf believed this initially. Influenced by others, Graf changed his views later in life and suggested the chronological order of the sources (with requisite editors hither and yond) was not P, E, J, D. Rather, Graf reversed things and argued the order was either E, J, D, P or J, E, D, P.

B. Julius Wellhausen (1844 – 1918)

Wellhausen believed the Pentateuch was not the history of ancient Israel, but was really the starting point for Judaism, defined as "the religious communion which survived the destruction of the nation by the Assyrians and the Chaldeans."¹⁷

¹⁷ Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies, trans., 18. www.reznikov.us/ebooks/Judaica/Prolegomena.

1. View Stated

Julius Wellhausen did the most to refine and popularize the Documentary Hypothesis which had been developing in academia for over 100 years. Earlier, I mentioned the influence of Hegel and Darwin on the Documentary Hypothesis. Wolf summarizes the way Hegelian and Darwinian concepts affected Wellhausen and says, “Hegel’s dialectic approach went hand in hand with Charles Darwin’s evolutionary model set forth in his *The Origin of Species*. Buoyed by the popularity of Darwin, Wellhausen’s view that Israel’s religion developed from a naturalistic animism to an advanced monotheism met with almost immediate acceptance.”¹⁸ Specifically, Wellhausen claimed the Pentateuch as we now know it does not originate with Moses, but was only publically accepted as authoritative at the time of Ezra’s reformation somewhere near 450 BC.

Wellhausen summarized his views in two major books: *The Composition of the Hexateuch* (German, *Die Composition des Hexateuch*, 1876 – 1877) and *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (German, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israel*). Of these two, *Prolegomena* has been far more influential and was first published in 1878 with a revised edition in 1882. A final fifth edition was released in 1899. *Prolegomena* was translated into English in 1885.

According to Wellhausen, the early parts of the Pentateuch consisted of the J and E documents.

The J document was written around 850 BC by someone in Judah who emphasized biography as well as ethical and religious concerns.

E came from the northern kingdom of Israel and was dated around 750 BC. According to Wellhausen, E had a “northern” provenance because it emphasized Bethel and Shechem (both in the Northern Kingdom – Gen. 28:17; 31:13; 33:19). E also emphasized the narrative about Joseph and the tribes that are his ancestors – Ephraim and Manasseh.

J & E were combined by a redactor / editor (R J-E) around 650 BC. Remember the influence of evolution mentioned above? For Wellhausen, J & E represented simple, naturalistic religion. Modern scholarship usually says the material of **J** and **E** has now been combined into what is generally termed the **JE epic narratives**. This is an acknowledgement on the one hand that it is mere speculation to try to subdivide the text any further, and on the other hand that this material remains distinctive from other Pentateuchal material.

¹⁸ Wolf, *The Pentateuch*, 77.

D was the book of the law discovered in the temple during the reign of Josiah. According to Wellhausen, Hilkiah the priest was probably the author of D. D emphasized centralized worship and may have been written in response to the wicked reign of Manasseh. E. J. Young summarizes the relationship between Josiah and the D document in Wellhausen's thought: "Before the Deuteronomic reform, sacrifices were offered at all places in the land; there was no central sanctuary. To show that this plurality of sanctuaries existed, Wellhausen appealed to Exodus 20:24 – 26. This state of affairs, however, was brought to an end by the Deuteronomic reform under Josiah (622 BC)."¹⁹ The D source purportedly represented an evolutionary step forward because it reflected the prophetic religion and a more developed ethical consciousness.

J/E was put together with D by another redactor (R D -- redactors were everywhere in Israel in those days!) to form a document hypothesized as JED.

The last document was P (previously known as E1). P was claimed to be post-exilic and was dated to sometime around Ezra (450 BC). Ezra was considered the main compiler of P, especially the legal and ceremonial material. However, the "holiness code" (Leviticus 17 – 26) containing ethical laws was attributed to Ezekiel (thus it dates from the exile). Genealogies, origins, sacrifices, and a description of the tabernacle were all part of P. So, P was another evolutionary step with external ceremonial rites.

