

and E to the period of the early monarchy.³ It was only with regard to P that Wellhausen discerned a problem.⁴

Prior to the 19th century, scholarly consensus considered both the Priestly documents and Deuteronomy to be Mosaic compositions;⁵ however, subsequent to the publication, in 1805, of de Wette's thesis that Deuteronomy was to be dated in the last half of the seventh century B.C.E., only P was dated early. After 1805, debate and discussion centered on the date of this source, until Wellhausen isolated and drew together the significant problems in the history of Israelite religion caused by its early dating and distilled the major argument resolving them.⁶ This involved an additional presupposition, namely that Israelite religion, of necessity, developed from a primitive state through a prophetic one into a priestly Yahwistic form.⁷

In the first part of *Prolegomena*, Wellhausen studied the biblical data relative to the place of worship, the sacrificial system, the sacred feasts, the priests and Levites, and the endowments of clergy. In each case he concluded that the data which derived from P bearing on these institutions were post-exilic and that therefore the source was post-exilic.⁸ In the second section, he examined the narrative tradition in Chronicles, concluding that it was a post-exilic revision of history inspired by Priestly concerns;⁹ he also recognized the »exilic« Deuteronomistic edition of Judges, Samuel, and Kings,¹⁰ and the Priestly edition of the Hexateuch.¹¹ In the third section, he emphasized again the influence of the post-exilic Priestly source on the whole of the Hebrew Bible.¹² Reading *Prolegomena* a century after it was written, we cannot but be impressed by its forceful logic and cunning argument. Nevertheless, it is important that we recognize the limitations of what was demonstrated in this book.

As Robert Polzin shows in his recent analysis of *Prolegomena*, Wellhausen argued deductively from a set of presuppositions rather than in-

ductively from raw data. Wellhausen's conclusions regarding the late dating of P are the only ones possible given his literary critical presuppositions concerning J, E, and D, and his reconstruction of Israelite religion.¹³ Polzin emphasizes that the marshalling of evidence in *Prolegomena* is not done to prove the hypothesis, but rather to indicate its necessity in the light of the aforementioned presuppositions.¹⁴

Of the two major presuppositions underlying *Prolegomena*, the schematic reconstruction of Israelite religion has been invalidated by insights gained through recent studies of biblical religion, research into other religious traditions of the ancient Near East, as well as from cultural and social anthropology.¹⁵ The presupposition of Pentateuchal documents and the manner of their editing retains its essential validity, and in the light of recent studies of the formation of the Samaritan Pentateuch and of some cuneiform historical and literary compositions, may almost be considered empirically substantiated.¹⁶

¹³ R. Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism: Method and Subjectivity in the Study of Ancient Texts*, Missoula, 1977, 131–34.

¹⁴ Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism*, 143.

¹⁵ The concerns and interests characteristic of the priestly source which were interpreted as indications of its lateness no longer need be so interpreted: e.g. 1) the Tabernacle was a pre-exilic structure, contrast Wellhausen, 38–45 and R.E. Freedman, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative*, 1981, 44–64; 2) at least part of the sacrificial system elaborated in P reflects pre-exilic practice, contrast Wellhausen, 76, 80–82, and J. Milgrom, »Sin-offering or Purification-offering?« VT 21 (1971) 237–239, idem, *Studies in Levitical Terminology*, 1, Berkeley, 1970, 54–59, 87; idem, *Cult and Conscience*, Leiden 1976, 124–127. Concerns for matters such as the specific type and nature of a sacrifice, purification rituals, and sacerdotal classes are attested in too many pre-exilic Near Eastern societies to be considered post-exilic, Israelite developments. Cf. M. Weinfeld, »Julius Wellhausen's Understanding of the Law of Ancient Israel and its Fallacies« (in Hebrew), *Shnaton* 4 (1980) 81–87 where Wellhausen's statements are contrasted with the known evidence.

The presence of a moral dimension is attested in some of the prophetic texts from Mari; the historiographical notion of divine causality is attested in non-Israelite texts from the ancient Near East (B. Albrektson, *History and the Gods*, Lund, 1967, chs. 5–6; M. Coogan, *Imperialism and Religion*, Missoula, 1974, ch. 1) and the idea of covenants between gods and nations is attested outside of Israel as well (Z. Zevit, »A Phoenician Inscription and Biblical Covenant Theology,« IEJ 27 [1977] 116–118; N. Lohfink, »Gott im Buch Deuteronomium,« in J. Coppens, ed., *La Notion biblique de Dieu* [= *Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologiarum Lovaniensium* XLI, n.d.], 115).

¹⁶ For examples from the Samaritan Pentateuch cf. J.H. Tigay »An Empirical Basis of the Documentary Hypothesis,« JBL 94 (1975) 329–342; R. Weiss, »Concerning One Type of Revision in the Samaritan Pentateuch,« in M.E. Stone ed., *Armenian and Biblical Studies*, Jerusalem, 1976, 157–164; A. Toeg, *Mtn Twrh Bsyny*, Jerusalem, 1977, 43–46; for examples from cuneiform sources cf. J.S. Cooper, »Gilgamesh Dreams of Enkidu: The Evolution and Dilution of Narrative,« *Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of J.J. Finkelstein*, Connecticut Academy of Arts and Science, Memoir 19, 1977, p. 41; H. Tadmor, »Observations on Assyrian Historiography,« *Ancient Near Eastern Studies ...*

³ *Prolegomena*, 7–9.

⁴ *Prolegomena*, 10, 366.

⁵ J.G. Eichhorn, *Einleitung ins Alte Testament*, vol. 2, Leipzig, 1782, 329.

⁶ R.J. Thompson, *Moses and the Law in a Century of Criticism Since Graf* (= SVT 19) 1970, 21–57.

⁷ *Prolegomena*, 11. This particular notion was developed originally by the Dutch scholar A. Kuenen who nurtured the idea of connecting the documents to a »logical« pattern of religious evolution from 1862–65. He finally expressed his ideas in *De godsdienst van Israel tot den ondergang den Joodschen staat* I, II, 1869–70 (E.T. *The Religion of Israel to the Fall of the Jewish State*, 1874–75, by A.H. May). Cf. P.H. Wickstead, »Abraham Kuenen,« JQR 4 (1892) 587–89.

⁸ *Prolegomena*, 51, 82, 112, 150–51, 166–67.

⁹ *Prolegomena*, 224–27.

¹⁰ *Prolegomena*, 280.

¹¹ *Prolegomena*, 295, 309, 311, 332, 361.

¹² *Prolegomena*, 419–25.