

## DOCUMENTARY HYPOTHESIS: THE SUBJECTIVE APPROACH TO BIBLICAL CRITICISM

### **Introduction**

A careful reading of the first five books of the Old Testament (Pentateuch) reveals peculiar literary, stylistic, and ideological characteristics. Some of these characteristics are more immediately noticeable, while others require some knowledge of the Hebrew language. More importantly, a large number of biblical scholars claim that the Pentateuch contains *diverging* literary, stylistic, and ideological characteristics which, they claim, imply different source material throughout the Pentateuch. In modern times, these “divergences” are taken as evidence that the books of Moses were written long after the death of Moses. The theory that adheres to multiple non-Mosaic authors of the Pentateuch is known as the Documentary Hypothesis.<sup>1</sup>

### **Historical Development**

#### From Astruc to Hupfeld

The individual credited with planting the seeds for the documentary hypothesis is Jean Astruc. In his book *Conjectures Concerning the Original Memoranda Which It Appears Moses Used to Compose the Book of Genesis*, he observes that the first chapter of Genesis refers to God as Elohim, while the second chapter mainly refers to God as

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<sup>1</sup>The theory did not start by denying Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

Jehovah or Yahweh.<sup>2</sup> While this observation had been made long before Astruc, those who hold the documentary view continue to give credit to Astruc for the discovery.

Astruc's book, written in 1753, did not question the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch; rather, it questioned the sources Moses used to compile the book of Genesis. Astruc speculated that the different names of God could be an indicator of different written sources that Moses used to write Genesis.<sup>3</sup> He supposed that the criterion of divine names could be used to determine which written sources Moses used when writing various sections of Genesis. He thought that the book of Genesis had two primary sources and as many as ten other sources.<sup>4</sup>

A few decades later Johann Gottfried Eichhorn wrote an influential book titled, *Introduction to the Old Testament*. His work was far more influential than Astruc's book. Eichhorn presented three arguments in support of the notion that Genesis had been compiled from several sources:

1. Argument from Style
  - a. Argument from Divine Names
2. Argument from Continuous Narrative
3. Argument from Parallel Passages

The argument from style starts with the idea that authors are consistent in their use of style throughout a given document or book. For example, authors typically use similar phrases, vocabulary, idioms, and allusions throughout the entire literary work. If

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<sup>2</sup>Gleason L. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994), 90.

<sup>3</sup>Allan A. MacRae, *JEDP: Lectures on the Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (Hatfield, PA: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1994), 67-68.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 71.

an ancient work contains a significant degree of variation in style, it may indicate a variety of sources or possibly a plurality of authors.

Eichhorn took variations in style, particularly the alternating use of divine names, to mean that Moses used different written sources to compile the book of Genesis. He reasoned that the best explanation for the alternating use of Jehovah and Elohim was that Moses actually copied from two written documents. Rather than Moses simply reading ancient documents and putting them into his own words, Eichhorn took this literary feature to imply that Moses simply copied from two separate documents.<sup>5</sup>

The argument from continuous narrative is perhaps more compelling than the argument from style. If all of the passages of Genesis that refer to God as Elohim are extracted and put into a continuous narrative, the result appears to be a complete story. Similarly, if the passages that refer to God as Jehovah are extracted, a separate continuous narrative may be discovered. This strengthened Eichhorn's belief that Moses simply copied from at least two ancient documents.<sup>6</sup>

The third argument begins with the observation of parallel accounts of a given story. For example, Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are retellings of a single story: namely, the account of creation. It may be argued that a single author would not compose a narrative containing double accounts of the same story. It would be redundant and distract the reader from the overall story. According to Eichhorn, the best explanation of this literary feature is that Moses pieced together the creation account using pre-existing documents.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 74.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 76.

