

The Pentateuch today

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Preliminaries

There is no more urgent question today in serious study of the Old Testament than that of the composition of the Pentateuch. A century after J. Wellhausen's epoch-making analysis of Israel's history, and his accompanying division of the Pentateuch into four documents, J, E, D and P, ranging in date from the early monarchy to the post-exilic period, most scholars do not even consider it necessary to give a passing thought to the traditional view that Moses was himself responsible for large parts of the books in which he is the prominent figure. R. E. Clements, for example, considers that '... the complexity of the problems rules out of court conservative attempts to overthrow the basic insights of literary criticism and tradition-history in the interests of a return to a very uncritical position'.¹ Our question is whether, in fact, the 'complexity of the problems' is indeed such that basic Mosaic responsibility for much of the Pentateuchal material is beyond recall. Or is the complexity born of the particular methodology adopted by the critics?

It is important to recognize that, despite Clements' remarks (cited above), there is important modern writing on the Pentateuch which does *not* rule Mosaic authorship out of court.² Such writing is not merely conservative reaction; indeed in a number of works we are beginning to see a movement within more conservative writing away from defensiveness and towards imaginative building upon traditional premises.

The fact that scholars can disagree so radically over Pentateuchal studies shows that the question of starting-points and presuppositions is just as decisive as it ever was. It makes a great difference whether a scholar takes seriously the possibility that the Pentateuch is God-given and reliable or whether he accepts as given the common critical assumptions about the nature of the Pentateuch.

This does not mean that those who view the Pentateuch as the Word of God will agree at all points as to what this implies for critical study. Nor does it mean that scholars who hold more or less conservative views can ignore each other's work, though this often happens: there must be dialogue and a coming to grips with the evidence and arguments produced by those of differing positions.

Diversity in the Pentateuch

Perhaps the crucial ingredient in modern debate about the Pentateuch is the fact of diversity within the Pentateuch. There are within the five books different kinds of writing (narrative, law, exhortation);³ and there are variations upon themes within both the narrative sections (e.g. Gn. 12:10-20; 20:1-18; 26:6-11) and the legal (Ex. 23:14-17; 34:22-24; Lv. 23:1-14; Dt. 16:1-8). This diversity of content has, since Wellhausen and before, led many scholars to suppose that the Pentateuch is also diverse in origin. Conservative scholars on the other hand have seen it as their task to defend the Mosaic provenance of the 'five books'. Some recent evangelical scholars have questioned the necessity of defending Mosaic authorship, feeling that the conclusions of modern scholarship about the Pentateuch's formation pose no threat to belief. But, although the work of critical scholarship has clearly furnished much insight into the meaning of the Pentateuch, it is still surely true that a belief in the Bible as the Word of God must entail the view that the Pentateuch is a unity in some real sense, not a collection of contradictory traditions. In the remainder of this paper we shall outline the major recent developments in Pentateuchal study, contrasting the approach which begins with the premise of diversity with one which begins with that of unity, and finding that it does make a difference to our interpretation of the whole Pentateuch. We shall finish by observing two specific areas in which debate continues.

From Wellhausen to Noth — beginning from diversity

In order to take stock of current views of the Pentateuch, we need to go back to Wellhausen, who,

¹ In G. W. Anderson (ed.), *Tradition and Interpretation* (Oxford, 1979), p. 113.

² E.g. P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), pp. 24ff.

³ S. R. Driver has made the classical statement of the style of writing more or less peculiar to Deuteronomy, in which exhortation plays a large part. *Deuteronomy* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), pp. lxxvii-xciv.

though he has been superseded in many important respects, is still the fountainhead of modern critical views.⁴ Wellhausen's literary analysis of the Pentateuch into four documents (J, E, D and P) was immensely powerful and persuasive because it was not only a piece of literary criticism (others before him had identified four documents), but was also a reconstruction of the history of Israel. It is in my view the latter aspect of Wellhausen's work, with its belief in the increasing priestly domination of Israel's religion and in the creativity of the exilic period,⁵ that has proved durable, and this has given the literary aspect of his work a vitality which might not otherwise have survived the work of his successors. This is why there is still so much commitment to a Josianic Deuteronomy, and an exilic P. The centrality of 'D' — Wellhausen's most important single idea — is primarily a historical idea, although its literary analysis remains a live issue.

