

# The Meaning of the Pentateuch

*Revelation, Composition  
and Interpretation*

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# Introduction

THIS BOOK IS A STUDY OF THE THEOLOGY of the Pentateuch. It follows an approach that looks for the biblical author's "intention" in the "verbal meaning" of his book. It seeks the meaning of his words, phrases and sentences. How do the individual pieces fit together within the whole? Central to the aim of this book is the discovery of the compositional strategy of the biblical author of the Pentateuch. This introduction gives an overview of the studies in the book and shows how they affect our understanding of the theology of the Pentateuch.

## REVELATION AND RELIGION

The book begins with a discussion of the question of authority. To whom was the Pentateuch written as the norm of biblical faith? For whom was it intended to be normative when first written? Who was its audience? What did it have to say to that audience then, and what, if any, claims does it make on its readers today?

What does it mean to believe that the OT is the Word of God? And what effect does the answer to that question have on an evangelical theology of the Pentateuch?

We begin our study with questions about two central terms that lie behind most of the discussions in this book: *revelation* and *religion*. Revelation, classically understood, is the divine act of self-disclosure put into written form as Scripture by the prophets. God has communicated through his prophets in ways understandable to them and to their readers. In the Pentateuch, as in the rest of the Bible, God used a human language, with its words, phrases and

sentences, to make known his will. Revelation was not a mystical divine act of self-disclosure; it was an everyday human act of speaking and writing. God revealed himself in a book, the Pentateuch, made of words, sentences and paragraphs. Through it, one can understand the mind of God, not mystically, but by reading its words. Revelation is not something that occurred only long ago; it continues today in the prophetic words of Scripture. One can know the mind of God (*mens dei*) by reading the words of the human author.

In this book I trace the rise and fall of the modern evangelical view of revelation and show, historically, how the classical evangelical view was replaced by one that builds on the notion of the Bible and religion. That replacement came to mean that for evangelicals, a theology of the Pentateuch was little more than a historical reconstruction of what the Israelites once believed rather than what its readers should believe—not a prescription of what its early readers were to understand as their faith, but a description of what ancient Israel once believed. The only real difference between the evangelical view and the critical view was that for evangelicals, what was thought of as history was limited to what could be read in the Bible. The critical view was grounded in a “real” history that had to be reconstructed from nonbiblical sources. It is not difficult to see that the evangelical view of the Pentateuch was, and still is, in need of hermeneutical adjustment to the message of the NT. If the Bible is the sacred text of ancient Israel, how could its message be applied to the church? What has the church to do with Israel and the OT? The evangelical answer to those questions consisted of a return to the application of NT typology to the OT. Israel in the OT was identified with the church in the NT. That which applied to the people of Israel in the OT was replaced by its application now to the church. Seen in that light, the Pentateuch cannot serve a normative role in the church; it can only point its readers to the religion of ancient Israel as the “faith once given.”

One question addressed throughout this book is the locus of meaning in the Pentateuch. Where and in what way do we find authoritative words in the Pentateuch? What, for example, does the Pentateuch tell us about the Mosaic law(s)? Is the Pentateuch written only for the ancient people of Israel? Is its intention primarily the descriptive task of understanding Israel’s religion under the Sinai covenant? Or was the Pentateuch written to confront its readers now, as then, with the imperative to live a life of faith exemplified by Abraham’s walk with God in the Pentateuch? Is it a “shout out” for Abraham, the

believing prophet (Gen 15:6; 20:7), or for Moses, the priest who in the wilderness failed to exhibit his faith (Num 20:12)? How can anyone today read and understand its meaning for his or her life? How can a Christian take its laws and religious rites as something that must be obeyed?

In the first section of this book I argue that the message of the Pentateuch, like the rest of the OT, is not that its readers should become ancient Israelites and worship God in a temple. That surely was the intent of these laws and judgments when first given to Israel at Sinai. Moses, however, did not give them the Pentateuch on Sinai; he gave them the law. Sinai came long before the writing of the Pentateuch. An additional part of the aim of this book is to demonstrate that in the writing of the Pentateuch, various selections of Sinai laws were included to show the great difficulty of living a life of faith under the Mosaic covenant and its law (Num 20:12; Deut 31:29). Israel's religion, established at Sinai with Moses as mediator, was not the ultimate concern of the message of the Pentateuch. The laws are put in the Pentateuch to give the reader a sense of the kind of religion that once characterized the covenant at Sinai. The law given at Sinai neither had the same purpose nor carried the same message as the faith taught by the Pentateuch.

What we have noted here can lead to an important distinction in reading strategies when looking for the message of the Pentateuch. My focus throughout this book is not what the laws meant to ancient Israel at Sinai. Instead, I am asking what the inspired written message of the Pentateuch means to us today, and what the law in the Pentateuch has to do with that. Surely, the author of the Pentateuch wants readers to see that Moses and the Israelites at Sinai were obliged to obey the Sinai laws; just as Noah was called on to obey the divine instructions for building the ark, so also Moses obeyed the Sinai covenant by doing what its laws required (Num 12:7). The author of the Pentateuch shows readers that Abraham lived centuries before the giving of the Sinai law and its authority over him. In making that point, the author was not suggesting that readers submit themselves to a new code of "Abrahamic" laws, but is making the same point that Paul later makes in Romans 4: readers should have Abraham's faith if they want to be counted as fulfilling the law. Abraham fulfilled the Sinai law by living a life of faith (Gen 26:5; Rom 8:4).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See John H. Sailhamer, "The Mosaic Law and the Theology of the Pentateuch," *WTJ* 53 (1991): 24-61; Hans-Christoph Schmitt, "Redaktion des Pentateuch im Geiste der Prophetie," *VT* 32 (1982): 170-89.

This is an amazing “Pauline” statement from within the Pentateuch itself. Long before the coming of Christ, the theology of Jesus and of the apostle Paul is reflected in the author’s intent (*mens auctoris*).

The purpose of the Pentateuch is not to teach a life of obedience to the law given to Moses at Sinai, but to be a narrative admonition to be like Abraham, who did not live under the law and yet fulfilled the law through a life of faith. The Pentateuch is a lesson drawn from the lives of its two leading men, Abraham and Moses.<sup>2</sup> The Pentateuch lays out two fundamentally dissimilar ways of “walking with God” (Deut 29:1): one is to be like Moses under the Sinai law, and is called the “Sinai covenant”; the other, like that of Abraham (Gen 15:6), is by faith and apart from the law, and is called the “new covenant.” These two central themes (law and faith) are played out in the Pentateuch and into the prophetic literature as a contrast of two covenants, Mosaic and Abrahamic, or law and gospel. We will see that the prophets were aware of the meaning of the Pentateuch through their own reading and study of it. As a result of that, they helped to preserve it by producing a new “prophetic edition” of the Pentateuch based on their understanding of Mosaic law. This is the “canonical Pentateuch” in our Bible today. Further evidence of the “prophetic update of the Pentateuch” is found in some early texts and versions.<sup>3</sup>

### THE PROPHETIC ECHO

Ernst Hengstenberg, a well-known nineteenth-century evangelical OT scholar,<sup>4</sup> sees in the composition of the books of the OT a great deal of interdependence among the biblical writers. The prophets relied heavily on the Pentateuch and on each other’s “comments” (e.g, 1 Sam 2:10)<sup>5</sup> and “glosses” on the Pentateuch. Such commentary could be found in the form of the remnants of ancient discussions about the meaning of texts, their translation, and the comments given to the text within the text itself. Just the location and arrangement of a text within or alongside other texts can affect how a reader understands the text. Hengstenberg calls this interdependence of the OT

<sup>2</sup>See John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 1-79.

<sup>3</sup>See John H. Sailhamer, “Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott Hafemann (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 25-37.