With the assistance of another mysterious redactor (RP -- the land was full of redactors back then!), the P document was combined with the other three sources – JED – to form a continuous narrative. A few editorial changes were made between 400 – 200 BC and – bam!—you have the Pentateuch.

Note: Wellhausen argued for a "Hexateuch," with Joshua included and said: "The five books of Moses and the book of Joshua constitute one whole, the conquest of the Promised Land rather than the death of Moses forming the true conclusion of the patriarchal history, the exodus, and the wandering in the wilderness. From a literary point of view, accordingly, it is more accurate to speak of the Hexateuch than of the Pentateuch."²⁰

¹⁹ E. J. Young, *Introduction*, 137.

²⁰ Julius Wellhausen, 23.

A note of explanation on the word “redactor”: Wellhausen pictured redactors who were not merely compilers but who freely shaped, reshaped and in some cases authored materials.²¹

The Documentary Hypothesis is often referred to as “higher criticism”: Critical study of biblical texts to ascertain their literary origins and history and the meaning and intention of the authors.

2. Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis Summarized

a. Summary

The “Graf-Wellhausen Documentary Hypothesis” is a theory describing the origins of the Pentateuch and rejecting Mosaic authorship. Having many antecedents, it was articulated best by K. H. Graff (1866) and Julius Wellhausen (1876-1884); thus it bears their name. Adding to the existing hypothesis, the newer hypothesis argued that written documents, which were combined and revised over several centuries from varying historical and theological points of view, could be precisely dated and placed in an evolutionary sequence. A J (Yahwist) document (ca. 850 B.C.) and an E (Elohist) document (ca. 750 B.C.) were thought to be combined by a redactor (RJE) around 650 B.C. The Deuteronomistic Code (621 B.C., called D) was added by a later redactor (RD) around 550 B.C. The Priestly Code (ca. 450 B.C.), which was added by a redactor (RP) around 400 B.C. completed the process. The hypothesis has been under almost constant revision since its creation, scholars being unable to reach agreement on one particular sequence for development.²²

b. The Evolution of Religion according to the Documentary Hypothesis

Again, the Documentary hypothesis represents an evolutionary view of religion. The hypothesis is patterned after secular evolutionary theories which were sweeping academia at that time. Remember, from their perspective, the law is more intricate and complicated than the Hebrew prophets.

So, the Biblical Chronology is: Law first; Prophets later.

Evolutionary Theories of life: Simple first; Complex later

²¹ B.T. Arnold, “Pentateuchal Criticism, History of,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, Alexander and Baker, eds. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 635.

²² I borrowed and slightly modified this paragraph from the notes of Dr. Randall C. Bailey.

So, the JEDP Chronology assumes: Prophets (more simple) first; Law (more complicated), comes later. Many scholars will argue that much of the Pentateuch is simply the prophetic worldview placed in narrative form.

C. Purported Characteristics of the Proposed Sources

I do not affirm the documentary hypothesis, but in what follows I will try to summarize what the theory asserts about the various sources. Again, I'm attempting to present the argument from the perspective of its advocates. I will offer my response later.

1. "J"

The "Yahwist" source: remember that the name *Yahweh* begins with a "J" in German.

"J" is considered the oldest source (950-900 BC?).

"J" begins at Genesis 2:4b and includes large portions of Genesis as well as portions of Exodus and Numbers along with small parts of Deuteronomy.

Purportedly written in Judah and dated to the period of the early monarchy (Solomon?).

Prefers the narrative style and stories.

Frequently uses puns.

Uses the name "Sinai" for God's mountain.

Calls the indigenous people "Canaanites."

In J, anthropomorphic terms are used for God.

2. "E"

"E" refers to the Elohist source. It is somewhat later than J, but follows basically the same story line.

The theory claims Genesis 15 is the first extant E text.

“E” was purportedly written in the Northern Kingdom, during the reigns of Omri and Ahab (850 BC?).

E is more sensitive to moral issues than J, but it views God as being more distant from mankind: He speaks in dreams.

Prefers a narrative styles and uses stories as warnings (thus the supposed moral concern).

