

So where there is a difference of purpose there can be a difference in the type of writing even of the same writer. The style of Deuteronomy is different from the alleged style of J; there is no question about that. The material they give to J tells about Abraham and what he did. It is narrative. In Deuteronomy Moses is addressing the people shortly before his death, exhorting them to obey the law and to follow the God who has done such wonderful things for them. It is filled with exhortations and pleas to follow the Lord followed by declarations of the misery that will come if they turn away from Him. All that has a very distinctive style – the style of Deuteronomy. It has a distinctive occasion. He is pouring out his soul to the people in his farewell address. You would not expect him to do that when he is writing about the marriage of Rebecca and Isaac or about the departure of Joseph from home. There is a different subject and a different purpose, and thus calls for a different style. A different purpose and subject and style does not necessarily mean a different author. When you are dealing with a different subject, you will naturally use a different style.

If you write a list of specifications for building something of a technical nature, your style is bound to be different than if you are telling a story or giving an exhortation. The style of P is different from the other styles, because its purpose is enumeration, statistics, lists, genealogies, and details of the laws which are not given as exhortation for the people, but as regulations for the priesthood to direct them in applying the laws and carrying out the work of the tabernacle. So P has a style that is distinctive from J-E, but it is distinctive because it is a different sort of material, with a different purpose, and the same is true of D as well. This is a tremendously important point.

To say there is no difference in style between what they give to P and what they assign to J-E would be absurd. But it is wrong to say that the difference in style is such that it necessarily implies a different writer, especially when we recognize that different subjects require very different styles, even when written by the same author.

It is important to understand the various stages of the critical theory of the development of the Pentateuch and to be able to describe what happened in each one of them. According to the theory as held today,