<sup>4</sup>Also picked up by C. F. Keil in his commentary on the Minor Prophets. See C. F. Keil, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, trans. James Martin (BCOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 2:96.

<sup>5</sup>Compare in the NT, for example, Matthew 2:15.

authors an “echo.” He understands virtually the whole of the messianic message of the OT to be a function of this echo. In the words of the prophets Hengstenberg hears an echo of the words of Moses as well as an echo of the words of other prophets.<sup>6</sup> He says of the prophecies of Joel, “The prophet adheres closely to the outline already given by Moses, with the filling up and finishing of which, all other prophets also are employed.”<sup>7</sup> Using the same terminology of an “echo,” C. F. Keil says of Habakkuk’s vision, “The description of this theophany [Hab 3] rests throughout upon ancient poetic descriptions of divine revelation from Israel’s earliest days (i.e., the Pentateuch). Even the introduction (ver. 3) has its roots in the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 33:2, and in the further course of the poem we meet with various echoes of the psalms.”<sup>8</sup>

For Hengstenberg (and Keil), the prophets did not merely bounce the words of Moses back and forth to the other prophets; they sent those words back freighted with their own prophetic commentary.<sup>9</sup>

Prophecy thus had an echo effect as it made its way through the books of the OT. One prophet’s words were heard by another, exegeted, and sent back as an echo of those earlier prophetic words. Each time the prophet’s words were heard and echoed, new clarity and relevance were revealed. It also rep-

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<sup>6</sup>Walter Kaiser points to a similar feature of OT interpretation and calls it “the analogy of antecedent Scripture.” Each biblical writer works within the context of the developing canon of Scripture that has preceded him. The difference between the views of Hengstenberg and Kaiser is that for Kaiser, the prophets played a passive role in recording their own echo of Moses and the other prophets. They did not attempt to read back into the earlier OT Scriptures. They simply recorded their own words in a kind of chronologically correct sequence.

<sup>7</sup>Ernst W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, trans. Reuel Keith (1854; reprint, McLean, Va.: MacDonald Publishing, 1972), 1:234.

<sup>8</sup>C. F. Keil, *Biblischer Commentar über die zwölf kleinen Propheten* (BCAT 4/3; Leipzig: Dörffling & Franke: 1866), p. 434.

<sup>9</sup>Kaiser argues for a more passive view of the prophets’ work, presumably because he does not want any later viewpoints superimposed back on earlier biblical texts. But that is exactly what Hengstenberg finds of importance in the prophetic word, which is an inspired (but not yet NT) interpretation. The difference between the two can be resolved, I believe, by noting that Kaiser’s primary difficulty with such an approach involves principally the NT authors’ interpreting the words of the OT in light of their NT fulfillment. But, even though Hengstenberg is also guilty of that charge, he, at least in principle, also wants to allow the OT to interpret itself. This is something that Kaiser is not so much opposed to as something that he does not seem to have considered, at least in an evangelical garb such as Hengstenberg. For Kaiser, this is something too similar to the modern critical concept of “reinterpretation” and thus (rightfully) outlawed at the start. Hengstenberg, however, raises the question within the context of not only a thoroughly orthodox view of biblical authorship, but also in terms of a consideration of the nature of the OT canon. For Hengstenberg, in the early days of the nineteenth century, the OT canon was still a safe haven from the storms of biblical criticism.



resented a distinct historical moment in the progress and unfolding of the whole vision. Within the hallowed halls of the OT Scriptures, Hengstenberg, Keil and others profess to hear the words and commentary of all the prophets, beginning with Moses and ending with Malachi. Some were known by name in Scripture, others were left unidentified. There are many examples of prophetic echoes in Scripture.<sup>10</sup> A notable one is Hannah's poem in 1 Samuel 2:1-10. As she dedicates her son, Hannah offers a song of praise and thanksgiving. At the close of her hymn, Hannah moves to another theme: the prophetic hope of the coming of God's messianic king (1 Sam 2:10). She does this by means of an echo of the poems in the Pentateuch. She says, "May those who contend with the LORD be shattered; against them may he thunder in the heavens, and judge the ends of the earth; may he give strength to his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed." Hannah's "anointed one" and "king" allude to the "messianic king" in the poetry of the Pentateuch (Num 24:7).

Biblical critics have been at a loss to explain how Hannah could have expressed such words. Where could Hannah have gotten a hope in a coming king? Their only explanation is to suppose that a later scribe has rewritten Hannah's praise hymn to make it conform to the messianic beliefs of the later prophets. They have failed to see, however, that Hannah or one of the later "prophetic authors" could have read the Pentateuch or been aware of the prophetic hope in the poems of the Pentateuch. If understood as an echo of the poetry in the Pentateuch, Hannah's words make sense. She, like the prophet Habakkuk, pleads with God to fulfill the messianic hopes that she has learned from the poems in the Pentateuch. Hannah's poem echoes the prophetic hopes of the Pentateuch, and Habakkuk's poem echoes Hannah's. The two poems guide readers in understanding the Pentateuch as messianic.<sup>11</sup> The notion of a prophetic edition of the OT does not, by itself, prove the Pentateuch to be messianic. It does, however, demonstrate that the canonical Pentateuch, as it is in our Bible, makes good sense as a messianic whole.

## THE TANAK

The foregoing observations on the "making" of the Pentateuch and the pro-

<sup>10</sup>For example, Zechariah 6:12-13 shows the postexilic interpretation of 2 Samuel 7; Psalm 110; Genesis 14.

<sup>11</sup>See, for example, Genesis 12:2; 18:18; 26:4; Psalm 72:17; Jeremiah 4:2; and Psalm 72:8; Zechariah 9:10.

phetic echo suggest that there is “intelligent life” behind the composition of the biblical books. This raises the question of whether the same sort of intelligent design can be found in the selection and assembly of these books into the whole OT canon (Tanak). I have much to say in this book about the final canonical shape of the OT, arguing throughout that its purpose was to provide the books of the OT with the best possible context for viewing them messianically.

Sometimes, the messianic influence on the final shape is conspicuous. In other cases, it may be merely a matter of what books are placed together and what order they follow (contextuality). The book of Ruth does not stand between the historical books of Judges and Samuel in the Hebrew canon. There, Ruth, whom Boaz called “a virtuous woman,” is placed after the poem in Proverbs 31 that begins with the question “Who can find a virtuous woman?”

Those who assembled the OT into its present shape were devout students of Scripture. Many of the individual books of Scripture had been studied and meditated upon for centuries.<sup>12</sup> They had come to be understood not merely as individual books, but as parts of a collected whole. When they were arranged into the OT canon, their framers no doubt were guided by such a holistic understanding of the HB.

Leaders such as Ezra, entrusted with the task of collecting and arranging the OT Scriptures, understood their task as, in part, providing these OT texts with an appropriate commentary. According to Nehemiah 8:8, they read the Scriptures and provided them with commentary and insight as they went. In many cases, their commentary aimed at highlighting the messianic features of these biblical texts. A celebrated example of messianically tinted canonical shape is the notice of the death of Moses at the end of the Pentateuch (Deut 34).<sup>13</sup> That this is not a part of the original Mosaic Pentateuch is clear because it includes an account of the death and burial of Moses.<sup>14</sup> As

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<sup>12</sup>See I. L. Seeligmann, *Voraussetzungen der Midraschexegese* (VTSup 1; Leiden: Brill, 1953), pp. 150–81.

<sup>13</sup>Franz Delitzsch, failing to see the late canonical significance of Deuteronomy 34:10 (and, in Delitzsch’s specific case, any link to Deut 18), remarks, “It is a weighty reason against the single personal and eschatological interpretation of *nabi*’ that we never find in the canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament an echo of this promise” (*Messianische Weissagungen in geschichtlicher Folge* [Leipzig: Akademische Buchhandlung, 1890], p. 45).