E uses the term Horeb as the name for God’s mountain.

Calls the indigenous peoples Amorites.

Stresses the prophetic.

Note: When J & E were joined by a redactor (RJE), much of E was lost to history.

3. “D”

Essentially consists of the book of Deuteronomy.

D was written at the time of Josiah’s reformation (circa 650 – 625 BC). Thus, Deuteronomy is a kind of a pious fraud to justify Josiah’s reformation.²³

D does not have a characteristic divine name, but uses both Elohim and Yahweh. (Some will argue D sees God as Yahweh – remember, there are lots of variations!)

Emphasis on the whole land of Israel.

Stresses fidelity to Jerusalem and the centrality of the Jerusalem temple.

Prefers long homiletic speeches.

“D” stresses Moses and Mosaic obedience.

Emphasizes ethical themes.

Has many “fixed” phrases (standard terms).

²³ Garrett, “The Undead Hypothesis,” 30.

Uses military imagery.

At some point after 586/86 BC, a Redactor (RD) joined JE and D.

4. "P"

"P" refers to the priestly source. P begins at Genesis 1:1 and goes through 2:4a. The "seven days" of Genesis 1 are tied to priestly regulations. P includes large portions of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, and all of Leviticus.

P represents the triumph of the postexilic priesthood and it attempts to justify their form of worship and codify their religion.²⁴ There are various opinions concerning the date of P. Typically P is dated after 539 BC (date the return from exile started). Some other folks want to date P to during the exile and they'll say it was written or began to be written "550 BC." (Remember, lots of variation!) But a common theory for the date of "P", and one suggested by early advocates of the Documentary hypothesis, is that the Priestly Code originates from sometime around 450 BC and was added to a previously existing JED document by a redactor (RP) around 400 B.C., thus completing the process of giving us our Pentateuch.

Lots of scholars claim P never circulated as an independent source, but the information was redacted directly into a previously existing JED document. But as Garrett notes, there are others who see J, E, D, and P as all being independent works at one time or another. Remember, the theory has lots of variations. Pentateuchal criticism serves as a good opportunity for creative writing!

Sometime after the exile, P was redacted by the anonymous "RP" redactor into JEDP. Dates vary, but perhaps 450 - 400 BC? The redactor is sometimes connected with Ezra.

In P, God is Elohim.

P emphasizes religious rituals (scholars use the word "cult") and procedures and sacrificial laws.

Focuses on Judah and the covenant.

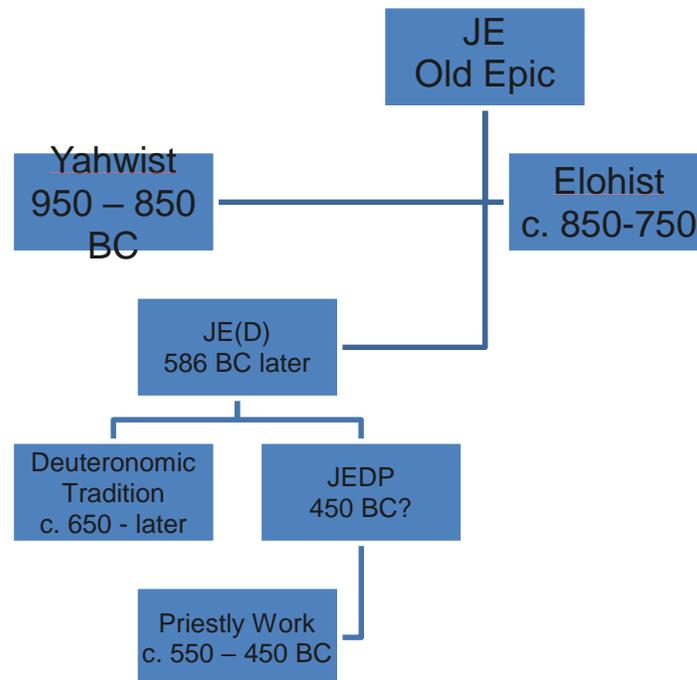
²⁴ Garrett, "The Undead Hypothesis," 30. Remember, the exile can be dated from 586 BC when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem.

