

# The Growth of the Pentateuch

## Preface

I. Lewy

Modern archaeology has certainly contributed much to our knowledge of the civilizations of the ancient Near East, but none of its discoveries has enabled us to solve the age-old problem of the composition of the Pentateuch. This book remains the key document for understanding the birth and growth of ancient Israel's character, religion, and culture. The grandiose theory of the German Professor Wellhausen no longer casts its spell over the majority of modern scholars, but "no other theory has succeeded in replacing it" (Professor Rowley). A splendid structure erected with ingenuity and industry is crumbling before our eyes, but there is no architectural genius among us who can rebuild a new system on solid foundations. It is high time that Pentateuchal research "overcome the present stage of stagnation," (Professor J. Bewer), uncertainty, dissension, and skepticism, and lay the foundations for a new and enduring structure.

In my book, *The Birth of the Bible—A New Approach*,<sup>1</sup> (referred to hereafter as B.o.B.), I sketched a design for just such a new systematic structure. My thesis was and is that the Pentateuch, though a highly composite work, is not a compilation from various independent sources. Instead I sought to establish that the Pentateuch began with one basic document, a literary and ethical masterwork, which was enlarged, revised, and annotated over a long period. Wellhausen's order of the sources, listed as J E D P, was substantially correct, but his attributions, interpretation, and dating was unsatisfactory.

The origin of the Torah must have been the Yahwist Protopen-  
tateuch, written by a teacher, who was an enlightened, humane,  
and peace-loving statesman. This teacher must have lived during  
the United Kingdom, ushering in the golden age of Israel's liter-  
ature. He probably wrote the Protopen-  
tateuch as a textbook for  
Prince Solomon, one intended to make him a just, wise, humane,

1. Now sold by Reconstructionist Press, 15 West 86th Street, New York, N. Y.