<sup>14</sup>There are, of course, literary reasons for distinguishing Deuteronomy 34 from the rest of the Pentateuch—for example, the compositional structure of the whole (narrative/poetry) suggests

messianically shaped, this piece of text is a commentary on the promise of a “prophet like Moses” in Deuteronomy 18:15.<sup>15</sup>

First, Deuteronomy 34 identifies the “prophet” in Deuteronomy 18 as an individual and not as the office of prophet. It does that when it says, “Now a prophet like Moses never arose in Israel” (Deut 34:10). It does not say, “The office of prophecy never arose”; it says, “A prophet [singular] like Moses never arose.”

Second, Deuteronomy 34 measures the fulfillment of the promise in Deuteronomy 18 far beyond Moses’ own day. Crucial to the time of the composition of Deuteronomy 34 is the statement that “a prophet like Moses never came” (Deut 34:10).<sup>16</sup> This statement not only reflects an awareness of the existence of an office of prophecy,<sup>17</sup> but also is able, within that chronological frame, to draw the conclusion that such an individual prophet (as envisioned in Deut 18!) had not arisen. Neither Joshua, nor Samuel, nor any of the pre-exilic prophets were in a position to make such a statement. In Joshua’s day, the prophetic office had not been established, and in Samuel’s day it had only just begun to function. Even during the exile, the office of prophet was still being actively exercised. Deuteronomy 34 says that the prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18 “never came.”

The relative time of the comment in Deuteronomy 34 is much later than the time of Moses (and Deut 18) and most of the prophets. The intent of the comment is to call on the reader to trust in God’s provision, especially in the absence of the fulfillment of Deuteronomy 18. The fact that the prophet “never came” is intended to spur the reader on to further trust in the hope of his coming. In other words, this last bit of commentary on Deuteronomy 18 in Deuteronomy 34 guides us in understanding Moses’ words not as a reference to the coming office of the prophet, but as a historically unfulfilled prophecy of the coming of an individual future prophet.<sup>18</sup>

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that the Pentateuch concludes with Deuteronomy 32/33.

<sup>15</sup>That it is a part of the canonical linkage between the Pentateuch and the Prophets is also evident because the reference to the death of Moses in Joshua 1:1 presupposes the account of his death in Deuteronomy 34:5. There is no other account of the death of Moses in the Pentateuch. Joshua 1:1 thus must be looking at the account of the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34:5.

<sup>16</sup>Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Prophecy and Canon* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 86.

<sup>17</sup>Since it suggests a distinct group from which the prophet could be identified as a prophet.

<sup>18</sup>I have in mind the way Deuteronomy 33:4-5 links Moses to the promise of a coming king in the poems of the Pentateuch.

The commentary, or explanation, provided by Deuteronomy 34 reflects the same understanding of Deuteronomy 18 found in the NT. Peter, in Acts 3:22-23, applies the word about the prophet in Deuteronomy 18 (not Deut 34) to Jesus. The promised prophet “never came” until Jesus. Thus Peter, through the eyes of Deuteronomy 34, understood Deuteronomy 18 prophetically, individually and messianically.<sup>19</sup>

## HERMENEUTICS

The goal of a theological study of the Pentateuch is the biblical author’s intent as realized in the work itself. The (human and divine) authors’ intent is the “verbal meaning” of the book. The author’s intent is what his words say as part of the book.

When talking about the meaning of the words of the Pentateuch, one should be careful to distinguish this from the “things” that the words point to in the real world. The Pentateuch is about real historical events, that is, “things that have happened” (*res gesta*) in the real world. Words are not the things themselves. Words only point to things and tell us about things.

In speaking about historical events (things), one may easily confuse what an author says about these events with the events themselves. As important as history and archaeology are for understanding the “things” that the Bible points to and talks about, they sometimes get in the way of understanding the “words” of Scripture. The Pentateuch may be compared to a Rembrandt painting of real persons or events. We do not understand a Rembrandt painting by taking a photograph of the “thing” that Rembrandt painted and comparing it with the painting itself. That may help us understand the “thing” that Rembrandt painted, his subject matter, but it will not help us understand the painting itself. To understand Rembrandt’s painting, we must look at it and see its colors, shapes and textures. In the same way, to understand the Pentateuch, one must look at its colors, contours and textures. To understand

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<sup>19</sup>If Deuteronomy 34 also tells us that the prophet promised in Deuteronomy 18 “never came” (rather than “has not yet come”), then the former chapter likely was written at a time when there were no more prophets. Prophecy had ceased. Compare 1 Peter 1:10-12: “Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (κxv).

Rembrandt's painting, one must study the painting itself. To understand the Pentateuch, one must study the Pentateuch itself.

### FINDING THE AUTHOR'S INTENT

How does one go about finding the meaning of a text such as the Pentateuch? The answer I offer is that one should approach the meaning of such a text in terms of its "big idea." There are questions we must ask. What is this book all about? Where is the author going? What is he trying to say? Every part of the Pentateuch has its place within the context of its big idea. The meaning of the whole helps us see the importance and the meaning of each of the parts. This is how texts such as the Pentateuch work. They are not randomly gathered bits of written facts. They give us whole pictures, and the meaning of the whole affects our understanding of the meaning of the parts.

This does not mean, of course, that the individual parts of the Pentateuch have no meaning apart from the whole. They clearly do. It only means that whatever we say about the meaning of the details and parts of the Pentateuch should be brought into line with the author's intent for the whole.

How do we find the big idea of the Pentateuch? The answer to that question is simple: we read it. As we read the Pentateuch, we begin to formulate in our minds a sense of what it is about. Once we begin to get a sense of what the Pentateuch is about, we can test our ideas against what we actually find in the Pentateuch. Does our understanding of the Pentateuch's big idea fit with what we find in the text itself? As one reads the Pentateuch, these are the kinds of questions one should ask: Am I forcing my ideas on the Pentateuch? Does my understanding of the big idea need some adjustment? Is my understanding totally wrong and in need of being replaced?

Obviously, such a process requires a great deal of reading. It also requires humility. If my understanding of the text does not seem to fit the text itself, I have to admit it and start with another big idea. Here, also, is where the help of others comes into play. We often can learn from others' understanding of the Scriptures. A major work such as the Pentateuch has been read for centuries. There are some well-grounded ideas about the Pentateuch, and we should take such ideas into consideration when we read.

How do we know if our big idea fits the text? Here is a basic principle: the best big idea is that which explains the most and the most important features

of the text. As we read through the Pentateuch with our big idea in mind, we will soon learn whether that idea helps us understand what is going on. For example, suppose that we had the notion that the big idea of the Pentateuch is “how to ride a donkey.” We would not have to read very far before seeing that our big idea is no help. Nothing in the Pentateuch comes anywhere near such an idea. But now suppose that our big idea is “the importance of obeying the Mosaic law.” It would soon be evident that such an idea is helpful in reading and making sense of the Pentateuch. Most of the Pentateuch is about the Mosaic law. The Pentateuch is even called “the law” by many today. Undoubtedly, this big idea would help us understand most of what is in the Pentateuch.

But what about the question of what is most important? Does the big idea of “obeying the Mosaic law” help us here? The answer, of course, lies in what we mean by “most important.” Most important to whom? To me as a person? To members of my church? To Jesus and the NT writers? To Judaism? Such a question could be answered in many ways.

If we are seeking the author’s intent, it seems reasonable to conclude that what is most important in the Pentateuch should be related to the author’s intent. What is most important to the author? Our big idea should help us understand not only most of what is in the Pentateuch, but also what is most important to the author. We are beginning to get ahead of ourselves, but it is important at least to introduce the notion of how we determine what is important to the author. The answer is that we should look to those parts of the Pentateuch that most clearly reveal the work of the author. How has the author put the book together? What terms does he repeat? What is the overall outline or structure of the book? These are the kinds of questions that help us see the most clearly defined activities of the author in a book such as the Pentateuch. It is only natural to suppose that such elements will help us determine what is most important to the author of the book.