Style is generally lists and schemata.

Genealogies and laws.

Main focus is on the types of sacrifices.

Majestic speech about God.



IV. Variants Ad Infinitum

Critical scholarship affirms the general trajectory of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis while disagreeing in the details. Yet, it is the Graf-Wellhausen JEDP outline that is still repeated today. Here are some variations, and these are just a few. There are lots of them.

A. Martin Noth and “Tetrateuch”

Martin Noth (1902 – 1968) created the term “Tetrateuch” which means “four books.” By this, he meant that Deuteronomy was originally composed as a theological forward to the “Deuteronomistic History,” consisting of Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings. He claimed all these books, including Deuteronomy, were written by a single author working in the late Seventh Century BC (625 BC?). We will address this more when we get to the Historical books. But

here is the big point for now: Noth saw Genesis – Numbers as a unit or “Tetrateuch.” He saw Deuteronomy – 2 Kings as another unit.

B. Gerhard von Rad and “Hexateuch”

Gerhard von Rad (1901 – 1971) was a German Lutheran pastor and Old Testament scholar. He suggested that Genesis – Joshua should be seen as one unit, the six books forming a “hexateuch.” Von Rad concluded that Deuteronomy reflected a fusion between two independent traditions, the exodus-conquest traditions and the Sinai event. That fusion of traditions became the basis for collecting together and organizing the earlier traditions into a series of creedal confessions about God. The Deuteronomy traditions became the basis to edit (redact) the earlier traditions into a coherent narrative that he termed *Heilsgeschichte*, "salvation history" or "the history of redemption." (You have got to love the Germans for inventing words!) In other words, von Rad saw Deuteronomy as the climax and heart of the Pentateuch with Joshua as part of the ongoing narrative of the exodus-conquest complex. Judges, on the other hand, belonged to a later body of material with a different purpose, and so was not included in the confessional schema of *Heilsgeschichte*.

C. Otto Eissfeldt and “L”

Otto Eissfeldt (1887 – 1973) was a German Old Testament scholar. Eissfeldt postulated instead of Wellhausen's oldest Hexateuch source, J, two originally independent sources, J¹ and J², or “L” (Lay source) and J, and also the continuation of the Hexateuch sources beyond Joshua. According to Eissfeldt, the “L” source focused on issues of importance to “lay” people (not the priests). To make things even more fun, this purported “L” source sometimes gets called the “N” source, the “N” standing for “nomadic.”

D. Julius Morgenstern and “K”

Julius Morgenstern suggested the existence of a “Kenite” source which was centrally concerned with the life of Moses.

E. R. H. Pfeiffer and “S”

R. H. Pfeiffer claimed to find a “Southern” or “Seir” source which he identified as a source for Genesis.

F. The Holiness Code

I made some reference to this earlier, but you will sometimes encounter OT scholars who claim that Leviticus 17 – 27 (or 17 – 26 depending on the author!) is a separate source known as the “holiness code.” They will identify this source as “H,” expanding JEDP by one more source. Others will call it a subset of “P.” Generally, “H” is considered to be a previously existing document incorporated into “P.” Remember, the Documentary Hypothesis says P was a post-exilic document.

Summary

I could go on. What you will discover is that each new generation of scholars wants to find a source they can say they “discovered”! You can hear the cries from scholars, “Please oh please don’t let the quest end with Graf and Wellhausen! I’m a liberal scholar and I want to say something original too!” So, you get to plow through books where someone in an office at a dying mainline seminary writes an article discussing “J1 versus J2” or “E1, E2, and E3.” It really never does end and at some point the whole theory dies the death of a thousand cuts! More polite and scholarly than myself, Block says, “The bewildering varieties of theories fosters little confidence in critical scholarship.”²⁵ The debate over the purported author(s), dating, provenance, or motivation for any given book (or section) of the Old Testament has only grown more disarrayed and contested among scholars. At present, liberal scholarly opinion concerning the Old Testament is so divided over what the OT is, who wrote it, and why, that it has become increasingly difficult for liberal scholars to make any meaningful claims about it.

