

THE HISTORY OF THE DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS

Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was largely taken for granted prior to the mid eighteenth century. But in 1753, a French physician, Jean Astruc, attracted attention by noting that Genesis made use of different names for God.¹ This led Astruc to conclude that Moses employed separate, earlier sources.² Shortly thereafter, J. G. Eichhorn brought to light "literary peculiarities and stylistic peculiarities" in the Pentateuch.³ Eichhorn posited a Jahwist (J) and an Elohist (E) to explain what appeared to be multiple authorship.⁴

Mosaic authorship was now officially in question; there was no looking back. Soon, biblical scholars were engrossed in the sophisticated effort to identify the various documents and respective authors that contributed to the Pentateuch. Evidence accumulated that Moses simply could not be responsible for the five books historically attributed to him. Why would Moses be referred to in the third person? What explains the multiple cases where a story is told twice, or even three times? How could Moses record his own death and write that "there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses" (words which give the impression that lesser prophets had

¹ Prior to Astruc, other persons and influencing factors contributed to the formation of higher criticism. The argument that negative higher criticism was absent from the church until after the Reformation starting with Bacon's Scientism in the 1620's, progressing through Hobbes' materialistic philosophy, Spinoza's antisupernaturalism and Richard Simon (often thought of as the father of higher criticism) in the late seventeenth century is provided in Norman Geisler, *Higher Criticism and the Bible*, Impact Apologetics, 2000, cassette. Friedman identifies several medieval contributors who believed that the Pentateuch was basically Mosaic but had been revisited by later scribes. Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Summit Books, 1987), 18-19. Others have credited Celsus and Ptolemy in the second century A.D. with questioning single authorship of the Pentateuch. Lloyd R. Bailey, *The Pentateuch* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 28.

² Lloyd R. Bailey, *The Pentateuch* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 29.

³ R. K. Harrison et al., *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 21.

⁴ Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 91.

arisen prior to the writing)?⁵ Numerous contradictions began to appear as did seemingly profound variations in style. The simplistic belief in Mosaic authorship, it was thought, had to give way to scientific investigation and the conclusion that only multiple authorship can explain textual diversity.

The fact that no standard criteria were in place for segmenting the biblical text allowed each scholar to create his own. This resulted in an abundance of theories. One that gained considerable acceptance late in the eighteenth century was that of Karl David Ilgen. Ilgen proposed E¹ (the second Elohist) which later became known as P (Priestly Code).⁶ P joined the company of J and E.

In the early nineteenth century, the German scholar, W. M. L. De Wette made a remarkable "discovery" about a remarkable discovery. De Wette convincingly argued that Deuteronomy was, in fact, the Book of the Law which was found in the Temple during the reign of Josiah (II Kings 22:8). He also argued that Deuteronomy exhibited characteristics that made it quite different from J and E and that it was actually fabricated in the seventh century to justify Josiah's centralizing reforms.⁷ Thus, D was born.

From the time of Astruc and Eichorn, criticism was in a state of development; consensus eluded the higher critical community. Important figures such as Geddes, Vater, and Ewald arose to challenge doctrines of the Documentary School.⁸ The Documentary Hypothesis was only one of a number of viable theories that higher criticism produced, the Fragmentary Theory and the

⁵ Archer in *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (89), points out that the "argument based on the use of the third person is very weak" and cites other ancient authors who employed this practice. He also states that the belief that the obituary in Deut. 34 was added by Joshua or another contemporary is acceptable and poses no threat to a traditional view of authorship.

⁶ Ibid., 94.

⁷ Ibid., 91.

⁸ Ibid, 91-92.

Supplementary Theory being others. But the Documentary Hypothesis would eventually prevail and become the dominant view through the influence of Graf, Kuenen, and, most notably, Julius Wellhausen.

