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So, thirdly, Israel must keep the covenant wholeheartedly. 'Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength' (6:5) sums up the whole message of Moses. This meant keeping the Ten Commandments given by God at Sinai (ch. 5). It meant applying the Commandments to every sphere of life. The second and longest sermon of Moses consists of a historical retrospect followed by an expansion and application of the commandments to every sphere of Israel's life in Canaan; the laws in chs. 12 – 25 roughly follow the order of the commandments and expand and comment on them. Israel must be as warm-hearted in her response to the law as the Lord had showed himself in giving her the land and the law itself.

Finally, Israel's future destiny depended on her response to the law. Obedience to the commandments would lead to immense prosperity in family, farm and nation, whereas disobedience would result in disaster, culminating in expulsion from the land (ch. 28). But if this happened, and Moses feared it would, it would not spell the end of Israel's relationship with God. Repentance would lead to renewal of the covenant blessings and national prosperity would be restored (chs. 29 – 30, 32).

The composition of the Pentateuch

While there is broad agreement among many scholars about the theme of the Pentateuch as sketched above, there are very deep differences of opinion about its composition. This has not always been the case; indeed, for nearly two millennia it was universally agreed that Moses was the principal author of the whole Pentateuch. It therefore seems best to tackle the issue of composition under three heads. First, the traditional theory of Mosaic authorship. Secondly, the consensus critical view, the documentary hypothesis, which reigned almost unchallenged from 1880 to 1980. Thirdly, modern theories.

The traditional view

From pre-Christian times to the beginning of the nineteenth century it was accepted by nearly everyone that Moses was the author of nearly all the Pentateuch. This is a natural conclusion to draw from a straightforward reading of Genesis to Deuteronomy. From Ex. 2 onwards Moses is the leading actor in the story. The Lord revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3); then Moses negotiated with Pharaoh for Israel's release and brought the people through the Red Sea to Sinai. There he personally received the Ten Commandments, other laws and the instructions for erecting the tabernacle. The narrative stresses that many of the laws were not

announced publicly to the whole nation, for the Lord's appearance on the mountain was too terrifying. Instead they were made known to Moses alone (Ex. 20:19–21; Dt. 5:5), who then passed them on to the people.

Moses' role as a mediator is stressed throughout the Pentateuch. Time and again laws are introduced by the statement, 'Then the LORD said to Moses'. This implies a special intimacy with God, suggesting that if God is the ultimate source of the law, Moses was its channel, if not the human author of it. This impression is reinforced most strongly by the book of Deuteronomy, with Moses addressing the nation in his own words, explaining the laws given on Sinai and urging Israel to keep them when they enter the promised land.

Deuteronomy contains the last words of Moses to Israel before he died. Moses talks about himself in the first person, 'The idea seemed good to me' (1:23); and sometimes he identifies with Israel 'as the LORD our God commanded us, we set out' (1:19). At other times he sets himself over against them, 'I told you, but you would not listen' (1:43). Chs. 1 – 11 describe most of the same events from the exodus to the conquest of Transjordan as the books of Exodus to Numbers do, but whereas these books recount it from the perspective of a narrator outside the situation, Deuteronomy describes the events as Moses experienced them. The claim that Moses is the speaker in Deuteronomy is inescapable.

If Deuteronomy ended at 31:8, it would be possible to suppose that Moses preached about the law, but someone else, perhaps much later, committed his ideas to writing. However 31:9, 'Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests', and 31:24, 'Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end', seem to exclude such a loose view of Mosaic authorship. If then Moses wrote Deuteronomy, it would seem likely that Exodus to Numbers were written by him earlier in his career, and that Genesis, the indispensable introduction to the other books, may well have been composed by him too.

These are the arguments that led early Jewish writers, the NT, and nearly everyone who studied the Bible until about 1800 to conclude that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. Consequently, Genesis was often called the first book of Moses, and so on. However in the nineteenth century this ancient consensus began to crumble, and to this change of approach we must now turn.

