

# The Authorship of the Pentateuch

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THE PENTATEUCH INCLUDES THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). These books separate into two unequal parts: Genesis and Exodus-Deuteronomy.<sup>1</sup> Genesis traces the ancestral origins of Israel. No single character dominates the story. Genesis 1–11 presents a panoramic view of creation, including the formation of heaven and earth and all humanity. The time span from the creation of Adam (Gen. 1:26–27) to the birth of Terah, the father of Abraham (Gen. 11:24), is 1,876 years.<sup>2</sup> Genesis 12–50 narrows in scope to chronicle the family history of Israel through a series of migrations. Israel's story begins in Ur of Babylon with Terah. The main subject matter concerns the three original generations of Israelites represented by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose stories take place primarily within Canaan, the land promised by God to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 12:1–4). Genesis ends with the fourth generation of Israelites (i.e., Joseph and his brothers) settling in Egypt (Gen. 47:9). The time span of Genesis 12–50 is 360 years (year 2236). Israel lives in Egypt an additional 430 years before their exodus in the year 2666 (Exod. 12:40–41).

Moses emerges as the central character in the second part of the Pentateuch, which tells the story of Israel's salvation from Egyptian slavery and the establishment of Yahwistic worship in the wilderness. Exodus-Deuteronomy are framed by his birth (Exodus 2) and death (Deuteronomy 34). His dates according to the Pentateuch span the years 2586–2706. Thus the vast majority of pentateuchal literature is confined to the 120 years of

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1. Rolf Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology: Substance, Method, and Cases* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 351–79.

2. See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 47–50 for an overview of the chronology within the Pentateuch. See also J. Hughes, *Secrets of the Times: Myth and History in Biblical Chronology*, JSOTSup 66 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1990).

Moses' life. During his career Moses liberates Israel from Egypt (Exodus 5–14), leads them into the wilderness (Exodus 15–18; Numbers 11–21), and mediates divine law at the mountain of God (Exodus 19–Numbers 10) and on the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy). The author of the Pentateuch is not identified within the literature. Yet it has become closely associated with Moses because of his central role in Exodus–Deuteronomy.

Mosaic authorship is reinforced by scattered references to writing in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Only God and Moses write in the Pentateuch. God writes laws (Exod. 24:12), the architectural plans for the tabernacle (Ex. 31:18), names of the elect in a special book (Ex. 32:32), and the tablets containing the ten commandments (Ex. 34:1; Deut. 4:13; 5:22; 9:10; 10:2–4). Moses writes four distinct genres of literature: prophecy about holy war (Ex. 17:14), laws (Ex. 24:4, 34:27–28; Deut. 31:9, 34), the history of the wilderness journey (Num. 33:2), and a song (Deut. 31:9, 22). Mosaic authorship is most likely extended in Deut. 31:24–26 to include the entire book of Deuteronomy, described as the “book of the torah,” meaning “book of the law.” Josh. 8:31–34 identifies the “book of the torah” as the “torah of Moses” (see also Josh. 23:6; 1 Kgs. 2:3; 2 Kgs. 14:6, 23:25). “Torah of Moses” most likely refers to the book of Deuteronomy throughout these citations. But over time the designation came to represent all pentateuchal literature. Thus when Ezra, the scribe, returns from Persia after the exile (sometime in the fifth century B.C.E.), the “torah of Moses” which he reads publicly may be the entire Pentateuch (see Ezra 3:2, 7:6; Neh. 8:1; and also 2 Chr. 23:18, 30:16, 34:14). As a result “Torah” and “Torah of Moses” became traditional titles for the Pentateuch, reinforcing Mosaic authorship of the literature. In the process Moses is also idealized as an inspired author. Thus, his authorship becomes important for attributing divine authority to Torah. It also lays the foundation for the belief that the Pentateuch contained one unified message because it had one divinely inspired author.

Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was assumed in Jewish Hellenistic, Rabbinic, and early Christian writings. Philo, a Hellenistic Jewish author writing in the first century of the common era, provides an example. He writes in his commentary on creation, “Moses says . . . ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.’”<sup>3</sup> Josephus also asserts that Moses authored the first five books.<sup>4</sup> The Rabbis, too, state, “Moses wrote his own book.”<sup>5</sup> Its origin was divine.<sup>6</sup> A similar perspective is also expressed by early Christian writers. The Apostle Paul refers to the

3. Works of Philo, op. 26.

4. Flavius Josephus Against Apion 1:37–40.

5. Talmud, B. Bat. 14b

6. Talmud, Sahu. 99a.

Pentateuch as the "law of Moses."<sup>7</sup> The author of the Gospel of Luke expresses the same thought when the Pentateuch is indicated by simple reference to its author "Moses,"<sup>8</sup> later described as the "law of Moses."<sup>9</sup> The examples indicate two important developments. First, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch emerges within tradition and not from historical-critical study of its literary composition. And, second, Mosaic authorship becomes important for attributing divine authority to scripture. The rabbis provide illustration when they conclude: God spoke Torah to Moses, who wrote down the words.<sup>10</sup>

Questions about Mosaic authorship arose, even with the absence of historical-critical literary study. The Rabbis, for example, continued to debate whether Moses could have written the account of his own death in Deut. 34:5–12.<sup>11</sup> Jewish medieval commentators noticed other problems. Abraham Ibn Ezra, a twelfth century C.E. Spanish interpreter, notes in his commentary on Deuteronomy that Moses could not have written the following phrases: "beyond Jordan" (Deut. 1:1)—Moses never crossed the Jordan River; the "Canaanite was then in the land" (Gen. 12:6)—assumes the expulsion of the Canaanite after the death of Moses; the naming of Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:14)—occurs during the monarchy period; the description of Og and his iron bed (Deut. 3:11)—assumes a much later date than the time of Moses. Ibn Ezra also concluded that the statement indicating all writings of Moses were inscribed on stones (Deut. 27:1–8) does not allow for five entire books, and that third-person references to Moses (such as "Moses wrote" in Deut 31:9) also assume another author.<sup>12</sup> Doubts about Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, however, remained at the periphery of interpretation. They did not provide a hermeneutical starting point for evaluating pentateuchal literature. Thus, in spite of a variety of literary problems, the authoritative teaching of tradition concerning Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was accepted without serious or widespread opposition. As a result Jewish and Christian interpreters sought a unified message in Torah from its single author, Moses.

#### CRITICAL EVALUATION OF MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH

The Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation introduced a more critical stance toward religious tradition and authority, expressed in the

7. 1 Cor 9:9.

8. Luke 24:27.

9. Luke 24:44.

10. B. Bat. 15a.

11. B. Bat. 15a; Menah. 30a.

12. For discussion see C. Houtman, *Der Pentateuch: Die Geschichte seiner Erforschung neben einer Auswertung*, Biblical Exegesis and Theology 9 (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994) 22–27; and Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, 2–3.

manifesto *sola scriptura*.<sup>13</sup> This claim meant that, for the reformers, only scripture, not traditional teaching, represented divine instruction on all questions of faith and practice. The study of scripture, therefore, was used as a counter voice to papal authority.<sup>14</sup> Such a use of scripture required a more historical-critical hermeneutic in order to illustrate the misuse of pentateuchal literature through past interpretation by the Roman church. The reformer's critical stance toward tradition would eventually call into question Mosaic authorship, since it too rested on the authority of traditional teaching, rather than arising from historical-critical study of pentateuchal literature. John Calvin (1509–64) and Benedict de Spinoza (1634–77) illustrate the emergence of historical criticism of the Pentateuch and the eventual rejection of Mosaic authorship.