It would be wrong, indeed, to say that Wellhausen's basic literary postulates have been rejected. On the contrary, most scholars are still committed to the belief that features such as duplicate narratives and divergent law-codes (as noted above) indicate diverse origins of the material. Indeed they have gone far beyond Wellhausen in postulating, not a small number of constituent documents, but an immensely large number of fragments, originally oral in nature, and having arisen among disparate groupings which only gradually came to constitute Israel. This is called the traditio-historical method and has come to dominate Pentateuchal study largely through the works of G. von Rad and M. Noth.⁶

Von Rad's seminal contribution was the separation of the Exodus and Sinai themes on the grounds that there was no mention of Sinai in certain formulae which he considered early, viz Dt. 26:5-9; Dt. 6:20-24; Jo. 24:2-13.⁷ These passages he believed to constitute an ancient confession commemorating an ex-

perience of deliverance from Egypt, but which betray no knowledge of the Sinai event. The theophany and covenant-making on Sinai belong, in von Rad's view, to a quite separate stream of tradition, which has been introduced to the 'Hexateuch' (he regards *Genesis-Joshua* as the real editorial unit, rather than the Pentateuch as such) as a subordinate element to that of the exodus.⁸ He advances several reasons for maintaining this, the chief being that the main features of what he regards as the exodus tradition do not appear in the Sinai pericope, though he also believes the section shows signs of being an interruption in the narrative.⁹ What is significant, however, is the new approach. Whereas the literary critics had begun with a number of authors to whom they attempted to allocate the material,¹⁰ von Rad is beginning with the material and working outwards. This produces an attitude that is less interested in authors than in streams of tradition and the boundaries between them.¹¹

Noth built upon von Rad's work, accepting the division between exodus and Sinai, and adding three more major Pentateuchal themes, viz Guidance into Arable Land (which he distinguishes from Guidance out of Egypt = exodus), Promise to the Patriarchs and Guidance in the Wilderness. Noth again postulates the original separateness of his five themes, locating the different streams among originally disparate clan or tribal groupings before these grew together to form Israel. The formation of Israel's traditions about her origins is, therefore, a kind of 'pooling of resources', each group contributing its own experience. But the process was gradual and highly complex, with the traditions influencing and even competing with each other. Moses, *ex hypothesi*, can only have belonged originally in one of the themes, and must have been incorporated into the others because of his strength in that theme (which Noth identifies as that of Guidance into Arable Land). Abraham has ousted Isaac, who is probably to be regarded as more original and ancient precisely because of his shadowiness in the material that we now have.¹² Thus the celebrated story of the pretence that a wife is a sister must have been originally told

⁴ Wellhausen's most influential work is *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel* (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885-) and in various other editions. Expositions and critiques of it are available in plenty. G. W. Anderson, *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1959), embodies a sympathetic understanding (though it goes beyond Wellhausen and is no mere account of his thought). For critical assessment see, e.g. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (London: IVP 1970); O. T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses* (Philadelphia: PRAC, 1943); K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (London, IVP: 1966).

⁵ Cf. P. R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration* (London: SCM, 1968), pp. 7ff.

⁶ M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1948), and in English, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood-Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972); G. von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), pp. 3ff.

⁷ Von Rad, *op. cit.*, pp. 3f.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 13ff.

¹⁰ Obviously I overstate here to make a point. The isolation of a number of authors (JEDP) began with observation of the material. And many literary critics were prepared to postulate more authors as they felt the material compelled them to.

