

Theory of two J Sources Not Generally Accepted

Frederick V. Winnett, "Re-examining the Foundations" JBL, Vol LXXXIV, March 1965

p. 2 The theory of two J sources has not, I believe, commanded general acceptance. Neither von Rad nor Speiser (whom we congratulate on his newly published commentary on Genesis) even mentions it. The theory has come under suspicion for two reasons: first, because its proponents have not been able to agree among themselves on how the narrative should be divided between the two J's, and secondly because acceptance of the theory involves the dissection and mutilation of stories which have every appearance of being literary units. Thus Gunkel's analysis of the beautiful little legend in 11.1-9 about the building of the city of Babylon into a Stadtbaurezension which he attributed to a Je document, and a Turmsage which he attributed to a Jj document is contrary both to common sense and to internal evidence.³ Would a tradition about the founding of Babylon make no mention of its most distinctive architectural feature, the great temple tower, Entemenanki? . . . It is generally recognized that the various traditions which go to make up the primeval history are not always consistent with one another, but any attempt to resolve the problem by arranging the traditions into two separate sequences raises more problems than it solves. . . .

The primeval history, even after the P-additions have been removed, still gives the impression of being the work of a single, creative mind. The author has selected, adapted and arranged his materials to tell a continuous story. . . Thus there can be no doubt about the literary unity of the J narrative.

³ H. Gunkel, Genesis, pp. 92-101 . . . The objection to his theory that the Abraham story is composed of two cycles of tradition, one of Hebronite origin (Ja), the other of Beersheba origin (Jb), is that the supposed cycles are not separate units but interdependent. The same objection applies to his theory that the Jacob story is composed of an Esau cycle and a Laban cycle.