Calvin never questioned the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. In the "Preface" to *The Four Last Books of Moses in the Form of a Harmony I*, Calvin states that "what was dictated to Moses was excellent. . . ."<sup>15</sup> And in the introductory "Argument" to *The First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, he makes clear his quest to discern the intention of Moses as a source of divine revelation.<sup>16</sup> Uncovering Mosaic intention often served polemical purposes, refuting the claims of papal authority. Historical study of the Aaronide (or Aaronic) priesthood, for example, indicated that Christ, not the pope, represented Aaron.<sup>17</sup>

Historical-critical study of the Pentateuch also brought literary repetitions and potential contradictions into clearer focus. For example, Calvin is aware of two creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2, and of the name changes for God from Elohim (in Genesis 1) to Yahweh (in Genesis 2). Such repetition is not "superfluous," according to Calvin, but it certainly does not prompt questions about Mosaic authorship, nor does it challenge the assumption that the Pentateuch contains a unified message about creation. Instead the two creation stories are for emphasis, inculcating "the necessary fact, that the world existed only from the time when it was created. . . ."<sup>18</sup> The change from Elohim to the more personal

13. For discussion of *sola scriptura* as it developed in Martin Luther's Leipzig Disputation of 1519 and subsequently through Calvin see Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969) 6–9.

14. *Ibid.*

15. John Calvin, *The Four Last Books of Moses in the Form of a Harmony I*, translated by Charles William Bingham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), xiv. For a summary of Calvin's use of the Old Testament, see David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament*, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995).

16. John Calvin, *The First Book of Moses Called Genesis I*, translated by John King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 58–9.

17. John Calvin, *The Last Four Books of Moses in the Form of a Harmony II*, translated by Charles William Bingham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950) 21.

18. *Genesis I*, 109.

name Yahweh is neither a contradiction nor an indication of distinct authorship, but "is here at length expressed by Moses, because his [God's] majesty shines forth more clearly in the completed world [of Genesis 2]."<sup>19</sup> Repetitive accounts of Abraham (Genesis 12, 20) and Isaac (Genesis 26) presenting their wives as sisters to foreign kings is recorded by Moses because it happened three times.<sup>20</sup>

Calvin solved more glaring contradictions by harmonizing different accounts rather than by exploring the possibility of authors other than Moses, who might represent distinct traditions with conflicting messages. The two statements concerning the duration of the flood (40 [Gen. 7:17] versus 150 [Gen. 7:24] days), for example, indicate two periods of activity, according to Calvin, rather than two versions of the flood story. The water rose for 40 days and then maintained its present height for an additional 150 days.<sup>21</sup> Distinct accounts concerning Moses' father-in-law (as Jethro in Exodus 18 and as Hobab in Numbers 10) were harmonized through genealogy in order to avoid contradiction. Those who sought to identify the two names as referring to the same person were "grossly mistaken." Hobab, according to Calvin, was actually the son of Jethro.<sup>22</sup> Thus, in the end, Calvin maintains the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Single authorship reinforced Calvin's desire to achieve a unified interpretation of the Pentateuch's many repetitions and contradictions. As indicated in the title of his commentary, his aim was to harmonize the diverse literature of the Pentateuch.

Benedict de Spinoza shared the reformer's rejection of traditional religious authority. He states in the "Preface" of his *Theologico-Political Treatise* that blind adherence to religious authority without free rational and critical inquiry is nothing more than superstition rooted in fear, resulting in prejudice and violence.<sup>23</sup> The reformer's claim of *sola scriptura* opposed such tyranny. Thus, Calvin sought to discern the intentions of Moses in the Pentateuch to counter the authority of the Roman church. Spinoza agrees with the claim of *sola scriptura*. He writes, "Scriptural interpretation proceeds by the examination of Scripture, and inferring the intention of its authors as a legitimate conclusion from its fundamental

19. Ibid., 108–9.

20. Ibid., 363, 521; John Calvin, *The First Book of Moses Called Genesis II*, translated by John King (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) 60–1.

21. *Genesis I*, 277–78.

22. John Calvin, *The Four Last Books of Moses in the Form of a Harmony IV*, translated by Charles William Bingham, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950) 10–12.

23. Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise Containing Certain Discussions Wherein is Set Forth that Freedom of Thought and Speech not only May, Without Prejudice to Piety and the Public Peace, be Granted; but also May not, Without Danger to Piety and the Public Peace, be Withheld*, translated by R. H. M. Elwes (1951), 7. For a discussion of Spinoza's use of scripture, see Kraus, 61–65.

principles.”<sup>24</sup> But Spinoza went far beyond Calvin and the reformers. He rooted the superstition of religious tradition in the interpretation of scripture itself. The clearest evidence of this was the claim of Mosaic authorship.

“The author of the Pentateuch,” writes Spinoza, “is almost universally supposed to have been Moses.”<sup>25</sup> But such a belief is “ungrounded and even irrational.”<sup>26</sup> Spinoza reviews the problems stated by Ibn Ezra, indicating non-Mosaic authorship. He adds further problems. Spinoza expands examples of third-person references to Moses (i.e., “Moses talked with God . . .,” “Moses was the meekest of men . . .”). He notes anachronisms in the comparison of Moses to later prophets (i.e., “there was never a prophet in Israel like Moses . . .”). And he highlights problems of geography (i.e., the mention of Dan in the story of Abraham pursuing his enemies [Gen. 14:14] is not possible historically because the city is not named as such until after the death of Joshua [Judg. 18:29]). The conclusion, writes Spinoza, is “clearer than the sun at noonday that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but by someone who lived long after Moses.”<sup>27</sup>

Spinoza introduced a whole new problem for the interpretation of the Pentateuch. It is that “the history of the Bible is . . . untrustworthy.”<sup>28</sup> Calvin never entertained such a possibility. For Spinoza the defense of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch advances the unreliable character of the Bible, and those who advocate for it provide one more instance of the superstition of traditional religious authority. In view of this he writes that the new aim of biblical interpretation is to uncover “a trustworthy history of the sacred writings.”<sup>29</sup> Three principles shape his new approach to the Pentateuch. First, a reliable history must be built on a study of the Hebrew language. Second, knowledge of the Bible must arise only from a study of the text and not from traditional teaching about it. And, third, the interpreter must identify the genuine authors of the biblical books, who were channels of divine revelation.<sup>30</sup> Thus Spinoza continues to maintain the divine inspiration of scripture. But interpretation of the divinely inspired Pentateuch became a quest for anonymous authors. Interpretation of their intentions would reveal the true, rational, and divine principles of scripture.

Spinoza concluded that Moses wrote only limited portions of the

24. Spinoza 99.

25. Ibid., 120.

26. Ibid., 126.

27. Ibid., 124.

28. Ibid., 120.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 101–3.

Pentateuch: an account of war with Amalek (Ex. 17:14; cf. also Num. 21:12); the Book of the Covenant (Ex. 21–23; cf. Ex. 24:4); and law in Deuteronomy. The majority of the Pentateuch was written by a later historian who incorporated Moses' writing within a history. Connecting phrases, moreover, indicate that the Pentateuch was part of a larger history, extending through Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. Spinoza provides the following evidence: "[A]s soon as he has related the life of Moses, the historian thus passes on to the story of Joshua: 'And it came to pass after Moses the servant of the Lord was dead, that God spoke to Joshua,' and, so in the same way, after the death of Joshua was concluded, he passes with identically the same transition and connection to the history of the Judges." Spinoza suspects Ezra (Ezra 7:10) to be the author of this history. Contradiction between similar accounts in the histories of Chronicles and Genesis–Kings (i.e., the account of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18:17 and in 2 Chr. 32:32) led Spinoza to conclude further that Ezra did not actually write the histories, but compiled them.<sup>31</sup>

## THE PENTATEUCH AND ITS SOURCES

### *The Identification of Anonymous Authors in the Pentateuch*

Rejection of Mosaic authorship introduced a new start for interpretation. The past belief that pentateuchal literature was unified in theme with a single author was replaced by new assumptions. Interpreters began to presume that many anonymous authors contributed to the composition of the Pentateuch, and that the literature could not be harmonized into a single, unified message. As a result interpreters now sought to identify the Pentateuch's anonymous authors, requiring new, historical-critical methodology. Two goals comprise the core of historical-criticism. First, repetitions and contradictions were separated, not harmonized, into different bodies of literature ("sources") in order to identify authors with distinct religious world views. And, second, interpreters sought to arrange the order in which the authors wrote, thus fashioning the history of Israelite religion. Locating literary contradictions to identify authors and establishing their chronology became the building blocks for historical critics to establish the "trustworthy history of the sacred writings" advocated by Spinoza. Some shared Spinoza's belief in divine inspiration; others did not. But, in either case, the quest for anonymous authors created tension with the traditional teaching that God had communicated a unified message in Torah at one time and through one author, Moses.