¹¹ Von Rad in fact maintained an interest in authorship, seeing the Yahwist (J) as the creative compiler of many of Israel's old traditions; *Old Testament Theology*, I (London: Oliver & Boyd 1962), pp. 107ff., esp. pp. 123f.

¹² Following H. Gunkel, Noth believed that brevity in traditions was a sign of antiquity, as were stories' anonymity and attachment to cult-places. On criteria such as these the Joseph story, e.g., is late and fictitious.

about Isaac but was subsequently swallowed up by Abraham as he became more dominant in the Israelite consciousness. The genealogical relationship between Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is, of course, artificial, since these three must originally have been hero-figures within entirely separate groups. Clearly these trends tend to postulate even greater original fragmentation than Wellhausen did.

The work of von Rad and Noth has been criticized on various grounds. R. E. Clements has charged both with erecting theories on a conspicuous lack of evidence. There is no evidence, he argues, for von Rad's ancient 'credos'¹³ (though those who hold a higher view of the historicity of the Pentateuch might differ on the basis of Dt. 26). Nor can Noth demonstrate that the Pentateuch has woven together kernels of originally separate events.¹⁴ On the other hand the presence of the name Yahweh in both exodus and Sinai themes, the difficulty experienced by Noth's successors of eliminating Moses from at least four of his five themes, and the unifying factor of Kadesh, suggest rather that more of the material belongs originally together than von Rad or Noth admitted.¹⁵ More fundamental questions have come from Schmid and Rendtorff¹⁶ who have raised the crucial issue for criticism of how the new traditio-historical approach is to be combined with the long-established results of literary criticism. In other words, what is to be done with JEDP? Both von Rad and Noth left room for a documentary stage in the development of the traditions. But this is now challenged by Rendtorff, who believes that the sorts of original sources postulated by Noth and von Rad are of a fundamentally different character from the traditional documentary ones, and call into question the very existence of a Yahwist — *i.e.* of a unified theological strand in the early development of the Pentateuch. Schmid has not actually abandoned the Yahwist, but places him in the seventh century, much later than he has usually been dated, and in close association with the Deuteronomist.¹⁷

Yet this is but the latest development in the traditio-historical approach to Pentateuchal study. It may be the death-knell of J and E. D and P, however, will be harder to shift. And it need hardly be said that what we are witnessing in Pentateuchal studies is not

that *metanoia* for which conservative scholars have been clamouring for a century or more. The details of this or that scholar's reconstruction may find greater or lesser acceptance. But the method, as expounded above by Noth, is firmly established.

D. J. A. Clines — beginning from unity

Critics of conservative scholars protest that in any argument they always rush back to presuppositions. This, however, is not a failure of nerve, nor proof of their inability to defend their position. Rather, the question whether any statement or set of statements is consistent with the belief that the Bible is God's Word is a fundamental question, and a question about method. This is not the place to labour the point.¹⁸ But it is a matter of fact that, depending on whether one begins with a unitary or a fragmentary view of the Pentateuch, one actually observes different kinds of things and gains an entirely different impression of the whole.

D. J. A. Clines' book, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*¹⁹ is significant in this respect, precisely because it does not constitute an outright rejection of the findings of previous research. Clines is less concerned to deny this or that element in the work of scholars who employ the traditio-historical method, than to urge that concentration on it diverts attention from the canvas in its wholeness that is spread before them. He contends that scholars have been so concerned with what he calls 'atomism' (concern with details) and 'geneticism' (concern with origins) in biblical literature that they have lost sight of the whole entities contained in it, and of the fact that they function as such.²⁰ He then develops what he sees as the theme of the Pentateuch, based on the three-fold promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3, in a way which suggestively embraces virtually all of the Pentateuchal literature.²¹ Clines sees the significance of his method in the fact that he does not begin with traditional literary-critical theory, but rather ends

¹⁸ On the whole subject see S. Erlandsson, 'Is there ever Biblical Research without Presuppositions?', *TSF Bulletin*, 65 (1973), pp. 1-5.

