

THE GENUINENESS AND MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP OF GENESIS

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While there is a definite need to know the dates, authorship, contents, and destination of the books of the Bible as has been researched by many good competent scholars, much of the speculative and hypothetical work of authors in the field of higher criticism ventured into areas where the critic's imagination was the only law, with ideas and opinions often influenced by and based upon evolution. In fact many of the theories rose and fell with evolution. Before World War I destructive biblical criticism was flourishing and threatened to darken the light of Scripture, but subsequently, it faded away. However, after the Second World War it revived and in recent years has risen again to attack the validity of Scripture. As a result, today the teaching in many conservative theological seminaries of the revelation and the authority of Scripture has been weakened and the truth of the inspiration of Scripture has become like a corn cob without a kernel.

The Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis assumed that Israel's religion, along with that of the pagans, arose from polytheism and then gradually evolved in the minds of the Israelites into a monotheistic concept. In other words, the proponents of this hypothesis date the concept of monotheism in the early Old Testament books no earlier than 700 or 800 B.C. To them there is no difference between natural and supernatural religions; any distinction between them is removed, leaving only natural religions produced from the imagination of man's corrupted religious perception. If this is true, "we," as Christians, "are of all men the most miserable!"

"Then I saw in my dreams," said Bunyan, "that the Interpreter took Christian by the hand and led him into a place where there was a fire burning against a wall, and one standing by it, always casting much water upon it to quench it; yet did the fire burn higher and hotter." Having questioned the significance of the strange phenomena, Christian was led to a place behind the wall, "where he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, of the which he did also continually cast (but secretly) into the fire."¹ This story of Bunyan's Interpreter's House, picturing the two sides of Christian's experience, matches the historical reality of Scripture very well. Through the ages Satan has used every means available to quench the flame of Scripture or even to do away with it. Yet after all these fearful storms, Scripture under God's blessing still burns as brightly as the sun at high noon.

In order to interpret a book of Scripture properly, a working knowledge of its original languages, historical background, geographical setting, and environmental conditions are necessary. But the spiritual perception necessary to understand the things of the Spirit of God within His writings is much more vital than any intellectual preparation. Scripture is not mere literature. It is the product of the Holy Spirit and is sealed by God's breath. The natural man has no way to understand it. It is only by the teaching of the Holy Spirit and by comparing spiritual things with spiritual that man may have spiritual discernment.

¹John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, n.d.), p. 41.

Genesis is the beginning of God's special revelation. As such, it is the foundation of God's redemptive truth. Just as a tree has its root under the ground both to support and to nourish its trunk, branches, and leaves; so Genesis, the root of God's revelation, supports and contributes to all other books of Scripture. Without Genesis the other books would be meaningless, and God's progressive revelation would have no foundation. If the branches and the trunk of a tree are cut off, the root could still put forth buds and eventually produce a new tree. But if the root is dug out of the ground, the trunk, branches, and leaves will automatically fall and wither away. This is the reason Satan has been so energetic in attacking the inspiration of Genesis through the ages. He knows that if the root dies, the trunk, branches, and leaves will all perish as well.

The critics themselves created many of the so-called problems and discrepancies in Genesis. Some problems arose from their misunderstanding of the nature of God's revelation, some from their misinterpretation of biblical inspiration, and some simply from the enmity of their old nature against God. The alleged problems are neither as numerous nor as serious as the critics charge. When all of the problems are placed together, they give the impression that they are well grounded, but when they are examined individually in the light from the Holy Spirit, all of them melt away as snow under the burning noonday sun.

The hypothesis of two creation accounts based on the use of two divine names was first proposed in 1753 by Jean Astruc (1684-1766), a royal physician of Louis XV of France, who had considerable learning but lived a profligate life. He used two of God's names to separate Genesis into two incomplete narratives and was persuaded to publish anonymously his treatise entitled "Conjectures on the Original Memoirs which Moses Seems to Have Used in Composing the Book of Genesis." To Astruc, Moses composed Genesis 1 through Exodus 2 by integrating two primary, parallel sources: one of which referred to God as "Yahweh" and the other referred to God as "Elohim." Johann Eichhorn (1752-1827) in his three volume *Introduction to the Old Testament* (1780-1783) advanced Astruc's hypothesis to include all five books of Moses. Then in 1823 Eichhorn denied the Mosaic authorship (editorship) of the Pentateuch. Eichhorn was followed by Karl David Ilgen (1768-1834) who in 1798 came to believe that the divine names were insufficient criteria for doing critical analysis. He had concluded that Genesis was composed of 17 different individual documents that he assigned to three different authors. Then Hermann Hupfeld (1796-1866) in his book, *The Source of Genesis*, published in 1853, built upon the thesis advanced by Ilgen and stressed that the documents were put together in their present form by an unknown editor. Thus, the supposed editors and documents in Genesis came to be designated by the initials J (Yahweh), E (Elohim) and P (priestly Elohim).