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31. Ibid., 133–9.

### *The Literary Methods for Identifying Authors*

The identification of anonymous authors arose from an inductive study of pentateuchal literature, especially the book of Genesis. Literary repetition, contradiction of content, and disruptions in chronology were considered indicators of different writers. Divine names emerged as an important starting point for tracing the literary thread of distinct authors. In some stories the deity is named Elohim (translated "God" in the New Revised Standard Version=NRSV), while in others Yahweh (translated "Lord" in the NRSV). The opening chapters of Genesis provide an example. The deity is Elohim throughout Gen 1:1–2:4, while the divine name Yahweh is used in Gen 2:5–25. Calvin saw this already in his commentary on Genesis, but interpreted it as a literary technique by Moses for emphasis. Historical critics, by contrast, judged the different divine names to be a contradiction, revealing authors with distinct views of deity. Jean Astruc (1684–1766) provides one of the earliest illustrations. He separated the literature in Genesis 1–Exodus 2 into sources A and B, based on the divine names.<sup>32</sup> The author of A used the divine name Elohim, while B preferred Yahweh. The results are summarized in Table 1.

Astruc illustrates early historical-critical literary methodology. The separation of divine names is his primary, but not sole, criterion for identifying anonymous authors. Additional literary criteria also influenced his interpretation. Thus he identified ten additional literary fragments. Two prominent examples are sources C and D, neither of which contains divine names. They constituted separate sources because of literary repetitions, contradictions of content, and problems of chronology. The C source included portions of the flood—the height of the water and its 150-day duration (Gen. 7:20, 23, 24). The D source included Abraham's rescue of Lot (Gen. 14), the birth of children to Lot (Gen. 19:29–38) and Abraham (Gen. 22:20–24), the genealogy of Ishmael (Gen. 25:12–18), Esau's marriage to Hittite women (Gen. 26:34–35), the genealogy of Esau (Gen. 35:28–36:43), and Onan's refusal to fulfill the levirate law (Gen. 38:6–9). The difficulty inherent in such literary judgments is illustrated by the story of Dinah's rape (Gen. 34). Astruc attributes this story to both the C and D sources at different locations in his study.

Examination of parallel episodes in sources A and B illustrates the variety of ways in which the distinct sources are combined in the Pentateuch. The two creation stories (Gen. 1:1–2:3 and 2:4–25) are placed side by side as doublets. In this case two conflicting views of creation are juxtaposed. The author of Gen. 1:1–2:3 envisions Elohim creating through a

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32. Jean Astruc, *Conjectures sur les mémoires originaux dont il parloit que Moïse s'est servi pour composer le livre de la Genèse. Avec des remarques, qui appuient ou qui éclaircissent ces conjectures* (Brüssel, 1753). For a summary of Astruc's work, see E. O'Doherty, "The Conjectures of Jean Astruc, 1753," CBQ 76 (1953): 300–4; and Houtman, *Der Pentateuch*, 63–70.

**TABLE 1**  
**ASTRUC'S A AND B SOURCES BASED ON THE DIVINE NAMES:**

	Author A (Elohim)	Author B (Yahweh)
<b>CREATION (Genesis 1-11)</b>		
Creation	Gen. 1:1-2:3	Gen. 2:4-25
Adam, Eve, Eden		Gen. 3
Cain & Abel		Gen. 4
Adam's Genealogy	Gen. 5	
Noah & Flood	Gen. 6:9-22 Gen. 7:6-10, 19, 22, 24 Gen. 8:1-19 Gen. 9:1-10, 12, 16, 17	Gen. 6:1-8 Gen. 7:1-5, 11-18, 21, 24 Gen. 8:20-22 Gen. 9:11, 13-15 Gen. 9:18-29 Gen. 10:1-32 Gen. 11:1-9
Noah/Vintner		
Noah's Genealogy		
Tower of Babel		
Shem's Genealogy	Gen. 11:10-26	
<b>ABRAHAM (Genesis 12:1-25:18)</b>		
Call of Abram		Gen. 11:27-12:9
Sarah/Pharaoh		Gen. 12:10-20
Abram/Lot		Gen. 13:1-18
Covenant/Offspring		Gen. 15:1-17:2
Circumcision	Gen. 17:3-27	
Sodom/Gomorrah		Gen. 18:1-19:28
Sarah/Abimelech	Gen. 20:1-17	
Birth of Isaac	Gen. 21:2-32	Gen. 20:18-21:1, 33-34
Sacrifice of Isaac	Gen. 22:1-10	Gen. 22:11-19
Death of Sarah	Gen. 23	
Marriage of Isaac and Rebekah		Gen. 24
Death of Abraham	Gen. 25:1-11	
<b>JACOB (Genesis 25:19-38:30)</b>		
Birth of Jacob/Esau		Gen. 25:19-26:33
Blessing of Jacob		Gen. 27:1-28:5
Jacob at Bethel		Gen. 28:10-22
Marriage of Jacob to Rachel/Leah		Gen. 29
Birth of Jacob's Sons	Gen. 30:1-23	Gen. 30:24
Conflict with Laban	Gen. 31:4-47, 31:51-32:2 [=1 Eng.]	Gen. 30:25-43, 31:1-3, 48-50
Jacob at the Jabbok River	Gen. 32:24-33	Gen. 32:3-23
Jacob meets Esau	Gen. 33:1-16	
Jacob at Succoth/Shechem		Gen. 33:17-20
Birth of Benjamin/		
Death of Rebekah	Gen. 35:1-27	
Genealogy of Esau	Gen. 37	
Judah and Tamar		Gen. 38
<b>JOSEPH (Genesis 39-50)</b>		
Joseph and His Brothers		Gen. 39
Joseph in Egypt	Gen. 40-48	
Jacob's Last Words	Gen. 49:29-33	Gen. 49:1-28
Death of Jacob	Gen. 50	
<b>ISRAEL IN EGYPT (Exodus 1-2)</b>		
Israel in Egypt	Exod. 1-2	

process of separation from wet chaos to dry land, while in Gen 2:4–25, Yahweh moves in just the opposite direction, fashioning life from dry desert by adding water. The accounts of the patriarchs, Abraham and Isaac, falsely presenting their wives as sisters to foreign kings are distributed more widely in Genesis 12–26, yet the distinction in divine names continues. When Abraham first lies to Pharaoh about Sarah (Gen. 12:10–20), it is Yahweh that plagues the Egyptians. Thus, it is an episode in Source B, according to Astruc. But when Abraham repeats this action with Abimelech (Gen. 20:1–18) Elohim, not Yahweh, threatens the king with disease and death, indicating a story in Source A. The divine name, Yahweh, returns in the account of Isaac, Rebekah, and Abimelech (Gen. 26:1–16), making it an episode in Source B, along with the first story of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt (Gen. 12:10–20).

The flood (Genesis 6–9), by contrast, illustrates how different sources can be interwoven, rather than placed side by side, or distributed throughout larger blocks of literature. Astruc identified two introductions to the flood. In Source B, Yahweh sees that the inclination of the human heart is thoroughly evil (Gen. 6:1–8), whereas in Source A, Elohim sees that the earth is corrupt (Gen. 6:9–22). Here the two introductions are combined into one story. The two versions continue to be interwoven, with Yahweh (i.e., Gen. 7:1–5) and Elohim (i.e., Gen. 7:6–10) providing slightly different instructions to Noah about the ark and its cargo of animals. And the distinctions continue into the conclusion. In Source B, Yahweh ceases the flood, smells sacrifice, and promises never to curse the ground again because of the evil inclination of the human heart (Gen. 8:20–22), repeating the theme that introduced this version of the story. In Source A, by contrast, Elohim blesses Noah (Gen. 9:1–10).