The Documentary Hypothesis under Wellhausen was rearranged to the order of JEDP. Contrary to Graf and Kuenen, Wellhausen asserted that P was actually later than J and E.⁹ This belief was in accordance with the conspicuous philosophical presuppositions by which Wellhausen operated. Wellhausen demanded that not only was the history of Israelite religion, like everything else, driven by the inevitable forward thrusts of evolutionary processes but the authors of the Pentateuch itself were caught up in a Hegelian struggle. The scholarly world was enchanted. But that was then.¹⁰

HOW HIGHER CRITICAL THOUGHT HAS CHANGED

Higher critics today largely agree that the Pentateuch contains contradictions, repetitions, chronological problems, variations in language, and radical breaks in style--all of which point to diverse authorship. But here is where the agreement, for the most part, ends.

Richard Friedman is clear, even now, that he regards the Documentary Hypothesis as the "starting point of research."¹¹ But for Friedman to so extend Wellhausen the benefit of the doubt in this era is especially naive if not deceptive, for much has changed.

⁹Ibid., 98.

¹⁰In spite of its wide success, the Documentary Hypothesis never enjoyed universal acceptance. For example, William Henry Green in *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), offered satisfying counter-arguments. Max Loehr was a prominent documentarian until his research led him to desert Wellhausen, opting instead for "the primacy and authorship of Moses in the Pentateuch [and] the traditional order of Israelitish history." Max Loehr, *The Five Books of Moses and the Question of Their Origin*, The Aftermath Series, ed. Horace M. DuBose, no. 8. (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1924), 333.

¹¹Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Summit Books, 1987), 28.

The enthusiasm Wellhausen had for his own hypothesis eventually waned due not to any lack of confidence in his conclusions but to what he perceived to be its questionable value in training students of theology.¹² The practical training value of the Documentary Hypothesis is now the last thing on anyone's mind; the integrity of the theory itself is in such jeopardy that even liberal scholars openly challenge major aspects of the Documentary Hypothesis. David Carr lists some points of dispute:

[T]he dating of the earliest pentateuchal stratum ("J") to the ninth or tenth centuries, the existence of an independent elohistic document ("E") or identifiable elohistic supplementary layer, the limitation of deuteronomistic and post-deuteronomistic elements to the book of Deuteronomy, and the idea that the priestly material ever existed separately as a priestly document.¹³

Furthermore, it is common to find scholars dating D prior to J. The latter has been re-dated to as late as the exile. De Wette's theory that Deuteronomy was written to instigate Josiah's reforms is practically extinct. According to Gleason Archer, scholars have "agreed in condemning 621 B.C. as quite impossible for the composition of [Deuteronomy]."¹⁴ E has fallen so out of favor that even some documentarians have dispensed with it.¹⁵ Some, for linguistic reasons, consider P to be pre-exilic.¹⁶ Van Seters questions P's independence and states that "in many cases the P texts do not make any sense without the larger J context."¹⁷ The letters themselves have become ambiguous, whereas in the heyday of documentarianism the use of

¹² Ibid., 243.

¹³ David M. Carr, "Controversy and Convergence in Recent Studies of the Formation of the Pentateuch," *Religious Studies Review* 23 (January 1997): 22.

¹⁴ Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 274.

¹⁵ John Van Seters, *The Pentateuch: A Social Science Commentary* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 75.

¹⁶ James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 8.

¹⁷ John Van Seters, *The Pentateuch: A Social Science Commentary*, 83.

abbreviations required no accompanying explanation.¹⁸ Harrison reports that some liberals are "thinking less in terms of 'documents' and more about 'streams of tradition.'"¹⁹ Among a number of scholars, even the standby redactors have gotten the snub.²⁰

In the midst of all the disagreement one thing is certain: Consensus is a thing of the past. Van Dyk declares, "[M]any of the bastions of Pentateuch Criticism have fallen from grace or are currently seriously undermined."²¹ Van Seters adds, "So prolific have the various methods and datings of sources or strata become that it is difficult to classify them."²² The liberalism that was once so optimistic about human potential to reason to the truth is subdued to the point of wondering what, if anything, we will ever know for sure about the formation of the Pentateuch.²³

Additionally, Wellhausen's evolutionary theory is no longer taken for granted. The traditional Wellhausian distinction between Israel and Judaism has diminished due to the reduction in the elapsed time between the "Yawist" and the "Priestly Code."²⁴ Wellhausen's belief that Jewish monotheism evolved from polytheism is unsupported both by the biblical text and archaeology. A student of the Old Testament cannot help but notice Israel's repeated rejection of monotheistic worship for syncretistic polytheism.²⁵ Discoveries such as those Ebla give ample support to early monotheistic belief.²⁶ Wellhausen's view of history was very much a product of its time and its present vulnerability has implications beyond itself because it served

¹⁸ Rolf Rendtorff, "The Paradigm is Changing: Hopes and Fears," *Biblical Interpretation* 1 (1993): 36.