The 'documentary hypothesis'

It all began with an interesting book written by a French doctor, J. Astruc in 1753. Astruc

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observed that in the early chapters of Genesis God is sometimes referred to as God and at others as 'the LORD'. This suggested to him that at least two sources had been drawn on by Moses in the writing of Genesis. This was supported by the observation that there was duplication of material in Genesis (*e.g.* two accounts of creation in chs. 1 and 2).

Astruc had no intention of denying the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch; he was simply exploring what sources Moses may have used. Yet his source analysis became a key ingredient of later criticism. In the course of the nineteenth century his analysis was refined, and some scholars argued that these sources were later than Moses.

About fifty years after Astruc a much more radical proposal was put forward by W. M. L. de Wette, who in his dissertation of 1805, and in another work (1806-7), argued that Deuteronomy was written in the time of Josiah (*i.e.* about seven centuries after Moses) and that the book of Chronicles gives a quite unreliable account of the history of Israel's worship. Both these ideas became central in the view of pentateuchal origins that emerged later in the century. So it is appropriate here to note how de Wette reached his conclusions, for they are fundamental to the new critical consensus often known as the documentary hypothesis.

De Wette noted that Chronicles has much more to say about worship than Kings does, although both deal with the same historical period. Hitherto scholars had regarded the details of Chronicles as an accurate supplement to the picture in Kings, but de Wette argued that since Chronicles was written after Kings, it could not be trusted. By dismissing the evidence of Chronicles in this way he could more easily argue that Deuteronomy too was a late work.

The language and atmosphere of Deuteronomy differ from the preceding books, but that hardly determines when it was written. What de Wette fastened on was Deuteronomy's insistence that all worship should be conducted at the place which the Lord would choose. Deuteronomy forbids worship at the country shrines, on the hilltop altars under every green tree, but insists that sacrifices, and especially the national feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, must be held at the central sanctuary chosen by the Lord (ch. 16). A reading of Samuel and Kings suggests that such strict rules were not introduced until the seventh century BC. Then in about 622 BC King Josiah abolished all the country shrines and required worship to take place only in Jerusalem (2 Ki. 22 - 23). If Deuteronomy's principles for worship were not enforced until Josiah's day, is it not easier to suppose the principles were invented then than

to suppose that Deuteronomy's laws were a dead letter from the time of Moses? This argument of de Wette connecting Deuteronomy with the centralization of worship in Josiah's day was to become one of the main planks in the 'Wellhausen synthesis' at the end of the century.

Most of Wellhausen's ideas had been anticipated by others. But he transformed OT scholarship with a book published in 1878, sweeping away traditional views of the origin of the Pentateuch. If few of his ideas were new, the way they were presented by Wellhausen was brilliant and appealed very strongly in an era when the theory of evolution was new and believed by many to explain not just biological change but many other historical developments.

Wellhausen painted a picture of Israel's religious development that seemed natural and inevitable without the need for miracle or divine revelation. In the earliest stages, he argued, Israelite religion was relatively unregulated. People offered sacrifice when they liked and where they liked, without any priestly interference. This is the situation Wellhausen saw reflected in the books of Samuel and Kings. At the end of the monarchy period King Josiah intervened, limiting all worship to Jerusalem, thereby greatly enhancing the power of the priests, who were now able to control the details of worship. Once the priests had this power, they consolidated it, and during the exile (587-537 BC) they invented all sorts of rules and regulations about the details of worship, the status of the priests, their entitlement to tithes and sacrificial portions and so on.

Wellhausen then proceeded to show how this picture of Israel's religious evolution could be tied in with the sources of the Pentateuch, which had first been identified by Astruc. Wellhausen accepted that four main sources could be identified, which were designated by the letters J, E, P and D. J, the Yahwistic source, uses the divine name 'the LORD' (Yahweh). It comprises about half of Genesis and small parts of Exodus and Numbers. E, the Elohist source, only uses the generic term 'God' (Elohim). It comprises about a third of Genesis and small parts of Exodus and Numbers. P, the priestly source, like E uses the generic term 'God'. It comprises about a sixth of Genesis (mainly chs. 1, 17, 23 and various genealogies) and most of Ex. 25 - Nu. 36. D is the book of Deuteronomy.