Astruc's use of divine names, literary repetition, and contradiction of content as clues to anonymous authors became a building block for later interpreters.<sup>33</sup> Debate over the separation of literature into distinct sources continues into the present time. Yet in general most interpreters agree that the Pentateuch contains similar stories by different authors. Additional examples include multiple interpretations of covenant (Genesis 15 and 17),<sup>34</sup> two interpretations of Hagar's expulsion (Genesis 18 and 21),<sup>35</sup> two names for the mountain of God (Sinai and Horeb),<sup>36</sup> two

33. For a more detailed illustration of historical-critical literary methodology, see Norman Habel, *Literary Criticism of the Old Testament*, Guides to Biblical Scholarship, Old Testament Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

34. George E. Mendenhall and Gary A. Herion, "Covenant," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary 1*, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doublday, 1992), 1179–1202.

35. Thomas B. Dozeman, "The Wilderness and Salvation History in the Hagar Story," *The Journal of Biblical Literature* 116 (1998): 23–43.

36. Thomas B. Dozeman, *God on the Mountain: A Study of Redaction, Theology and Canon in Exodus 19–24*, SBLMS 37 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988).

accounts of the revelation of the divine name (Exodus 3 and 6),<sup>37</sup> several interpretations of the exodus (Exodus 14–15),<sup>38</sup> two versions of the Decalogue (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5),<sup>39</sup> two designations for the people of God (“children of Israel” and the “congregation”),<sup>40</sup> two identifications for the indigenous population (“Canaanites” and “Amorites”),<sup>41</sup> several accounts of Israel’s fear of conquest and loss of the promised land (Numbers 13–14; Deuteronomy 1),<sup>42</sup> at least two views on warfare (Numbers 31 and Deuteronomy 20),<sup>43</sup> several conflicting cultic calendars (Exod. 23:14–17; Leviticus 23; Numbers 27–28; and Deuteronomy 16),<sup>44</sup> competing views of proper worship—especially sacrifice (Leviticus vs. Deuteronomy),<sup>45</sup> and differences concerning the appropriate sanctuary (i.e., the tent of meeting in Exodus 33, the tabernacle in Exodus 25–31, 35–40, or the place of the name in Deuteronomy).<sup>46</sup> These and many other repetitions confirm the existence of several anonymous authors in the Pentateuch with divergent views of God, community, and worship.

But new questions arose. The identification of authors, the nature of the literature, and the process by which the Pentateuch was formed were far from settled. Astruc’s sources, for example, quickly took on the names of deity prominent in each. Thus scholars such as Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827) referred to Elohistic (E) and Yahwistic (J=the German spelling of the letter Y in Yahweh) sources, instead of A and B sources.<sup>47</sup> And there was even debate whether sources indicated authors at all. Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette (1780–1859) suggested that the different divine names may represent periods of writing or perhaps distinct schools of thought, rather than discrete authors.<sup>48</sup> Still other ques-

37. Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974).

38. Thomas B. Dozeman, *God at War: Power in the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

39. F.-L. Hossfeld, *Der Dekalog: Seine späten Fassungen, die originale Komposition und seine Vorstufen*, OBO 45 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1982).

40. Otto Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, translated by Peter R. Ackroyd (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 183.

41. Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 183.

42. Thomas B. Dozeman, *Numbers*, NIB (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

43. Ibid.

44. Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, translated by Menzies and Black (1883 Reprint; New York: Meridian Books, 1957).

45. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

46. Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into the Character of Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

47. J. G. Eichhorn, *Einleitung ins Alte Testament* (Leipzig, 1780–3).

48. W. M. L. de Wette, *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Halle, 1806–7); and *Lehrbuch der historisch-kritischen Einleitung in die Bibel Alten und Neuen Testaments I: Die Einleitung in das Alte Testament enthaltend* (Berlin, 1844).

tions followed, arising from refinements in methodology and from the limitations in the work of the early historical critics like Astruc and Eichhorn. Three problem areas continue to influence interpreters of the Pentateuch into the present time.

First, the focus of study on Genesis 1–Exodus 2 by early critics was too narrow to provide a model for the authorship of the entire Pentateuch. Thus, the extension of the sources became a pressing question. Do the Elohistic and Yahwistic sources continue on through the Pentateuch, or even further into the book of Joshua where the conquest of land is narrated? Those who advocated the continuation of sources into the book of Joshua often spoke of a six-book Hexateuch (Genesis–Joshua), rather than a five-book Pentateuch (Genesis–Deuteronomy). Martin Noth introduced yet another term—Tetrateuch—by arguing that the book of Deuteronomy should be separated from Genesis–Numbers, and read as the introduction to the history of Israel in the land contained in the books Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.<sup>49</sup> The history of Israel’s life in the land (Joshua–Kings) became known as the “Deuteronomistic History,” indicating its close ties to the book of Deuteronomy. The exclusive focus on narrative in Genesis also did not address the role of law or the relationship of law and narrative in the formation of the Pentateuch. Thus later interpreters turned their attention more to Exodus–Deuteronomy to investigate the origin and authorship of the many laws in the Pentateuch.<sup>50</sup>

Second, the character of the literature and the process by which distinct writings were combined in the Pentateuch remained a matter of debate. Astruc used the word “sources” to describe continuous, independent and parallel narratives, woven together by editors also called redactors. Alexander Geddes (1737–1802) and Johann Severin Vater (1771–1826) disagreed, advancing a fragmentary theory of the literature. They envisioned the Pentateuch to be a collection of many individual stories combined into larger groupings.<sup>51</sup> Still other scholars advanced a

49. Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1981); and *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, translated by B. W. Anderson (Chico: Scholars Press, 1981). For discussion of the debates surrounding the proper boundaries of a Tetrateuch, Pentateuch, or Hexateuch see A. G. Auld, *Joshua, Moses and the Land: Tetrateuch-Pentateuch-Hexateuch in a Generation Since 1938* (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1980); and Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 241–48.

50. Frank Crüsemann, *The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law*, translated by Allan W. Mahrke (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

51. Alexander Geddes, *The Holy Bible or the Books accounted Sacred by Jews and Christians: otherwise called the Books of the Old and New Covenants* (London, 1792), and *Critical Remarks on the Hebrew Scriptures: Corresponding with a New Translation of the Bible*, Vol. I, *Containing Remarks on the Pentateuch* (London, 1800); Johann Severin Vater, *Commentar über den Pentateuch, Mit Einleitungen zu den einzelnen Abschnitten der eingeschalteten Übersetzung von*

supplementary hypothesis in which a foundational source was expanded with the addition of parallel documents. Heinrich Ewald (1803–75) represented this position early in his career, arguing that an E source, extending from creation in Genesis 1 to the conquest of land in the book of Joshua was supplemented by a J source.<sup>52</sup> These debates continue into the present time. Advocates for source criticism include Richard E. Friedman<sup>53</sup> as well as Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien.<sup>54</sup> John Van Seders<sup>55</sup> and Rolf Rendtorff<sup>56</sup> favor in general a more supplementary approach for interpreting the growth of pentateuchal literature.

And, third, interpreters also began to identify more than two authors from the divine names. Already in 1798 Carl David Ilgen suggested a three-source theory of composition in Genesis with two Elohistic authors.<sup>57</sup> Fifty years later (1853), Herman Hupfeld (1796–1866) addressed the problem anew with his separation of Elohist one (E1) and two (E2). E1 was a foundational document, according to Hupfeld, beginning with creation in Genesis 1 and continuing through the book of Joshua, while E2 had a more narrow focus on the patriarchal literature beginning in Genesis 12.<sup>58</sup> Later scholars would follow the lead of Hupfeld, but rename this foundational document the Priestly (P) source.<sup>59</sup> Finally, the recognition that the book of Deuteronomy was also a distinct and independent source by Eduard Riehm,<sup>60</sup> a student of Hupfeld, laid the groundwork for the documentary hypothesis, in which four distinct bodies of literature are identified in the composition of the Pentateuch: P

Dr. A. Geddes merkwürdigen critischen und exegetischen Anmerkungen und einer Abhandlung über Mose und die Verfasser des Pentateuchs, Vols. I–III (Halle, 1802–5).

52. Heinrich Georg August Ewald, *Die Komposition der Genesis Kritische Untersuchung* (Braunschweig, 1823).

53. Who Wrote the Bible? (New York: Summit Books, 1987).

54. *Sources of the Pentateuch: Text, Introductions, and Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

55. *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); *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).