Some observations should be made. First, both Astruc and Eichhorn were primarily concerned with the source material for the book of Genesis and the first few chapters of Exodus. The multiple source hypotheses, at this stage, had not been applied to the rest of the Pentateuch.<sup>8</sup> Second, at this point, only two main sources had been delineated. Several possible unknown sources were posited, but they were considered to be speculative. The two main sources were known as the J and E sources.<sup>9</sup>

In 1805, a man by the name of Willem Martin Lebrecht De Wette proposed an additional source. Although he was from the school of “Fragmentary Theorists”, he contributed to what would eventually be the standard documentary view.<sup>10</sup> De Wette’s contribution comes from 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of 2 Kings, where King Josiah finds the book of the law and institutes his reforms in accordance with it. De Wette theorizes that Josiah and the local priests conspired together in order to bring the worship centers of Israel to Jerusalem. To accomplish this, they would need a divine edict. God Himself would have to reveal to the people His laws and expectations for worship. De Wette concludes that Josiah and the priests concocted a book of the law in order to give divine authority to their desired reforms.

As evidence of this theory, De Wette points out the correlation that exists between the content of the book of Deuteronomy and King Josiah’s implemented policies.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 84-6.

<sup>8</sup>However, some argue that Eichhorn’s later works show his acceptance of the application of his theory to the rest of the Pentateuch.

<sup>9</sup> MacRae, 88.

<sup>10</sup>Archer, *Survey of the Old Testament Introduction*, 91.

Interestingly enough, Josiah's reforms reflected the commands given in that book. De Wette supposes that Josiah and the local priests, who were interested in gaining wealth, wrote the book of Deuteronomy. While this theory is not currently accepted in its entirety, the conclusion that Deuteronomy was written during the reign of King Josiah is orthodoxy within higher critical circles.<sup>11</sup> De Wette's contribution was the addition of a D document to the existing J and E documents.

Finally, in 1853, one of the largest contributions to the current documentary theory was made by Hermann Hupfeld. Hupfeld wrote a book entitled *The Sources of Genesis*. In that book he recognized the J, E and D sources that had been formulated prior to his work. However, he divided the E document into two different sources. Hupfeld observed that some sections of the E document resembled the J document in style, vocabulary and subject matter.<sup>12</sup> However, the use of the name Elohim barred Hupfeld from concluding that J and E were actually the same source.

Hupfeld, therefore, divided the E document into E<sup>1</sup> and E<sup>2</sup>. He ordered the writings of the documents to be E<sup>1</sup>, E<sup>2</sup>, J, and then D. Hupfeld worked from the notion that E<sup>1</sup> was the groundwork document that other documents built upon. This groundwork would eventually be supplemented by later documents E<sup>2</sup> and J. At some point a redactor, or a string of redactors, compiled these writings to form the Pentateuch.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>MacRae, 95.

<sup>12</sup>Archer, *Survey of the Old Testament Introduction*, 94.

<sup>13</sup>Geoffrey W. Bromiley, gen. ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 3. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 745.

Hupfeld's reasons for this division are based primarily on style. He compares the style of Genesis 1 to that of later portions of the Pentateuch where Elohim is used. The style used in the first chapter of Genesis is much more like that found in Leviticus. After Genesis 20, passages that use Elohim are much more similar stylistically to the J source.<sup>14</sup>

### The Graf-Wellhausen View

The current documentary hypothesis is largely the result of the writings of Julius Wellhausen. He wrote two very influential books which resulted in the popularization of the documentary view. His writings were, in large part, a restatement of the works of Karl Heinrich Graf and Abraham Kuenen. The work of these three men primarily dealt with the order of the existing source material.<sup>15</sup> The result of their work is currently considered the classical documentary view.

Two philosophical ideas gave rise to the change in priority of the existing source documents. First, the dialectical idealism of G.W.F. Hegel allowed these men to view the history of the world as something guided by a collective will. This will or "*Geist*" was driven forward by a collective thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.<sup>16</sup> Through this process the collective will or spirit of man could evolve until it ultimately reached what Hegel called "Absolute Spirit". Humanity would, through an ideal evolutionary process, eventually come to know itself.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>MacRae, 107-08.