Wellhausen argued that Deuteronomy (D) knows only the material found in J and E, but that P knows the material in J, E and D. This gives a relative ordering of the material in the Pentateuch; J→E→D→P. He then argued that the picture of worship in J and E matches the practice of worship in the monarchy period,

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when lay people could worship where and when they liked. The picture of D[Deuteronomy] fits in with the aims of Josiah's centralizing reforms, while P's attention to the minute details of worship fits in with the dictatorship of the priestly class which Wellhausen surmised had developed in and after the exile. He therefore suggested that J should be dated c. 850 BC, E c. 750 BC, D c. 622 BC and P c. 500 BC. These sources, once they had been written down, were merged one after the other, so that eventually the current Pentateuch emerged in the time of Ezra (fifth century BC).

The implications of this approach to the Pentateuch were far-reaching. If the earliest sources, J and E, were written about six centuries after Moses, they could hardly be relied on to give an accurate picture of that era, let alone the patriarchal era. And if J and E were untrustworthy, how much more so were the later sources D and P. Wellhausen himself was quite clear about the consequences of his critical position. J and E give us no historical information about the patriarchal period; instead they project the religious situation of the monarchy period into hoary antiquity like a 'glorified mirage'. Similarly, D and P reflect the concerns of the time in which they were composed, not the Mosaic era.

Wellhausen's negative judgment about the historical worth of the Pentateuch initially evoked a very hostile reaction. Nevertheless, his approach soon became widely accepted by critical Protestant scholarship. It took much longer for it to be embraced by Catholic or Jewish scholars.

The acceptance of this theory was aided by several factors. First, it was accepted and advocated by scholars like S. R. Driver, who, unlike Wellhausen, did believe in biblical inspiration and argued that the late dating of the pentateuchal sources did not affect their spiritual value. One could accept Wellhausen's critical theories without betraying the Christian faith and becoming an atheist.

Secondly, and probably more significant in the long run, were the modifications made to the documentary theory by the form-critical school of Gunkel, Alt, Noth and von Rad. By arguing that behind the relatively late sources (J, E, D, P) there were old traditions, (some indeed reaching back to, or even before Moses), this form-critical school restored trust in the historical value of the Pentateuch to some extent. It may after all tell us something about the periods to which it purports to relate; maybe not a lot, but certainly more than the nil returns of Wellhausen. For example, Gunkel in his commentary on Genesis (1901) suggests that the earliest form of the patriarchal stories came from before Israel's settlement in the land.

Similarly H. Gressmann (1913) argued that a primitive form of the Ten Commandments came from the time of Moses.

More important for confirming the impression that acceptance of the documentary hypothesis did not mean saying good-bye to any knowledge of the patriarchal era was the work of A. Alt (1929). He argued that the picture of patriarchal religion in a few passages in Genesis (31:5, 29, 53; 46:3; 49:25) was true to their nomadic life-style, with the essential idea of a tribal god, who protected the tribe in its wanderings and blessed it with children. Although Alt relied on a very narrow range of texts, his picture of patriarchal religion resembles in outline the picture a more traditional reader might construct.

Similarly, by focusing on those elements common to both J and E, M. Noth (1930) was able to construct a picture of Israel before the monarchy that consisted of a league of tribes bound together by covenant, fighting holy wars and worshipping at a central shrine. Once again, though Noth was very far from finding much history in the Pentateuch itself, he was sketching an outline of Israel's religious constitution that was not dissimilar to an uncritical reading of Exodus to Judges. In a similar way G. von Rad (1938) argued that the earliest Bible creed in Dt. 26 gradually developed in the course of time into our present Pentateuch. By affirming a continuity between the oldest elements in the Pentateuch and the existing work and finding a slim historical kernel within it, these scholars helped to make the documentary hypothesis more palatable.

