

The Pentateuch

Edited by
THOMAS B. DOZEMAN,
KONRAD SCHMID and
BARUCH J. SCHWARTZ

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zum Alten Testament*

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Mohr Siebeck

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The Pentateuch

International Perspectives
on Current Research

Edited by

Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid
and Baruch J. Schwartz

Mohr Siebeck

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Abbreviations

ATD.A	Das Alte Testament Deutsch: Apokryphen
ATSAT	Arbeiten zu Text und Sprache im Alten Testament
BZAR	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HTKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
JHebS	Journal of Hebrew Scriptures
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism: Supplement Series
KEH	Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament
RBL	Review of Biblical Literature
SHAWPH	Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse
SPB	Studia post-Biblica
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
TUAT.E	Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, Ergänzungslieferung. Edited by Otto Kaiser
UTB	Uni-Taschen-Bücher
ZAR	Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte

All other abbreviations follow *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (ed. P. H. Alexander et al.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendricksons, 1999).

Introduction

The present volume documents the proceedings of the symposium “The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research,” which was held on January 10–12, 2010 in Zurich, Switzerland. Its aim was to bring together leading scholars in the field in order to overcome the parochialization in the global academic landscape with regard to questions of the Pentateuch’s literary development.

The current situation in international pentateuchal research is accentuated by three distinct settings of international scholarship in Europe, Israel, and North America. In effect, these scholarly discourses are, to say the least, poorly connected to each other, at times even independent from one another. Each operates with its own set of working assumptions, each uses different methods, and each produces its own results. In every other academic discipline, such a situation would be felt to be untenable. The field of biblical studies, however, is only beginning to see the essential need to deal with these differences in order to achieve sustainable progress in its scholarly discourse.

How did this situation come about? The common starting point was the Documentary Hypothesis, which was developed in the nineteenth century and explained the composition of the Pentateuch out of four sources (J, E, D, and P), combined by three redactors (R^{JE} , R^{JED} , R^{JEP}) in three different stages. In addition, this theory allowed for some minor redactional elements that are not connected to the three main redactions. This model grew to a quasi-canonical status in critical biblical scholarship: it even became common procedure in pentateuchal studies to first separate a text into its underlying sources and only then to analyze it using the usual exegetical methods.

In North America, the Documentary Hypothesis is still very commonly assumed as an explanation for the composition of the Pentateuch. It dominates the major textbooks, and it is broadly accepted among scholars, although some modifications have been applied to the theory. First and foremost, the number of redactional passages has grown, at the expense of the number of texts assigned to the sources. However, North American scholarship is less exclusively focused on questions of composition than European research is, often pursuing other methodological perspectives on the texts. Therefore, the picture is not fully representative, as the compositional approach is only one among other, even more dominant ones: many analyses of pentateuchal texts

discuss comparative questions with regard to the ancient Near Eastern texts, ancient Jewish texts, or other parts of the biblical canon. Moreover, there is a strong focus on hermeneutical questions.

Israeli scholarship is also widely focused on the Documentary Hypothesis and sees its future especially in refining its basic tenets. Some scholars try to show that the sources existed in splendid isolation one from another and that only one final redactor composed the Pentateuch out of these four sources. The Priestly and the Holiness texts have received particular attention and have been studied with remarkable care. This research contributes many insights to a new understanding of the texts, especially in Leviticus and Numbers. An important difference from the traditional shape of the Documentary Hypothesis as formulated by Wellhausen is the early dating of the Priestly Code, to the preexilic period, that is shared by many Israeli scholars. This position of course implies more deviations from Wellhausen than just an earlier historical setting of the main narrative thread in the Pentateuch. In methodological terms, Israeli scholarship has a tendency to understand pentateuchal research as a literary endeavor: the text of the Pentateuch should be explained by means of literary models, and only at a second stage should extratextual evidence and historical parameters enter the discussion.

Measured against the common starting point in the nineteenth century, European scholarship has probably changed most dramatically when compared with the other main academic cultures. To be sure, some adherents still subscribe to the Documentary Hypothesis in Europe, but they can no longer claim to represent the mainstream. Most scholars accept only P as a sufficiently plausible hypothesis, and they have abandoned the assumption that the non-P texts can be divided into two continuous sources (such as J and E) that cover the whole textual range from Genesis at least to Numbers. Rather, they allocate the non-P texts in two different ways. On the one hand, scholars allow for a significant quantity of post-P expansions and additions in the Pentateuch. On the other, they interpret the compositional history of the pre-P Pentateuch in a framework that is similar to the framework typical of interpretation of the Prophets, the Psalms, and the wisdom literature: they are built up out of small textual units that have been successively assembled and reassembled into larger collections and blocks, but these smaller units do not yet presuppose the storyline of the overall textual body in which they are incorporated now (the Pentateuch). Some European scholars agree with the common Israeli “literary-first” approach, while others differ decidedly on the methodological assumption that literary and historical evidence need to be accounted for separately. These scholars instead argue that compositional theories must comply with the basic parameters provided by archaeology, epigraphy, and the reconstruction of ancient Israel and Judah’s history. This perspective in particular has led European scholars to express skepticism about the early

date – in the early or middle monarchic period – proposed for the existence of extended documents covering the complete storyline of the Pentateuch.

