

## 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.<sup>21</sup> In this he advanced the theory that the narrative, apart from the Deuteronomic material contained in it, was the result of the conflation not of three, but of four documents, J<sup>1</sup>, J<sup>2</sup>, E, and P. Of these, J<sup>1</sup> and J<sup>2</sup> had first been combined by a redactor, R<sup>J</sup>, whose narrative was then fused with E by R<sup>E</sup>. To this, R<sup>D</sup> had later added Deuteronomy. Finally, R<sup>P</sup> had combined R<sup>D</sup>'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 Hexateuch<sup>22</sup> which he published ten years later. To avoid, however, any suggestion that the second source, J<sup>2</sup>, was merely an elaboration of the first, he substituted the symbols L and J for Smend's J<sup>1</sup> and J<sup>2</sup>, 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.<sup>23</sup> 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<sup>1</sup>, J<sup>2</sup>, 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 conflate 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.<sup>24</sup>

The phenomena to which Wellhausen called attention did not of themselves necessarily point to this conclusion. But Eduard Meyer,<sup>25</sup> taking up where Wellhausen had left off, delivered him

<sup>21</sup> *Die Erzählung des Hexateuch* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912).

<sup>22</sup> *Hexateuch-Synopse* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1922).

<sup>23</sup> Instances are given in Simpson, *Early Traditions of Israel*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>24</sup> *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, tr. J. Sutherland Black and Allan Menzies (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885), pp. 342-43.

<sup>25</sup> *Die Israeliten und ihre Nachbarstämme* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1906), pp. 1-103.