The archaeological approach of the American W. F. Albright and his school further enhanced the impression that the Pentateuch could be trusted, even if its constituent sources were very late. They argued that the names of the patriarchs were typical names of the early second millennium, that the migrations and seminomadic life-style of the patriarchs also fitted this period, and that many of the legal rites and family customs mentioned in Genesis (*e.g.* giving dowries) were also attested in old non-biblical texts. This all showed the essential historical trustworthiness of Genesis. R. de Vaux's *The Early History of Israel* (1971) is probably the greatest monument to this approach, combining judiciously the insights of archaeology with the critical methods of Alt, Noth and Wellhausen to produce a quite positive view of Israel's historical development.

There was thus a consensus across the scholarly world that there were four main sources (J, E, D, P) in the Pentateuch, mostly written long after 1000 BC, which, despite their age, gave a good insight into the history of Israel

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between 2000 and 1300 BC.

The collapse of the consensus

The 1970s saw the publication of several seminal works which initiated a period of great turmoil in pentateuchal studies. In 1974 T. L. Thompson presented a thorough examination of the oft-cited archaeological arguments for the historical character of the patriarchal narratives. He showed that many of the arguments proved much less than was often alleged, indeed that sometimes the Bible or the parallel non-biblical sources had been misinterpreted to bolster belief in Genesis. There were some elements left that looked early, *e.g.* the names of the patriarchs, but if one believed that Genesis was written after 1000 BC, as Thompson did, these could be explained quite differently.

J. Van Seters (1975) went further in querying the critical consensus. He argued, not that the patriarchal stories were undatable as Thompson did, but that they actually fitted conditions and legal institutions of the sixth century BC. Furthermore, he queried the two-century old belief that the variation in the names of God ('the LORD'/'God') or that parallel stories (*cf.* Gn. 12 /Gn. 20) were necessarily indicators of different writers or sources. In fact Van Seters went a long way to eliminating the E source in Gn. 12 – 26, arguing that it was not a coherent entity, but just early elements incorporated by J, who was the major author of this part of Genesis.

R. Rendtorff (1977), like Van Seters, dispensed with many of the standard criteria for distinguishing sources and poured scorn on many of the arguments put forward by scholars favouring a documentary analysis. He argued that Genesis emerged in quite a different fashion. There was one group of stories about Abraham, another group about Jacob, another about Joseph. These grew independently for a long while until they were joined together by an editor who linked up the originally separate stories to form a coherent long narrative.

Finally, there was the great commentary on Genesis by C. Westermann, published in instalments from 1968 to 1982. Westermann is of similar vintage and outlook to de Vaux, whereas Thompson, Van Seters and Rendtorff are younger radicals, and his work is probably more

significant than theirs. Yet Westermann, while holding fast to a tenth-century date for the J source (not the sixth century as Van Seters holds) does more or less dispense with the E source. The patriarchal stories tend to be viewed by Westermann as a substantial unity from the hand of J, with occasional inserts from the much later P source.

Another trend in biblical studies that began to make its mark in the 1970s has encouraged scholars to read the Pentateuch as a unity. The new literary criticism is primarily concerned with understanding works in their existing form not with the process of their composition. It is concerned with the arrangement of works as wholes, their theme, the use a narrator makes of devices such as repetition, mimesis (portrayal of reality), and dialogue; the depiction of character and motive within narrative. The old criticism, on the other hand, was preoccupied with authorship, the date of composition, sources, and the historical circumstances surrounding the writing of the text. The new literary criticism has led to a much greater appreciation of the techniques of the Hebrew writers and often, as a consequence, to a rejection of the criteria used to distinguish sources. For example, whereas repetition tended to be viewed by older critics as a mark of multiple sources, new critics tend to regard it as an important narrative device, which can be exploited by a single author for dramatic effect. There has been no frontal attack by new literary critics on the documentary hypothesis, but many asides from *e.g.* R. Alter (1981) and M. Sternberg (1985), who indicate their dissatisfaction with the standard source criticism. And the unified readings of the Pentateuch offered by Clines (see bibliography) and Whybray owe much to the new criticism.

