

type of laws proper to Israel and those common to the ancient Near East, A. Alt (1934) distinguished the former as *apodictic* and the latter as *casuistic* (see LAW, ANCIENT NEAR-EASTERN). G. Mendenhall (1954) and others then proceeded to show the close relationship between the Covenant Code, the oldest body of laws in the Pentateuch and the center of the attention of the other scholars, and the Hittite treaties, in which the concept of overlord-vassal relationship is presented in the same form as in the ancient Israelite Code. All this helped to give a more profound appreciation of the covenant itself and of its role in Israel's life.

In appraising the work of the form critics it can be said that they have confirmed the antiquity of much of the material of the Pentateuch, thrown greater light on the developing theologies within Israel and shown the need for much further study before any hypothesis can be accepted with all its details. The excesses in this field have not vitiated the value of the approach.

C.4 | Uppsala School. A third approach that had its influence on Pentateuchal criticism was that of the so-called Uppsala School. Scandinavian scholars, such as Mowinckel (1930), J. Pedersen (1931), H. Nyberg (1935), and I. Engnell (1945), contributed in varying ways to the prestige of this school. In general there was a great stress put on the predominance and fidelity of oral tradition in ancient history and a consequent disregard for any supposed written documents in the early period. Even after the material had been consigned to writing (and Engnell would more readily accept an early written form for some of the legal matter), oral tradition was considered to have had its influence on the written documents. Such an approach would clearly be detrimental to the documentary hypothesis. In fact, Engnell, one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the approach, rejected the four classical documents and replaced them with a P Work, a symbol standing for the heterogeneous material in the Tetrateuch (Genesis through Numbers), and a D Work, Noth's Deuteronomistic history. In both cases the emphasis is not on fixed literary traditions that can be precisely marked off as J, E, P, or D, but on a long history of oral tradition that was finally edited in the postexilic period in two principal works.

The vehemence with which these proposals were made, including occasional violent attacks on scholars of an opposite view, did not hasten their acceptance. Today most scholars would agree that the Uppsala School has not paid sufficient attention to the importance of writing, and consequently of written documents, in the early period of Israel's history. On the other hand, the emphasis on oral tradition and especially on its fidelity in transmission was a welcome stress, since it contributed to a healthier respect for the antiquity of much of the material of the Pentateuch. The school has also shown a reluctance to accept variant readings of the Masoretic Text, a reluctance that has frequently been justified on the basis of further studies.

Summary and Modern Trends. What has been stated above already affords some idea of the present situation with regard to the origin of the Pentateuch. Almost all would agree to the extreme complexity of the picture. Israel's Torah represented both a literary and a religious heritage that was kept ever alive by its adaptation to the constantly changing historical scene.



Torah (Pentateuch) scroll in modern Synagogue service.

The adaptation necessitated the addition of new material and the revision of the old. Today the emphasis is being placed on the successive stages of this adaptation and the development of the theological concepts. When the attempt is marked by sound methodological principles, the results are positive and valuable.

Throughout the long and occasionally heated history of the documentary hypothesis the question of historicity was constantly being raised. As we have seen, in the earlier stages of the theory's history grave doubts were cast on much of the historical character of the Pentateuch, in particular on the Genesis narratives. This situation has changed, owing in great part to the results of archeological work. The ruins themselves and, above all, the literature of other ancient peoples have provided an authentic background against which the Pentateuchal narratives can be seen. The patriarchal stories, for example, have been convincingly shown, in a series of articles by R. de Vaux (1946-49), to reflect the first half of the 2d millennium B.C. This does not mean that these contain history in the modern sense; not even the later stories of the Exodus, wandering, and conquest do that. But it does mean that they contain a sufficient historical basis to support the weight of the credal interpretation that is their principal object. Once the concern for that historical basis can be satisfied, at least to the extent that is possible, greater emphasis can be correctly placed on the theological development:

Pentateuchal criticism in the future, then, will most probably concentrate on three general aspects of this theological development. The first aspect is that of the individual units and their meaning before their introduction to a particular cycle of tradition. The second is that of the principal cycles of tradition, such as the Yahwist, Elohist, and others. Some of the richest theological meaning was given to the material at this stage, and for that reason this aspect will continue to be studied for further insights. The third is that of the canonical Pentateuch. At times this is neglected by the scholars in their interest in the earlier stages. But it is in this aspect that the Pentateuch was made a part of the Christian Scriptures and that it has influenced the greater part of Christian history. It is likely that the canonical Pentateuch will be the object of the most intensive work in the future.