This hypothesis is far from being workable. For instance, in certain J passages "Elohim," which is characteristic of E, is present (3:1,3,5; 4:25; 7:9,16; 9:27; and so on), and in certain E and P passages "Yahweh," which is characteristic of J, is found (17:1; 22:11; and so on). In order to cover this embarrassing situation, the critics cut some verses and clauses out of their context and assigned them to another document. They cut 5:29 out of P and assigned it to J, because the divine name "Yahweh" (which is translated "the LORD") is present. Yet they left 4:25 in J although "Elohim" is in this verse. They

separated 7:16b that has “Yahweh” from the midst of P and assigned it to J. However, they left 9:26 and 16:13 undivided in J, but both have “Yahweh” and “Elohim.” Genesis 21:1 is a dilemma to the critics because both clauses have “Yahweh.” According to their theory of “doublets” they should separate them. Yet according to their usage of divine names to designate different authors, they have to place the couplets together. To cut the knot they assigned 21:1a to J and 21:1b to P. How absurd! Genesis 21:33 was assigned to J, disregarding the presence of “Elohim” in 33b. Genesis 22:11,14 are both assigned to E, yet both have “Yahweh.” Genesis 28:21 is assigned to E, yet “Yahweh” is also found there. These examples are sufficient to show the fallacy of this hypothesis.²

Another ground for the alleged difference of authorship in Genesis is repetition or “duplicate accounts.” Critics use them as strong evidence to prove that this book was not written by Moses but was a compilation from different writers and editors in separate ages. They assume that there are two accounts of creation: one from P (1:1-2:3), and the other from J (2:4-25); two documents of the flood were woven together: one from J (6:5-8; 7:1-5,7,10,12,16b-17, 22-23; 8:2b-3a,6-12,13b,20-22), and the other from P (6:9-22; 7:6,11,13-16a,18-21,24; 8:1-2a,3b-5,13a,14-19), but 7:8-9 was put together by an unknown editor. They perceive two records of Abraham lying: J (12:10-20), E (20:1-18); God’s ratifying His covenant with Abraham from two sources: J or E uncertain (15:1-21), P (17:1-27); three documents for Hagar’s twice being expelled: P (16:1a, 3, 15-16), J (16:1b-2,4-14), E (21:8-21); three documents for Jacob being named and then renamed: J (32:22,24-32, 35:16), E (32:23), P (35:9-13,15); three authors of God’s promising Abraham a son: uncertain (15:4), P (17:16), J (18:10); and three accounts of the meaning of Isaac’s name being applied: P (17:17-19), J (18:12-13), E (21:6). Thus it is inferred that Genesis is a compilation of various documents written by assorted unknown authors in the distant past and pieced together by an unidentified editor or editors in an uncertain period or periods.³Such an “unknown” and “uncertain” assumption

²On this point, I recommend for further study W. Henry Green’s *Unity of the Book of Genesis* (1895) and *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (1896). Although these two books are out of print, they can be secured from many good Seminary libraries.

³Particularly since the 1960s, increasing criticism has emerged against taking Genesis as exhibiting stages of composition. “This criticism ranges from minor adjustments, to major overhauling, to the suggested scrapping of the documentary hypothesis as a viable explanation of the origin of the Pentateuch in general, and of Genesis in particular.” Rolf Rendtorff (*Problems*, 148) “exhibits no restraint in his criticism of JEDP as a viable explanation of the Pentateuch’s fabric: ‘The positing of “sources” in the sense of the documentary hypothesis can no longer make any contribution to understanding the development of the Pentateuch.’” Isaac M. Kikawada and Arthur Quinn (*Before Abraham Was: the unity of Genesis 1-11*) “demonstrate that the rhetorical features of Gen. 1-11 are so distinctly woven into one tapestry as to constitute an unassailable case for the unity of the section, and most likely composition by a single hand.” Gary Rendsburg (*Redaction of Genesis*, 104-5) “suggests, in the light of his study, that the documentary hypothesis is ‘untenable’ and should be ‘discarded.’” “Using the computer, Y. T. Radday and H. Shore have recently subjected the language of Genesis to a thorough word-level linguistic analysis [*Genesis: An Authorship Study in Computer Assisted Statistical Analysis*]. In essence, their work is an attempt to throw light on the authorship of Genesis by means of computer investigation. Throughout this study one question is constantly raised: to what degree may one calculate the probability that any one section of Genesis attributed, say, to J, was written by the same person to whom an E or P section is ascribed? The authors analyzed the 20,504 words in Genesis, for each of which nine pieces of information (mostly grammatical) were recorded . . . In the following sentence Radday and Shore present their final position: ‘with all due respect to the illustrious Documentarians past and present, there is massive evidence that the pre-Biblical

may be due to the critics' negligence regarding the typical style in ancient Eastern literature, which did not produce documents of either a fragmentary composition or by an integration of various sources. It may also be due to their ignorance of the progressive nature of God's revelation, the purpose of which is to make Himself known to man. He reveals Himself through nature and man's conscience, from historical events and personal lives, by the performance of the priests and the preaching of the prophets, in rewarding the righteous and judging the wicked, and so on, in order that man may perceive who He is and how He works (Heb. 1:1-2). Among these means of revelation, He has revealed Himself also through His names and titles, both of which stand for His personality, position, and authority. **The names and different titles of God in His revelation are for different emphasis rather than from different documents.**