In response to this situation, the Zurich symposium tried to foster dialogue between exponents of different approaches to the composition history of the Pentateuch. Of course, this endeavor has not yet had time to yield any substantial results in terms of reaching a new (partial) consensus on these questions. Nevertheless, it was encouraging to see participants unanimously recognize the need to bridge the different academic cultures in pentateuchal research and to increase international activities with that goal in view.

However, the focus of the symposium on composition provides only a limited representation of current scholarship on the Pentateuch, which can be augmented by other literary, linguistic, and sociological methods that are also prominent in contemporary pentateuchal research. Even this limited focus, however, resulted in a rich presentation of different approaches. We have sought to capture the breadth of research by organizing the volume into five parts. The first section, *Current Issues in Methodology*, provides an overview of literary problems and the range of methodological solutions that are employed by current researchers on the composition of the Pentateuch. The following three sections narrow the scope of study to specific text complexes within the Pentateuch that present distinct problems in terms of composition. These sections include the book of *Genesis*, the books of *Exodus–Deuteronomy*, and a third section entitled *P, H, and D*, which explores problems of composition within Priestly literature (P and H) and the relationship of this literature to the book of Deuteronomy (D). The final section, *Pentateuch in the Hebrew Bible and Its History of Reception*, broadens the focus once again to explore the formation of the Pentateuch as a whole and its interaction with the composition of the Prophetic literature and the Psalms.

The section *Current Issues in Methodology* provides a helpful overview of points of consensus and disagreement among current researchers on the composition of the Pentateuch. Baruch J. Schwartz opens the volume with the question, “Does Recent Scholarship’s Critique of the Documentary Hypothesis Constitute Grounds for Its Rejection?” He reviews recent developments in pentateuchal study that have called into question the traditional model of the Documentary Hypothesis in favor of more redaction-critical and supplementary theories of composition. A review of the original criteria that led to the Documentary Hypothesis leads Schwartz to argue that the project has not yet reached its conclusion and thus requires further research, rather than abandonment. Konrad Schmid continues with a similar line of questioning by asking, “Has European Scholarship Abandoned the Document Hypothesis? Some Reminders on Its History and Remarks on Its Current Status.” His review of the documentary, supplementary, and fragmentary theories of composition illustrates their close relationship in the history of interpretation and, hence, the

continuing importance of documents among contemporary European researchers of the Pentateuch, even though they may not represent the traditional sources of the Documentary Hypothesis. In "The Pentateuch in Current Research: Consensus and Debate," Reinhard G. Kratz narrows the lens to contemporary European research by focusing on the question, Where does a text begin and end? He agrees with Erhard Blum that this question is crucial for identifying literary works in the composition of the Pentateuch. Kratz summarizes the broad areas of agreement among European interpreters on this question, namely, in the identification of P, the book of Deuteronomy, and the non-P and non-D texts in the Pentateuch. He also notes points of continuing debate, including the ending of P, the relationship of Deuteronomy to the Tetrateuch, the identification of a Hexateuch, and the methodological problem of evaluating literary cross-references as a basis for identifying literary works.

David M. Carr changes the focus from the identification of early documents and the history of redaction to the work of late scribes in "Scribal Processes of Coordination/Harmonization and the Formation of the First Hexateuch(s)." Carr argues that a more controlled method for exploring composition can be achieved through a focus on late scribal activity where P and non-P texts are harmonized (e.g., in the insertion of the Priestly laws of purity in the non-P account of the creation story in Gen 2:19, 20). Carr suggests that the tendency of late scribes to harmonize texts that are transmitted separately from each other provides a window into the same process at an earlier stage of composition, where separate texts like Deuteronomy and the non-P Hexateuch, or P and the non-P Hexateuch, also underwent a similar process of harmonization and coordination by editors. Benjamin D. Sommer addresses a recurrent problem in the modern era of research in the essay "Dating Pentateuchal Texts and the Perils of Pseudo-Historicism." He cautions against dating texts on the basis of extrinsic social or historical criteria, which encourage interpreters to restrict composition according to the imagined compatibility between a particular social setting and the literary themes of a text. Jean-Louis Ska closes the first section by illustrating "The Limits of Interpretation," by which he means the need for an interpretation to respect the rights of a text in its present form before atomizing it into many different compositional units. Ska presents four examples in which the literary tensions in pentateuchal texts have more to do with cultural background or narrative design than with multiple authorship.