These new directions in pentateuchal studies have broken the century-old critical consensus, but they have not established themselves as a new orthodoxy. They probably represent the views of a vocal minority, whereas a silent majority still hold a moderate form of the documentary hypothesis such as de Vaux defended.

We can perhaps set out the main critical options in a table:

Old documentary hypothesis

J	10th century	Contain authentic echoes of Moses and the patriarchs
E	8th century	
D	7th century	
P	6th century or later	

New critical view

6th century	Reflects late monarchy or exilic situation
	Not really a distinct source
7th century	
6th century or later	

The new critical view retains the late dating of D and P of the old documentary hypothesis but rejects the distinction between J and E. It maintains that the enlarged J (roughly old J + E) does not give historical insight into the early periods (*i.e.* the patriarchs, Moses or the judges), but rather into the beliefs of the Jews in the exile.

Hitherto we have only looked at the views of mainline critical Christian scholars. Critical Jewish scholars have in recent years made the greatest contribution to the study of the ritual texts of the Pentateuch (*i.e.* Ex. 25 – Nu. 36), what is usually termed P. For example, Milgrom has argued that the exilic dating of P is mistaken. The laws on worship in Leviticus do not correspond to what was done in the temple when it was rebuilt after the exile, which they should do if the book was written then. The language of these books (P) is more archaic than that of Ezekiel, the priest-prophet who preached about 600 BC. The style of worship, the equipment used in worship, and the priests' duties as described in Exodus to Numbers have many similarities to what is known about worship in other parts of the ancient Near East of the second millennium BC. This suggests to these scholars that P (Ex. 25 – Nu. 36) is at least pre-exilic and describes what happened in the worship of the first temple, and maybe the tabernacle as well. However, few Christian scholars have paid much attention to these argument and most still seem to regard P as an exilic or post-exilic work.

A conservative response

Given the current critical confusion about the Pentateuch, what can be affirmed about its origins? Can it be trusted at all in what it says about the eras of Moses and the patriarchs? Or were the stories and laws just made up by the exiles to express their hopes for the future? Is the Pentateuch a substantial unity or is it composed of a variety of conflicting sources?

One response to the current debate about the Pentateuch might be: 'The critics are so divided among themselves that they cannot prove anything. So let us just go back to what the Pentateuch says about itself and accept that Moses was its main author.' However, such a response fails to do justice to the earnestness of the debate and the very real issues that have been raised. In attempting to set out a reasoned conservative reflection on the debate four issues need to be addressed. First, how many sources can be identified in the Pentateuch? Are the traditional criteria for distinguishing the sources valid? Secondly, does J date from the time of the exile (*c.* 550 BC), early monarchy (*c.* 950 BC) or Moses (*c.* 1250 BC)? In particular is

there any history in the patriarchal stories, and when were the opening chapters of Genesis composed? Thirdly, how far can P and J be sharply defined? When was the priestly material composed? Finally, was Deuteronomy really composed to promote or justify Josiah's reforms in 622 BC? These issues are, of course, highly complex, taking up acres of print in many books, and it is possible here to outline just one direction of thought.

First, source analysis. It was Astruc who suggested that the alternation between 'God' and 'the LORD' (Elohim/Yahweh) marked different sources. Nowadays it is widely accepted that this criterion does not serve to distinguish the sources J and E very well, so that many conclude that there is no E source. However, the distinction between the P and J sources is often maintained on the strength of the divine-name criterion and the sources' alleged difference in style. On this basis the flood story (Gn. 6 – 9) is often split into J and P versions. Yet even here several recent writers have acknowledged that the case is not proven. Others have pointed out that other ancient texts also use a variety of names for the same God, so why should this phenomenon in the Hebrew Bible indicate multiple sources? Often in Genesis a theological reason is evident for the alternation. Where God is the universal Creator of the world, the God of foreigners as well as Israelites, 'God' (Elohim) is the preferred term. Where though he is the covenant partner, particularly of Israel, 'the LORD' (Yahweh) is frequently used.