¹⁹ R. K. Harrison et al., *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, 27.

²⁰ John Van Seters, *The Pentateuch: A Social Science Commentary*, 78.

²¹ P. J. Van Dyk, "Current Trends in Pentateuch Criticism," *Old Testament Essays* 3 (1990): 199.

²² John Van Seters, *The Pentateuch: A Social Science Commentary*, 74.

²³ According to David Carr, "Not only do biblical scholars not agree on many aspects of the formation of the Pentateuch, but many disagree about whether one can say anything reliable on that subject or what difference it would make if we could" (*Controversy and Convergence in Recent Studies of the Formation of the Pentateuch*, 22).

²⁴ Rolf Rendtorff, "The Paradigm is Changing: Hopes and Fears," 1:44.

²⁵ Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 152.

²⁶ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 771.

as a framework for his entire construction. One might add that when conclusions are refuted the presuppositions that lead to those conclusions should also come under suspicion.

PRESUPPOSITIONS OF HIGHER CRITICISM

Friedman's admission that Wellhausen's greatest contribution to the Documentary Hypothesis was not in the way of innovation but rather culmination is telling.²⁷ Why did he gain such renown? The genius of Wellhausen, according to Friedman, was his successful merging of "historical and literary analyses."²⁸ Friedman fails to mention that Wellhausen's history was anchored in the prevailing philosophical suppositions of the day. With no divine hand sovereignly guiding history, higher criticism was quite naturally open to Hegelian synthesis and Darwinian evolution as alternative explanations.²⁹ Wellhausen speculated that early Israelite religion must have been primitive, pagan, and polytheistic. The real merging, therefore, was not that of "historical and literary analyses" but of antinaturalistic philosophy with higher criticism.

The philosophical presupposition of antinaturalism serves as the foundation for all of negative higher criticism. The treatment of predictive prophecy illustrates this as well as anything. If a text contains something that is known to be historical (e.g., the reference in 1 Kings 13:2 to Josiah), the text simply cannot predate the fulfillment. In higher critical circles that is the end of the matter; no debate is tolerated as to whether the text might be an actual prophecy. The rules are strict. Any attempt by conservatives to argue to the contrary is met with ridicule or haughty silence.

²⁷ Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 26.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ R. K. Harrison et al., *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, 22.

Revealing his antisupernaturalistic bent, Friedman, for example, points out that Moses could not have written of himself that he was "the humblest man on earth" for the statement would be self-refuting.³⁰ The origin of that statement must obviously be a separate person from Moses (it is here that a supernaturalist would be inclined to agree). But one who is open-minded to the possibility of God communicating with Moses finds the text merely awkward at worst (and perhaps amusing). Perhaps Moses humbly submitted and recorded what God wished him to record, blushing all the while. If, however, supernatural events--like God inspiring a biblical author--are impossible then a third party is unavoidable. It is to this conclusion that Friedman jumps without bothering to demonstrate the impossibility of a God who communicates.

Richard Friedman writes, "At present [1987]. . . there is hardly a biblical scholar in the world actively working on the problem who would claim that the Five Books of Moses were written by Moses--or by any one person."³¹ For Friedman and others, to question the assumptions of higher criticism with respect to the authorship of the Pentateuch is literally to remove oneself from the realm of serious scholarship. But the claims of contemporary higher critical thought relating to authorship on which there is consensus are few and can be identified only in the broadest terms, the most important of which does not concern the question of who wrote the Pentateuch but who most certainly did not.