The essays on *Genesis* explore a wide range of literary problems and theories of composition in the primeval literature, the marriage rites of Jacob's sons, and the Joseph story. Thomas Krüger argues in "Genesis 1:1–2:3 and the Development of the Pentateuch" for a balanced method that examines both literary design and internal tensions. The application of this method reveals a narrative of elevated prose that overlies a history of composition about

the number of days of creation and the meaning of the Sabbath. In “Text- and Reception-Historical Reflections on Transmissional and Hermeneutical Techniques in Genesis 2–3,” Michael Bauks examines the function of Gen 2:25 in bridging the once-separate oral traditions of creation and paradise in Gen 2–3 as a means of creating a literary narrative. She concludes her essay by tracing the different interpretations of Gen 2–3 in Ben Sira, Qumran, Jubilees, and 1 Enoch. Jan Christian Gertz identifies repetitions and conflicting terminology in the flood story in “Source Criticism in the Primeval History of Genesis: An Outdated Paradigm for the Study of the Pentateuch?” These literary features, he writes, arise from a history of supplementation in which editors use source traditions but change them to such a degree that the recovery of the original documents is no longer possible. Ronald Hendel disagrees in the essay, “Is the ‘J’ Primeval Narrative an Independent Composition? A Critique of Crüsemann’s ‘Die Eigenständigkeit der Urgeschichte.’” Hendel identifies a J source in Gen 1–11 but focuses his interpretation on its continuation into Gen 12:1–3, which conflicts with Frank Crüsemann’s assertion that there is no literary connection between Gen 1–11 and Gen 12:1–3 in the J narrative. In “Rachel, Leah, and the Composition of Genesis,” Sarah Shectman notes the tension between the requirement of Isaac and Jacob to marry Aramean wives and the disappearance of this custom only one generation later, when Jacob’s sons no longer follow the practice. The problem, she concludes, arises from the combination of conflicting traditions about marriage customs, which the redactor of Gen 31 resolves with the account of the rejection of Laban’s household by Leah and Rachel in Gen 31:14, thereby accounting for this sudden shift in marriage practices. Christoph Levin concludes the essays on Genesis with a study of Gen 39, “Righteousness in the Joseph Story: Joseph Resists Seduction (Genesis 39),” in which he argues for an understanding of J as a redactor of preexisting material.

The essays on *Exodus–Deuteronomy* identify sources and original versions of stories while also exploring the role of redaction in narratives and in laws. The section opens with Rainer Albertz’s investigation into “The Late Exilic Book of Exodus (Exodus 1–34*): A Contribution to the Pentateuchal Discussion.” He argues that the originally independent version of the story of the exodus ends with the shining face of Moses in Exod 34:32, which is meant to fulfill the divine promise of a miracle in Exod 34:10. Thomas B. Dozeman changes the focus of study from the exodus to the wilderness journey in “The Priestly Wilderness Itineraries and the Composition of the Pentateuch.” He explores the role of a redactor in relating P and non-P itineraries in the formation of the Pentateuch, while also investigating the scope of an independent P source. Erhard Blum addresses the composition of law in “The Decalogue and the Composition History of the Pentateuch.” The synoptic comparison of Exod 20 and Deut 5 provides a window into the biography of the Decalogue,

in which Blum identifies an original seventh-century heptology in the Exodus version of the story of Moses. A later exilic version is included in Deut 5, and further transformations of the Decalogue take place in both Deut 4 and in the law of the Sabbath in Exod 20. Simeon Chavel turns the study of law to the problem of cultic centralization in "The Literary Development of Deuteronomy 12: Between Religious Ideal and Social Reality." He traces literary revisions of the law through the addition of paragraphs in Deut 12 that increasingly qualify the demand to consume meat at the temple, until the law becomes more symbolic than programmatic. Joel S. Baden concludes the section with "The Deuteronomic Evidence for the Documentary Theory." Careful comparison between Deuteronomy and Exodus/Numbers in the stories of the appointment of judges (Deut 1:9–18; Num 11; and Exod 18) and the second giving of the tablets of the Decalogue (Deut 10:1–5; Exod 34:1–5*, 28) indicate the dependence of Deuteronomy on the separate and independent sources J and E in Exodus and Numbers.

The composition of the Priestly literature (P) in the Pentateuch and its relationship to the Holiness Legislation, centered on Lev 17–27 (H), and the book of Deuteronomy (D) represents a dynamic area of research among contemporary interpreters. The essays in this section explore a range of important questions about the composition of *P*, *H*, and *D* in the formation of the Pentateuch. In "An Eternal Covenant with Circumcision as Its Sign: How Useful a Criterion for Dating and Source Analysis?" Saul M. Olyan examines the reasons for dating P to the exile through a careful analysis of the story of circumcision in Gen 17. Israel Knohl widens the focus to raise the question, "Who Edited the Pentateuch?" The answer, he concludes, lies in a series of editorial frameworks that address the themes of the sanctity of the Sabbath and the broadening of sacred space to include the people and even the land. The subject matter of these themes identifies the editorial frameworks with H, and they represent, according to Knohl, the final editorial process of the Pentateuch. Jeffrey Stackert addresses the methodological problem of how to differentiate between innerbiblical interpretation and redaction in his essay, "Distinguishing Innerbiblical Exegesis from Pentateuchal Redaction: Leviticus 26 as a Test Case." After a review of the research, he applies the method to the composition of Lev 26. In "P, Source or Redaction: The Evidence of Numbers 25," Itamar Kislef identifies three narrative remnants in the present form of the narrative in Num 25 that are interwoven by a Priestly redaction. The synoptic tradition of clean and unclean animals in Deut 14 (D) and Lev 11 (H) is the starting point for Christophe Nihan's essay, "The Laws about Clean and Unclean Animals in Leviticus and Deuteronomy and Their Place in the Formation of the Pentateuch," which explores the ways in which D and H use a common source to develop their distinctive teaching on purity and restrictive diet.

