

THE MIGHTY ACTS OF GOD by Arnold B. Rhodes. Covenant Life Curriculum

everywhere profess to be written by Moses. The fact is that Moses is never mentioned a single time in the fifty chapters of Genesis. It should also be remembered that the title "The First Book of Moses" and similar titles do not belong to the Hebrew text. At least a part of the answer to the question about the Canaanites in Deuteronomy is that the whole of the content of this book did not originate in the seventh century. The writing down of documents does not necessarily coincide with the origin of material.

But there is also truth in the Mosaic position. The Mosaic tradition did not arise out of nothing. Moses was the human founder of Israel's religion. He made it clear that the LORD reveals himself through history, that he is the redeeming and covenanting God, that he is Sovereign over all, that he is not to be represented by images, and that he is without female counterpart. Moses was the human instrument of the Exodus deliverance and the covenant at Sinai. He was the great pioneering lawgiver of Israel. There is a Mosaic nucleus in the Pentateuch, which was expanded and adapted to meet the changing conditions of the People of God. For subsequent generations of Israelites to attribute all their Law to Moses was fully natural and right.

Remember that Israel thought in wholes, not in halves and quarters. All Israelites were the Children of Jacob, even those who were not related by blood; indeed all Israelites were Jacob. Furthermore, all Israelites were delivered from Egyptian bondage, even those who were not born until generations later. Since David was the father of psalmody within Israel, the entire Psalter came to be synonymous with his name, although everyone agrees that some of the Psalms were written long after his day. Solomon's name became almost a synonym for Wisdom Literature, even for some of that which did not get into our Bible. For example, it is recognized by all that the Apocryphat Wisdom of Solomon was written long after Solomon's day. In other words, Jesus and the writers of the New Testament spoke and wrote of Moses in the manner of Jewish tradition, and we have no right to press them into a modernistic frame of reference, with its copyright conception of authorship. While our thinking about authorship is quite different from that of the Israelites, we do have striking similarities to their way of thinking in wholes. For example, George Washington is regarded as the father of all fifty states that compose our country today, not simple of the original thirteen colonies. Alaska and Hawaii can claim him as father just as truly as the rest of us.

Regardless of how few or how many the human authors of the Pentateuch may have been, the Law is a part of God's written word. To see even a little bit of how God worked through real men of old in bringing it into being fills me with awe and gratitude, and enables me all the more to see its relevance for real people. Even so traditional a scholar as Edward J. Young says: "When we affirm that Moses wrote or that he was the author of the Pentateuch, we do not mean that he himself necessarily wrote every word. To insist upon this would be unreasonable . . . Also, under divine inspiration, there may have been later minor additions and even revisions." If it can be admitted that there could be "later minor additions and even revisions," the principle is established that Moses did not have to write the whole Pentateuch in order for it to be known as "the law of Moses." Moreover, if God could take care of minor additions and revisions, he could surely take care of a far more complicated process of composition. The quality of one's Christian faith cannot be judged on the basis of his attitude toward the authorship and composition of the Pentateuch. There are good Christians on both sides of the issue and some in between.