It was liberalism that juxtaposed science with blind dogma as it embarked on the work of higher criticism. But oddly, as the archaeological evidence for Mosaic authorship accumulates, the commitment of the critics to their philosophical presuppositions grows. On the very grounds of those presuppositions, the possibility of Mosaic authorship cannot even be entertained.

³⁰ Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 18.

³¹ Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 28.

One wonders on the emergence of what hypothetical set of facts would the faith of the higher critics be weakened. In fact, such a hypothetical set of facts does not exist because the a priori rejection of Mosaic authorship always has been, and presently is, axiomatic to higher critical thought. Here is scholarship working backwards. Critics begin with the conclusion instead of arriving at it through careful induction. Any surprising data are ignored so as not to interfere with the predetermined results of research.

Just as antisupernaturalistic philosophy rules out any honest consideration of Mosaic authorship, it has the same effect on divine inspiration. In attempting to limit his comments to methodology, Rendtorff writes, "But in scholarship, by definition, there is no heresy. We should rather practise and accept methodological pluralism."³² Upon examination, however, Rendtorff is not as postmodern as he appears. While he should be credited for stating approval of the trend of looking more carefully at the final textual product for its meaning, absent among the wide range of methodological persuasions to which he pays tribute is any methodology that assumes the Old Testament to be divinely inspired or even historical until proven otherwise. In fact, never should those in the scholarly community resort to calling one another such insulting things as "biblicists or even fundamentalists."³³ That would not be fair, after all, because no scholar works with the assumption that the Bible is true, much less divinely inspired. Clearly, there remains one heresy. So, while many of the conclusions of higher criticism have changed, the presuppositions remain unchallenged and unchallengeable.

HIGHER CRITICAL HANDLING OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

³² Rolf Rendtorff, "The Paradigm is Changing: Hopes and Fears," 1:47.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ W. J. Martin, *Stylistic Criteria and the Analysis of the Pentateuch* (London: Tyndale Press, 1955), 16.

It appears that higher critics are in the habit of treating biblical scholarship more as an art than a science. The acceptance of the text at face value would be insipid. Apparently, it attracts greater attention and is more personally rewarding for the critic to concoct theories on obscure conditions and motivating factors surrounding various authors than, for example, to fall back on the time-tested assumption that narratives were written to record actual events in history.

If there is a guiding principle for the handling of Scripture it is that texts may be dealt with in whatever manner best suits the critic at the moment. In some cases, a given text is considered historically accurate and trustworthy but only insofar as it is indispensable to a theory of higher criticism. Take, for example, the widely used statement in Ex 6:3 about God's name having been withheld from the patriarchs.³⁴ The trustworthiness of the text, in this case, needs no defense. Nor is it shown that the same critical methods for challenging the trustworthiness of other passages are not applicable here.³⁵

In typical humanistic fashion, it is assumed that biblical writers are each driven by a personal agenda. For example, God did not command that Levites be provided for; the Levites themselves inserted that command.³⁶ Also, if something positive is recorded about a certain biblical character it is because the author had something personally to gain, often pride. But if in the same passage the same character has offended God or is given a bad review a new pen has met the page indicating, of course, the arrival of a separate and distinct author from a competing faction. Simply out of the question is the possibility that one single author was sincerely

³⁴ W. J. Martin, *Stylistic Criteria and the Analysis of the Pentateuch* (London: Tyndale Press, 1955), 16.

³⁵ Examples abound of critics exploiting the Bible. Hoffmeier (31-32) reveals how Finkelstein, in alleging the Canaanite origins of the Israelites (as opposed to the biblical version of the nation's sojourn in Egypt) must necessarily add to his archaeological arguments for the resedentarized nature of the early Israelites the use of selected biblical texts to fill in gaps.

³⁶ Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 122.

attempting to record history as it pertained to a biblical person who, like everyone, sometimes did right and sometimes failed in the eyes of God.