The volume concludes with a series of essays that explore the role of the *Pentateuch in the Hebrew Bible and Its History of Reception*. In “‘A Prophet Like Moses’ (Deuteronomy 18:15) – ‘No Prophet Like Moses’ (Deuteronomy 34:10): Some Observations on the Relation between the Pentateuch and the Latter Prophets,” Reinhard Achenbach probes the relationship between prophetic texts and the basic plotlines of the Pentateuch, investigating the dynamic way in which the two bodies of literature influence each other. Achenbach focuses in particular on the transformation of the reference to Moses’ unique prophetic status in Deut 18:15 through Jeremiah, Second and Third Isaiah, and Ezekiel. Graeme Auld advocates “Reading Genesis after Samuel.” Analysis of the intertextual links in the development of characters, especially between Joseph and David, leads Auld to the conclusion that the authors of Genesis knew and used Samuel as a sourcebook and “re-presented many of its themes by way of implicit comment and critique” (469). In “Extra-Pentateuchal Biblical Evidence for the Existence of a Pentateuch? The Case of the ‘Historical Summaries,’ Especially in the Psalms,” Thomas Römer raises the question of whether the Bible itself might provide evidence for the existence of a Torah that comprises five scrolls. The study of the Psalms in particular underscores the special status of the Pentateuch, even though there is freedom in the arrangement of its themes. Noteworthy for Römer is the separation of creation from the exodus and the near absence of the ancestors, which raises the question of whether these themes may also have begun as separate complexes in the formation of the Pentateuch. In his essay “Using Ezra’s Time as a Methodological Pivot for Understanding the Rhetoric and Functions of the Pentateuch,” James W. Watts explores the literary and social effects that result from the Pentateuch becoming Scripture. Careful attention to the “scripturalization” of Torah is crucial, according to Watts, for any historical-critical study of the Pentateuch. In “Parallel Torahs and Inner-Scriptural Interpretation: The Jewish and Samaritan Pentateuchs in Historical Perspective,” Gary N. Knoppers reviews the current state of research on the Samaritan Pentateuch and its implications for understanding the editing and transmission of the Pentateuch in the late Persian and early Hellenistic periods.

It is our hope that the essays in this volume provide a helpful summary of the current state of research on the composition of the Pentateuch. The wide range of topics in the volume reflects the creativity presently found in the study of the composition of the Pentateuch. The essays indicate areas of consensus and points of disagreement that guarantee a rich future of dialogue and research among colleagues in Europe, Israel, and America.

The symposium of which this volume is the outcome was generously funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), the University of Zurich, the Hochschulstiftung in Zürich, the Zürcher Universitätsverein (ZUNIV), the Schweizerische Gesellschaft für orientalische Altertumswissen-

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Current Issues in Methodology

Does Recent Scholarship's Critique of the Documentary Hypothesis Constitute Grounds for Its Rejection?

BARUCH J. SCHWARTZ

One occasionally gets the sense that the current wave of pentateuchal criticism takes it as axiomatic that the Documentary Hypothesis has been disproven. Contemporary critics seem to be convinced not so much that the documents of the Pentateuch – J, E, P, and D – have been sufficiently scrutinized and that there is no more to be said about them that could be of any use or interest, but rather that the theory itself, the very claim that these documents once existed and that they were combined in one way or another to constitute the Pentateuch, has now been demonstrated to be erroneous.

Yet it is not entirely evident precisely what it is that recent critics have found wrong with the classical, source-critical theory and why they are prepared to accept its inadequacy as their starting point. In a brief attempt to address this question, it may be preferable to resist the temptation to discuss and evaluate the various proposals that have been suggested in place of the Documentary Hypothesis and to focus on one question alone: independent of what they suggest in its place, what has led recent critics to regard the Documentary Hypothesis as though it has been invalidated?

One difficulty in answering this question is that the scholars in question often refrain from addressing it themselves. Rather than providing an accounting for why they find the documentary solution to the problems of the Pentateuch's composition so unsatisfactory, scholars offer a description of the scholarly process that led to this new point of departure¹ or a summary statement that the source-critical study of the Torah was largely abandoned in the last decades of the twentieth century, retaining at most the separation of P from non-P but generally viewing even P as a redactional stratum rather than as a document.² "Since the work of Rolf Rendtorff," one scholar writes, the

¹ For instance, Erhard BLUM, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte* (WMANT 57; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener 1984), 1–3.