<sup>15</sup>Bromiley, 745.

<sup>16</sup>Hegel didn't use the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis language, but it is so associated with him in literature about the documentary hypothesis, I continued to use it.

Second, the theory of biological evolution proposed by Charles Darwin was becoming increasingly popular. Darwin was not the only one to propose the theory of evolution, but there is a correlation between the publication of his book *The Origin of Species* and the widespread acceptance of the theory.<sup>18</sup> During the 1860's various thinkers worked out some of the implications that Darwinism had on their respective disciplines. Literary criticism was among the disciplines that utilized the basic evolutionary framework to evaluate its own subject matter.

If science and philosophy could show the spurious nature of the belief in supernatural intervention, then it may be appropriate to find a new approach to biblical studies. If biology could find new ways to explain the origins of life on earth without appealing to the supernatural, perhaps the Old Testament itself could be shown to be the product of known natural causes. In biology Darwin found that life progressed from simple to complex; perhaps religion developed that way as well. In philosophy, Hegel thought that the collective soul of man progressed from a primitive understanding of itself to a well-developed understanding of itself. These new paradigms shaped newly formed sciences into machines that turned out naturalistic explanations of everything!

All of the ideas necessary to formulate a well-developed documentary view were now in place. Four "well-established" primary source divisions had been made. The philosophy supporting a historical process of development from simple ideas to complex ideas began to take root in the scientific community. All that remained was to apply this

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<sup>17</sup>Robert Audi, gen. ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 367.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 205.

framework to the discipline of source criticism. The only problem was that the existing order of the source documents did not fit with the new philosophy. The E<sup>1</sup> document was supposed to be the groundwork for the remaining three documents. This document was renamed P, because of its apparent priestly origin, and re-dated to some post-exilic time.<sup>19</sup>

The classical formulation of the documentary hypothesis thought that the J source was first because of its anthropomorphic view of God. That source had an earthy quality in that it talked about God walking in the garden and smelling sacrifices offered to Him. The E document tends to make God more distant. The D document is complex in its formulation of laws and ceremonies. It shows a well-developed set of religious beliefs and practices. It is the P document, however, that reveals the most complexity. Allan A. MacRae elaborates on this development in his book, *JEDP: Lectures on the Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*:

According to [the Wellhausen theory], the regulations become more and more strict. In the J document, a man can make an altar anywhere. When Abraham comes into the land he makes an altar at one place after another. Wherever he is, he sets up an altar and sacrifices. Deuteronomy, however, says that there is only *one place* where sacrifices can be offered. The P document does not repeat the restriction so emphasized in Deuteronomy, but assumes it. Thus the critics claim that there is development from simple laws to complicated regulations... The critics claim that there is a great increase in complexity between the J and P documents.<sup>20</sup>

The development of the Pentateuch goes from an anthropomorphic view of God to transcendent view of God, from simple rules to complex regulations, and from general rules to specific legal codes. All of this was consistent with Wellhausen's evolutionary

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<sup>19</sup>Bromiley, 745.

<sup>20</sup>MacRae, 118-19.

view of religion. By the time of Wellhausen, people began to doubt the historicity of the Pentateuch. Wellhausen himself considered the Pentateuch to be a response to the cults during the postexilic times.<sup>21</sup> Shortly after Wellhausen, a large amount of criticism came from biblical scholars and archeologists. Criticisms ranged from slight modifications to the dating of various source documents to the outright rejection of the methods and conclusions of the documentary theory.<sup>22</sup>

### Contemporary Higher Critical Thought

Wellhausen laid the foundation for higher critics who would come after him. His fundamental contentions, however, are not observations derived from the text; rather, they are higher critical theories arrived at by methods generated by Darwinian and Hegelian philosophy. Nonetheless, the following ideas are the assumptions from which modern critical scholars work:

1. Religion evolved from simple animism, to polytheism, to monotheism.
2. Religion progressed from a nature/fertility stage, to a spiritual/ethical stage, to a priestly/legal stage.
3. The Pentateuch contains contradictions.
4. The Pentateuch was written by rival priestly circles.
5. Much of the Pentateuch was written in response to political problems taking place long after the death of Moses.<sup>23</sup>

An example of a contemporary higher critic is that of Richard Elliott Friedman. In his book *Who Wrote the Bible*, Friedman attempts to defend the documentary hypothesis on a popular level. He starts by describing and questioning the tradition which ascribes

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<sup>21</sup>Bromiley, 745.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 746.