It may be said of the Bible that the critics not only see what is not there (e.g., an agenda) but they habitually fail to see what plainly is there. A case in point is how the Old Testament's consistent monotheistic perspective has managed to go unnoticed by those who pour over its pages. Archer points out that Yehezkel Kaufmann's evidence against any hints of polytheism in the Torah was completely disregarded by the critics.³⁷

Another habit of the critics is to assume that the Bible is guilty until proven innocent or what has been called the "hermeneutic of suspicion."³⁸ While the practice of initially extending a text the benefit of the doubt is standard scholarly procedure, the rules shift when dealing with the Old Testament. Archer comments on this double standard:

All too frequently the tendency has been to regard any biblical statement as unreliable and suspect, though the very antiquity of the Old Testament (even by the critics' own dating) should commend it for consideration as an archaeological document. In case of any discrepancy with a pagan document, even one of a later age, the heathen source has been automatically given the preference as a historical witness. Where there happens to be no corroborative evidence at hand from non-Israelite sources or archaeological discoveries of some sort, the biblical statement is not to be trusted unless it happens to fall in with the theory.³⁹

Were the methods used by critics applied to any other written work they would produce the same conclusions regarding multiple authorship. One such method divides stories in the Pentateuch into J sections and E sections and then marvels that the J portions contain no E and vice versa.⁴⁰ The story of Joseph and his brothers in chapter 37 of Genesis, for example, is believed to have seventeen author changes in 36 verses, at least three of which occur in mid-

³⁷ Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 573.

³⁸ James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*, 4.

³⁹ Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 114.

sentence.⁴¹ The chapter is divided as follows: 1 (P); 2a (R); 2b (J); 3a (E); 3b (J); 4 (E); 5-11 (J); 12-18 (E); 19-20 (J); 21-22 (E); 23 (J); 24-25a (E); 25b-27 (J); 28a (E); 28b (J); 29 (E); 31-35 (J); 36 (E). It may be true that J contains no E material. That fact would only be impressive, however, if at the moment that E material is found in J, it is not separated and swiftly assigned to E. Here, as always, circular reasoning is inherently dishonest because it disguises itself as a genuine argument.

Green exposes the circularity of the critical method based on the use of stylistic variations:

All paragraphs, clauses, and parts of clauses, in which a certain class of alleged criteria occur, are systematically assigned to one document, and those having another class of criteria are, with like regularity, assigned to another document; and when the process is complete, all the criteria of one class are in one document, and those of the other class are in the other document, simply because the critic has put them there. The documents accord with the hypothesis because they have been constructed by the hypothesis.⁴²

The critics also tend to ignore obvious possible explanations when it is advantageous to do so. For example, Friedman asserts that identical language in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah makes it "hard to believe that they are not by the same person."⁴³ This is not hard to believe in the least. Why could it not be that Jeremiah is acquainted with a Mosaic Deuteronomy and simply quotes it or even occasionally adopts its style for literary effect?

W. J. Martin points out that the critics are known to neglect the "accepted canon of exegesis" that a passage be interpreted in context.⁴⁴ In Jer. 8:8 the prophet condemns the "lying pen of the scribes." It fits Friedman's hypothesis for him to maintain that Jeremiah was attacking

⁴⁰ Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 66.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁴² William Henry Green, *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 113-14.

⁴³ Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 127.

⁴⁴ W. J. Martin, *Stylistic Criteria and the Analysis of the Pentateuch*, 16.

P because of P's unflattering portrayal of Moses, who happened to be Jeremiah's hero. But a simple reading reveals that the whole context, before and after verse eight, is denouncing idolatry. There is no reason to believe that Jeremiah's statement has anything to do either with Moses or with P.

Finally, critics are sometimes satisfied with an approach to exegesis that is ignorant of Hebrew idiom and stylistic devices. One such device is that of rhetorical amplification. This is regularly employed in Genesis in the "form of progression from the general idea to the subordinate terms."⁴⁵ But to higher critics it is a sure sign of multiple authorship. Martin responds well: It would appear. . . nothing less than presumption for anyone to forget his limitation to such an extent as to set bounds to the versatility and ingenuity of an external mind.⁴⁶

CRITICAL RECEPTIVITY

While the critics subject the biblical text to intense scrutiny they refuse, in many cases, to give any treatment whatsoever to a whole body of relevant material, that being the arguments of those who challenge the assumptions of negative higher criticism. Rendtorff fancies, "Even the most committed synchronic exegete today would not argue that the first two chapters of the book of Genesis were written by the same author."⁴⁷ It is as if conservative scholars and their arguments do not exist.⁴⁸

⁴⁵⁴⁵ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁷⁴⁷ Rolf Rendtorff, "The Paradigm is Changing: Hopes and Fears," 1:52.