Thus the divine name criterion is a doubtful pointer to different sources. This is not to say that Genesis is a total unity that sprang completely fresh from the mind of one author. It is certain that the writer used a variety of sources, genealogies, poems and narratives in creating his work, but the names of God are by themselves an unreliable guide to source division.

The second major issue is the extent and date of J. For simplicity the discussion here is confined to Genesis. The fragmentary nature of J in the later books makes its existence more problematic there. But in Genesis it comprises about 50% of the text according to the traditional documentary hypothesis; about 85% if, with modern writers, E is not recognized as distinct; and nearly 100% if the P material was written before J and has been worked into his composition.

The scope of J thus remains subject for debate and so does its date. The documentary hypothesis held that J reflects the ideals of the early monarchy, *e.g.* in the boundaries of the promised land (Gn. 15:18–21), the implied rise of the Davidic monarchy (Gn. 38; 49:10) and so

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on. More recent radical critics like Van Seters have argued that J reflects the concerns of the exiles yearning to return to Canaan, hence Genesis' preoccupation with God's promise of the land to Abraham and his descendants. These observations about the interests of J certainly show its relevance to various epochs but do not necessarily prove that it originated in those times. In fact, each of the three main parts of Genesis, the 'proto-history' (chs. 1–11), the patriarchal story (chs. 12–35) and the Joseph story (chs. 37–50) could have originated early. The closest ancient Near Eastern parallels to Genesis 1–11, the Atrahasis epic, the Gilgamesh epic tablet 11, the Sumerian flood story, and the Sumerian king list all date from the early second millennium. Similarly, the portrait of patriarchal life and religion drawn in Genesis 12–25 is unlike that of the Mosaic and subsequent periods. Names, religious practices and legal customs attested in these chapters of Genesis find parallels in the second millennium. Finally there are features in the Joseph story that suggest that it probably originated in the Ramesside era, *i.e.* about the time of Moses.

However, there are enough hints sprinkled throughout Genesis to show that if the book originated earlier than the monarchy period, it was at least revised then. Terms like Dan (14:14), Chaldeans (15:7) or Philistines (21:32,34) and Joseph's title 'lord of his entire household' (45:8) look like modernizations to make the stories more easily intelligible to readers in monarchy times. Similarly, patriarchal religion is described from a later perspective. It was to Moses that the name Yahweh (the LORD) was first revealed: the patriarchs worshipped God as El Shaddai (God Almighty Ex. 3:13–14; 6:3). Yet Genesis, acknowledging that the God who spoke to Moses was the God whom the patriarchs knew, interchanges the terms. Speeches by God tend to use the old terms (El Shaddai, El or Elohim), whereas the narrator frequently speaks of God using later terminology as 'the LORD' (Yahweh).

The P source is dated by the old documentary hypothesis and the new radicals to the exilic era at the earliest. Here the notion that fragments of Genesis (*e.g.* chs. 17, 23) belong to P will not be examined; contrary to the critical consensus, these passages do appear to be some of the older parts of Genesis. The great bulk of the laws on worship between Ex. 25 and Nu. 36 are our concern here. The language and content of these sections show that the P material is much earlier than the exile. Indeed Milgrom believes it reflects worship in the first, *i.e.* Solomonic, temple. Haran has traced some elements to worship in the even earlier tabernacle. This would mean that Mosaic origin of the material is possible.

Careful study of Deuteronomy by Milgrom and McConville has demonstrated that it knows P. Contrary to Wellhausen and his documentary hypothesis, Deuteronomy was written after P, as the order of the biblical books itself suggests.