² See e.g. Jan Christian GERTZ, *Tradition und Redaktion in der Exoduserzählung: Untersuchungen zur Endredaktion des Pentateuch* (FRLANT 186; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 9–28, 391 (on Gen 12–50); Christoph BERNER, *Die Exoduserzählung: Das*

nondocumentary model “has gained increasing acceptance.”³ Another writes, “A growing number of scholars, especially in Europe, have given up the classical Documentary Hypothesis as a relevant model for explaining the composition of the Pentateuch.”⁴ Still another says simply that for thirty years the Documentary Hypothesis has been “losing ground,” and that except for the distinction between P and non-P, all elements of the classical hypothesis are now controversial.⁵ Or, as one colleague has remarked orally more than once in my presence, the scholars who control the field and whose opinions really matter have all discarded not only the Documentary Hypothesis but also the notion of narrative sources entirely; this being the case it is therefore no longer even a legitimate option. It is, he seems to be arguing, a relic of the past, and those who insist on bringing it up are simply ignoring the consensus of cutting-edge scholarship.

One may rightly ask if the rejection of the source-critical approach has become the new point of departure for pentateuchal scholarship simply by consensus – either that of the majority, or that of the acknowledged experts, or that of the most recent critics. If so, the basis for this consensus is apparently the decisive influence of the ground-breaking work of Rolf Rendtorff.⁶ Regardless of whether they accept, reject, or modify Rendtorff’s own conclusions, scholars are virtually unanimous in crediting him with having pronounced the Documentary theory in need of replacement. As one scholar put it thirty years ago, Rendtorff “demonstrates [*sic*] that Pentateuchal scholarship

literarische Werden einer Ursprungserzählung (FAT 73; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 1–9.

³ Konrad SCHMID, “The So-Called Yahwist and the Literary Gap between Genesis and Exodus,” in *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation* (ed. T. B. Dozeman and K. Schmid; SBLSymS 34; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 29.

⁴ Thomas Christian RÖMER, “The Elusive Yahwist: A Short History of Research,” in Dozeman and Schmid, *Farewell to the Yahwist*, 9.

⁵ Erhard BLUM, “The Literary Connection between the Books of Genesis and Exodus and the End of the Book of Joshua,” in Dozeman and Schmid, *Farewell to the Yahwist*, 89.

⁶ In his now-classic *The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch* (trans. John J. Scullion; JSOTSup 89; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990; orig. pub. 1977). The intellectual roots of Rendtorff, however, go back to Martin NOTH’s pivotal work, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1948). Noth already claimed that the Pentateuch was constructed of “larger units” of tradition, assigning these to the oral prehistory of the sources. Rendtorff’s innovation, in which he has been followed by most contemporary European pentateuchal scholars, was to apply Noth’s insight to the realm of the *literary* development of the Pentateuch, virtually ignoring all need to differentiate between presumed oral traditions and existing literary texts.

stands in need [*sic*] of a fundamentally new change of mind and that the approaches it employs must [*sic*] be thought out again *de novo*.”⁷

Surely none of these scholars would actually imply that consensus alone constitutes sufficient grounds for dismissing and abandoning source criticism. In the humanities, after all, majority opinions are not necessarily more convincing and minority views are not necessarily to be discarded. I remember being quite appalled by some of my own teachers who attempted to present the Documentary Hypothesis to their students as the unanimous determination of scholars who had “discovered” the four sources, J, E, P, and D; the students were expected simply to take their word for it. Obviously, it is no more legitimate for documentarians than for nondocumentarians to do this.

As for the argument from the apparent lack of consensus among the documentarians themselves – if the source critics can’t agree, and so much controversy exists among them, the entire theory must be incorrect⁸ – there is nothing compelling about this reasoning either. The failure of source-critical scholars to arrive at a single, unambiguous, and unanimous division of the entire Pentateuch into its four documents in no sense disqualifies the Documentary theory itself, any more than the failure of contemporary, nondocumentary scholars to come to any agreement on most aspects of their own theories of the Pentateuch’s literary history renders their entire approach invalid.

What is true of consensus is true of novelty. The newest suggestion is not always the correct one; unless previously unknown hard evidence comes to light to supplement the existing data, words such as “outdated” and “obsolete” really have no place in the historical-critical study of literature. Moreover, seemingly new ideas and ostensibly new solutions occasionally turn out, upon examination, to have been proposed, debated, and even refuted by earlier scholars. The newer approaches to the Pentateuch are a case in point: they are in large measure a revival of the Fragmentary and Supplementary Hypotheses that preceded the Documentary one, prepared the way for it and eventually

⁷ Hans Heinrich SCHMID, “In Search of New Approaches in Pentateuchal Research,” in *The Pentateuch: A Sheffield Reader* (ed. J. W. Rogerson; Biblical Seminar 39; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 24; see also his more detailed “Auf der Suche nach neuen Perspektiven für die Pentateuchforschung,” in *Congress Volume: Vienna, 1980* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSup 32; Leiden: Brill, 1981), 375–94.

⁸ This frequently occurring argument is raised by RENDTORFF (Problem, 102–3) and is echoed, for instance, by Carr (David M. CARR, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996], 147). Interestingly, Rendtorff has voiced it in his critique of nondocumentarian approaches as well; see his review of *Abschied vom Jahwisten: Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion* (ed. J. C. Gertz, K. Schmid, and M. Witte; BZAW 315; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002) in *RBL* 12 (2003). Online: http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/3152_3482.pdf.

gave way to it.⁹ If old theories are to be discarded because they are outdated, the nondocumentary approach to the Pentateuch would have to be discarded too.