<sup>23</sup>Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York, NY: Summit Books, 1987), 22-26.

Mosaic authorship to the Pentateuch. He writes, “There are traditions concerning who wrote each of the biblical books – the Five Books of Moses are supposed to be by Moses, the book of Lamentations by the prophet Jeremiah, half of the Psalms by King David – but how is one to know if these traditional ascriptions are correct?”<sup>24</sup>

Friedman then goes on to explain why he thinks the tradition is not correct. His reasons for denying the traditional authorship of the Pentateuch are birthed from the arguments already discussed in this paper. He, of course, goes into much more detail and gives numerous examples, but the reasoning is similar. For Friedman and most other contemporary biblical scholars, the documentary view is the standard view. In his book *Who Wrote the Bible*, Friedman describes the current intellectual climate:

At present, however, there is hardly a biblical scholar in the world actively working on the problem who would claim that the Five Books of Moses were written by Moses – or by any one person. Scholars argue about the number of different authors who wrote any given biblical book. They argue about when the various documents were written and about whether a particular verse belongs to this or that document. They express varying degrees of satisfaction or historical purposes. But the hypothesis itself continues to be the starting point of research, no serious student of the Bible can fail to study it, and no other explanation of the evidence has come close to challenging it.<sup>25</sup>

According to Friedman, the current academic scene fosters research that presupposes the Graf-Wellhausen framework. During the time of Astruc, Eichhorn and DeWette, an individual could be punished for criticizing the traditional view. Today, a biblical professor who holds to the traditional view, or even attempts to defend the traditional view, is not taken seriously.

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 28.

## Example Reasoning for the Documentary View

A lengthy explanation of the reasoning of higher critical thought is beyond the scope of this paper and beyond the expertise of the author of this paper. However, some examples must be given to show the basic reasoning process of the higher critic.

Arguments for the documentary view stem from a variety of observations. These observations are interpreted in light of the higher critics naturalistic / evolutionary assumptions. Friedman points out several potential problems for those who hold to the traditional Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch:

1. Contradictions exist between parallel accounts throughout the books supposedly written by Moses.
2. The Pentateuch includes things that Moses could not have known.
3. The Pentateuch records things that Moses would not have said.
4. The Books of Moses refers to Moses in the third person.
5. The Pentateuch describes places where Moses had never been, and uses language that reflects another time and location.
6. If Moses wrote the entire Pentateuch, he must have written about his death. The style of writing used to write about the death of Moses is consistent with the previous writings in Deuteronomy.
7. The text uses phrases like “to this day”.<sup>26</sup>

These observations are the starting point for the critical scholar. While all scholars admit that literary parallels exist, critical scholars take these parallel accounts as evidence of a variety of authors. A few examples of parallelisms may be given from the book of Genesis:

**Table 1.** Genesis Parallelisms

<b>Story</b>	<b>Chapters</b>
Creation	1 and 2
Abraham claims Sarah is his sister	12:10-20 and 20:1-17
God changes Jacob’s name to Israel	32:28 and 35:10

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 17-21.

It appears that the creation accounts in chapters one and two of Genesis are contradictory accounts of the same event. In these are parallel accounts, the order of creation is different. In the first chapter, man is last to be created. In the second chapter, man is created before the plants and trees. Surely Moses would not contradict himself this blatantly. It would seem, to a higher critic, that a better explanation of this problem is that a later author or redactor pieced together this material.

