

Kaufmann, Yehezkel, The Religion of Israel (U. of Chicago Press, 1960)

p. 205, It has been shown above that there is no trace whatever of D's centralization idea in P; P must, therefore, have been composed before the age of Hezekiah.¹⁶

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All supposed tokens of P's lateness are overshadowed by this monumental fact. Wellhausen's idea that the early religion of Israel was spontaneous and rite-free is permissive only so long as the cuneiform literature (that already in his time was being studied with reference to the religion of Israel) is not taken into account. To Wellhausen, the cultures of Babylonia, Assyria, and Egypt are irrelevant for the history of biblical religion. Israel's culture is taken as the direct outgrowth of primitive Bedouin origins. The error of this view will be shown below.

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The idea that P is dominated by the exilic mood of national guilt is wrong. That mood brought into prominence the new cult forms of confession and prayer without sacrifice, often illustrated in Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. These are not found in P. The sins that P's sacrifices atone for are unwitting transgressions of the individual and the community, especially sins involving impurity (Lev. 4-5; Num. 15. 25; cf. Lev. 16.16ff.). The sin offering, an innovation of P according to Wellhausen, is brought only for unwitting sins and has no reference to the historical sin of the nation. P knows of no special rite for atoning national sin.

p. 205 The mood of the real exile is not reflected at all, nor are any of the later prophetic motifs alluded to: the gradual destruction, first of Israel then of Judah, or the destruction of the temple. The image of exile in the Torah must, therefore, be an ancient one, antedating the historical experience of destruction and exile.¹⁵

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It is this negative fact, that in the Torah nothing of later historical events is reflected that speaks decisively for its antiquity. The opponents of the Wellhausen school have often pointed out that the Torah contains old and reliable historical documents. But this argument is still not conclusive; late books can utilize ancient materials. Only the fact that the Torah shows no knowledge whatever of later historical conditions fixes the date of its sources between termini different entirely from those postulated by the prevailing view.

p. 206 As the law of the local sanctuaries, then, P crystallizes a stage of religious evolution earlier than D. The tradition that placed P before D thus correctly reflects the historical development.