¹⁹ *JSOT*, Supplement 10 (1978).

²⁰ Clines, *op. cit.*, pp. 7ff. The author is motivated by the desire to bring to bear modern techniques of literary criticism, broadly understood. Indeed this is a trend within Old Testament studies as a whole, and numerous works have emanated from *JSOT* in this mould and relating to the narrative books of the OT; e.g. J. Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: *JSOT*, 1978). Cf. in this regard W. Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973).

²¹ The theme of the Pentateuch is the partial fulfilment — which also implies the partial non-fulfilment — of the promise to or blessing of the patriarchs. The three elements of the promise — posterity, divine-human relationship, and land — are to the foreforn respectively in Gn. 12-50, Exodus — Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, p. 29. (He also shows how Gn. 1-11 anticipates the theme, pp. 61ff.)

¹³ R. E. Clements, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 111f.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 112f.

¹⁶ H. H. Schmid, *Der Sogennante Jahwist* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976); R. Rendtorff, *Das Überlieferungs-geschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977).

¹⁷ With Schmid's position may be compared with that of J. van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1975); cf. below n. 54. For a fuller and basically sympathetic account of modern trends, see E. Ball, 'Observations on some recent Pentateuchal Studies', *Churchman* (forthcoming 1983).

with it, making the point that his holistic reading of the Pentateuch is not after all incompatible with the attempt to trace a history of its formation.²² He then argues that of the two essential aspects of the promise to the patriarchs, *viz* (1) promise and (2) 'partial non-fulfilment', the former certainly and the latter probably can be found in the three major blocks of material which literary criticism professes to have discovered (the Yahwist or JE, Deuteronomy and the Priestly material).²³ Clearly Clines' challenge to traditional methods is not as radical as those who advocate the basically Mosaic origins of the Pentateuch would like it to be (especially when he interprets the original function of the whole Pentateuch in relation to an early-post-exilic dating of the final redaction).²⁴ Nevertheless his work is a salutary corrective to the approach which, having isolated sources, attempts to describe the several theologies contained in them without external controls. Did the Yahwist's narrative originally contain an account of the conquest? Some answer with an emphatic affirmative, either tracing J through to Joshua, or speculating that the end of the account has been lost.²⁵ Clines' work shows, however, that the theme of non-fulfilment is stamped upon the whole Pentateuch, and therefore that the quest for a 'lost' or hidden ending of the J document is at best unfruitful. The fact that the theme of non-fulfilment is stamped on the Pentateuch as a whole is of overriding importance.²⁶

Clines' book is one of the most interesting and useful currently available on the Pentateuch. It is so because he offers a challenge to mainstream critical opinion that is itself creative.²⁷ Yet it does also contain a fundamental challenge to those who, like Clements, believe that the history of the Pentateuch's formation is so complex that there is no returning to a unitary view.²⁸ We saw that the nature of von Rad's and Noth's advance upon Wellhausen was that they began from 'within' the text, with small fragments — the smaller the better — and worked 'outwards', postulating all the time new sources. Most modern writers proceed thus, only seeking, as a logically final step, evidence of attempts to bring the series of fragments into harmony with each other. The effect of seeking the logic of the whole first is

quite radical, for then one is operating with a framework which exercises a hermeneutical constraint. Instead of regarding duplicate accounts as the deposit of an evolution which a redactor has only superficially controlled, one begins to ask how they relate to and illuminate each other.²⁹ For my part I think that this sort of approach compels us to ask: is the belief that the present final form of the Pentateuch is coherent and meaningful as a totality ultimately compatible with any and every theory about the Pentateuch's formation? There are people today who argue this.³⁰ But in fact it is doubtful if one can view the Pentateuch as a collection of originally diverse traditions and at the same time claim that it is a fully coherent whole in its present form; the gap between origins and end-results on this view cannot ultimately be closed, as the following discussion will show.