The acceptance or rejection of any theory regarding the composition of the Pentateuch is thus not a function of factors such as the chain of tradition, the majority of scholarly opinion, the consensus of the experts, the authority of the master, or the uniformity of results. The test of a hypothesis is only in its ability to provide a convincing, comprehensive, and economical solution to the problems posed by the data. And so, when one seeks to determine why recent critics have come to reject the Documentary Hypothesis, one expects to learn where exactly they found it to be wanting as a response to, and as a convincing method of accounting for, the specific data that it was designed in order to explain. Yet when one returns to the pioneering work of Rendtorff, one is immediately struck by a paradox in this context. To be sure, Rendtorff does acknowledge quite emphatically that the Documentary Hypothesis is a solution to questions raised by the final form of the Pentateuch.¹⁰ The problematic data to which it is expected to provide a response, he readily admits, are literary in nature and pertain to the canonical Torah. The “Problem of the Pentateuch” with which the source-critical method arose in order to contend is the literary unintelligibility of the work as a whole: the discrepancies and contradictions, the duplications and inconsistencies, the discontinuity and disruption, and the terminological, stylistic, and ideological multiformity.¹¹ However, instead of expressing his dissatisfaction with the theory and its results in terms of the degree to which they provided a comprehensive and persuasive explanation for these phenomena, he seems simply to have decided to address other issues. Consider, for instance, the famous pronouncement:

as soon as access to the pentateuchal texts is set in the context of the form-critical method, the statement of the question is basically altered. The Pentateuch as a whole as it lies before us is no longer the point of departure, but rather the concrete individual text, the “smallest literary unit.”¹²

⁹ See the helpful overview of the Fragmentary and Supplementary theories in Cees HOUTMAN, *Der Pentateuch: Die Geschichte seiner Erforschung neben einer Auswertung* (CBET 9; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 80–84 (Fragmentenhypothese), 91–95 (Ergänzungshypothese). See also Hans-Joachim KRAUS, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart* (Neukirchen: Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins, 1956), 144–49.

¹⁰ RENDTORFF, *Problem*, 23. This is reflected in the title of CARR’s book (above, n. 7) as well; the “fractures” of Genesis are, of course, the textual disruptions and inconsistencies.

¹¹ See Baruch J. SCHWARTZ, “The Torah: Its Five Books and Four Documents,” in *The Literature of the Hebrew Bible: Introductions and Studies* (ed. Z. Talshir; *The Ancient Literature of Eretz Israel and Its World* 1; 4 vols.; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2011–) [Hebrew], 1:161–225, esp. 177–91.

¹² RENDTORFF, *Problem*, 23.

A statement such as this cannot be construed as a refutation of the source-critical approach or of any of its specific findings. It is merely a redefinition of the object of inquiry. Rather than addressing itself to the perceived inadequacies of the documentary solution in addressing the problem it is intended to solve, the form-critical and tradition-critical investigation is a response to an entirely different set of questions. This in itself has no bearing on whether the earlier set of questions was in any way invalidated, much less so on whether the source-critical answer to them was correct or not. The form-critical consideration of the smaller units of narrative tradition may in fact be entirely compatible with the documentary solution to the Pentateuch in its literary form. Yet Rendtorff seems to feel that the study of the traditions cannot coexist with the study of the literary collections that have grown out of them, taking it as axiomatic that source criticism needs to be replaced, not supplemented, by a method of study that deems inadmissible as a starting point any consideration of the final form of the pentateuchal narrative, and that developmental hypotheses may legitimately be advanced only for the individual tale or cycle of tales. Thus, he goes on to criticize severely Gunkel, Gressmann, von Rad, and Noth and all those who, like them, continue to maintain the Documentary Hypothesis at the same time as they embark upon the study of the smaller units and how they have come to be associated with one another.¹³ But what is the fundamental error of which Gunkel, Gressmann, von Rad, and Noth were guilty?

Rendtorff's answer is that the source-critical and tradition-critical methods could theoretically be compatible, but only if "at the end of the traditio-history inquiry" we arrived at the sources J, E, P, and D – and this, he says, has been shown (!) "scarcely ever" to be the case.¹⁴ He does not claim that the Documentary Hypothesis has been found to be an insufficient or unconvincing explanation for the present form of the Torah or that it fails to provide a plausible description of the components that existed in the penultimate stage of its creation.¹⁵ The problem for him is rather that it is impossible to arrive at these same components by another method, that they cannot be reconstructed other than through analysis of the final form of the text. In other words, when the tradition-critical method is employed on its own, starting from what Rendtorff

¹³ *Ibid.*, 24–31.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁵ Nor does he do so in section 3 of *Problem*; although this section is indeed entitled "Criticism of Pentateuchal Criticism," it actually presupposes the Documentary Hypothesis' inadequacy and the superiority of the "smallest unit" approach. A number of his assertions – such as that in the documentary analysis there is insufficient cross-referencing between the major plot complexes (his tradition complexes) and that what little there is is redactional (see esp. 90–100), that the style of presentation differs too markedly between tradition complexes or even specific texts assigned to a single document (34–42, 156), and that there is no theological profile for the Yahwist (126–33) – assume what they set out to demonstrate.

calls the smallest “literary” units – even though these seem to be defined much more thematically than literarily, devoid of context and divorced from their role in the narrative, disconnected from their anticipations and echoes, irrespective of their affinities with, and indeed severed from their close ties to, other passages – the results are not the four documents known to classical criticism.