Since I am an ethics professor, I will make a brief observation concerning how acceptance of the Documentary Hypothesis influences one’s hermeneutics related to ethics in the Torah. A great deal of the Torah is legal material related to ethics. Since Documentary Hypothesis sees the Torah as a composite document assembled and modified over time, the assumption is that it contains *various* legal codes as opposed to a unified legal code. For example, scholars frequently compare and contrast the Decalogue (Exodus 20:1 – 17; Deuteronomy 5:6 – 21), the Covenant Code (Exodus 20:22 – 23:19), the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17 – 26), and the Deuteronomic Code (Deuteronomy 4:44 – 28:46). Each code is assumed

²⁵ Daniel L. Block, “Pentateuch,” in *The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1271.

to represent the ethics of a particular period of Israel's history and development. Allen Verhey reflects such a stance when he says:

The later collections sometimes revised earlier legislation. It was evidently not the case that the whole law was given at once as a timeless code. Rather, the lawmakers displayed both fidelity to the earlier legal traditions and creativity with them as they responded both to new situations and to God.²⁶

Such a stance weakens the moral imperative and force of the Torah by suggesting contradictions exist within the legal code as opposed to searching for resolutions to the issues at hand.

V. Purported Evidence for the Documentary Hypothesis

In the following notes, I will summarize the reasons why liberal scholars affirm the documentary hypothesis. Many of these items also serve as criteria by which source critics attempt to identify different sources.

A. Different Uses of the Divine Name

Source critics assert that the names "Yahweh" and "Elohim" represent different sources with competing theologies. The critics claim that even though these names often occur without any discernible reason for using a particular name, a number of chapters, or sections of chapters, especially in Genesis, use exclusively or predominately one name or the other and a correlation can be seen between the name chosen and the theological concepts and literary characteristics of the passages.

B. Narrative and Legal Material

In the Pentateuch, narrative material is interspersed with blocks of legal material. Source critics claim this is because someone spliced the two together.

C. Doublets

Source critics point out that there are several stories that appear to be similar. They then claim this represents the use of two different sources. In fact,

²⁶ Allen Verhey, "Ethics in Scripture," in *The Old Testament and Ethics*, Joel B. Green and Jacqueline E. Lapsley, eds. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 2.

this is one of the most common reasons for support of the Documentary Hypothesis. Some purported doublets are:

Two Decalogues, Ex. 20 & Dt. 5

Abraham risks Sarah 2x, calling her his sister in both Gen. 12.10-16 & 20: 1 – 7.

Beersheba marks a covenant 2x (21.22-31; 26.26-33)

D. Comments, editorial or other, suggesting later era

Gen. 36.31, "These were the kings who reigned in Edom before any Israelite king reigned".

Deuteronomy 3.13-14 ("so that to this day Bashan is called Havvoth Jair")

Deuteronomy 34.6 ("to this day no one knows where his grave is").

E. Ancient sites re-named

Gen. 14.14 (Dan); Deut. 34.1 (Dan); Gen. 13.18; 23.2 (Hebron).

F. Other Sources are Cited in the Pentateuch and the rest of the Old Testament

For example: "The book of the generations of Adam", Gen. 5.1; "the book of the wars of the Lord" (Num. 21.14); "the book of the covenant" (Ex. 24.7; 2 Kings 23.2); "the book of Jashar" (Josh. 10.13; 2Sam. 1.18).

G. Hebrew used in the Law

Some claim there is evidence of late Hebrew in the Pentateuch. Also, there are claimed differences in syntax, style, and vocabulary between different sections of Pentateuch (e.g. Leviticus vs. Deuteronomy)

Wellhausen's conclusion: The Law came late and built the idea of covenant-law upon the foundation of the later prophets.

H. Domestication of Camels

Genesis 12:15 – 16: Pharaoh’s officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house. Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and **camels**.

