

Documentary Theory Relatively Recent
Redactors Succeed in Achieving Literary Unity

Simpson, Guthbert Aikman, Composition of the Book of Judges (Oxford, 1957)

p. 159 As regards Gen. 10:8, Eissfeldt objects that the literary evidence is against the derivation of 10:8 and 10:10 from different hands, for the reason that 10:8 without 10:10 is a mere torso. This appeal to the phenomenon of a minor literary unity, which forms the substance of this objection, needs to be carefully examined. It ignores the fact that the redactors who conflated the documents of which the narrative of the Hexateuch is composed were concerned to achieve a literary unity, and were by no means unsuccessful in this respect. Witness the fact that the composite character of the present narrative remained unnoticed for more than two thousand years. Nor could a unity of this kind have been achieved simply by the judicious use of scissors and paste; for if it could, then we would have to suppose an agreement between the component narratives in respect to both content and structure, so marked that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to see why they were conflated at all. The very fact of conflation presupposes differences in the presentation of the tradition in the respective documents, which called for reconciliation in the interests of national and religious unity. For such a unity to be effective it was not sufficient to include one of the differing forms of a given tradition and to ignore the other - even though preference were given to the representation of each of the documents in turn. The process of conflation was a process not of exclusion but of inclusion, and this called for the greatest care lest any salient feature of either narrative be omitted, and so for the most expert adaptation. This being the case, no attempt to break down the present narrative into its component documents can be successful unless full account is taken of this fact. Even the quite understandable desire to keep the redactional material at a minimum can be productive of serious error. For if redactional material is treated as source material, then many of the ^{p.160} differences of representation in the respective sources will remain undetected, and the historical necessity for their conflation will be missed.