In the third parallel, God names Jacob two times. In the second account, God says to Jacob, "You will no longer be called Jacob." However, a few chapters prior to this account, Jacob had already been named Israel. If God had already given Jacob the name Israel, then there is no reason to name him Israel again. The higher critic may conclude from this that a competing school or a redactor unfamiliar with the other account added this account of God's renaming of Jacob.

In addition to the problematic parallelisms, the Book of Moses records things that Moses would not have said or would not have known. For example, if Moses was the most humble man in all of the earth, he would not have claimed to be the most humble man in all the earth. It also seems unlikely that Moses would he write about his own death. Chapter thirty-four of Deuteronomy says that the LORD buried Moses and that "to this day" no one knows where his grave "is". The fact that the author wrote "to this day" shows that someone after Moses wrote that section of the book.

Furthermore, the fact that the style used in the last portion of Deuteronomy is identical to the rest of the book. If Moses did not write the last portion, and the style of the last portion is just like the style used throughout the book, it would seem that whoever wrote the last portion of the book also wrote the rest of the book. Indeed, according to the

higher critic, Moses never claimed to write this book, and he is always referred to in the third person. Accordingly, the higher critic thinks there is no reason to think that Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy.

### **Evidence for Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch**

#### Consequences of Denying Mosaic Authorship

While higher critics may not see the theological implications of their theoretical speculations, it is important for Christians to understand the consequences of denying Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Later authors of the Old and New Testaments ascribe Mosaic authorship to the Pentateuch. If Moses did not write it, then these “inspired” authors are mistaken. If the documentary hypothesis is correct, it would mean that whoever wrote the Bible mislead its intended readers concerning the authorship of the Pentateuch. This would utterly destroy the authority of Scripture and undermine the Christian faith.

#### Old Testaments Claims about the Pentateuch

It is important then to look at what the Old Testament says about the Pentateuch and what it says about Moses. In Exodus 17:14 the LORD told Moses, “Write for me a memorial in a book... that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek.” Later, chapter 24:4 says, “And Moses wrote all the words of Yahweh”. Verse seven of that same chapter says that Moses read the book of the covenant in the hearing of all the people.<sup>27</sup> It is clear from these passages that Moses wrote something! If Moses read something, it implies that he had something to read. If the composer of the source

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<sup>27</sup>Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), 45.

document or some redactor wrote this, it would have been misleading at best and outright deceptive at worst.

Several Old Testament references exist to confirm that Moses wrote down the events of the Exodus and subsequent wanderings in the desert. The following are only a few examples of this:

**Table 2. Old Testament Allusions to Mosaic Authorship<sup>28</sup>**

Exodus 34:27-28	<sup>27</sup> Then the LORD said to Moses, “ <i>Write down these words</i> , for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.” <sup>28b</sup> And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant – the Ten Commandments.
Numbers 33:1-2	<sup>1</sup> Here are the stages in the journey of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt by divisions under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. <sup>2</sup> <i>At the LORD’s command Moses recorded</i> the stages in their journey.
Deuteronomy 31:9,11	<sup>9</sup> So <i>Moses wrote down this law</i> and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. <sup>11</sup> when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall <i>read this law</i> before them in their hearing.
1 Kings 2:3	<sup>3</sup> and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws, and requirements, <i>as written in the Law of Moses</i> .
2 Kings 14:6	<sup>6</sup> Yet he did not put the sons of the assassins to death, in accordance with <i>what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses</i> where the LORD commanded: “Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers: each is to die for his own sins.”
2 Kings 21:8	<sup>8</sup> I will not again make the feet of Israelites wander from the land I gave their forefathers, if only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them and will keep the whole Law that my servant <i>Moses gave</i> them.
Ezra 6:18	<sup>18</sup> And they installed the priests in their divisions

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 46.

	and the Levites in their groups for the service of God at Jerusalem, according to what is <i>written in the Book of Moses</i> .
Nehemiah 13:1	<sup>1</sup> On the day the <i>Book of Moses</i> was read aloud in the hearing of the people...
Daniel 9:11-13	<sup>11</sup> Therefore the curses and sworn judgments <i>written in the Law of Moses</i> , the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. <sup>13</sup> Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us.
Malachi 4:4	<sup>4</sup> Remember the <i>law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him</i> at Horeb for all Israel.