⁴⁸⁴⁸ In a sampling of a variety of recent higher critical works from Van Seters, Whybray, Friedman, and Campbell and O'Brien, not one mention was given to a single member of a list of the Documentary Hypothesis' critics that included such names as W. H. Green, Harold Wiener, Max Loehr, Kenneth Kitchen, and James Orr. This is understandable when it is realized that the purpose of the critics' work is not actually to deal with the question of whether the fundamental propositions of higher criticism are true but to move forward from that assumption down ever-dividing theoretical roads.

The inattention of critics does not end with their dismissing of conservative scholars. In the introduction to *Who Wrote the Bible*, Friedman confesses that "since Wellhausen's days there has been an archeological revolution, which has yielded important discoveries that must now figure in any research into the Bible's authors."⁴⁹ While promising to discuss the relevant archeological finds, remarkably, Friedman subsequently fails to point out (not to mention discuss) even a single archeological find that would call into possible question the conclusions of higher criticism with respect to biblical authorship. Clearly, only a very narrow kind of archeological evidence is invited to the discussion.

Ignoring unsavory data appears to be the habit of many of the proponents of higher criticism. Brushing away the evidence in some cases is impossible but even such a consequential archaeological revelation as the pre-Mosaic existence of writing--the denial of which was once no small matter--left the higher critical community still unconstrained.

Often passing on actual findings, the critics prefer the dubious practice of drawing conclusions from what archaeology has *not* discovered. The recent work of James Hoffmeier argues convincingly for the historicity of the accounts of Israel's existence in Egypt. Conceding a general lack of conclusive evidence from extra-biblical sources, Hoffmeier is quick to point out that such a lack of evidence does not constitute a case against the historicity of the biblical accounts.⁵⁰ In fact, sometimes the expectation of the existence of confirming evidence is unreasonably held. For example, Hoffmeier contends that the critics' demand for evidence of

⁴⁹ Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 29.

⁵⁰ James K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*, 34.

widespread destruction in Canaan to confirm the historicity of the conquest is based on an ignorance of the passages that admit the incompleteness of the conquest, such as Josh 13:1-7.⁵¹

Furthermore, such expectations are not in accord with the expressed purposes of the invading Israelites, namely, to take full advantage of the hard work of others (Deut. 6:10-11). The Israelites did not intend to destroy and move on but to conquer and possess. Total destruction would amount to the senseless ruination of their own potential property.⁵² A mere three cities--Jericho, Ai, and Hazor--are said to have been destroyed by fire. Considering the circumstances, this sort of restraint is what one should expect and is a satisfying explanation for the lack of archaeological destruction that has been cited as evidence against the conquest.

Hoffmeier does not stop at demonstrating the insufficiency of the lack of direct evidence for making conclusions about the historicity of the biblical text; he points out many compelling pieces of indirect evidence that show the biblical accounts to be consistent with the customs and conditions of Egypt (e.g., Joseph's age of 110 as recorded in Gen 50:22 being considered by Egyptians as the ideal lifetime).⁵³ Undeniably, the author of Exodus was intimately familiar with numerous aspects of Egyptian culture. For anyone whose presuppositions will so allow, a history-writing Moses emerges as a qualified candidate.

But presuppositions hold remarkable sway. Some who are aware of the evidence for the historicity of the biblical text conclude that "it looks like history, but it isn't." The appearance of historicity is owed to the redactor who was fooled by his sources.⁵⁴ On this Hoffmeier comments:

It seems to me. . . that if the narratives look like history, are structured historiographically, and the events described (especially in the Joseph story) are not incredible and compare

51⁵¹ Ibid., 36.

52⁵² Ibid., 44.

53⁵³ Ibid., 95.

