

related to a higher theme—that of God's glory and will.

The device of parallelism proved in their hands an effective expression of that rounded measure lacking which an alleged poet writes at the best only exalted prose, and on lower levels, pure banality. They also used assonance and alliteration; occasionally they ventured a sort of rhyme; they played with words in a way that we might call "punning" were they not so solemnly serious; they employed refrains and measured repetition; they grouped their lines also in simple strophic structures of twos, threes, fours, or in even larger units—a fact which adds to the sense of form and at times provides subtle overtones to the thought.

The curse of not a few contemporary writers is that with notable mastery of their art they yet have nothing to say! To their qualities of great expression the Hebrews added robust and profound thought. Their theme was one, whatever their immediate topic, and it is the greatest theme that can engage human thought. In some way the mystery of human life had been impressed upon them. What is man? Man in his deepest being, man over against and in relation to that supreme mystery of Being from which all things and all beings proceed? Here lay their interest, their obsession. Age after age, in varying mood, form and emphasis, the Hebrew writers discussed directly or through implication this and this only. Some lost the greatness in a petty selfishness; some were content to mouth ancient sentiments, and at best to stand on the gains of former ages. But on the whole they were creative thinkers of the highest order.

On the same theme much has been written in subsequent centuries by way of commentary or expansion, much too in quite other traditions. Yet it is no *ex parte* bias that would claim Israel's insights to be unrivaled in primacy and importance to this day. They were taken up, obviously, into rabbinical Judaism; they became the essential core of Christianity; along these two lines, and supported by Islamic thought likewise in its central impulse Hebrew, they have shaped the culture of all the West, and are at this day the vital impulse in our groaning and travelling toward a better world.

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THE GROWTH OF THE HEXATEUCH

by CUTHBERT A. SIMPSON

- I. The Traditional Authorship of the Pentateuch.
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The term Hexateuch is of modern origin and designates the first six books of the Old Testament. It conveniently registers the fact, established by critical investigation, that the documents of which these six books are composed did not end with the death of Moses (Deut. 34) but continued with an account of the Israelite settlement in Palestine. The word Pentateuch, used in Origen's commentary on John 4:25, refers to the first five books only. In the Jewish tradition these books are called "Torah" or "Law" and they stand by themselves, while the book of Joshua is included among the "Former Prophets." That Joshua should have come to be regarded as the author of the book bearing his name as its title—a tradition first recorded in the pages of the Talmud (Baba Bathra 14b)—is easily understandable.

I. The Traditional Authorship of the Pentateuch

The ascription of the Pentateuch to Moses, explicit in the various English versions of the Bible, rests upon a tradition of obscure origin. The books themselves do not claim him as their author. Indeed, it may be argued that the attribution of certain specific passages to him—e.g., Exod. 24:4; 24:25; Num. 33:2; Deut. 31:9—rather suggests that these passages are unique in this respect, and that the Pentateuch as a whole does not come from his hand. It is not until we come to Chronicles, with its continuation in Ezra and Nehemiah, that we find reference to "the law of Moses," meaning the Pentateuch (II Chr. 23:18; 30:16; Ezra 3:2; 7:6; Neh. 8:1, 4; "the book of Moses," II Chr. 35:12; Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1). The tradition of

Mosaic authorship thus appears to have been current about 250 B.C. In view of the absence of earlier testimony one can scarcely maintain that it took form much before that date, nearly a thousand years after Moses' death.

II. The Beginnings of Pentateuchal Criticism

Apart from Jerome's identification of Deuteronomy with the law book of Josiah, there appears to have been no challenging of the tradition on critical grounds until the eleventh century, when two rabbis, Isaac and Ibn Ezra, ventured to question the Mosaic authorship of certain passages, with, however, no immediate result. It was not until 1320 that the matter was raised again by Carlstadt, who, in his *De Canonis Scripturis*, called attention to the fact that the style of the Old Testament narrative remained unchanged after the account of the death of Moses, and suggested that this might have some bearing upon the question of the authorship of the Pentateuch. In the two centuries which followed, a number of scholars raised further questions on other grounds, noting (a) the occurrences of two or more versions of what appeared to be the same incident, (b) the inconsistencies in the narrative, and (c) its recurring chronological difficulties.

III. The Composite Character of the Hexateuch

It will be convenient at this point to list some of the more outstanding instances of these

<sup>1</sup>The doctrinal and ethical implications of certain of the tales in Genesis did cause some searching of heart for the author of the Clementine Homilies, and led him to attempt a modification of the tradition, but this was not critical in the strict sense of the word.

<sup>2</sup>For particulars see Cuthbert A. Simpson, *The Early Traditions of Israel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1948), p. 18.