The reason for using only Elohim in Genesis 3:1b-5 is apparent. The preceding passage denotes God's special revelation to man, whereas this passage describes Satan's tempting man. God is Yahweh to His people. But He is the great, the mighty, and the terrible God to Satan. Scripture therefore says that Satan believes that there is one God, but trembles. He dared not speak of God as Yahweh! Poor Eve, who was so excited that she forgot all about her status, called God by Elohim as Satan did (Gen. 3:3).

In the passage that follows (3:8-24), Yahweh Elohim is again predominant. Here, the man whom God had created fell into sin and was corrupted, and the only remedy for the dying man was grace from the merciful (Yahweh) and powerful (Elohim) God. Salvation comes from a balance between God's love and justice. Here God reveals Himself as Yahweh-Elohim, the God of love and justice, to prepare His redemption for Adam.

Yahweh indicates God's love and providence, while Elohim denotes God's justice and sovereignty. Only Elohim, the sovereign Creator, could appoint Seth to replace Abel (4:25). In speaking of God's being grieved, gracious Yahweh is used (6:3,6-8). Concerning Noah's generation and the corrupt earth, Elohim was employed to denote justice (6:9-22). When God spoke to Noah concerning "the end of all flesh," Elohim was talking (6:13). When He spoke concerning Noah as a righteous one, Yahweh was the speaker (7:1). When Noah was given a command, sovereign Elohim was usually the giver (6:22; 7:9,16a). When Noah was shut in the ark to keep him safe, providential Yahweh was in action (7:16b). Concerning God's reign over nature, Elohim was used (8:1-19). When He accepted sacrifice and gave a vivid demonstration of His grace,

triplicity of Genesis, which their line of thought postulates to have been worked over by a late and gifted editor into a trinity [JEP], is actually a unity." R. K. Harrison ("Genesis," ISBE, 2:437) "suggests that Genesis 1-36 originally had an independent existence as eleven, distinct cuneiform tablets, each with its own identifying colophon ["an inscription usually placed at the end of a book or manuscript and usually containing facts relative to its production," e.g. Gen. 2:4a; 5:1a; 6:9a; 10:1a; 11:10a and so on]. It would have been 'a comparatively easy matter for a talented person such as Moses to compile the canonical books by arranging the tablets in a rough chronological order, adding the material relating to Joseph, and transcribing the entire corpus on a leather or papyrus scroll.'" Victor Hamilton concludes, "It is not without significance that recent studies have tended to support the essential unity of Genesis." These quotes were selected from Victor P. Hamilton's *Genesis in The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990) Vol. I, pp. 5, 24-38. Our quoting the above authors does not mean that we agree entirely with all their theological positions.

Yahweh was employed (8:20-22). The Holy Spirit knew exactly which name to use. He never makes a mistake in His truth. “Every word of God is pure; He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him” (Prov. 30:5).

The genuineness of Genesis does not depend solely on these points, since our so-called logical minds can be deceptive. But what Christ said is settled forever! He confirmed the genuineness of the first two chapters of Genesis by testifying to the creation of Adam and Eve as a historical fact, and not a myth or legend (Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 10:5-9). When He rebuked the scribes and Pharisees, He mentioned “the blood of Abel” as the beginning of the Jews’ guilt (Matt. 23:35). He confirmed that Noah’s flood was a historical destruction (Matt. 24:37-39) and the devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah as God’s judgment (Matt. 11:23-24). He described Lot’s time in Sodom and the judgment of his wife as a historical warning regarding the last days (Luke 17:28-32). In His preaching and teaching, He often spoke of Abraham (John 8:37-40,56-58) and repeatedly He testified of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mark 12:26) and their lives before God (Matt. 8:11; 22:32). The above references indicate that Christ testified to the truthfulness of essentially the entire book of Genesis. No other authority can give us more confidence in reference to the genuineness of the first, foundational book of Scripture!