56. Rolf Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*, BZAW 147 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977).

57. Carl David Ilgen, *Die Urkunden des Jerusalemmischen Tempelarchivs in ihrer Urgestalt also Beytrag zur Berichtigung der Geschichte der Religion und Politik aus dem Hebräischen mit kritischen und erklärenden Anmerkungen, auch mancherley dazu gehörigen Abhandlungen Theil I: Die Urkunden des ersten Buchs von Moses* (Halle, 1798).

58. Herman Hupfeld, *Die Quellen der Genesis und die Art ihrer Zusammensetzung* (Berlin, 1853).

59. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, 6–7, is one of the first to write that the “main stock” (Grundschrift) source is better described as the Priestly Code.

60. E. Riehm, *Die Gesetzgebung Mosis im Lande Moab* (Gotha, 1854). His work builds on earlier research by scholars like W. M. L. de Wette (see below).

(Priestly source), E (Elohistic Source), J (Yahwistic source), and D (Deuteronomy). Table 2 highlights some of the more important texts that have historically been attributed to the distinct authors (or "sources") of the Pentateuch, known as P, J, E, D.<sup>61</sup>

The literary character and central themes of the four sources, P, J, E, and D, can be summarized in the following manner. The Priestly source uses the divine name Elohim in Genesis, hence its early designation as E1. Initial interpreters identified the Priestly source as beginning with creation in Genesis 1 and continuing through land distribution in Joshua 18–19. Its style of writing is formulaic. Genealogies and dating organize the literature in Genesis.<sup>62</sup> Covenants with Noah (Genesis 9) and Abraham (Genesis 17) are central themes in P. The life of Moses in Exodus–Numbers is organized around the revelation (Exodus 24–31) and construction of the tabernacle (Exodus 35–40), the creation of its sacrificial cultic system and priesthood (Leviticus) and the social organization of the wilderness camp (Numbers 1–10).<sup>63</sup>

The Yahwistic source parallels P. It begins with creation in Genesis 2, focusing on the garden of Eden. Its style is less formulaic. Stories in the opening chapters of Genesis include Adam and Eve's expulsion from the garden, the murder of Abel by Cain, the flood, subsequent stories of Noah as an intoxicated vintner, and the tower of Babel. The ancestral literature is organized around the divine promise of land and descendants (Gen. 12:1–3), conceived as covenant (Genesis 15). J literature is also prominent in the story of Moses, including accounts of his birth and early years, the exodus, revelation at Sinai, wilderness wandering, and perhaps also stories of the conquest in Joshua.<sup>64</sup>

61. The table follows in general the listing of the sources in "Translator's Supplement: Analytical Outline of the Pentateuch," compiled by B. W. Anderson in Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. B. W. Anderson (Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 261–276. For the sake of clarity, the table does not include all literature in the Pentateuch. For a complete analysis of pentateuchal sources, see Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

62. Priestly writers organize history around genealogy, as in the phrase, "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 2:4a). See the repetition of this phrase in Gen. 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, etc.

63. For discussions of the priestly literature in the Pentateuch, see Jacob Milgrom, "Priestly ("P") Source," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary 5*, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 454–61; Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 204–8; Sean E. McEvane, *The Narrative Style of the Priestly Writer*, AB 50 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1971); R. B. Coote and D. R. Ord, *In the Beginning: Creation and the Priestly History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); and J. Blenkinsopp, "The Structure of P," *CBQ* 38 (1976): 275–92.

64. For discussions of the Yahwistic source see Albert de Pury, "Yahwist ("J") Source," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary 6*, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1012–20; Hans Walter Wolff, "The Kerygma of the Yahwist," *Int* 20 (1966): 129–58; R. B. Coote and D. R. Ord, *The Bible's First History* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989); and Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 199–204.

**TABLE 2**  
**PENTATEUCHAL AUTHORS (OR SOURCES) P, J, E, D:**

	P	J	E	D
<b>Creation</b> (Gen. 1-11)				
Creation	1:1-2:4a		2:4b-25	
Eden			Gen. 3	
Cain/Abel			Gen. 4	
Adam's Genealogy	Gen. 5			
Noah/Flood <sup>1</sup>	Gen. 6-9		Gen. 6-8	
Noah/Vintner	9:18-27			
Noah's Genealogy <sup>2</sup>	Gen. 10		Gen. 10	
Tower of Babel	11:1-9			
Shem's Genealogy	11:10-26			
<b>The Ancestors</b> (Gen. 12-50)				
Abraham:				
Call of Abram	12:1-4a, 6-9			
Sarah/Pharaoh	12:10-20			
Abram/Lot		13:1-18		
Covenant/Offspring		15:6-12, 19-21	15:5, 13-16	
Flight of Hagar		16:1-14		
Covenant/Circumcision	Gen. 17			
Sodom and Gomorrah		18:1-19:28		
Sarah/Abimelech				20:1-17
Expulsion of Hagar			21:8-21	
Sacrifice of Isaac			22:1-19	
Death/Burial of Sarah	Gen. 23			
Marriage of Isaac/Rebekah		Gen. 24		
Genealogy of Ishmael	25:12-17			
Jacob:				
Birth Jacob/Esau		25:21-26:33		
Stolen Blessing		27:1-45		
Dream at Bethel				28:11-22
Marriage of Jacob/Leah and Rachel		Gen. 29		
Jacob's Children <sup>3</sup>	Gen. 30	Gen. 30		
Conflict with Laban <sup>4</sup>		Gen. 31	Gen. 31	
Wrestling with Angel		Gen. 32		
Rape of Dinah		Gen. 34		
Jacob's Sons	35:22b-26			
Isaac's Death	35:27-29			
Esau's Genealogy	Gen. 36 <sup>5</sup>			

1. P=Gen. 6:9-22; 7:6, 11, 13-16a, 17a, 18-21, 24; 8:1, 2a, 3b-5, 7, 13a, 14-19; 9:1-17. J=Gen. 6:1-8; 7:1-5, 7-10, 12, 16b, 17b, 22-23; 8:2b, 3a, 6, 8-12, 13b, 20-22.

2. P=Gen. 10:1-7, 20, 22-23, 24, 31-32. J=Gen. 10:8-19, 21, 25-30.

3. J=Gen. 29:31-35; 30:4-5, 7-16, 20-21, 24, 25-43. E=30:1-3, 6, 17-19, 22-23.

4. J=Gen. 31:1, 3, 17, 19a, 20-23, 25b, 27, 30a, 31, 36a, 38-40, 46-49, 51-53a. E=Gen. 31:2, 4-16, 19b, 24-25a, 26, 28-29, 30b, 32-35, 36b-37, 41-45, 50, 53b-55.

5. Source critics distribute Gen. 37-50 primarily between J and E. P provides a list of Jacob's offspring (Gen. 46:6-27) and notice of Jacob's death along with burial instructions (Gen. 49:29-33; 50:12-13).

**TABLE 2 (continued)**

	P	J	E	D
<b>The Life of Moses (Exodus–Deuteronomy)</b>				
Birth and Call of Moses:				
Israelite Oppression	Ex. 1:1-7, 13-14	1:8-12		
Midwives			1:15-21	
Birth/Flight		2:1-22		
Call/Revelation of Divine Name	2:23-25; 3:1-6:1 6:2-7:7	3:9-12; 13-15		
Plagues and Exodus				
Plagues	7:8-13 (snakes) 8:16-19 (gnats) 9:8-12 (boils)	Ex. 7-11		
Passover	12:1-20, 28, 40-51	12:21-39		
Victory at the Red Sea <sup>6</sup>	Ex. 14	Ex. 14	Ex. 14	
First Wilderness Journey:				
Manna <sup>7</sup>	Ex. 16	Ex. 16		
Water from Rock		17:1-7		
War with Amalek		17:8-16		
Jethro's Instruction			18:1-27	
Cultic Revelation at the Mountain of God:				
Theophany		Ex. 19:18	19:16-17, 19	
Decalogue			20:1-21	
Tabernacle	24:15b-18; Ex. 25-31			
Golden Calf		Ex. 32-34	32:1b-4, 21-24	
Construction of Tabernacle	Ex. 35-40			
Ordination of Priests/ Sacrificial System	Leviticus			
Selection of Levites/ Organization of Camp	Num. 1:1-10:10			
Second Wilderness Journey :				
Departure	10:11-28	10:29-36		
The Seventy Elders		Num. 11		
Miriam, Aaron, Moses	Num. 12			

6. P=Ex. 14:1-4, 8-10, 15-18, 21-23, 26, 28-29. J=Ex. 13:20-22; 14:5b, 6, 13-14, 19b, 20, 24, 25b, 27aa, 30-31. E=Ex. 13:17-19; 14:5a, 7, 11-12, 19a, 25a.

