

THE INTERPRETER'S BIBLE

ful to which collection a certain legend may belong, there would be little reason to hope that they would be of much value as source material for reconstructing the history of Israel, or for tracing the course of their religious development. In such a case the study of the narrative of the Hexateuch—the study of the laws is another matter—would be not much more than an academic exercise, it certainly could contribute little to the business of living. And this was precisely what seemed to be emerging from the critical efforts of twenty-five years. Scholars had lost their way in a kind of literary morass, their work was in danger of degenerating into pure irrelevancy, and seemed to the ordinary man to have brought little more than intolerable confusion.

It was in explicit revolt against this confusion that Rudolf Smend in 1912 published his work on the Hexateuch.²⁷ In this he advanced the theory that the narrative, apart from the Deuteronomistic material contained in it, was the result of the conflation not of three, but of four documents, J, J², E, and P. Of these, J and J² had first been combined by a redactor, R¹, whose narrative was then fused with E by R². To this, R³ had later added Deuteronomy. Finally, R⁴ had combined R³'s work with P.

Working with this apparatus, Smend was able to assign practically all the material to one or other of his primary sources; secondary material, whether elaboration of one of the component narratives or redactional harmonization and linking, he reduced to a bare minimum.

Smend's methods and conclusions, with certain minor modifications, were accepted by Otto Eissfeldt in his analysis of the narrative of the Hexateuch²⁸ which he published ten years later. To avoid, however, any suggestion that the second source, J², was merely an elaboration of the first, he substituted the symbols L and J for Smend's J¹ and J², L signifying lay source (*Laienquelle*). In employing this symbol he was able to call attention to the fact that it was the least theological of the narratives, and also to place it in sharp contrast to the final one of the series, the Priestly Code.

The analytical work of these two scholars was characterized by an extraordinary penetration. Nevertheless, the order which Smend brought out of the confusion was artificial in the extreme. The narratives as he reconstructed them suffered in places from an internal inconsistency, so marked as to be impossible.²⁹ At the same time they were so similar in the ground

they covered that they could only have been written by men depending upon a common tradition, the content and scope of which remained fixed for some four centuries. And there is a further point to be noted. In Smend's analysis the authors of the four documents, J, J², E, and P (in Eissfeldt's terminology, L, J, E, P), had effected an almost identical articulation of their material, so that it was possible for a redactor to collate the first two with practically no adaptation or connecting links, and then for a second redactor, with the same ease, to combine this narrative with the third. The question inevitably arises, "Why, if they were indeed so similar, were the pre-exilic narratives ever combined?"

These facts suggest that Smend, troubled by the literary confusion which confronted him, allowed himself to be swayed by his desire to find a solution to the problem of the Hexateuch along the neat and orderly lines of a document-hypothesis uncontaminated by the heresy of supplementation, and so failed to allow sufficiently for the presence of material which does not belong to any of the narratives in their original form. He took little account of the steady and dynamic expansion to which the tradition had been subjected, even after it had first been committed to writing. As a result he failed, as Gunkel had failed, to discern the extent to which this process reflected, and had been conditioned by, political and religious developments. His analysis was, in short, a purely literary performance.

VII. The Two Editions of the J Document

All this seems to suggest that, for a solution of the problem of the Hexateuch, full account must be taken of the political and religious developments which Gunkel and Smend too easily ignored. To this conclusion Wellhausen was again the first to point the way when, arguing from certain duplications in the narrative of the Exodus and from the general impression of the crucial importance of Kadesh which the narrative nevertheless conveyed even in its present form, he maintained that the tradition of Israel had originally known nothing of a journey to, or of the lawgiving at, Sinai, but had told of the people going directly to Kadesh from the Red Sea.³⁰

The phenomena to which Wellhausen called attention did not of themselves necessarily point to this conclusion. But Eduard Meyer,³¹ taking up where Wellhausen had left off, delivered him

from a possible charge of undue impressionism. He established the existence in the Hexateuch of a document, J, which told of the Israelites journeying directly to Kadesh from the Red Sea, and showed that this document had been elaborated by a later writer, J², who added the material telling of the journey of Israel to Sinai and of the lawgiving there.