Let us take an example. It is well known that the author of the Pentateuch writes for more than sixty chapters with hardly a word said about the Mosaic law. If we think that the big idea of the Pentateuch is “the importance of obeying the Mosaic law,” why does this idea help us so little to understand the whole first sixty chapters of the book? The Mosaic law does not seem to be most important to the author in the first part of the Pentateuch. Some have suggested the Pentateuch should have begun with Exodus 12:1, which begins

the account of the giving of Passover, the first real part of the Mosaic law in the Pentateuch. A better way is to adjust our understanding of the big idea. Perhaps another way of stating our big idea will help explain one of the most important facts about the Pentateuch, which is that it does not immediately deal with the Mosaic law.

In this introduction, for illustration purposes, I will pursue a different big idea for the Pentateuch. I propose that the big idea of the Pentateuch is “the importance of living by faith.” Admittedly, when we read through the Pentateuch with this big idea in mind, it does not immediately help us understand most of what is there. Most of what is there is still “law.” It does, however, as we will see, help us understand what seems to be most important to the author. It may be that we will have to feel our way along a bit further in formulating our understanding of the big idea of the Pentateuch. If our big idea is to be a good one, it must include both the Mosaic law and the concept of living by faith. At this point, my concern is to introduce the concept of a “big idea” and the way it can help us shape our understanding of the author’s central focus in the Pentateuch.

To summarize: We are seeking the author’s intent in the Pentateuch. This means that we must seek to understand the meaning of his words and sentences. We do that by understanding his words within the context of the whole of the written Pentateuch. Our clues to the author’s big idea are to be sought primarily in those things that he most often writes about and that seem most important to him.

### **THE COMPOSITION OF THE PENTATEUCH**

What can one say about the way the biblical authors wrote their books? We often assume that biblical books such as the Pentateuch were written as books are today. That is unlikely. From what we can gather from a close study of the Pentateuch itself, the actual work of composition was complex. Many smaller written texts were woven into a single text, much like one would make a quilt or even a scrapbook. The end product demonstrates its unity and singleness of purpose. A close look at the way the Pentateuch was written can give us a clearer picture of the author’s meaning.

The author of the Pentateuch apparently started out with two kinds of written sources. It seems that he had several smaller written works that formed the basis of the Pentateuch as a whole. The story of primeval history

(Gen 1–11) or the story of the patriarchs (Gen 12–50) probably already existed in written form when they were used to “make” the Pentateuch. The author also seems to have had a collection of several smaller written records. Some of these were in narrative form, others in poetic. He also had several collections of written laws.

The work of the author, however, was more than merely the compiling of written sources, more than just the making of a scrapbook. The Pentateuch as we now have it is the product of much reflection and organization of its material. There is a strategy in its final shape. Thus, it is important to call its author an “author.” His work surely merits that description. The author took written records and wove them together into a coherent whole so that the whole of his narrative has a center, a focus, and tells a complete story of real events. The most direct indication of the author’s meaning in the Pentateuch is the overall literary strategy of the book and the verbal seams that unite the final form of the text. The authorship of the Pentateuch is much like that of the Gospels, Samuel and Kings, all of which appear to have used written sources to tell their story.

A question that has interested evangelical biblical scholars is whether the author of the Pentateuch was Moses. I believe that the “biblical” answer to that question comes from Joshua 1:8 and John 5:46. After the death of Moses, Joshua had in his hands a book called “the law” (Josh 1:8). In John 5:46 Jesus said that Moses wrote concerning him. It is reasonable to conclude from these two texts that, as the biblical writers understood their own books, it was Moses who gave Joshua the book called “the law,” in which he wrote about the Christ. It is also reasonable to conclude that Moses’ “book of the law” in Joshua 1:8 was understood to be the same book as the present (canonical) Pentateuch. This does not mean that Moses wrote about his own death (Deut 33 and Deut 34). So there was material added to the Pentateuch, at least in the last part of the book.

Technically, there are minimally two editions of the Pentateuch: the Mosaic “first edition” of the Pentateuch, and a prophetic “second edition,” which included the last two chapters of Deuteronomy (Deut 33–34). Additions appear to have been few, but there were likely some important ones. Deuteronomy 33 probably is the work of Moses, but it appears to have been added by a later “author” (Deut 33:1) because its introduction is clearly aware of the death of Moses (“before he died”).



I do not intend to pursue this question further in this book, but one of the implications of the “two editions” notion of the Pentateuch is that our present Pentateuch is quite close in appearance and shape to the original Mosaic one. The “secondary” nature of the last two chapters of the Pentateuch helps us understand the “original” nature of the rest of the Pentateuch.

*What Pentateuch?* Evangelical biblical scholars have devoted a fair amount of time discussing who wrote the first Pentateuch. Where we have fallen short is in our lack of attention to the question of who wrote the *last* Pentateuch, that is, the one we now have in our Bible, the one with the notice of the death and burial of Moses in the last two chapters. When and why was that edition published, and why and how was it attached to the earlier edition?

The answer to that question is not hard to find. Judging from what is said in the additional parts of the Pentateuch (e.g., Deut 33–34), I conclude that those last two chapters were meant to provide an explanation of some of the major events in the Pentateuch at a late period in Israel’s history. One of the last statements in the Pentateuch tells us that after Moses died, “There never again arose a prophet quite like him” (Deut 34:10). To make that statement, one would have to have lived after the last prophet in Israel. The text does not say, “A prophet like Moses has not yet arisen.” That could be said at any point in Israel’s history. What the text says is, “A prophet like Moses never arose.” That statement could be made only if all the possible “prophets like Moses” had come and failed to measure up to the prophet Moses. It would also indicate that the last edition of the Pentateuch was written late, after the last prophet, Malachi.

Such observations suggest that the present canonical Pentateuch was a second, or final, edition of the “law of Moses.” Judging from what we can gather from biblical statements, I conclude that the first edition of the Pentateuch was an early “book of the law” written by Moses (see Deut 33:4). The present edition was written much later than that Mosaic Pentateuch. It is impossible to determine how different the two editions were. We have no “first edition” of the Mosaic Pentateuch.<sup>20</sup> Our primary concern in the task of discovering the theology of the Pentateuch is the need to focus on the

<sup>20</sup>All we have is a second “prophetic edition” written late in Israel’s history, much like the books of Kings and Chronicles and the *Vorlage* of the LXX. In many passages Chronicles comes to us as a late “second edition” of Samuel and Kings. With the Greek translations of Kings and Chronicles we also have two editions of the Hebrew of Kings and the Greek (LXX) of an earlier translation of a more recent version of the Pentateuch.

Pentateuch now in our Bible, that is, the “canonical Pentateuch.” The Pentateuch was not only historically passed along to and used by the later OT prophets, Jesus and the authors of the NT, but also it was the one around which the theology of the rest of the OT was formed. In effect, it was with the “second edition” of the Pentateuch that the book of the “law of Moses” became an essential part of the OT canon: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. It is also that edition which Paul identified as the inspired Scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:16. It is the only edition of the Pentateuch we have.

**The audience of the Pentateuch.** When reading the Pentateuch with its theology in mind, one must identify the particular historical audience it addresses. To do that, several points should be made clear about its audience. First, one must distinguish between the audience *in* the Pentateuch and the audience *of* the Pentateuch. In Genesis 6, when God tells Noah to build an ark, he is not telling the reader of the Pentateuch to build an ark; he is telling Noah in the flood narrative to build one. The reader has no need to escape a universal flood, but in this narrative, Noah does. When God speaks to Moses and Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, he is not speaking to the readers of the Pentateuch, but to the Israelites in the wilderness narrative (Ex 19–24). Just as with the instructions for Noah’s ark, what God tells Moses at Mount Sinai is not what the author wants to tell his readers. Readers should keep their attention on the correct audience of the Pentateuch and interpret it in that context.