Some current fashions and directions

I want now to indicate two areas in which there is discussion — and room for discussion — within Pentateuchal study, *viz* (1) the question of demythologization and (2) 'Deuteronomism'.

1. *Demythologization.* Von Rad popularized the belief that the authors of Deuteronomy — in the seventh century — took a novel view of the nature of the cult. Whereas the older biblical writers had believed the tabernacle/temple to be the actual home of God, and the ark of the covenant his real footstool (*e.g.* 2 Sa. 6:6-11; Ps. 132:7f.), Deuteronomy now insisted on the fact that it was nothing more than a box containing the tablets on which the law was written (Dt. 10:1-5).³¹ Accompanying this 'demythologization' in the realm of religious ideas, there went a 'secularization', *i.e.* an attempt to diminish the influence of temple and clergy upon the life of the people. Deuteronomy's permission to slaughter animals non-sacrificially (12:15ff.) is an example of this secularizing tendency. Not only does Deuteronomy differ from earlier writers, however, but P — the 'priestly' strand — is then held to try to re-establish the former sacral conceptions. These underlie, for example, the description of the making of the ark (Ex. 25:10ff.), particularly in the ideas of the

²² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 89ff.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 97f.

²⁵ See O. Kaiser, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), p. 194.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 95.

²⁷ Other writers have looked for characteristics and style within the parameters of traditional Pentateuchal criticism; *cf.* W. Brueggemann, 'The Kerygma of the "Priestly Writers"', *ZAW*, 84 (1972) pp. 397-414.

²⁸ See above, n. 1.

²⁹ This is done well by F. D. Kidner, *Genesis* (London: IVP, 1967). See his remarks on Gn. 12:10-20; 20:1-18; 26:6-11, *ad. loc.*

³⁰ B. S. Child's commentary on Exodus (London: SCM, 1974), is by way of being a programmatic attempt to demonstrate the possibility. The theory behind the practice is stated in the introductory sections (especially III and IV) of his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM, 1979). His approach is commonly called Canonical Criticism. Despite its attractiveness it is open to serious criticism. See the symposium of reactions to his *Introduction* in *JSOT*, 16 (1980).

³¹ G. von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy* (London: SCM, 1953), p. 40. The whole discussion on pp. 37-44 is relevant.

cherubim (sometimes depicted in the Psalms as 'bearing God', Ps. 80:1) and the mercy-seat, where God promises to meet with Moses (Ex. 25:22). Similarly Leviticus 17:3ff. is said to go back on Deuteronomy 12 by insisting again on sacrifice at one place only.³² D and P are sometimes further contrasted in terms of their supposedly characteristic name-theology (D) and glory-theology (P) — Deuteronomy's use of God's name (as at 12:5) insisting, it is said, that God himself is not present at the sanctuary.³³

This discussion raises two issues. The first is in fact that with which we closed the preceding section — *viz* is original discreteness compatible with final coherence? But it is clear that the sorts of claims made by von Rad and others about the differences between Deuteronomy and P preclude any real coherence within the completed Pentateuch. On the contrary, contradiction and polemic are of its essence. Here, then, is strong evidence that for those who hold to the coherence of the Pentateuch as we know it the work of establishing its real and underlying unity must continue.

This brings us more specifically to the point at issue. The assertion that Deuteronomy demythologizes and secularizes can be one of the thornier problems for many students of the Pentateuch. Yet it seems to me that there is much inaccurate thinking behind this apparently powerful thesis. On the relation between Leviticus 17 and Deuteronomy 12, for example, everything depends upon a wrong interpretation of 1 Samuel 14:32ff., where the action recorded is usually regarded as being a sacrifice, and therefore representing the conditions against which Deuteronomy is said to have reacted.³⁴ In fact, however, it has been well shown that 1 Samuel 14:32ff. presupposes some such law as that of Deuteronomy itself (Dt. 12:15ff.), and therefore that there are no grounds for the view that Deuteronomy represents a departure from the practice of Saul's day.³⁵ On the question of the ark, much can be explained in terms of changing situation rather than conflicting ideology. In the desert wanderings, God often had occasion to meet dramatically with (Moses and) Israel from the tabernacle (*e.g.* Nu. 14:10). Deuteronomy, however, is legislating for the regular,