7. P=Ex. 16:1-3, 6-27, 32-35a. J=Ex. 16:4-5, 28-31, 35b, 36.

**TABLE 2 (continued)**

	P	J	E	D
Spy Story/Loss of Promised Land <sup>8</sup>	Num. 13-14	Num. 13-14		
Cultic Law	Num. 15			
Korah, Dathan, and Abiram Revolt <sup>9</sup>	Num. 16	Num. 16		
Aaron's Rod	Num. 17			
Priestly Duties	Num. 18			
Corpse Contamination	Num. 19			
Sin of Moses	20:1-13			
Conflict with Edom		20:19-20	20:14-18, 21	
War against Sihon/Og			21:21-35	
Balak and Balaam <sup>10</sup>		Num. 22-24	Num. 22-24	
Census	Num. 26			
Inheritance	Num. 27			
Calendar/Sacrifice	Num. 28-30			
War against Midian	Num. 31			
Land Distribution	Num. 32			
Canaan/Cities of Refuge	Num. 34-36			
<b>Moses' Teaching on the Plains of Moab</b>				
Teaching				Deut.
Death of Moses		Deut. 34:1a, 7-9 <sup>11</sup>		

8. P=Num. 13:1-17a, 21, 25-26, 32-33; 14:1a, 2-3, 5-10, 26-38. J=Num. 13:17b-20, 22-24, 27-31; 14:1b, 4, 11-25, 39-45.

9. P=Num. 16:1a, 2-11, 16-24, 27a, 35-50. J=Num. 16:1b, 12-15, 25-26, 27b-34.

10. J=Num. 22:3b-8, 13-19, 21-37, 39-40; 23:28; 24:1-25. E=Num. 22:2-3a, 9-12, 20, 38; 22:41-23:27, 29-30.

11. Scholars have also identified the pentateuchal sources in the books of Joshua and Judges. For an outline of this literature, see Otto Eissfeldt, *Hexateuch-Synopse. Die Erzählung der Fünf Bücher Mose und des Buches Josua mit dem Anfange des Richterbuches* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1922).

The Elohist source represents the remaining stories where the divine name Elohim occurs. It is less formulaic than P, emphasizing instead a more prophetic interpretation of Israel's origins. Central examples include the second episode of Abraham falsely presenting Sarah as his sister to Abimelech of Gerar (Genesis 20), where Abraham is idealized as a prophet. The testing of Abraham in the divine command to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22) is also attributed to E. Source critics also identify E in Exodus-Numbers. Examples include the use of the name Elohim in the call of Moses (Exodus 3) and in the theophany at Sinai (Exodus 19). The limited literary basis for E has raised questions about its independence from the Yahwistic source. As a result later interpreters often simply refer to JE as one body of literature in the Pentateuch.<sup>65</sup>

The D source is confined to the literature of Deuteronomy, which divides between sermons and laws presented by Moses in a single day. Central themes include covenant, the need for Israel to be distinct from surrounding nations, centralized worship, and the danger of idolatry.<sup>66</sup>

#### *The Date and Chronology of Anonymous Authors and the History of Ancient Israelite Religion*

The identification of anonymous authors required interpreters to arrange them chronologically in order to fashion a history of Israelite religion. Thus, for example, interpreters sought to determine when the two accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2 were written and in what order. Dating anonymous authors proved to be a much more ambiguous undertaking than identifying distinct bodies of literature in the Pentateuch. Historical linguistics, archaeology, comparative religion, the cultural history of the ancient Near East, and current hypotheses concerning the nature of religion and the history of Israelite religion all play a role in determining the historical setting and chronology of pentateuchal literature.<sup>67</sup> Astruc, for example, sought to confirm the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch through his study of sources A and B. He argued that the sources were pre-Mosaic and used by Moses in composing the Pentateuch. Astruc's dating was initially followed by Eichhorn with respect to Exodus-

65. For discussion of the Elohist source, see Alan W. Jenks, "Elohist," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary 2*, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 478–82, and *The Elohist and North Israelite Traditions*, SBLMS 22 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977).

66. Moshe Weinfeld, "Deuteronomy, Book of," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary 2*, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 168–83 and "Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School;" and see Eissfeldt, *Introduction*, 219–33.

67. For overview and summary of the distinct methodological approaches for interpreting the Pentateuch, see *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters*, edited by Douglas A. Knight and Gene M. Tucker, Society of Biblical Literature: The Bible and Its Modern Interpreters I (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985).

Deuteronomy. The impossibility of such theories only came to light gradually as the results of historical-critical research accumulated.

Three insights have become pivotal for determining the date and chronology of pentateuchal authors and the development of ancient Israelite religion: first, W. M. L. de Wette's study of Deuteronomy; second, Julius Wellhausen's dating of the Priestly source, and, third, more recent re-evaluations of the Yahwistic source. The following chronological outline of ancient Israelite history will provide background for the subsequent discussion:<sup>68</sup>

The Mosaic Period	(1300–1200 B.C.E.)
The Tribal Period	(1200–1000 B.C.E.)
The Monarchical Period	(1000–586 B.C.E.)
The Period of the Exile	(586–538 B.C.E.)
The Post-Exilic Period	(538 B.C.E.)

### *1. The Josianic Reform and the Author of Deuteronomy.*

The Pentateuch presents Moses mediating divine law twice. First he mediates law at Mount Sinai in the year of the exodus (Exodus 19–Numbers 10) and a second time, forty years later, on the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy). Thus, the historical setting for the revelation of law in the Pentateuch appears to be in the Mosaic period. But the revelation of law in the Pentateuch raises a number of questions. Why are there two separate law codes, revealed at distinct locations? Why are there differences in content between the two bodies of law? Do the differences in content indicate particular periods in ancient Israelite history other than the Mosaic period? W. M. L. De Wette provided new direction in pentateuchal studies by identifying the author of much of the pentateuchal laws as reflecting the social and historical circumstances of the late Monarchical period, not the Mosaic period.

De Wette focused on the second body of law contained in the book of Deuteronomy in two studies: first in his dissertation and more thoroughly in his *Introduction to the Old Testament*.<sup>69</sup> He noted that the story

68. See J. Maxwell Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986). The chronology is based on Christian dating. B.C.E. translates "Before the Common Era." The Common Era (C.E.), that is the era of both Judaism and Christianity, commences with the birth of Jesus.

69. W. M. L. de Wette, *Dissertatio critico-exegetica qua Deuteronomium a prioribus Pentateuchi Libris diversum, alias cuiusdam recentioris auctioris opus esse monstratur; quam . . . auctoritate amplissimi philosophorum ordinis pro venia legendi AD XXVII* (Jena, 1805), and *Beiträge zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Halle, 1806–7). For a detailed study of de Wette see John W. Rogerson, *W. M. L. de Wette Founder of Modern Biblical Criticism: An Intellectual Biography*, JSOTSupp 126 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992).

of Moses comes to an end at the close of Numbers. The land of Canaan is divided (Num. 26:52–56), Moses' impending death is confirmed (Num. 27:12–14), and Joshua is appointed as successor (Num. 27:15–23). Then somewhat unexpectedly Deuteronomy begins the story anew by repeating much of the material that occurs in Leviticus and in Numbers. New law is given (Deuteronomy 4–5, 12–25), the story of Israel's wilderness journey is retold (Deuteronomy 1–3), many specific laws repeat (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28), Joshua is appointed a second time to succeed Moses (Deuteronomy 31), and God tells Moses again of his impending death (Deuteronomy 31, 34). The repetitions suggest that the history of Moses is completed at the close of Numbers.