Having established this point, Meyer proceeded to argue that the southern tribes had entered Palestine not from the east by crossing the Jordan, but from the south.³² His argument was based not upon a reconstruction of an early narrative of the Conquest—which indeed he believed to be irrecoverable—but upon the geographical position of the tribes of Judah and Simeon, cut off as they were from the north until the rise of the monarchy; upon the political situation in the time of Saul and earlier; and upon the narrative reflecting a movement northward from Kadesh in Num. 21:13, and its variants in Num. 14:29-45 and Exod. 17:8-16.

In analyzing the narrative of the Conquest,³³ beginning with Num. 13 and ending with Judg. 2:3, one may isolate what is probably the earliest account of an invasion of Palestine from the south (as postulated by Meyer). This appears to belong to the same stratum of the J material as the Kadesh narrative of the Exodus. We thus have an account of the Exodus and the Conquest which embodies the tradition of the southern tribes only.

Just as the Kadesh narrative of the Exodus was elaborated by the addition of material telling of the Israelites going to Sinai following the deliverance at the Red Sea, so the account of an invasion of Palestine from the south has been enlarged by the addition of material telling of all the tribes proceeding from Kadesh to the land of Moab, of their miraculous crossing of the Jordan at Jericho, and of their conquest under the leadership of Joshua, of the land occupied in historical times by Ephraim and Benjamin. Following this the narrative reverts to the earlier account, now preserved in Judg. 1—of the conquest of the south, though with the order of events changed to make it fit the new representation that it was a movement not northwards from Kadesh, but southwards from Joshua's (supposed) headquarters in the vicinity of Jericho.

This secondary conquest material seems to belong to the same stratum of J as does the Sinai material, that is, J². Since it is concerned with Benjamin and Ephraim, one may tentatively infer that the specific tradition upon which J² had drawn in his elaboration of the

southern J narrative was the tradition of these two tribes.

Further support for this inference is furnished by an analysis of Genesis which takes full account of the duplications and inconsistencies in the J material noted by Wellhausen, Balde, and Kuenen, for which Smend and Eissfeldt sought to account by postulating two originally independent documents, both characterized by expressions and modes of thought which earlier critics had noted as indications of J.

By this analysis a narrative is isolated which contains traditions most of which bear the marks of having been current either in the vicinity of Hebron, the capital of the southern tribes, or in the land east of the Jordan. Significantly, the author of this narrative nowhere reveals any firsthand knowledge of the traditions of the Joseph-Rachel tribes, Ephraim, Manasse, and Benjamin. It is thus a southern document, with certain east-Jordan affinities, and it appears to belong to the same stratum of the J tradition as the Exodus-Kadesh narrative and the related account of the conquest of the south.

This J¹ material in Genesis has been subjected to the same kind of elaboration as the J¹ narrative of the Exodus and the Conquest. There has been added to it a great deal of material which reveals for the most part an interest in legends which are rooted in the north. This material is from the same stratum as that dealing with Sinai and the conquest of the north.

The conclusion demanded by the observation of these phenomena would seem to be that the inconsistencies and repetitions within the J material of the Hexateuch to which Wellhausen first called attention in 1876, are due to the fact that the document is based on a very simple narrative, J¹, embodying the tradition of the southern tribes; and that this was later elaborated by another writer, J², who added to it the tradition of the Joseph tribes, reconciling the two traditions as best he could.

The "second edition" of the J document itself received some further additions, but this elaboration did not have the systematic character which marks the work of J². It was the completed J document—J² plus supplements—which was ultimately conflated with the E document to form the narrative JE.

This conclusion, it may be noted, is within the framework of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis, and indeed is in substantial agreement with the suggestions advanced, however tentatively, by Wellhausen himself. It rejects the theory—also congruent with the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis—espoused in different forms by Eduard Smend, and others, that the J narrative is the

²⁷ *Die Entstehung des Hexateuchs* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912).

²⁸ *Hexateuch-Studien* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1922).

²⁹ *Impressions on a recent visit to Simpson, Early Traditions of Israel*, pp. 32-33.

³⁰ *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, tr. J. Sutherland Black and Alban Menzies (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885), pp. 342-43.

³¹ *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1906), p. 1108.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 72-77.

³³ *Simpson, Early Traditions of Israel*, pp. 280-82.