On reflection, this is hardly surprising; indeed it is difficult to imagine how it could be otherwise. After all, if form criticism has taught us anything, it is that the themes, motifs, and traditions available to ancient Israelite authors, poets, prophets, legislators, and sages were numerous and varied. From their presumed ancient settings they could have developed and progressed in any number of ways, assuming a potentially infinite number of verbal forms. These in turn could have been combined in virtually every imaginable manner and could have been arranged in any order. We can easily postulate innumerable ways in which the larger literary complexes in which some of these came to be incorporated could have evolved, some quite logical conceptually and entirely plausible historically. But none of this negates the possibility that from among these innumerable (and thoroughly unpredictable) theoretical developments, four ancient authors, each emerging at the very end of a long tradition-historical and literary process, arrived at results corresponding to the four documentary sources that source critics have found to be entwined in the Torah’s final form and that they named J, E, P, and D.

The shift to the form-critical study of the smaller units of text and their presumed underlying traditions in and of itself, while it is often credited with having invalidated the Documentary Hypothesis once and for all, really accomplished nothing of the sort. There is nothing inherent in the tradition-historical investigation to negate the emergence of narrative sources in the form of literary documents, as von Rad and Noth clearly perceived, nor is there anything that makes the documents identified by source criticism any more or less likely to emerge from the evolution of traditions and texts.

Why then do the nondocumentarians insist not only that we can, and should, go beyond the source-critical investigation – as Gunkel believed – but that it must be rejected? Four possible reasons come to mind.

The first has to do with a perceived unacceptability of what is often called the documentary “model” or “paradigm.” Scholars seem to sense something eminently unreasonable or improbable in the Documentary Hypothesis as a theoretical, abstract idea of the way a work such as the Torah might plausibly have taken shape, preferring instead to imagine a process corresponding more closely to the two types of literarily composite works with which we are familiar: revision and collection. After all, throughout most of history, from talmudic and medieval times almost until the present, these two possibilities – adding to a single existing text, or collecting a number of existing texts – were

the only processes imaginable to account for the evidence of more than one creative hand in a biblical book.¹⁶ We feel intuitively comfortable with positing that a version of a text, once written, is recopied, and that when this is done, interpolations and revisions are made, so the work is in effect *rewritten*, “edited,” or “redacted,” in the jargon of our profession. We are similarly untroubled by the idea that separate literary works are collected by scribes in anthology form. And we are most at home with the combination of the two, with the notion that separate traditions have been combined by scribes who left their own mark on them while doing so. Surely these well-attested “models” are preferable to positing the interweaving of parallel narratives into a single text – an otherwise unattested literary event.¹⁷

I believe there are several methodological flaws here. Speaking of models and paradigms conveys the idea that the task of the scholar is to develop an abstract idea of how the Pentateuch *ought* to have come into existence, and that scholarly critique should be directed at how convincing the model is in the theoretical sense. Models compete with models, with the most attractive model gaining acceptance.¹⁸ This is an erroneous way to proceed; strictly speaking, there should be no models or paradigms at all. We should not care

¹⁶ On this topic see Menahem HARAN, *The Biblical Collection: Its Consolidation to the End of the Second Temple Times and Changes of Form to the End of the Middle Ages* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute / Magnes Press, 1996–) [Hebrew], vol. 1; most recently Eran VIEZEL, *The Commentary on Chronicles Attributed to Rashi* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2010) [Hebrew], 232–60.

¹⁷ It was in response to this challenge that George Foote MOORE wrote his “Tatian’s Diatessaron and the Analysis of the Pentateuch,” *JBL* 9 (1890): 201–15 (repr. in *Empirical Models for Biblical Criticism* [ed. J. Tigay; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985], 243–56), laying to rest the claim that the interweaving of partially parallel narratives is unparalleled in world literature. Early source critics were of the opinion that the composition of the Former Prophets was accomplished by combining the Elohist and Yahwistic accounts of Israel’s history from the conquest until the exile. This theory too would refute the claim that the phenomenon of intertwined narratives is otherwise unattested. Although this view of the composition of the Former Prophets was later abandoned by virtually all critics, it has recently been advanced again, with some persuasive refinements, by HARAN, *Biblical Collection*, 2:185–237. In Haran’s view, the works of the two historiographical sources – better defined as “schools” of historiographical writing – were combined in much the same manner as the Pentateuch by the Deuteronomistic redactors, who superimposed their own contribution on the whole as they wrote. Haran’s reconstruction makes it clear that this took place a full century *before* the process of composition of the Pentateuch from its sources began, thus countering the notion that the documentary “model” is unprecedented.