From this table it is clear that there are at least some, during the writing of the Old Testament, who ascribed Mosaic authorship to the Pentateuch. However, these references do not appear to impress the higher critic. They may respond by suggesting that, at best, this shows that Moses wrote parts of the Pentateuch. In fact, they may say, the first cited Scripture passage tells you what Moses wrote down. Exodus 34:28b says that Moses wrote down the Ten Commandments. By no means does that imply that he wrote the rest of the Pentateuch. Nor does it prove that the documents used by later redactor(s) were documents penned by Moses.

However, this objection misses the point. A well-established tradition had been established early on in the history of Israel. Even liberal scholars admit that converging traditions pointed to Moses as the author of the Pentateuch.<sup>29</sup> Those who hold to the documentary hypothesis must adopt two very cynical assumptions in order to maintain their view:

1. The tradition of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was concocted.

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<sup>29</sup>William S. LaSor, David A. Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 9.

2. Later redactors and compilers of the Pentateuch intentionally mislead the people of Israel.

This, however, is a kind of *a priori* rejection of the textual and historical evidence. In his book *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, Gleason Archer points out that Wellhausen simply “passes over in silence” verses that conflict with his theory.<sup>30</sup> Wellhausen does not deal with the passages cited in table 2. His evolutionary model of the origin and development of religion trumps biblical evidence and historical tradition.

### New Testament Claims about the Pentateuch

The tradition of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch carries into the New Testament as well. In the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus Christ declares, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe his writings, how can you believe my words?” Jesus affirmed the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, but the current documentary school holds that Jesus was wrong about the authorship of the Pentateuch.

Jesus, however, was not the only New Testament figure to affirm Mosaic authorship. As the following table shows, several New Testament authors affirmed this:

**Table 3.** New Testament Allusions to Mosaic Authorship

<b>NT Reference</b>	<b>Scripture</b>	<b>Person Speaking</b>
John 7:19	<sup>19</sup> Has <i>Moses not given you the law?</i>	Jesus
Acts 3:22	<sup>22</sup> For <i>Moses said</i> , ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people.’	Peter – in reference to Dt. 18:15
Acts chapter 7	Stephan recounts the life of Moses	Stephan recounts the life of Moses
Romans 10:5	<sup>5</sup> <i>Moses describes</i> in this way the righteousness that is by the law: “The	Paul – in reference to

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<sup>30</sup>Archer, *Survey of the Old Testament Introduction*, 117.

	man who does these things will live by them.”	Lev. 18:5
1 Corinthians 9:9	<sup>9</sup> For it is <i>written in the Law of Moses</i> : “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.”	Paul – in reference to Dt. 25:4
2 Corinthians 3:15	<sup>15</sup> Even to this day when <i>Moses is read</i> , a veil covers their hearts.	Paul

Again, the above examples are a small sample of testimonies to the authorship of the Pentateuch. The authors of the New Testament considered Moses to be a historical person who led the Hebrew people out of Egypt. There are no New Testament passages that deny Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and there are plenty that suggest he did write it. What is more, the tradition that Moses wrote the Pentateuch extends beyond the New Testament.

The Ante-Nicene Fathers continued this tradition. In *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, Clement refers to Moses as the one who “noted down in the sacred books all the injunctions which were given him.”<sup>31</sup> Ignatius also testifies in favor of Mosaic authorship in *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Antiochians*. He writes, “For Moses, the faithful servant of God, when he said, ‘The Lord thy God is one Lord,’ and thus proclaimed that there was only one God, did yet forthwith confess also our Lord when he said, ‘The Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah fire and brimstone from the Lord.’ And again, ‘And God said, Let Us make man after our image: and so God made man, after the image of God made He him.’ And further ‘In the image of God made He

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<sup>31</sup>The Master Christian Library, CD-ROM. (AGES Software, Inc., 2000) *The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, chapter 43.

man.”<sup>32</sup> Clearly these men affirmed the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Several books of the Pentateuch are cited in the above two quotes and many more could be given.