This brings us to the final question, the date of Deuteronomy. For more than a century the date of Deuteronomy has been taken as the fixed point in critical debate; all the other parts of the Pentateuch are dated relative to Deuteronomy. Current critical discussion has hardly looked at this assumption. The source analysis is questioned by some, J and P may be redated by others, but that Deuteronomy is from the late seventh century is hardly questioned. It is simply accepted that the similarity of Deuteronomy's style to that of Jeremiah and the books of Kings and that it contains the programme for Josiah's reformation prove that it dates from that era.

Again these arguments cannot be properly dealt with here. But their uncertainty may be pointed out. First, similarity of Hebrew style does not prove a similar date for Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and Kings. Literary styles changed slowly in the ancient Near East. It is more likely that Jeremiah and Kings were quoting from or alluding to the earlier Deuteronomy to give credibility to their own message. Jeremiah appears to quote from all parts of Deuteronomy, but never from the so-called deuteronomistic history (*i.e.* Joshua – 2 Kings). Secondly, Deuteronomy does not promote the aims of Josiah's reformation by limiting all worship to Jerusalem; rather it insists that an altar be built and sacrifices offered at what Josiah would have called 'a high place', namely Mt. Ebal (Dt. 27:5–7). This makes it inappropriate to regard Deuteronomy as a programme for, or a justification of, Josiah's reforms. Thirdly, Deuteronomy does not seem to be aware of the big religio-political issues of the late monarchy period. It is unaware of the division of the nation into two kingdoms. It gives no description of Baalism and Canaanite worship, just condemning it in general terms. On the other hand, it demands the extermination of the Canaanites, who by the seventh century had long since disappeared as an identifiable entity.

These observations undermine the case for a seventh-century date of Deuteronomy. There are features in the book which make an earlier date more probable. First, it appears to be quoted by the earliest writing prophets, Amos and Hosea, in the eighth century BC. Secondly, it is arranged like Hittite treaties of the sixteenth to thirteenth centuries BC and the older laws of Hammurabi (*c.* 1750 BC), not like first-millennium treaties. Thirdly, some of its laws on marriage seem closer to those of documents

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of the second millennium than those of the first millennium. These points do not require Mosaic authorship, but they suggest that an early origin of Deuteronomy is possible.

Conclusion

'In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit' is Judges' acid comment on the anarchy of that time. A similar lack of consensus is found today in the debates about the Pentateuch. Scholarly arguments are traded to and fro, but underlying the debate there are many undeclared assumptions. For example, should we expect texts to be coherent unities or collections of fragments? Is the Bible innocent until proved guilty or guilty until proved innocent? Does the teaching of Jesus and the apostles determine our view of the inspiration and authorship of these books? Different scholars answer these questions differently and their integrity must be respected.

Reasons have been given above for seeing much greater unity within the Pentateuch than is often alleged by source critics, and for accepting the basic historical trustworthiness of these books. But those who do not share a belief in the essential coherence of texts, or who start with an assumption of their guilt, may find little difficulty in sweeping aside these arguments. So doubtless the debates will continue for a long

time. However Christian readers of the OT should remember that 'everything' (including the Pentateuch) 'was written to teach us', not about theories of authorship, but to give us 'hope' (Rom. 15:4), a hope disclosed first to Abraham, partially fulfilled in Moses' time, and ever more fully since. If we make the divine purpose of Scripture ('training in righteousness'; 2 Tim. 3:16) our paramount concern, we may keep critical debates in their proper perspective.

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Further reading

- D. J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (JSOT Press, 1978).
 R. W. L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament* (Fortress, 1992).
 R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Eerdmans/IVP/UK, 1970).
 J. H. Sailhammer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Zondervan, 1992).
 G. J. Wenham, 'Method in Pentateuchal Source Criticism', in *Vetus Testamentum* 41 (1991), pp. 84-109.
 ———, 'The Date of Deuteronomy: Linch-Pin of Old Testament Criticism', *Themelios* 10/3 (1985), pp. 15-20; 11/1 (1985), pp. 15-18.