In the past, many scholars claimed the mention of domesticated camels in the patriarchal narratives was an anachronism. They asserted that camels were not domesticated until later than the era of the patriarchs, thus the mention of camels in stories about Abraham indicates the story was invented by a later author unaware that camels had not been domesticated until after the patriarchs (think about all the animals mentioned in the Book of Mormon, and you understand the argument). You will often hear this argument repeated even today. However, there is now evidence that camels were domesticated by 3000 – 2500 BC. The black obelisk of Shalmaneser III shows domesticated camels. Camel bones were found at the site of ancient Mari in a house dating around 2400 BC. Archeology supports the Biblical view of camels. People in the uniformed blogosphere still bring this up.

VI. Branch’s Critiques of the Documentary Hypothesis

Despite its widespread popularity, there are multiple problems with the Documentary Hypothesis, rendering the entire concept as untenable in my opinion. After summarizing the matter, here are the reasons Dr. Branch rejects the Documentary Hypothesis.

A. Absolutely No Manuscript Evidence

There is absolutely no manuscript evidence for this theory. By this, I mean that no one has ever found a document that pre-dates the OT and presents itself as a “Yahwist” book or an “Elohists” book. Perhaps the closest the critics can arrive at is the Samaritan Pentateuch, but the differences between the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Hebrew Pentateuch are obviously due to Samaritan propagandizing. The oldest Hebrew texts of the Pentateuch support the unity of the book. This simple point is often overlooked in debates. Wolf rightly says, “None of the alleged documents has ever been found in spite of assurances of scholars that at one time each document had an existence of its own.”²⁷ I cannot stress strongly enough that I am pointing out the most obvious and glaring weakness of this theory: NO ONE

²⁷ Wolf, *The Pentateuch*, 79.

HAS EVER FOUND ANY DOCUMENT which purports to be “J” or “E” on its own.

B. Hittite Suzerainty Treaties and Deuteronomy

The similarity in structure between Deuteronomy and ancient Hittite treaties points to a provenance for the Pentateuch from an era much earlier than 650 – 539 BC. The Hittite Kingdom was based in the eastern region of modern day Turkey and existed from around 1850 – 1180 BC, the empire coming to an end after being attacked by the Sea Peoples (The Philistines!). The Hittites made numerous treaties with smaller kingdoms. These are called Hittite Suzerain-Vassal treaties. The Hittite treaties had a very particular structure, and the book of Deuteronomy appears to mirror this structure. This means the book of Deuteronomy looks more like a document written well prior to 1000 BC as opposed to being written circa 650 BC, as the Documentary Hypothesis requires. This is quite a devastating blow to a central premise of the Documentary Hypothesis.

C. Silver Scrolls Discovered in 1979

An amazing archeological discovery has presented serious challenges to the Documentary Hypothesis. In 1979, two silver scrolls were discovered in a burial cave at Ketef Hinnom near Jerusalem. One scroll was four inches long by one inch wide and the other was one and a half inches long by a half-inch wide. These scrolls were used as amulets and were engraved with the well-known priestly blessing from Numbers as well as a quote from Deuteronomy. There has been some debate about the date of these scrolls, but Eric Waaler says, “Based on archaeological and palaeographic studies, the amulets are dated between 725 and 650 BC. The amulets contain material from the Priestly source (Nu. 6:24–26) as well as from the [time] frame of Deuteronomy (Dt. 7:9).”²⁸ Thus, he reasonably dates the amulets to 725 – 650 BC.

Why is this find problematic for the Documentary Hypothesis? Remember, the purported “D” source – dated to Josiah’s reforms circa 635 BC – and the purported “P” source – dated to after the exile circa 450 BC are both dated *after 650 BC*. If we have evidence of quotations from both Deuteronomy and Numbers from 650 BC or earlier, the entire structure of the Documentary Hypothesis is seriously challenged.

²⁸ Erik Waaler, “A Revised Date for Pentateuchal Texts? Evidence from Ketef Hinnom,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 53.1 (January 2002): 29.