De Wette also noted that the style of writing and religious outlook in Deuteronomy were unique. The language was more reflective and theologically sophisticated than the literature in Genesis–Numbers. It contained distinctive phrases (i.e., "that you may live in the land which Yahweh our God gives you"). And the book presented a unique view of the cult. Images were strictly forbidden (Deuteronomy 4–5), and all worship was required to take place at a single sanctuary (Deuteronomy 12). The demand for centralized worship meant that Passover became a national festival celebrated at the central temple (Deuteronomy 16). The vision of centralized worship in Deuteronomy was at odds with the biblical portrait of Israel as having many sanctuaries throughout the Mosaic (i.e., Exod. 20:24–25) and monarchical (i.e., Saul in 1 Samuel 13; David in 1 Samuel 21; and Solomon in 1 Kings 3) periods. As a consequence de Wette argued that Deuteronomy could not have been written by Moses. No trace of its wilderness vision of community and worship was evident when Israel entered the land and lived under judges and monarchs.<sup>70</sup> De Wette concluded that the earliest portions of Deuteronomy were written in the closing years of the Monarchical period, during the Josianic reform (621 B.C.E.). The most important innovation of the Josianic reform was the centralization of worship (2 Kings 22–23) advocated in Deuteronomy. Thus this book, with its command for one sanctuary and centralized worship, must have been the "book of the law" (1 Kgs. 22:8) that guided the reform of Josiah. Its original author, according to de Wette, wrote at the close of the Monarchical period, with later writers adding even more literature in the Exilic and post-Exilic periods. De Wette's fixing of the date of Deuteronomy at the end of the Monarchical period

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70. Wellhausen (*Prolegomena*, 4–5) describes de Wette as "the epoch-making pioneer of historical criticism." The reason, according to Wellhausen, is that de Wette perceived how "disconnected are the alleged starting-point of Israel's history and that history itself. The religious community set upon so broad a basis in the wilderness, with its sacred center and uniform organization, disappears and leaves no trace as soon as Israel settles in a land of its own, and becomes, in any proper sense, a nation."

became a fulcrum point for establishing the chronology of the remaining literature in the Pentateuch.

## *2. The Post-Exilic Theocracy and the Author of the Priestly Source.*

The Priestly source begins with creation in Genesis 1 and runs at least through Numbers, if not Joshua. It focuses on cultic law associated with the wilderness tabernacle (i.e., Exodus 25–31, 35–40; Leviticus; Numbers 1–10). Prior to Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), interpreters identified the Priestly source as the oldest body of literature in the Pentateuch. Its presumed antiquity was indicated by the various designations, E1, the Older Elohist, the foundational document, the main stock, and the German word Quelle (Q)—meaning spring, source, or origin. It was considered the foundational text upon which other documents were added. As a result interpreters assumed that the revelation of law, the tabernacle cult, and its priestly hierarchy were part of the earliest history of ancient Israel, preceding even the prophets and kings of the Monarchical period. This was de Wette's position. He assumed that Deuteronomy was a reinterpretation of the tabernacle legislation. Julius Wellhausen proposed just the reverse, that the Priestly source was dependent upon Deuteronomy, and that its author wrote after the Josianic reform in 621 B.C.E., probably as late as the post-Exilic period (i.e., the period after the sixth century B.C.E. exile).<sup>71</sup> Wellhausen argued in *The Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* that the Priestly source was the latest body of literature to enter the Pentateuch. De Wette provided the clue. He had demonstrated that centralized worship was an innovation in Deuteronomy. The new demand of centralized worship during the Josianic reform was evident in the polemical tone of the book of Deuteronomy. Repeatedly in Deuteronomy multiple sanctuaries are condemned, while the law of a single sanctuary is carefully outlined. The priestly author, Wellhausen contended, is so dependent on Deuteronomy that there is no need for further argument about centralized worship at a single sanctuary. It is simply assumed. The absence of conflict indicated to Wellhausen a much later document, written during the post-Exilic period, when Israel was a theocracy, organized around one sanctuary and ruled by priests. Further evidence of the post-Exilic theocracy in the Priestly source, according to Wellhausen, is the separation of Aaronide priests and Levites, something that is also lacking in Deuteronomy, and most likely emerged in the post-Exilic period. Wellhausen's late dating of P to the post-Exile provides the basis for the classical theory of the documen-

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71. Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*. For discussion of Wellhausen's work, see *Julius Wellhausen and His Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, edited by D. A. Knight, *Semeia* 25 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983).

tary hypothesis, in which the order of the sources in the Pentateuch is J, E, D, and P.

Wellhausen's research on the Priestly source has far reaching implications for interpreting the history of ancient Israelite religion. Neither Mosaic authorship nor even the Mosaic period play a role in his interpretation of the Pentateuch. Instead the writing of the Pentateuch begins in the Monarchical period with the J and E sources. He judged J to be a history written in the southern kingdom of Judah, while E was a later, northern version. (Israel became two nations in 922 B.C.E. after the reign of Solomon: Judah, the southern kingdom, and Israel, the northern kingdom). Both J and E precede Deuteronomy and the Priestly source. They assume multiple cultic sites, worship is closely tied to agrarian life, and there is a minimal role for law. Wellhausen placed the two histories in the early Assyrian period (9th-8th century B.C.E.). Other interpreters would locate J as early as the United Monarchy Period (the 10th century B.C.E.).<sup>72</sup> The D source remained firmly fixed as the document of the Josianic Reform in the late 7th century B.C.E. And now P was judged to be a late history from the post-Exilic period, no earlier than the 5th century B.C.E.

The chronology of authorship was evident in the festivals, according to Wellhausen. J and E were organized around harvest festivals (Exod. 23:14–17; 34:21–23). In D (Deuteronomy 16) and especially P (Leviticus 23) worship became more abstracted from nature until their festivals were no longer attached to harvest cycles. The central role of law envisioned in D and P, moreover, emerges late in the history of Israel, not at its origin in the Mosaic period as the pentateuchal story suggests. As a consequence the prophets, according to Wellhausen, represent an older form of religion, prior to the legal traditions of D and P. Wellhausen's conclusion was that Moses, the law-giver at the wilderness tabernacle in P, is a literary fiction, meant to lend authority to the priestly theocracy and cult of the post-Exilic period. In fact a minimum period of seven hundred years now separated the author of the P source from the subject matter of Moses, the exodus, and the wilderness wandering.

Wellhausen's hypothesis concerning the time, place, and religious outlook of the priestly author has undergone extensive criticism and revision. Scholars believe that priestly law was most likely in formation already in the Monarchical period and, thus, not an innovation by post-Exilic writers as Wellhausen concluded.<sup>73</sup> And Wellhausen's develop-

72. See for example Gerhard von Rad, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, translated by E. W. T. Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 1–78.

73. See the criticism of Wellhausen by Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel: From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, translated and abridged by M. Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

mental view of religion as a progression from simple and free charisma to more complex ritual has also been rejected, along with his negative view of priestly ritual as lacking the religious depth of the prophets. More recent research has demonstrated the dynamic character of ritual, law, and priestly hierarchy throughout the religious development of ancient Israel.<sup>74</sup> Yet the basic insight of Wellhausen concerning the late date of the Priestly source has remained a building block in the modern identification of pentateuchal authors.

### *3. The Exile and the Author of the Yahwistic Source.*

The most recent debate among pentateuchal interpreters concerns the authorship and date of J. Debate concerning the independence of an E source from the J source has been ongoing in twentieth century biblical scholarship. Many writers refer simply to JE. Yet throughout the modern historical-critical period of interpretation, there has been a strong consensus for dating the Yahwistic source (or JE) to the early monarchical period. Wellhausen placed J in the 9th-8th centuries B.C.E. More recent scholars like Gerhard von Rad pushed the date of J to the 10th century B.C.E. In either case there was agreement that ancient Israel began to write historical narrative early in the monarchical period—if not during the renaissance of the United Monarchy (10th century B.C.E.), then shortly thereafter (9th-8th centuries B.C.E.). Scholars debated questions of genre. Could such writing be called history, or were other categories such as epic, myth, legend, or folklore more appropriate?<sup>75</sup> Within this debate, however, there was general agreement that some form of historiography emerged during the early monarchical period. This consensus strongly influenced the interpretation of ancient Israelite religion in at least two ways. First, an early date for J allowed interpreters to use it as an avenue for discerning the social and religious world view of the United Monarchy of David and Solomon (the 10th century B.C.E.).<sup>76</sup> Second, the presence of historiography during the early monarchical period also accentuated the uniqueness of Israel within its larger cultural setting, since no other contemporary culture had produced anything like

74. See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus*, AB 3A (New York: Doubleday, 1991); and Frank H. Gorman, Jr., *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time and Status in the Priestly Theology*, JSOTSup 91 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1990).