### Internal Evidences of Mosaic Authorship

Another way to determine who wrote an ancient text is to examine the internal evidence. If the text in question makes reference to historical events, current issues, geographical or climatic conditions that are consistent with a certain time period, it would make sense that the text would have originated from that time period.<sup>33</sup> A summary of Gleason Archer’s internal evidences are given below:

1. Eyewitness details appear in the Exodus account.
  - a. Ex. 15:27 records the exact number of fountains and palm trees at Elim.
2. The author of Genesis and Exodus shows a thorough acquaintance with Egypt.
  - a. The author is familiar with Egyptian names such as *On* as the native name for Heliopolis.
  - b. The author uses a greater percentage of Egyptian words than elsewhere in the Old Testament.
3. The author shows a consistently foreign or extra-Palestinian view-point so far as Canaan is concerned.
  - a. The references to crop sequence in connection with the plague of hail are consistent with an Egyptian weather pattern.
  - b. The flora and fauna referred to are Egyptian or Sinaitic, and are never distinctively Palestinian.
  - c. The narrative of the Exodus route is filled with authentic local references which have been verified by modern archaeology.
4. The atmosphere of Exodus through Numbers is unmistakably that of the desert, not of an agricultural people settled in their ancestral possessions.
5. There are references to archaic customs which are demonstrable for the second millennium B.C., but which did not continue during the first millennium.
6. There are significant archaisms in the language of the Pentateuch.
  - a. The pronoun “she” is frequently spelled *HW* instead of the regular *HY*. There are only three occurrences of this spelling in the rest of the Old Testament.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Antiochians*, chapter 2.

<sup>33</sup>Archer, *Survey of the Old Testament Introduction*, 118.

7. There is a most remarkable unity of arrangement which underlies the entire Pentateuch and links it together into a progressive whole, even though successive stages in revelation (during Moses' writing career of four decades) result in a certain amount of overlapping and restatement.<sup>34</sup>

There are many internal evidences that the Book of Moses was written during the time of Moses. If someone wrote the Book of Moses hundreds of years after Moses, they would have had to meticulously reconstruct these historical, geographical, and literary features. It would have required a calculated attempt to deceive the readers of the Book of Moses.

### **Criticisms of the Documentary Hypothesis**

#### General Criticisms

While the above evidences are not exhaustive, they show that there is a basis for claiming that Moses wrote the Book of Moses. It is not a mere guessing about the author of these books. There are textual, literary, historical and archeological reasons for claiming Mosaic authorship of these books. This is in sharp contrast to the methods and conclusions of the documentary view. While the traditional view has been supported by tradition, archeological evidence and literary unity, the documentary hypothesis requires little more than the observation of stylistic diversity and a keen imagination.

For example, there are no objective reasons to infer a plurality of authors on the basis of the alternating use of divine names. It is an interesting speculation, but to turn speculation into fact without evidence is not scientific. Gleason Archer points out that alternating names was a common literary device that was employed was Homer's epics.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 118-25.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 127-28.

Yet there are no objective reasons to suppose that Homer used Z (Zeus) and K (Kroniōn) documents to piece together his epics. If this was a common literary feature of works of that time, then the need to infer different sources based on divine names disappears.

Further, the criterion of divine names was broken up by Hupfeld into E<sup>1</sup> and E<sup>2</sup> documents. This division weakens the original source criterion because E no longer serves as the sole criterion for source division. Hupfeld saw stylistic commonalities between certain portions of E<sup>1</sup> and J. He then complicated the original source division. However, this complication may actually call into question the original source division based on divine names.<sup>36</sup> Dramatic changes in the criteria for source division may reveal the subjective nature of the documentary method. It is very difficult, if not impossible; to be sure that a given stylistic feature is an objective basis for a source division.