ongoing and unspectacular worship in the land. It is impossible to develop the point further here.³⁶ But in general it may be said that in the whole discussion much depends on how one selects and gives weight to biblical passages and vocabulary. And Noth's misunderstanding of 1 Samuel 14:32ff. shows the extent to which a false initial idea can lead to weak exegesis which then reinforces the false idea. J. Milgrom has made a number of damaging observations on the way in which Weinfeld has handled biblical vocabulary in constructing his view of a demythologizing Deuteronomy.³⁷

2. 'Deuteronomism'. One of the most influential contributions to modern Pentateuchal study derives from a work that mainly deals with Joshua-2 Kings. M. Noth (again) argues, however,³⁸ that the real beginning of this sequence, which he believes is the work, in its final form, of a single author, is the book of Deuteronomy; and indeed that chs. 1-4 of Deuteronomy were prefixed to an already existing form of the book expressly as an introduction to the whole complex, Deuteronomy-2 Kings. This proposal has come to dominate Deuteronomy studies,³⁹ and has wider implications for the Pentateuch in that it leads to the idea of a *Tetrateuch* (*viz* Gn.-Nu.) as a basic editorial unit rather than von Rad's *Hexateuch* (Gn.-Jo.).⁴⁰ This in turn has implications for such questions as whether the Yahwist originally included a conquest narrative in his account.

At first glance Noth's Deuteronomist (Dtr) does not appear to threaten traditional views of the Pentateuch too seriously. It is not unreasonable to think that someone in the exile edited a large body of inherited material and used it to show that it was Israel's chronic apostasy that had brought about the exile.⁴¹ (The regular form particularly of 2 Kings together with the fact that the story ends with the final deportation to Babylon and its immediate

³⁶ I have done so in 'God's Name and God's Glory' (*op. cit.*), pp. 153ff.

³⁷ D. Milgrom, 'The Alleged "Demythologization" and "Secularization" in Deuteronomy', *IEJ* (1973), pp. 156-161. See also his *Studies in Levitical Terminology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1970). For a full-length study of the character of deuteronomistic law in relation to other Pentateuchal law, see my forthcoming monograph, *Cultic Laws in Deuteronomy* (Sheffield: JSOT).

³⁸ In *The Deuteronomistic History*, first published in German in 1943, but now issued in translation by JSOT, Sheffield, 1982.

³⁹ M. Weinfeld, *op. cit.*, distinctive and influential in its own way, accepts Noth's basic proposals as a presupposition, as on, *e.g.* p. 3.

⁴⁰ G. von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1965), pp. 1ff. Cf. his *OT Theology*, I (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), pp. 129ff.

⁴¹ It should be said that there is now some argument as to how many major 'deuteronomistic' redactions of Jo.-2 Ki. there actually were. See R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), for the view that there were two.

³² See M. Noth, *Leviticus* (London: SCM, 1965), pp. 129f.

³³ Von Rad, *Studies*, pp. 38f. Another major work committed to the belief that Deuteronomy is the achievement of crusading demythologizers is that of M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972): see especially pp. 19ff. For a different view, see J. G. McConville, 'God's Name and God's Glory', *TB*, 30 (1979), pp. 149-163.

³⁴ *E.g.* Noth, *Leviticus*, pp. 129f.

³⁵ By J. M. Grintz, 'Do not eat the blood', *ASTI*, 8 (1970-1971), pp. 78-105.

consequences suggests this.) But the theory does, of course, build on a Josianic 'Ur'-Deuteronomy, and suggests that certain parts of the book (especially chs. 1-4) are exilic.