75. For discussions of history writing, see Thomas L. Thompson, "Historiography [Israelite]," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary 3*, edited by D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 206–12; and A. Momigliano, *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography*, The Sather Classical Lectures 54 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). For summaries of the myth and history debate; see C. Kloos, *Yhwh's Combat with the Sea: A Canaanite Tradition in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986); and J. W. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation*, BZAW 134 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974).

76. See, for example, von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*.

the J source.<sup>77</sup> The closest parallels to such historiography appear much later in the ancient Near East, with the early Greek historians like Herodotus, writing during the Persian period in the fifth century B.C.E. and later.<sup>78</sup>

Contemporary interpreters are increasingly arguing for a late date to the Yahwistic source. The central arguments surround its relationship to Deuteronomy (D) and the Deuteronomistic History (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings). In 1976, H. H. Schmid undertook a fresh literary study of Yahwistic stories, terminology, and themes.<sup>79</sup> He discovered similarity between the J literature in Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers and prophetic themes and genres in the Deuteronomistic History (i.e., the commissioning of Moses in Exodus 3-4 is a prophetic genre repeated in Judges and Samuel). Schmid concluded that the "so-called" J literature was formed by deuteronomistic writers during the Exilic period, accounting for the thematic emphasis on blessing, nationhood, and the promise of land. John Van Seters has also argued that the J source originates in the exile and is later than Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History.<sup>80</sup> Like Schmid, his study focuses on terminology and the relationship of literature in Genesis, Exodus, and Numbers to Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History. But Van Seters has also added the comparative study of historiography in the ancient world to argue against an early monarchical date to the J source. He, too, favors an Exilic date for J, closer to the emergence of Greek historiography in the Persian period (beginning with the Persian capture of Babylon in 539 B.C.E.). Rolf Rendtorff and his student Erhard Blum have reached somewhat similar conclusions to Schmid and Van Seters with regard to the date of J literature, employing more tradition-historical methodology.<sup>81</sup> They also argue for the original formation of pentateuchal historiography in the Exilic period by deuteronomistic writers and editors.

Debate over the formation of pentateuchal literature and the best designation for the anonymous author(s) is far from settled. Interpreters continue to argue both for sources and for a process of supplementation

77. For a discussion, see R. Gnuse, "Heilsgeschichte" as a Model for Biblical Theology: The Debate Concerning the Uniqueness and Significance of Israel's Worldview, College Theology Society Studies in Religion 4 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988).

78. For an overview and comparison, see John Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven: Yale University, 1983).

79. H. H. Schmid, *Der sogenannte Jahwist: Beobachtungen und Fragen zur Pentateuchforschung* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976).

80. Van Seters, *In Search of History*.

81. R. Rendtorff, *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*; and E. Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch*, BZAW 189 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990).

to account for the formation of the Pentateuch.<sup>82</sup> Van Seders continues to use the term Yahwist to describe an Exilic history, while others have dropped the name altogether. Blum, for example, prefers the designation, D-Composition for traditional J literature, accentuating closer ties to Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History.

Dating the Yahwist to the Exilic period will undoubtedly have implications for interpreting the history of ancient Israelite religion. Three issues are already beginning to emerge.

First, there are new historical questions. Werner Lemche, Thomas L. Thompson, and others are presently questioning the biblical portrait of the United Monarchical period as a golden age under David and Solomon.<sup>83</sup> Past theories of a renaissance during the reign of kings David and Solomon during the 10th century B. C. E. were supported, in part, by the location of the J source during this period. The removal of the J source from this period is certainly one factor in the current debate surrounding the development of Israelite culture in the 10th century B.C.E. These authors are now questioning whether ancient Israel ever experienced a renaissance under kings David and Solomon. Some question altogether the historical portrait of David and Solomon as builders of a strong Israelite state.

Second, the cultural and religious uniqueness of Israel during the Monarchical period will also require re-evaluation when the J source is relocated to the exile. The J source supports a theology of salvation history in which Israel's relationship with Yahweh is portrayed as radically distinct from the religious practices of the surrounding nations. The Pentateuch presents the history of Israel as a series of elections in which the ancestors and the nation of Israel are separated from their neighbors. The very notion of a history of salvation may be a late theological development in the history of ancient Israel. The emergence of historical writing and a historical consciousness in ancient Israel only in the late Monarchical period may signify much more similarity between Israel and its neighbors during the early Monarchical period than was previously assumed. In this case the message of prophets like Hosea (late 8th century B. C. E.) that Israel abandon the worship of Baal for a more exclusive worship of Yahweh may not be a call to an ideal past, but an innovation in the history of Israelite religion.

82. For a summary of current debate, see A. de Pury and T. Römer, "Le pentateuque en question: Position du problème et brève histoire de la recherche," in *Le pentateuque en question: Les origines et la composition des cinq premiers livres de la Bible à la lumière des recherches récentes*, Le monde de la Bible (edited by A. de Pury; Genève: Labor & Fides, 1989).

83. Niels Peter Lemche, *The Canaanites and Their Land: The Tradition of the Canaanite*, JSOTSup 110 (Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1992); and Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People: From the Written and Archaeological Sources*, Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East 4 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992).

And, third, the late dating of pentateuchal literature suggests that the creative period for the emergence of the Yahwism represented in the Torah is the Exilic and post-Exilic periods, not the Monarchical period as scholars have traditionally assumed. This shift in focus is prompting more intense study of the Persian and Hellenistic historical eras—the time of the post-Exile. Such a hypothesis is the opposite position of Wellhausen and most other 19th and early 20th-century interpreters, who viewed the history of Israelite religion as a process of decay from the charisma of prophets in the Monarchical period to post-Exilic priestly ritual.

### SUMMARY

The preceding overview has sought to demonstrate the dynamic and incomplete character of the search for pentateuchal authors. Many important contributions have been overlooked, especially the study of oral tradition and folklore as a form of anonymous authorship.<sup>84</sup> Yet even our brief overview illustrates that only in the modern period have anonymous authors replaced Moses as the assumed writer of the Pentateuch. The survey of modern interpreters, moreover, indicates a trend toward progressively later dating in identifying the authors of the Pentateuch. Early hypotheses about authorship moved initially from the Mosaic period to the Monarchical period as the setting in which the Pentateuch was written. Current debate now focuses on the Exilic and post-Exilic periods as the social setting of the pentateuchal authors.

The later dating of pentateuchal literature creates wider gaps between the biblical presentation of ancient Israelite history and contemporary reconstructions of it. Early historical critics disputed the biblical presentation of the Mosaic period in biblical literature. Contemporary interpreters are disputing the biblical portrait of the Monarchical period, especially the historical character of the 10th century B. C. E. United Monarchy under kings David and Solomon. The ever increasing separation of pentateuchal literature from the history it presents raises new literary questions of genre (What kind of literature is the Pentateuch?) and religious questions about authority (In what way is the Pentateuch reliable literature for faith and life when its authority does not arise from Moses' inspired authorship?). These questions are dynamic and open to revision through the history of interpretation as biblical interpreters seek to identify the anonymous authors of the Pentateuch.

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84. See Herman Gunkel, *Genesis*, 8th ed (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1969 [reprint of 3d. ed. 1910]); Axel Olrik, "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," in *The Study of Folklore*, edited by Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965 [1909 original]); and Ivan Engnell, *A Rigid Scrutiny: Critical Essays on the Old Testament*, translated by John T. Willis (Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1969).