54⁵⁴ Ibid., 97.

favorably with the Egyptian backgrounds (as I have shown they do), then the narratives ought to be considered historical until there is evidence to the contrary.⁵⁵

EVALUATION OF CRITICAL CRITERIA

Four higher critical pillars for the rejection of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch will be answered in turn: 1. different names for God; 2. doublets; 3. internal contradictions; 4. stylistic variations.

The higher critics claimed early on that the use of separate names for God (*Yahweh* and *Elohim*) indicates different authors. But the occurrences of different divine names in the Qur'an have not been regarded as cause for similar conclusions.⁵⁶ For some reason it is easier to imagine that Muhammad could have utilized such variety than to imagine so for Moses.

In response to the critics' charge, conservatives asserted that such an analysis ignored the purposes of the respective texts. Green explains that *Elohim* is thought to be used in instances that depict God's power or represent him as the "object of fear and adoration" while *Yahweh* is a more personal and revealing term.⁵⁷ Hence, "Jehovah denotes specifically what God is in and to Israel; Elohim what he is to other nations as well."⁵⁸

It is now known that prominent gods of Israel's neighbors appear in their literature under multiple names.⁵⁹ Archer asserts that if the Semitic and Egyptian data were available to Astruc and Eichhorn "source division based on divine names could [n]ever have arisen."⁶⁰

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 128.

⁵⁷ William Henry Green, *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*, 102.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 103

⁵⁹ Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 127.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 128.

Not only is there no need to posit separate authors on the basis of divine names, there is no justification for it. It has been known for more than a century that numerous variations exist between the LXX and the MT (Dahse cited at least 180 cases).⁶¹ Loehr adds that the critics "admitted without hesitation . . . that here and there in the Masoretic text a *Jahve* or an *Elohim* may have come from the hand of a redactor."⁶² He concludes, "These two considerations may fully suffice to make clear what a very frail tool in the hands of literary criticism the finger post of the names for God is."⁶³

In addition to divine names, higher criticism is dependent on the presence of doublets. It is assumed that one author would not tell the same story twice in the same narrative. Variations in the stories could not indicate one author's recording of two purposes, two emphases, or even two similar, but distinct, episodes. Rather, variations in the stories must point to two separate authors reporting their respective (and inaccurate to one degree or another) versions of a single event or tradition. But while Friedman, for example, alleges "two different stories of the creation of the world,"⁶⁴ Archer shows that the accounts in question are easily recognized as having separate purposes: Gen. 1 being a creation account and Gen. 2 being not a competing version but a complementary account of man and his environment.⁶⁵

There is not a single alleged doublet for which a reasonable explanation does not exist to prevent the necessity of resorting to a multiple-author theory. In cases where separate accounts most likely refer to a single event the common practice among Semitic authors of recapitulation

⁶¹ Ibid., 100.

⁶² Max Loehr, *The Five Books of Moses and the Question of Their Origin*, The Aftermath Series, ed. Horace M. DuBose, no. 8. (Nashville: Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, 1924), 350.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 22.

⁶⁵ Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 135.

is a plausible explanation.⁶⁶ Other doublets refer to separate events. For example, take the case of Abraham lying to Pharaoh and then to Abimelech regarding his relationship to his wife. Twice, a man is accompanied by his beautiful wife in a strange and potentially hostile region. It is quite easy to imagine that the same ancient conditions that would prompt a man to deceive in one instance would prevail upon the other.

In assessing the critical use of doublets, W. H. Green states, "They are for the most part hypercritical cavilling, magnifying molehills into mountains, and measuring ancient oriental narratives by the rules of modern occidental discourse."⁶⁷

For higher criticism in general, it seems that there is no such thing as an apparent contradiction, only contradictions. An example is the distinction that is made between a "forever" temple in 1 Kings 9:3 and a "cast out" temple later in verse seven. To find a contradiction in this passage one must presuppose the Dtr² theory (that Jeremiah revisited the text after 586 B.C.). In order for the higher critic to be credible he must begin not by presupposing Dtr², but by showing that the "cast out" reference is necessarily incompatible with a "forever" temple. The critics import a problem into the text, taking issue with a passage that read fine on its own and failing to recognize that any alternative explanation must arise out of *necessity*, not possibility. A simple reading of the text reveals that the promise in verse three was conditional. Imagine a father announcing to his son, "Here are the keys to the car; it is yours to drive as long as you want. Now let me warn you that if you misuse it I will revoke the privilege." Such a statement requires no complex analysis. But a proponent of higher criticism might be forced to conclude that this

⁶⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁶⁷ William Henry Green, *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*, 113.

announcement contains a contradiction that may be explained by positing two separate statements made at different points in time, one prior to the revocation and one after.