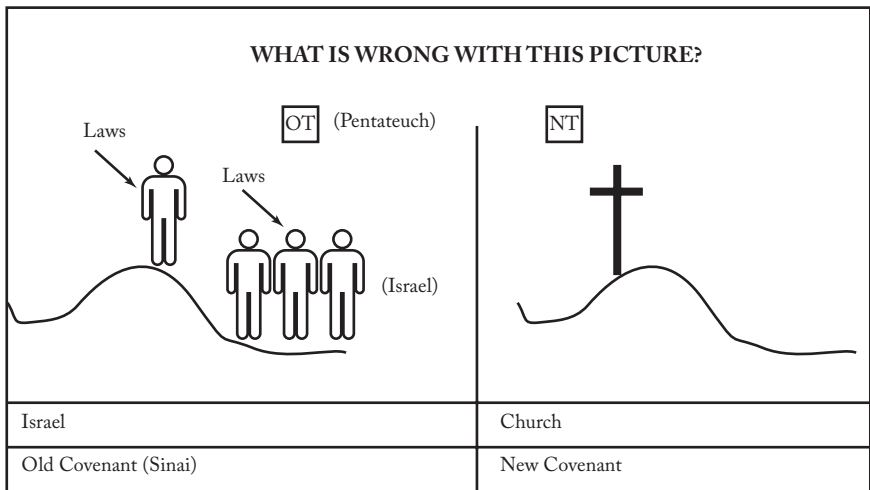


Figure i.1

In figure i.1 the Pentateuch is shown as a part of the covenant that God established with Israel at Mount Sinai. In that covenant God gave his laws to Moses, who passed them on to the Israelites standing at the foot of the mountain. Thus, in that view of the Pentateuch, God made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, and it was to teach the Sinai covenant and the law that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. This picture represents a common misunderstanding of the purpose of the Pentateuch. What’s wrong with this picture? It identifies the giving of the law with the writing of the Pentateuch. It overlooks that the Pentateuch itself was not written to teach Israel the law. The Pentateuch was addressed to a people living under the law (Deut 30:1-2; Ezra 7:6-10) and failing at every opportunity (Neh 9:33). The Pentateuch looks beyond the law of God to his grace. The purpose of the Pentateuch is to teach its readers about faith and hope in the new covenant (Deut 30:6). Hence, figure i.2 should be redrawn to show the distinction between the law and the Pentateuch as well as the role of the new covenant in the message of the Pentateuch.

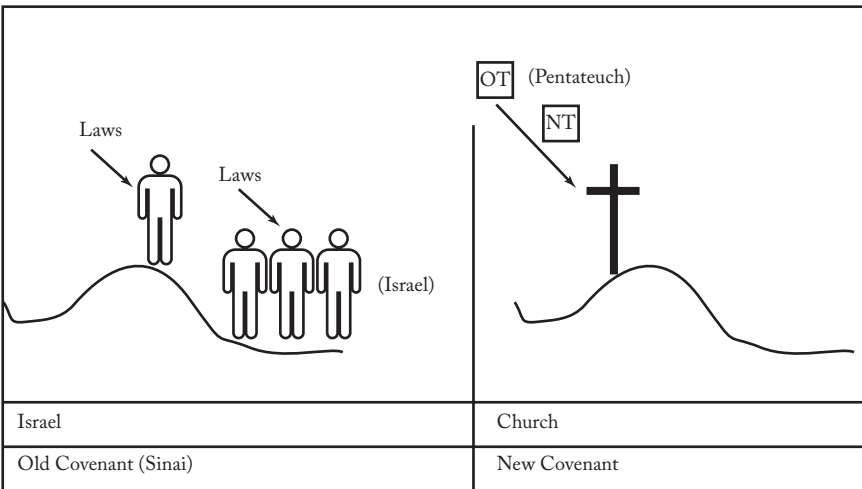


Figure i.2

In Jeremiah 31:31 the “Mosaic” Sinai covenant is contrasted with the “prophetic” new covenant. There was an “old covenant” established by Moses, and a “new covenant” established by Christ through his sacrificial death on the cross. In Galatians and Romans Paul looks back to the Sinai covenant as something that failed to bring about faith and divine blessing. Nothing was

inherently wrong with the Sinai covenant, but something was fundamentally wrong with Israel's heart: it needed cleansing and filling with God's love (Deut 30:6). But as the prophets saw it, Israel had continued to disobey God's law, and they were in danger of divine correction. Ultimately, the need was to have the law written on their hearts instead of on tablets of stone (cf. Ezek 36:26-27). Israel's prophets and the NT authors frequently looked back at the law as a colossal failure. The Sinai covenant was a broken covenant. The NT contrasted the failure of the Sinai covenant with the new covenant, which succeeded in Christ.

The Pentateuch as we have it in our Bible today is not directly associated with Sinai. To be sure, it tells us about Sinai, but it is not to be identified with the events at Sinai. Keep in mind that it was not at Mount Sinai that Moses gave Israel the present canonical Pentateuch. The Pentateuch was written to Israel at a later time, certainly only after Israel's failures that it records. It was given to tell Israel that the Sinai covenant had failed. As the prophet Hosea saw, the Pentateuch is primarily not about a wedding, but a divorce. In the canonical Pentateuch the prophets also see beyond that divorce to a new covenant "in the last days" (Hos 3:5). In the Pentateuch we are confronted with a call to a new covenant, not to the old. In that respect, the Pentateuch is quite close in meaning to NT book of Galatians. The book of Galatians is also about the Sinai covenant. Paul, in Galatians, raises the question of the continuing validity of the Sinai covenant. According to Galatians, the Sinai covenant failed. In the same way, the Pentateuch confronts its readers with the failure of the Sinai law and the hope of a new covenant. If the Mosaic laws are not written to the readers of the Pentateuch, why are they there?

If the purpose of the Pentateuch is to show that the Sinai covenant and its laws failed, why are there so many laws still in the Pentateuch? We will return to that question in the discussion of the relevance of the Mosaic law in the life of the Christian. For the moment, I want to emphasize that the mere presence of these laws in the Pentateuch is no warrant for taking the Pentateuch as a "book of law." A "book with laws" is not necessarily a "book of law." There may be other reasons why the author included the laws in the Pentateuch. Among them is that perhaps the laws were put in the Pentateuch to show the reader why the Sinai covenant failed. We will return to this question later, when we look closer at the Pentateuch's laws and how they have

been positioned within a framework of narratives and poems, suggesting a compositional strategy behind their present location.

**Summary.** The Pentateuch was not written as modern books are. It is a collection and arrangement of ancient written sources, many of which appear to have been fragmentary and already old by the time of Moses. Indeed, Moses may have had to translate some of them into Hebrew. The Pentateuch represents a literary strategy in which the author strives to teach a theological message. The Pentateuch that we now have is likely a late version of the “book of the law” written by Moses (Josh 1:8). Moses wrote it as a source of divine wisdom and meditation, not as a book of law. It was the later prophets who, after much meditation (“day and night”) on the words of Moses, produced the Pentateuch that we have today, the canonical Pentateuch. Through those words, God called them to proclaim his “law” and Israel’s failure to obey it. Its purpose was to remind God’s people of their commitment to the Sinai covenant and the law given to Israel at Sinai. As I will argue in the rest of this book, the Pentateuch’s view of the law is similar to that of Paul in the book of Galatians. The law failed, but the prophets saw in the Pentateuch the revelation of a new and better covenant. The Pentateuch was written not so much to teach Israel about the Sinai covenant as to teach them about the new covenant. Under the new covenant, the law of Moses was to be inscribed by God’s Spirit on the heart of every believer. Each one would obey God “from the new heart” that God was yet to give them. As the prophets had come to learn from their own study of the Pentateuch, the temple and priesthood had been replaced by the reading of Scripture. This meant that Israel had become a “kingdom of priests” and a holy nation rather than a “kingdom with a priesthood” (as had happened in Ex 19:24). The prophetic ideal of an individual, personal relationship with God through the reading of his Word had become the rallying cry of the “Israelite church.” A future union of believers consisting of Israel and the nations had already been laid out by the prophetic authors of the Pentateuch (Gen 35:11; 48:4; Is 66:18-24). All of these features of the prophetic new covenant were foretold in the canonical Pentateuch.