D. There is no agreement about the Documentary Hypothesis

Quite often, Wellhausen's reconstruction is presented as fact in both popular and academic books. However, there is no unanimity among source scholars today nor has there been since Wellhausen's day. Each new generation finds new sources, discounts old sources, and produces absurd ideas in the name of scholarship. As I noted earlier, OT scholars playfully toss about the terms "J, J1, J2, E1, E2, L, K, S" with complete expectation they will be taken seriously. A prime example: *The Book of J* by Harold Bloom – He claims "J" was written by a secular woman!?! The sources multiply *ad infinitum, ad nauseam*. The perpetual "discovery" of such new sources, moreover, raises serious questions about the internal coherence of the documentary hypothesis and leads one to suspect that a great deal of purported "scholarship" is actually subjective opinion based on an anti-theistic bias.

E. The Hebrew of the Pentateuch Does Not Require a Late Date

Arguments for dating Hebrew can be notoriously circular, unless a particular claim is supported by inscriptional evidence from archaeology or other evidence which can be securely dated. This duly noted, the Hebrew of the Pentateuch looks old. The five books of the Pentateuch fail to distinguish between the third person pronouns "he" and "she." Instead of using *hû* (הוא) and *hî* (היא) like the rest of the OT, the Pentateuch uses only the masculine form -- *hû* (הוא). The same is true for the words "boy" and "girl". Earlier, we noted these grammatical oddities that occur only in the Pentateuch and not in the rest of the OT point to the unity of the Pentateuch. For our purposes here, I mention that these archaisms point to an early date for the text.²⁹

F. Ancient scribal techniques

One thing we have learned from ancient Egypt is that scribes sometimes updated place names to help contemporary readers understand the name of a location. There is nothing strange about updating language and place names as documents are copied.

G. Other ANE Cultures Used Various Names for "Gods".

It was Common for gods at Ugarit to have compound/multiple names; Thus, the

²⁹ Much of my argument here is taken from Daniel I. Block, "Pentateuch," in *The Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1998), 1272.

use of various names for the one God of Israel would not have been considered unusual in the ANE context. Furthermore, if God is as big as the Bible claims He is, multiple names help fallen humans understand His grandeur.

The use of divine names as criteria for source divisions is faulty methodology. In common speech, many of us are called by different names every day. My wife calls me “Sweetie,” by daughters call me “daddy,” my soldiers call me “sir,” and my students call me . . . well, I won’t repeat what they call me. If we speak this way on a daily basis, why is it so hard to imagine calling one God by various different titles? The variation in names for God are more easily explained and understood to bring out different aspects of the character of God. Yahweh is the covenant name of God and emphasizes His special relationship with Israel. Elohim speaks of God universally as the God of all the earth. Garrett says, “Elohim is what God is and Yahweh is who he is.”³⁰

Somewhat playfully, we could apply the Documentary Hypothesis to *Winnie the Pooh* (1926) by A.A. Milne. Sometimes the bear in the story is called “Winnie the Pooh,” sometimes he is called “Pooh-bear,” and sometimes he is called “silly old bear.” Applying the logic of the Documentary Hypothesis, one could argue these different names prove there was not one author – A.A. Milne – but instead Milne was an editor/redactor bringing together at least three competing sources! The silliness of this example at least illustrates the silliness of ideas suggested about the OT merely because of different names used for God.

H. Moses & writing.

Contrary to some opinions in 19th century (including Wellhausen), we now know the Egyptians and peoples of Mesopotamia were extremely literate from a time long before Moses. There is even evidence of slaves writing on the walls of mines where they were forced to work. If the slaves could write, then it is likely that Moses could write. Thus, Moses was most certainly literate and educated. Today, most liberals will probably grant this point.

I. Why Must an Author Be Limited to One Literary Style?

A plurality of literary styles used by a single author is also attested in Egypt (poetry & prose). Furthermore, modern authors use various styles, so why can’t ancient authors? For example, compare the difference between *The Chronicles of*

³⁰ Garrett, “The Undead Hypothesis,” 32.

Narnia and *Mere Christianity*, both authored by C. S. Lewis.