Another contradiction is assumed in Numbers 25. It is said that "the seductive women were Moabite in the first half of the story and Midianite in the second half."⁶⁸ Verse 1 says that sexual immorality was committed with Moabite women, while verses 6-18 make multiple references to a single Midianite woman. It does not require unusual imaginative skill to see how a Midianite woman (or several for that matter) might have joined with the Moabite women to conspire against the Israelites, especially in light of the fact that 22:4-7 records collaboration taking place between the elders of the two nations. Clearly, no contradiction exists.

This pattern is observed repeatedly among the critics. Contradictions are discovered because their necessity is assumed. No subsequent explanations are accepted and the adage is proved out that one ultimately finds that for which he looks.

As to stylistic variations, it is very simplistic to assume that a biblical author could not diversify his style for any number of reasons. Other authors have certainly shown themselves to be capable of such diversity. Geisler points out that C. S. Lewis, for example, is responsible for "children's stories, in-depth literary critiques, scholarly analysis, allegorical satire, science fiction, biographical narrative and logic-driven . . . treatises."⁶⁹

Martin amply demonstrates what he refers to as "the mind's abhorrence of monotony"⁷⁰ as existing in classical literature:

. . . no one would now think of attaching any significance to, say, the fact that beans are mentioned in the Iliad but not in the Odyssey; that the Iliad is rich in words for wounds and wounding, whereas such words are rare in, or absent from the Odyssey; that the words for

⁶⁸ Richard Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* 228.

⁶⁹ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, 588.

⁷⁰ W. J. Martin, *Stylistic Criteria and the Analysis of the Pentateuch*, 12.

grasshopper, crane, eel, maggots, snow, sparrow, and donkey occur only in the Iliad, palm-tree only in the Odyssey. In fact the Iliad uses 1,500 words none of which occurs in the Odyssey. Or again, no deductions of any kind could be made from the fact that in the works of Shakespeare the word 'pious' is found only in Hamlet and subsequent plays. Even inconsistencies may occur in one and the same author; Virgil in a single book makes the wooden horse of fir in one passage, of maplewood in another, and of oak in yet another.⁷¹

CONCLUSION

That the critic (in defiance of Ockham) must posit a final redactor to explain the unity and orderliness of the Pentateuch argues for single authorship.⁷² Having received a royal education and being an eyewitness to the events, Moses was undoubtedly qualified to write the Pentateuch. As a leader who took a sincere interest in the preservation of his people, Moses would have had every motivation to write the Pentateuch. Those who were closer in time to Moses and arguably in a better position to rule on the matter recognized Moses as the author.⁷³

The Bible itself testifies explicitly to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch in numerous places.⁷⁴ For those who are not philosophically predisposed against Mosaic authorship it seem reasonable to trust such an overwhelming biblical testimony. Particularly compelling is the fact that corroboration is given from the lips of Jesus and, for many, this alone is sufficient to put the question to rest.⁷⁵

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⁷¹⁷¹ Ibid., 13.

⁷²⁷² Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 135.

⁷³⁷³ Bailey cites Philo, Josephus, and the Talmud as a few examples (27).

⁷⁴⁷⁴ See Ex. 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Deut. 31:9; Josh. 1:8; 1 Kings 2:3; Ez. 6:18; Neh. 13:1; Dan. 9:11-13; Lk. 16:29-31; 20:28; Lk. 24:27,44; Jn. 1:45; 5:46-47; 7:19; Acts 15:21; Rom. 10:5.

⁷⁵⁷⁵ Jesus, in Jn. 5:46-47, strongly vouches for Mosaic authorship: If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say? (NIV).

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