We are already well on our way to describing the message of the Pentateuch. Provisionally, we might say that the purpose of the Pentateuch appears to be much like the works of Israel’s later prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel). In their view, the people of Israel had fallen short of what God de-

manded in the Sinai covenant (see Is 1). What was needed was a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34), one in which Israel was given a new heart and God's Spirit (Ezek 34:24-31; 36:26-27). The human heart had not withstood the test of the tablets of stone given to Israel at Sinai. A new heart was needed. The message of the Pentateuch is like that of the biblical prophets and the NT: God would send his Spirit to renew the human heart and lead people to trust God and obey (Deut 30:6).

All of what I am saying, of course, has to be exegetically tested by evidence from the Pentateuch itself. Like any attempt to determine the big idea in the biblical text, it has to be shown to provide the best explanation of what is actually there in the text of the Pentateuch. Why, for example, does the author of the Pentateuch place the story of the golden calf in such a prominent place in his narrative (Ex 32)? Just at the moment when God was giving Moses the law on Mount Sinai, Israel was breaking it at the foot of the mountain. Israel had just heard the Ten Commandments. God had commanded that they not bow down to idols or have "other gods." Yet, just then, Israel had fashioned a golden idol and was bowing down to it.

To be sure, the author of the Pentateuch is going somewhere with his story. He has a point to make. Our task is to uncover that point anew for ourselves today.

## THE PENTATEUCH AS A WHOLE

Before we examine individual parts of the Pentateuch—for example, the account of the creation (Gen 1) or the exodus (Ex 1–15), it is helpful to look at it from a wider perspective. What is the message of the Pentateuch as a whole? What is its overall purpose? When we have determined something about the Pentateuch from that perspective, we can turn to the smaller parts and ask how they contribute to its overall message.

*The structure of the Pentateuch.* The most influential, yet subtlest, feature of an author's rendering of historical narrative is the overall framework within which he or she arranges it.<sup>21</sup> Some call this the "context." I call it the "structure" in order to emphasize two important things: (1) a narrative has external boundaries; eventually it stops being something textual, like words and sentences, and becomes part of the real world; (2) a narrative has an internal re-

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<sup>21</sup>John Sailhamer, "Exegetical Notes: Genesis 1:1-2:4a," *Trinity Journal* 5, no. 1 (1984): 73-82.

lationship among its own parts.<sup>22</sup> To a large degree, the structure of biblical narratives determines their meaning.

*Definition:* Structure is the total set of relationships within a narrative. It is an expression of the relationship of the parts to the whole and the parts to each other.

In this book I take up two issues about the structure of the Pentateuch. First, how do we go about assessing the meaning of the structure of a work as large as the Pentateuch? Second, what is the meaning, or the message, that comes out of the structure of the Pentateuch? The meaning of a narrative such as the Pentateuch is tied to its shape and progression. What is the author saying in his narrative, and where is he going “in the text”?

*The beginning and the end of the Pentateuch.* Although it might seem simplistic, one of the most important questions we can ask about the Pentateuch is “Where does it begin, and where does it end?” Only then can we ask, “How does its narrative begin? How does it end? Where is it going?”

*Where does the Pentateuch begin?* It may seem obvious where the Pentateuch begins, but this is a serious matter for many who have studied the Pentateuch. A great Jewish scholar of the medieval period, Rabbi Solomon Ben Isaac (Rashi), taught that the Torah (Pentateuch) did not begin until Exodus 12:1, which starts the account of the establishment of the Passover, the first law in the Pentateuch. For Rashi, all that precedes Exodus 12:1 is but a prologue to the Torah. The Torah (Pentateuch), being a book of laws, begins with its first law.

Modern biblical scholars believe that Genesis 1–11 also is not a part of the Pentateuch. A recent work on the theme of the Pentateuch begins with Genesis 12. Another major study suggests that the Pentateuch originally began not with Genesis 1:1, but with Genesis 2:4a, “This is the history of the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1 was added to the Pentateuch by a later scribe, and 2:4a was placed at the end of Genesis 1. I think we can safely say, however, that the Pentateuch in our Bible begins with Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

*Where does the Pentateuch end?* It is harder to determine where the Pentateuch ends than where it begins. There is more than one place that appears to be an end to the Pentateuch.

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<sup>22</sup>See the notions of “intextuality” and “innertextuality” in John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), pp. 207-12.

Those who hold that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch usually argue that the end of the Pentateuch is Deuteronomy 34:4, because Moses' death is reported in the next verse (Deut 34:5). The last eight verses of the Pentateuch, they maintain, were added by Joshua after the death of Moses. But, holding to the same logic, we would have to say that the end of the Pentateuch is more likely to be Deuteronomy 32:52, because the next verse also understands Moses to be dead (Deut 33:1).

Others argue that there never was a "Pentateuch," that is, a five-part book. The original book ended at Numbers 36:13 and was a "Tetrteuch," a four-part book. Deuteronomy was the first part of a larger historical book that consisted of the books of Deuteronomy through Kings.

Still others point to the end of the book of Joshua (Josh 24:26), where it states that Joshua wrote a final copy of the "law of God" (Pentateuch?) that included the whole of the book of Joshua. In that case, they often speak of a "Hexateuch," that is, a six-part book.

If we take the Pentateuch as it comes to us in the OT Scriptures, no doubt it ends with the last verses of Deuteronomy 34 (Deut 34:10-12). Not only is Moses dead and buried by this time (Deut 34:5-9), but also, the writer tells us, "A prophet like Moses never did arise in Israel, one who knew God face to face" (Deut 34:10). That is quite a revealing statement. Clearly, the author who made this statement knows about the entire line of prophets who followed Moses. He also knows that none of them, not even one, was "like Moses." All of them have come and gone, and Moses had no equal. A huge jump is made here at the end of the Pentateuch, taking us from the last days of Moses to the last days of the prophets.

Now that we have noted where the Pentateuch begins and ends, we can raise the question of how it begins and ends. What subject, or ideas and themes, does the author begin with in this work? What subject, or ideas and themes, does the author end with in this work?

*How does the Pentateuch begin?* If Rashi were correct that the Pentateuch began at Exodus 12:1, we would have to say that the Pentateuch begins with the law. Thus, the whole of God's dealings with Israel would be grounded in his giving them the law. This is the view of classical Judaism (covenantal nomism). The Pentateuch is law and must be obeyed as law.

If others were correct who say that the Pentateuch begins with Genesis 12:1, we would have to say that the Pentateuch begins with God's promise to



Abraham (the Abrahamic covenant). This would mean that the Pentateuch grounds God's giving Israel the law in his gracious call and promises to Abraham. Thus, the central issue in the Pentateuch would seem to be the relationship of the gospel and the law (gospel/law).

If the Pentateuch originally began with Genesis 2:4a, "This is the history of the heavens and the earth" (and Gen 1:1 was added later), then Genesis 1 would make no actual statement about creation. It would only be a statement about "nature." The view of Genesis 1 would be that the world of nature was already in existence when God began his work in Genesis 1. "This is the history of the heavens and earth: the earth was formless and void. . . ." Nature, the physical world, is already there as God begins his work of "creation." It is a given that even God must face. If that were the beginning of the Pentateuch, then both the giving of the law and the promises to Abraham would be grounded in nature. The relationship of gospel and law would be subordinated to that of nature and grace (nature/grace).