And there is a more serious consideration. Noth published his monograph on 'Dtr' some years before G. E. Mendenhall pointed out parallels between the structure of Hittite treaties and certain sections of the Old Testament — and the application of the treaty parallels to Deuteronomy came later still.⁴² The treaty structure of Deuteronomy is still perhaps the most important single factor in modern Pentateuchal criticism, though not all scholars take it seriously as such.⁴³

The debate as to how strongly the parallels argue a second millennium date for Deuteronomy as opposed to a first millennium date cannot be entered here.⁴⁴ But it is worth pointing out that, in claiming that chs. 1-4 were affixed to Deuteronomy by the exilic author, Noth took no account whatever of the book's treaty form, nor specifically of the fact that those very chapters constitute precisely the so-called 'historical prologue' of the treaty.⁴⁵ Some modern scholars have attempted to marry the insight as to treaty-structure with Noth's theory.⁴⁶ Others, however, despite the benefit of a hindsight which Noth could not have, have failed to confront the issue.⁴⁷ If then, the Hittite parallels do argue a second millennium date for Deuteronomy, the implications are weighty, not only for the Pentateuch but for criticism of everything from Genesis to 2 Kings.

Ancient Near Eastern studies have produced a further argument against the deuteronomistic theory. Essential to Noth's view is the premise, long held,⁴⁸ that there is a distinctive deuteronomistic style, and that this style is a phenomenon datable to a

particular period (*viz* the seventh century). K. A. Kitchen and others, however, have urged that many of the features of so-called deuteronomistic style in fact constitute the stock-in-trade of treaty language in large parts of the ancient Near East, and spanning long periods of time.⁴⁹ In particular the motif of threatened loss of land is widespread and conventional in the treaties, and therefore is a poor guide to the dating of any document.⁵⁰

Concluding observations

It is impossible in the space available to treat every aspect of Pentateuchal study.⁵¹ The present remarks should be seen merely as supplementary to the standard introductory literature, not least in preceding issues of this journal (and its predecessor).⁵² Much important modern literature has not been mentioned. The character of the patriarchal narratives is perhaps the burning issue of the day (not treated here largely because of the Selman article just noted), and the student should be aware of A. R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman (eds.), *Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives*,⁵³ which contain much material that counters the scepticism of the trends set by T. L. Thompson and J. van Seters.⁵⁴ On the question of literary compositeness or unity, reference should be

⁴⁹ K. A. Kitchen in J. B. Payne (eds.), *New Perspectives on the OT* (Waco: Word, 1970), pp. 1-24, especially pp. 17ff. The point is currently being worked out in detail by J. Niehaus of Liverpool University, who has outlined it in a paper read at the Tyndale Fellowship OT Study Group, 1982, entitled 'Observations on the Deuteronomistic History', and deposited in Tyndale Library, Cambridge.

⁵⁰ Kitchen, *ibid.*, pp. 5ff.

⁵¹ For a full-scale and very new treatment see V. P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982).

⁵² E.g. K. A. Kitchen, 'The Bible in its Context', *TSF Bulletin*, 59-64 (1971-1972); G. J. Wenham, 'Trends in Pentateuchal Criticism since 1950', *TSF Bulletin*, 70 (1974), pp. 1-6; M. J. Selman 'Comparative Methods and the Patriarchal Narratives', *Themelios*, 3 (1977), pp. 9-16. Standard conservative works, while in some respects dated, are still useful: e.g. D. T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses* (Philadelphia: PRPC, 1943); G. Ch. Aalders, *A Short Introduction to the Pentateuch* (London: Tyndale Press, 1949). R. K. Harrison's *Introduction to the OT* (London: IVP, 1970) contains an important account of the rise of critical Pentateuchal study.

