

## EDITORIAL

*Zur Datierung Der "Genesis-P-Stücke" Namentlich Des Kapitels Genesis XVII* was published in 1964 and is available only in German. Fortunately for those who have not had opportunity to read this book the author, Dr. Samuel R. Külling, has provided the English reader with an abstract of his research which we offer in the following pages.

According to the Graf-Wellhausen theory, which is still widely accepted in Old Testament scholarship, the P document is dated in the postexilic era or about 450 B.C. Typical is the assertion by Gerald A. Larue, *Old Testament Life and Literature* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1968), p. 31: "Most present-day scholarship accepts the basic premises of the documentary hypothesis—namely, that different source materials are to be found, that the labels J, E, D, P, are acceptable for major sources, and that the order of development is that proposed in the Graf-Wellhausen thesis." These four sources, according to Larue, issue out of oral and written traditions so that the so-called "documents" should be considered "a continual stream of literature representing a pattern of progressive interpretation of traditions and history."

Dr. Larue is to be commended for stating his assumptions explicitly: "Because the documentary hypothesis is the most widely accepted of all theories of Pentateuchal analysis, this book will utilize, in principle, the conclusions reached by this method of research," p. 33. He also reminds the reader that "the documentary hypothesis, no matter what form it takes, is nothing more than an hypothesis—a proposition—assumed to explain certain facts. . ."

Numerous commentaries have been written in recent decades designed to aid the laity in teaching the Bible. Among the series that adopt the Graf-Wellhausen theory as the basis for their interpretation of the Old Testament are the following: *Layman's Bible Commentaries*, Richmond: John Knox Press, General Editor, B. Kelly; *Torch Bible Commentaries*, London: Student Christian Movement Press, General editors: John Marsh and Alen Richardson; *Westminster Guides*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, General editor: Edwin M. Good; *Bible Guides*, Nashville: Abingdon Press (London: Lutterworth Press) General editors: William Barclay and F. F. Bruce.

The wide adoption of this documentary hypothesis is apparent in textbooks used in courses in religion currently. The Oxford Annotated Bible, usually the favorite edition for Bible reading in colleges and uni-

versities, offers study notes from this perspective. Among the popular textbooks for interpreting the Old Testament are: B. W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*; N. Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations*, and W. Harrelson, *Interpreting the Old Testament*.

Conscious of this current extensive usage of the documentary hypothesis in the interpretation of the Old Testament, Dr. Kulling provides an extremely timely and worthy research concerning the so-called P document in light of the contemporary culture of Old Testament times. His analysis supplements the critical study made of the book of Deuteronomy—usually identified in part or whole as the so-called D document—by Meredith E. Kline in *Treaty of the Great King* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963).

The implications of dating the P document in postexilic times are readily apparent in interpreting the Old Testament. The significance of Aaron as a high priest issues out of the importance of the high priesthood in the Jewish community in the postexilic era. The tabernacle is but a figment of the imagination and never existed when Israel was in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. The priesthood before Davidic times is part of the imaginative literary genius of the postexilic writer rather than a reality during Mosaic times.

It is rather misleading for the layman who studies the Bible to be subjected to this type of interpretation by modern scholarship especially so when the basis for it is theoretical. However, numerous commentaries, a large segment of current Sunday school literature, and other Bible study helps reflect the document hypothesis as the framework for interpretation of the Old Testament.

It is hoped that the critical analysis of the documentary theory as set forth in the following pages will make current scholars sensitive to the need of abandoning these theories that have permeated Old Testament scholarship and biblical interpretation for so many decades.

In place of these theories and hypotheses there is much in favor of recognizing with R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1969), p. 537, that "ancient Hebrew tradition unanimously credits Moses with a substantial place in the mediation of the Law and is wholly opposed to any concept that would place the beginnings of national, moral, and spiritual tradition at some point during or subsequent to the occupation of Canaan under Joshua." After a comprehensive discussion he asserts that "almost the entire body of Pentateuchal material could have been easily extant in practically its present form by the late Joshua period," and that "there appears to be no substantial ground for denying that the Pentateuch in virtually its extant form was in existence by the time of Samuel," (p. 541).  
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