But we have already seen that the Pentateuch begins at Genesis 1:1, and hence it begins not with law or promise or even with nature as a given; it begins with creation (*ex nihilo*) and thereby establishes a great theological moment at its beginning. All God's acts recorded in the Pentateuch are grounded in the "real world" (biblical realism). Also, the Pentateuch begins with the free act of God in creation. The Pentateuch also moves quickly to tell us that this free act was also for our "good" (e.g., Gen 1:4). Creation thus is cast as an act of grace, unmerited favor. From the point of view of the structure of the Pentateuch, the giving of the law, the promises to Abraham, and nature itself are grounded in God's gracious gift of creaturehood. The Pentateuch ultimately is about creation and grace (creation/grace).

The simple structural observation that Genesis 12:1-3 is grounded in Genesis 1 has many implications. A direct link is established at the beginning of the Pentateuch between God's work of creation and his work of redemption. The call of Abraham and the blessing of the nations (Gen 12:1-3) have as their basis God's original "blessing" in creation (Gen 1:28). The future of humanity is tied to God's gracious election to create humankind. Also, the theme of creation and restoration exhibited in the flood and Noah's sacrifice (Gen 8:20-21) provides the basis for the redemption and blessing promised to Abraham and his seed. It is not by accident that in the rest of Scripture, both the OT and the NT, God's work of redemption is grounded in his act of creation.

The God who is the redeemer in Isaiah is the Lord “who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth” (Is 51:13). He hides Jerusalem in the shadow of his hand, “stretching out the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, ‘You are my people’” (Is 51:16). Biblical redemption is incomplete until God creates “a new heavens and a new earth” (Is 65:17), and then his people will rejoice in all he has created (Is 65:18).<sup>23</sup>

*How does the Pentateuch end?* Biblical scholars have always thought it unusual that the Pentateuch comes to an end before its narratives are over (*in medias res*). The divine commitments to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are the centerpiece of the message of hope in the Pentateuch, but they are unfulfilled at the end of the Pentateuch (Deut 34). A central theme in the Pentateuch is God’s gift of the land, but at the end of the Pentateuch Israel is not yet in the land. God’s last words in the Pentateuch are a reiteration of the promise rather than an anticipation of its fulfillment: “And the LORD said to Moses, “This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, “To your seed I will give it.” And I will cause you to see it with your own eyes, but you shall not go there” (Deut 34:4). Moses is barred from enjoyment of God’s blessing.

This poses no problem for those who see the book of Joshua as the end of the Pentateuch (Hexateuch). Joshua 21:43 says, “And the LORD gave to Israel all the land he had promised to give their fathers, and they possessed it and dwelt in it.” Joshua 21:45 says, “Not one thing from every good thing the LORD had sworn to give to the house of Israel failed to come to pass. Everything came to pass.” That is how we might expect the Pentateuch to come to an end: Israel, dwelling safely in the land, enjoys God’s good promises.

The fact that the Pentateuch ends with Israel still in the wilderness leads one to draw a remarkable conclusion: the author of the Pentateuch leaves open the question of the time of the fulfillment of the patriarchal blessings. He does not allow the reader to understand the conquest as fulfilled within the Pentateuch. He surely knows about the conquest and its initial successes (Deut 30:1). He even adds a few successes of his own (e.g., Deut 4:38, 46–49). He also knows about Israel’s subsequent failures (Deut 30:1–3). It is those failures that occupy his attention. The ending he gives to the Pentateuch as a

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<sup>23</sup>I cannot emphasize enough that the Pentateuch grounds redemption in creation, not nature. Biblically, creation is the result of a free act of God (grace, election); nature is not free (Eccles 1:4–7), and one day it will make way for the “new heavens and new earth.”

whole shows his desire to leave open a possibility that a future remains for God's commitment to Israel. Looking beyond the initial optimism of Joshua 21:45, the author reflects the same sober realization of Israel's later prophets who looked back on a long, dismal history of Israel's failure to keep God's covenant (Is 6; Hos 1). Even the author of the book of Joshua ultimately falls under the influence of the ending of the Pentateuch in its own long-term assessment of the optimism of Joshua 21:45. Ultimately, Joshua must face the reality of the exile as forecast in Joshua 23:15, "But just as all the good things that the LORD your God swore concerning you have been fulfilled for you, so the LORD will bring upon you all the bad things, until he has destroyed you from this good land that the LORD your God has given you."

### POEMS IN THE PENTATEUCH

Genesis 1–11 is a collection of small, self-contained narratives. At the conclusion of each narrative is a poem. The poem is followed by an epilogue. Each poem represents the final word of the central character of that narrative. By means of each poem, the central character makes a programmatic statement about the events of the narrative. The poems are something like the songs in a Hollywood musical. They thematize what the author intends the reader to draw from the narratives. The epilogues return the narrative to its status quo.

In the present shape of the Pentateuch the creation account in Genesis 1–2 concludes with the short poem by Adam regarding his newly fashioned wife (Gen 2:23). Then comes an epilogue (Gen 2:24). The account of the fall in Genesis 3 concludes with a poem (Gen 3:14–19) and an epilogue (Gen 3:20–24). The account of Cain in Genesis 4 concludes with Lamech's poem (Gen 4:23) and an epilogue (Gen 4:24–26). The genealogy in Genesis 5 concludes with the poem of (another) Lamech (Gen 5:29) and an epilogue (Gen 5:30–32). The story of the flood in Genesis 6:1–9:24 concludes with Noah's poem (Gen 9:25–27) and an epilogue (Gen 9:28–29).

After the conclusion of Genesis 9, the pattern (within Genesis 1–11) ceases. The Table of Nations, which follows in Genesis 10, is not a narrative, and there are no further poetic texts in Genesis 1–11. An important feature of the Table of Nations is the additional "narrative insertions" positioned throughout the chapter. Their purpose is to provide the reader with a running commentary of the important events in the lives of these seventy nations. There

is an important purpose for attaching Genesis 10 to the account of Noah's poetic discourse in Genesis 9:25-27. Among other things, Genesis 10 gives a preview of the historical identity and implications of Noah's programmatic statement in Genesis 9:27: the sons of Japheth will dwell in the tents of Shem, and the Canaanites will serve them.

The Table of Nations also answers additional questions raised by Noah's poem. It identifies the "descendants of Japheth" who will dwell in the tents of Shem, and it further identifies the "descendants of Shem and Ham." It serves as a summary of what will become of these various people when Noah's "prophetic poem" comes to fulfillment.

According to Genesis 10:2, the sons of Japheth are "Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras," and ultimately the "Kittim." Among the sons of Ham who will be subject to Japheth and Shem are Babylon, Assyria, the Canaanites and the Philistines. Among the sons of Shem, in whose tents the sons of Japheth will dwell, are Assyria (or Assur) and Eber. Viewed as a historical and genealogical map of Noah's poem in Genesis 9:27, the Table of Nations shows the reader that the Medes, the Greeks, and the Kittim ultimately will "dwell in the tents of" Babylon and Assyria (=Syria?), along with the Canaanites and the Philistines and, ultimately, Assyria (Syria?) and Eber. All of those events eventually played out in the subsequent historical events of Israel's past.

A further observation is to be made about the compositional shape of Genesis 1-11. Spliced into the final lists of the descendants of Shem in Genesis 11 is a brief narrative account of the building of the city of Babylon (Gen 11:1-9) reminiscent of the story of Cain and the city named after his son Enoch (Gen 4:17). This is the same Babylon that figures prominently in the narrative additions to the Table of Nations (Gen 10:8-12). The people of the city of Babylon want to make a name (Shem) for themselves, but in Genesis 12:1-3, God promises Abram that he will give him a great name (Shem).