¹⁸ This adherence to the model over the comprehensive textual solution may in part account for the fact that most nondocumentary studies deal with only a small portion of the Pentateuchal material (at most one “book” of the Tetrach; generally only a portion thereof); a notable exception to this is Erhard BLUM, whose *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (BZAW 189; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1990) represents a comprehensive hypothesis applied throughout the Torah.

one way or the other if, upon examination, it emerges that the Pentateuch is a unified whole, an amalgamation of sources, several strata of supplementation, or none of the above. Moreover, when the examination itself is influenced by a paradigm or by an idea of what ought to have happened or how things are likely to have taken place, our evaluation of the results becomes a matter of how skillfully the model has been applied to the data rather than how comprehensively the proposed solution accounts for the data, and surely this is inadmissible.¹⁹

Further, viewing the question as one of models and paradigms creates the false impression that the need to determine how the Pentateuch came into existence is the goal and motivation of source criticism, that is, that the history of the Pentateuch's composition is an object of inquiry in and of itself. But the very notion that the pentateuchal text has a history is not self-evident; it is itself a hypothesis – offered up not from among the infinite possibilities in the theoretical realm but in response to a specific set of problems posed by the objective, textual reality of the canonical Torah itself. If not for the doublets, contradictions, and narrative discontinuities that make this text unintelligible in its given form, scholars would never have imagined that it was anything other than a unity and would never have suggested that the explanation for these features lies in the process by which the text took shape. The attempt to reconstruct the process should not be presented as a goal in its own right. If textbooks and general introductions tend to present the Documentary Hypothesis as if it were a method rather than a proposed solution, and even if source critics themselves occasionally do so, this is lamentable and needs to be corrected, but it does not in any way disprove the hypothesis itself. The hypothetical documents J, E, P, and D are a solution, not an assumption, and source criticism did not arise as a general, literary-critical methodology but rather as a theory pertaining to a specific text, the canonical Pentateuch.

A second perceived shortcoming of the Documentary Hypothesis is that the very basis for the claim that the Pentateuch is composed of distinct narrative sources and the key to their identification – the use of the divine names El Shaddai, Elohim, and YHWH – turns out to be neither consistent nor reliable.²⁰ Here too, however, we have a case of confusion. Despite the fact that two of the four documents, J and E, did receive their names from the divine names YHWH and Elohim, respectively, the Documentary Hypothesis does not begin from the suggestion that certain authors consistently refer to the God of Israel by the name YHWH while others do not; even less does it proceed from the as-

¹⁹ Of course, documentarians are guilty of the same error when they impose source division on texts that do not warrant it, apparently driven by a compelling need to find two or three accounts of every episode in the Pentateuch.

²⁰ See Erhard BLUM's helpful excursus "Die sog. 'Gottesnamen' als literarkritisches Kriterium" in his *Vätergeschichte*, 471–75.

sumption that the divine name is a central feature of each author's ideological agenda in writing his version of Israel's prehistory. Rather, it begins from the existence of functionally parallel yet mutually exclusive and contradictory narratives – some of which have been amalgamated into now-composite texts and some of which have been kept separate from each other. This precedes the issue of the divine name; only after they have been disentangled can the separate narratives be examined, and only then can it be determined how each one makes reference to the deity.

The same is true of every aspect of the Pentateuch that can be placed in the category of features or characteristics, whether terminological, stylistic, thematic, or theological, of one or another of the documents. Such features are observable only after the documents have been separated from each other; they are not the grounds for the separation, much less are they the grounds for the hypothesis itself. Moreover, scholarship's evaluation of such elements may change over time; what initially appear to be distinguishing traits, enabling us to disentangle the sources, may turn out to be something else entirely. None of this disproves or discredits the theory itself, because it is not based on the characteristics of the documents.

In the case of the divine name, what may have briefly appeared to some early critics to be a stylistic variation, or even a theological one that expressed itself in consistent terminology, immediately proved not to be anything of the sort. All of the pentateuchal authors, and in fact all Israelite traditions, agree that Israel's God is named YHWH. They also agree that it is not necessary always to refer to him by this name exclusively, and that in some contexts it is perfectly legitimate, even preferable, to call him *ʾēlōhīm* or another appellation. The question on which the pentateuchal authors differ is a historical one: at what point in history did the Tetragrammaton become known, and to whom?²¹ This is the key to the fluctuations in the use of the divine name in the Torah sources, and on this point they actually are quite consistent – as long as one keeps in mind that all of the narrators are perfectly at liberty to use the Tetragrammaton, and to allow their characters to use it, from the time of Moses on; that a narrator who believes that the name YHWH was familiar to all of humankind from the beginning of time is perfectly at liberty to use the word *ʾēlōhīm* as well, and even to have his characters use it; that a narrator who believes that the name YHWH was unknown prior to the time of Moses is

²¹ If the older, "stylistic" position was that of Astruc and Eichhorn, then the newer, "historical claim" position was espoused – in express opposition to Astruc's views – by Hupfeld; see Hermann HUPFELD, *Die Quellen der Genesis und die Art ihrer Zusammensetzung* (Berlin: Wiegandt und Grieben, 1853), 87–88. On Hupfeld, see the detailed study by Otto KAISER, *Zwischen Reaktion und Revolution: Hermann Hupfeld (1796–1866); Ein deutsches Professorenleben* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse III/268; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).