Dr. R. A. Torrey said:

If we accept the teaching of Jesus Christ, we must of course accept everything upon which He sets the stamp of His endorsement. To say that you accept the authority of Jesus Christ, and then to throw overboard that upon which He sets the stamp of His endorsement is to be utterly irrational. And He sets the stamp of His endorsement upon the entire Bible, upon the entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament; and therefore, if we accept the authority of Jesus Christ we are logically compelled to accept the entire Old Testament and the New Testament as the Word of God.⁴

We have discussed briefly the genuineness of Genesis. Now, what about its authorship? Some people have tried to prove it by the contents of the book, by the qualifications of the writer, by the approval of the ancient Jewish scribes, or by the agreement among Christian churches in church history. These suggestions are good support for Mosaic authorship, but without a certain endorsement they are insufficient. Even if we were shown a gold plate engraved by an angel with a clear statement that Moses was the real author of Genesis, we could not put very much confidence in it. We accept the authenticity and authority of Genesis because Christ our authority accepted it. Without His confirmation we could never be sure that Moses had written the Pentateuch. Even if we were sure that Moses was the author, we would never be sure that the inspiration of Moses was genuine. Ancient scribes could make mistakes. Christian churches could have the wrong idea. And even Moses might take inspiration for granted. But the Son of God would never make a mistake. In view of the fact that Christ has placed His seal on the Mosaic authorship of Genesis, who are we to say that the Mosaic authorship of Genesis is not reliable? He is the Truth. Thus He would not teach His

⁴R.A. Torrey, *Soul Winning Sermons* (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell, 1925), p. 30.

hearers myth as if it were actual history. The one who says, “But let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matt. 5:37), would never accommodate the alleged ignorance of the Jews. He had authority over Satan, men, life, disease, and as a matter of fact, He even now has all authority in heaven and on earth. Whatever He says stands! Anyone who denies it is kicking against the goads and is hurting himself most of all.

“The First Book of Moses,” as Luther printed in his German Bible, does not appear in the Hebrew text. Neither, by itself, does Josephus’ statement “and of them five belong to Moses,”⁵ carry much weight. We honor what Christ says in the New Testament concerning the authorship of the Pentateuch, and all those who reverently honor Him as an infallible teacher will join us in accepting His word without dispute. When Christ was in this world, He tried to correct the Jews’ misinterpretation of the Pentateuch, but He never doubted its Mosaic authorship. He acknowledged that the set of books containing Exodus 3:2-6 was written by Moses (Mark 12:26). He also testified to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch by saying that the contents of Moses’ and the prophets’ writings were more authoritative than a message to the world from a person who was raised from the dead (Luke 16:29-31). Following His resurrection He confirmed the three divisions of the Old Testament as they stood in the Hebrew text. He said, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44). Without a doubt the “law of Moses” here refers to the Pentateuch; “the prophets” to the former and latter prophets; and “the Psalms” to the Hagiographa or Holy Writings. The reason why Christ called the third division Psalms was because His custom was to designate an entire division by its first book, or even the entire Old Testament by its first division. He used the first division of the Old Testament, the Law, to refer to the whole Old Testament.⁶ Since Psalms is at the head of the third division, He named the entire division after it.

Aside from His calling the Pentateuch “the law of Moses,” Christ also called it “the law” (Matt. 5:17; 22:40), “the book of Moses” (Mark 12:26), and even “Moses” (Luke 16:29,31; John 7:19). In a word, the question of the authorship of Genesis can be settled by answering the question Christ asked, “Whom say ye that I am?” Is He the Christ, the Son of the living God, or was He merely a son of the carpenter Joseph? If He was the Word made flesh, His witnesses concerning the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch are certainly superior to the assumption of Origen, Abraham Ibn Ezra, and many so-called scholars today. He should be our final authority. If not, Christianity is but a big lie.

Furthermore, to deny the Mosaic authorship is to deny one’s personal salvation. Jesus said, “But if you believe not his [Moses’] writings, how shall you believe my words?” (John 5:47). Here, Christ speaks definitely of one’s attitude toward the Mosaicity of the Pentateuch as determining one’s attitude toward His own words. Scripture cannot be broken. One who denies the integrity of the Pentateuch essentially

⁵Whiston, *op. cit.*, p. 787.

⁶John 10:34 “ye are gods” was quoted from Psalm 82:6; John 15:25 “They hate me without a cause,” from Psalm 69:4; yet both of them, Jesus said, are in the Law.

denies the Lord's Word in the New Testament. Therefore, to deny the Mosaicity of the Pentateuch is not only a biblical problem but a spiritual one. Whether a person has real faith in Jesus Christ or not can be tested by whether or not he believes in the Mosaicity of the Pentateuch.

In conclusion, this brief discussion serves only as a sample for the readers to follow in their further study. In order to understand God's truth, the believer needs spiritual perception and some time spent in diligent study. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, will help our understanding. All those who sincerely seek after truth will be taught by Him. As Jesus said, "He [the Spirit] will guide you into all truth."

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