J. Why Must the Law follow the Prophets?

The Covenant concept used by prophets presumes the existence of the Law. At this point, the Documentary Hypothesis has forced an arbitrary evolutionary scheme upon the date. The prophets' work presupposes a normative law of God which Israel ought to know, but has violated. Divine law and covenant must exist some time prior to these writing prophets. The Prophets criticisms make virtually no sense if the Law was not in existence. Furthermore, to suggest the prophets are "less complex" than the Law is to impose an arbitrary judgment upon the content of the prophets.

Hosea (circa 740-722 B.C.) 12:9 shows great similarity with Exodus 20:2. Hosea 12:13 says, "The LORD brought Israel from Egypt by a prophet and Israel was tended by a prophet." This demonstrates that Moses was a prophet. If the lawgiver was also a prophet, it seems reasonable that the Law and Hebrew prophecy are consistent with each other. Hosea 4:6 ("law of your God") and 8:1 ("the people have broken my covenant and rebelled against my law") assume the existence of the Law of God.

Isaiah (ca. 740-700 B.C.) 24:5 ("The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant"); 54:10; 55:3 (referring to a renewal of covenant; also 59:21; 61:8); 56:4, 6 (reference to the Sabbath command as part of God's covenant). Law: 1:10; 2:3; 5:24-25; 8:16, 19-20; 30:9; 42:21, 24-25.

Jeremiah (ca. 626-586 B.C.) 3:16 ("the ark of the covenant of the Lord"); 11:1-5, 10; 14:21; 22:9; 31:31-34 (a new covenant, implying an old one was in existence); 2:8 makes reference to "experts in the law"; 6:19 says people have rejected God's law; 8:8; 9:13; 16:11; 26:4; 32:20-31 (Exodus, law); 44:10, 23.

Also Amos 2:4; Micah 4:2; Malachi 4:4.

K. If the P Material Comes Last, Where is the Temple?

Where is the Temple if P is late? The Documentary Hypothesis dates the P source to the post-exilic era (typically around 450 BC). The temple had been rebuilt by returning exiles in 516 BC. So, at the time when liberalism claims P was written, the rebuilt Temple was in existence. But no mention of a fixed temple or place of

worship is found in the alleged “P” document, leaving one to wonder why it would not be mentioned in the purported P source. Also, as reconstructed, the purported P sources shows no mention of Jerusalem or glorification of a national capital. A better explanation is that the material they are calling “P” is actually part of a unified narrative composed in its entirety prior to the rise of Jerusalem as the nation’s capital or the construction of the first temple by Solomon.

L. The Pentateuch’s Description of the Patriarchs Validated

The Patriarchal narratives echo what archaeologists have discovered of the culture of early second millennium B.C. West Semitic names; Abraham's journey fits conditions of Middle Bronze II era; nomadic lifestyle; social & legal customs (wives, concubines, purchase of land); religion.³¹

M. Missing the forest for the trees

The search for hypothetical sources tends to diminish appreciation for final form of books as we have them.

My Conclusion

I find great agreement with the following quote from E. J. Young: “Nor need we be ashamed to acknowledge that the words of Scripture are the words of God. For these words are resplendent with the glory of the divine majesty. The attempt to explain them as anything less than divine is one of the greatest failures that has ever appeared in the history of human thought.”³² The Documentary Hypothesis is a speculative, subjective theory inconsistent with the historical backgrounds of the Ancient Near East.

The Anvil of God’s Word

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
When looking in, I saw upon the floor,
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

³¹ Others claim the Pentateuch (Genesis 47:11; Exodus 12:37; Numbers 33:3, 5) shows a memory of the city of "Rameses" (only so called from 13th to 11th c. B.C.). Extra-Biblical sources also confirm there were Semitic slaves in Egypt. Advocates of the “late date” for the Exodus point to evidence of invasion, destructions of cities, and new settlements in Canaan from late 13th c. to 12th c. B.C. This particular argument is more relevant for those who accept the late date for the Exodus. I favor the early date.

³² E. J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 11.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,
"To wear and batter these hammers so?"
"Just one," said he; then with a twinkling eye,
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word,
For ages, skeptics' blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed - the hammers gone.
- by John Clifford

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