A similar problem exists with the arguments from parallel passages and continuous narratives. It is not only possible, but likely, that the Hebrews had multiple forms of expressing themselves. As Archer says, “The Documentarians have also assumed without proof that ancient Hebrew authors were incapable of variety in their modes of expressions.”<sup>37</sup> Perhaps parallelisms were intentional literary devices to convey a particular thought. Archer comments, “Part of the answer to the theory of doublets may be found in the nature of Hebrew literary style... Careful examination of the alleged doublets and parallel accounts... tends to show that these phenomena are capable of a far more natural and unforced explanation of the basis of single authorship than is possible

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<sup>36</sup>MacRae, 107-12.

<sup>37</sup>Archer, *A Survey of the Old Testament Introduction*, 132.

on the theory of multiple sources.”<sup>38</sup> There is no reason to reject the idea that Moses used repetition and literary variety to accomplish his literary task.

### Philosophical Criticisms

The primary philosophical criticisms of the documentary hypothesis are that it (1) presupposes naturalism, (2) uses circular reasoning, and (3) it is subjective method. First, naturalism can be shown to be false; so it should not be a presupposition in any historical methodology. A Naturalist, who claims that the only thing that exists is matter in motion, does not recognize the real distinction between the matter of which he or she speaks and his or her knowledge of matter. To say that there is no real distinction between matter and knowledge is to obliterate the subject / object distinction. But to obliterate the subject / object distinction is to obliterate knowledge.

Further, several classical arguments for the existence of God are valid and sound arguments. Various forms of the cosmological argument are sound and demonstrate the existence of a God. The moral argument for God’s existence demonstrates that God must be the ontological ground of individually good things. The argument from design shows that an Intelligence put the world together. The evidence for the existence of God is sufficient to disprove the Naturalistic hypothesis.

Second, those who employ the methods of Wellhausen employ circular reasoning. Dr. Thomas Howe illustrates this problem in his class notes:

The basic assumption is that there cannot be a supernatural element to the Scriptures, at least not one that is susceptible of empirical investigation. And since only that which is capable of being empirically verified can be held to be true, then the supernatural element cannot be true. Upon this foundation the critic investigates the biblical text and presents what he holds to be inconsistencies and contradictions

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 139-40.

and concludes that there cannot be any supernatural element. The critic expects to find a consistent style consisting of various particulars which the critic selects from the text according to his presupposed definition of what constitutes style. Once the critic has extricated from the text all those particulars which meet his qualifications of style, he appeals to the consistency of these particulars as the qualifying characteristic that constitutes these particulars as a “document” distinct from all the other particulars in the text. This is the kind of circular reasoning employed.<sup>39</sup>

The higher critic is either unaware of this problem or he or she clings to an overly restrictive method of investigation. Either way, the circularity problem remains. This problem results in a subjective method of inquiry that is not regulated by facts. As Howe notes above, the text of Scripture is judged on the basis of an unsubstantiated philosophical view.

### **Conclusion**

The documentary hypothesis, while accepted by a large number of scholars, is not the only view held by biblical scholars. Several conservative scholars have offered refutations of the documentary view, but due to secular dogma, responses to the documentary view that include supernatural explanations are ruled out. The documentary hypothesis, like the theory of evolution, is dogmatically protected at institutions of higher learning.

Unfortunately, Christian students who attend universities and seminaries around the world are adopting an utterly secular view of Scripture. Once the view that Moses did not write the Pentateuch is accepted, the doctrine of inerrancy will be rejected. That conclusion invariably follows from the view. The rejection of inerrancy is a rejection of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>39</sup>Thomas Howe, *Old Testament Survey 1: Class Notes* (unpublished classnotes: Southern Evangelical Seminary), 71-72.