⁵³ Leicester: IVP, 1980. All the essays are valuable. Those by G. J. Wenham and J. J. Bimson, might be singled out. Wenham takes on the religion of the patriarchs and the critical questions arising from the names they use for God; Bimson pins down a date for them at an early point in the wide range of possibilities canvassed. This follows the thesis presented in his *Redating the Exodus* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1978; [now in a second edition by Almond Press]) that the exodus in fact occurred in the fifteenth century as suggested by the biblical data and not in the thirteenth century as is widely held by scholars, including many conservatives. The claim of Thompson that the patriarchal narratives do not even intend to be historiographical can only be countered by evidence that they do in fact reflect historical circumstances, and these essays go a considerable way towards doing just that.

⁵⁴ T. L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974); J. van Seters, *op. cit.*

⁴² G. E. Mendenhall, in *Biblical Archaeologist*, 17 (1954), pp. 26-46, 50-76. The application of his discovery to Deuteronomy was made by M. G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), and by K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (London: IVP, 1966), pp. 90-102.

⁴³ As a factor in dating Deuteronomy, it is dismissed as 'overpressed' by R. E. Clements, *op. cit.*, p. 118. On the other hand, P. C. Craigie takes it completely seriously in his commentary on Deuteronomy, *op. cit.*, pp. 22ff.

⁴⁴ Kline, Kitchen and Craigie stand on one side of it. For the other see M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomistic School*, pp. 59ff.; D. J. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* (Rome: PBI, 1963).

⁴⁵ See Kitchen, *op. cit.*, or Craigie, *op. cit.*, pp. 22ff., for an account of the treaty-form and how it works out in Deuteronomy.

⁴⁶ See A. D. H. Mayes, *Deuteronomy* (London: Oliphants, 1979), pp. 29f., who attributes the present treaty-form to the second dtistic layer of redaction. On such a view, however, it is hard to explain why Deuteronomy is cast in a form nearest to second millennium Hittite treaties.

⁴⁷ As A. G. Auld, *Joshua, Moses and the Land* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980), a recent study of the book of Joshua which leans heavily on Noth.

⁴⁸ See above, n. 3.

made to G. J. Wenham's fascinating demonstration of the unity of the flood-narrative, taking into consideration both literary features and the Babylonian parallel account, the Gilgamesh epic.⁵⁵ Not least among modern developments is the fact that conservative commentaries on Pentateuchal books are beginning to appear in some numbers.⁵⁶

Our survey of modern trends in writing on the Pentateuch has shown that there is no shortage of good conservative writing, both defensive and creative. It is worth stressing again at the end of this

⁵⁵ G. J. Wenham, 'The Structure of the Flood Narrative', in *VT*, 28 (1978), pp. 336-348. Contrast G. von Rad's careful separation of the supposed J and P narratives in his commentary on Genesis (London: SCM, 1961), pp. 112-135.

⁵⁶ E.g. Craigie on *Deuteronomy*, *op. cit.*, Wenham on *Numbers* (Leicester: IVP, 1981), and on *Leviticus*, *op. cit.* This last work is notable for its interpretation of clean and unclean food and other aspects of the rituals of ancient Israel, and also helpfully draws attention to the work of those scholars who, in dating P prior to D, have delivered a challenge to the traditional documentary hypothesis. Watch for further volumes in the NICOT series, and for a new series by Word books.

survey that it is important not to be merely defensive. Often, indeed, energy can be wasted by the attempt to defend that which should not be defended. It is nowhere claimed, for example, that Moses wrote Genesis. And indeed, a large part of the narrative in which Moses figures is in fact in the third person. The significance of the fact that Deuteronomy 1:1 locates Moses' speeches in the plains of Moab 'beyond the Jordan' (implying an author's stance actually *in* the promised land) should not be missed. And as soon as we agree that Moses may not have done it all himself, the possibility is open to a variety of hands. The student who accepts the Bible as the Word of God then, should not fear the idea of multiple authorship as such. It could well be that certain narratives have undergone expansion. On the other hand, it is right to question the assumptions underlying specific theories of multiple authorship, theories which view the Bible's story of the origins of Israel and the world as so much fiction, and the formation of the Pentateuch as the coalescence of divergent and even conflicting traditions of dubious authenticity.