To summarize: Viewed as a whole, Genesis 1-11 follows a recognizable compositional strategy that links together an otherwise loose collection of independent narratives. The strategy consists of attaching poems to the end of each narrative. Noah's pronouncement in Genesis 9:25-27 is an example of how programmatic such poems prove to be in the overall context. Noah's poem provides the interpretive context for the Table of Nations and the account of the building of the city of Babylon.

Is there a similar compositional pattern of narrative and poetry elsewhere in the Pentateuch? The answer is that there are four major collections of poems in the Pentateuch: Genesis 49, Exodus 15, Numbers 23–24, and Deuteronomy 32–33. Several features of these poems suggest that they are part of a compositional strategy similar to that in Genesis 1–11.

Genesis 49 comes at the conclusion of the large block of narrative representing the “patriarchal history” (Gen 12–48). Genesis 49:29–33 is an epilogue. The poem in Exodus 15:1–18 concludes the large block of narrative representing the “exodus from Egypt” (Ex 1–14). Exodus 15:19–21 is an epilogue. The poem in Numbers 23–24 concludes the narratives dealing with the wilderness wanderings, which in the present shape of the Pentateuch is Numbers 10–21. Numbers 24:25 is an epilogue. The poem in Deuteronomy 32–33 concludes the narratives of the conquest of the Transjordan of which the book of Deuteronomy is now a part. Deuteronomy 34 is an epilogue.

The arrangement of the larger poems in the Pentateuch reflects a conscious strategy that spans the whole of the Pentateuch from Genesis 1 to Deuteronomy 34. This strategy also appears to be an extension of the compositional strategy of Genesis 1–11.

The focal point of each of these major poems is the promise of a coming messianic king. The three poems in Genesis 49:1, Numbers 24:14, and Deuteronomy 31:29 have an almost identical introduction. In each introduction the central narrative figure (Jacob, Balaam, Moses) calls an audience together (using imperatives) and advises them (using cohortatives) of what will happen “in the last days.” The phrase “in the last days” is found only one other place in the Pentateuch: Deuteronomy 4:40.

The phrase “in the last days” occurs fourteen times in the HB—thirteen times in Hebrew, once in the Aramaic of Daniel. It is generally recognized that the phrase has an “eschatological” meaning. It is about the days of the coming messianic king. The same three poems (Gen 48–49; Num 23–24; Deut 32–33) also have considerable cross-referencing between them.

What is said about the king in Numbers 24:9a is a verbatim statement of Genesis 49:9b: “He crouches down, he lays down like a lion, and like a lioness; who will arouse him?” Numbers 24:9b is a direct quotation of Genesis 27:29. Such cross-referencing and quotation shows an author’s conscious awareness of the strategic importance of these three poems. The three major poems in the Pentateuch frequently refer to and allude to the smaller poems in Genesis

1–11. In doing so, they link the themes of the poems in Genesis 1–11 to the messianic and eschatological hope expressed in the larger poems.

Central to this connection is the identification of the future warrior of Genesis 3:15 with the messianic king of the larger poems. Along with that is the identification of the nature of the warfare in the remainder of the Pentateuch with the battle between the “seed of the woman” and the “seed of the serpent” in Genesis 3:15. Each of the three large poems is attached to an earlier poem to which it provides additional commentary: Genesis 49 overlays and interprets the poem in Genesis 48 along the lines of the coming king from the house of Judah; the poem in Numbers 24 overlays and interprets the poem in Numbers 23; the poem in Deuteronomy 33 overlays and interprets the poem in Deuteronomy 32. A close study of the additional material in the poems suggests that the overall compositional strategy was made from a messianic perspective. The large poem in Exodus 15 is different from the other poems in the Pentateuch in that it overlays the narrative passage in Exodus 14 and extends the Pentateuch’s view of “kingdom” beyond the house of Judah to the eternal reign of God (Ex 15:18).

This consistent pattern of usage of the poems as interpretation is intentional and extends to the scope of the whole of the Pentateuch. The fact that the poems have been extended and linked to the king from the house of Judah (David) suggests that their intent is to identify the king in the poems as a messianic figure. The messianic hope begins to emerge from these poems along with the eternal reign of God as king.

The foregoing observations suggest that the author of the Pentateuch intentionally used the (large and smaller) poetic texts in the Pentateuch to establish a context for reading the narratives. The author wants us to view the stories in the Pentateuch within the context of the prophetic hope in a coming messianic king. Thus, the poems focus attention on the central theme of the need for God’s grace and redemption (the small poems of Genesis 1–11) and at the same time link those themes to the coming messianic king and his kingdom (the large poems forming the central structure of the Pentateuch). This suggests that one of the central issues in the message of the Pentateuch is the coming king and his eternal kingdom.

## THE THEME OF FAITH

In the preceding section we looked at the influence of the messianic hope and

eschatology in the composition of the final shape of the Pentateuch. We have noted that, viewed as a whole, the compositional strategy of the Pentateuch represents the same hope found in the compositional strategy of the literature of the later prophets: the new covenant. By means of a textual strategy that uses poetic texts to thematize central ideas in the narrative, the events of the Pentateuch are linked to pointers to events that lie in the future. Past events foreshadow the prophetic future. Like the Pentateuch, the prophetic literature also uses the interchange of narratives and poems to express its central themes. In the prophetic literature it is the narrative that interprets the poems. Without the prophetic narratives we would be hard-pressed to understand the poetry of the prophets.

One could point to other compositional strategies in the Pentateuch. One is a strategy that stresses additional prophetic themes that show up in the OT prophetic literature and ultimately in the NT. One prominent theme is faith and trust in God.<sup>24</sup>

I suggested above that the Pentateuch is composed of major units of narrative, such as Genesis 1–11; 12–50; Exodus 1–15; 19–24. These narratives are linked through the author's use of poetry and commentary as well as a common terminology and "lament form." Each of these narrative pieces is marked by the author's use of similar kinds of editorial comments. These comments are remarkable because of their similarity to the themes we find throughout the OT prophetic literature. The comments I have in mind are marked by the recurrence of the Hebrew verb "to believe" (*ʿāman*) and the use of this form: (1) emergency situation, (2) promise given, (3) response of faith or no faith.

According to Hans-Christoph Schmitt, at crucial points in the Pentateuch the author alerts readers to the central importance of the concept of "faith" (*āman*). When Abraham entered a covenant with God, it was based on his faith (*āman* [Gen 15:6]). When Moses heard the call of God and followed his command, it was because "he believed" (*āman* [Ex 4:5]). When Israel heard the words of God and followed Moses and Aaron, it was because "they believed" (*āman* [Ex 4:31]). The whole purpose of God's meeting with the people at Mount Sinai was that they might "believe" (*āman* [Ex 19:9]). Also, when the Israelites refused to take the land God had promised them, it

<sup>24</sup>See Hans-Christoph Schmitt, "Redaktion des Pentateuch im Geiste der Prophetie," *VT* 32 (1982): 170–89.

was because they “did not believe” (*lō-ya’āminû* [Num 14:11]). Moses and Aaron could not enter the land because they “did not believe” (*lō-he’ēmāntem* [Num 20:12]). At each crucial step along the way of Israel’s history in the Pentateuch, we are reminded that the deciding issue in their relationship with God was their faith, or lack of it.

According to some biblical scholars, these “compositional seams” are designed to set up a contrast between the necessity of “keeping the law” over against that of “having faith.” Such a compositional strategy, which I will attempt to retrace through the Pentateuch, helps us see the importance of faith to the author of the Pentateuch and shows us its closeness to the theology of the prophets. Put simply, it suggests that one of the overriding purposes of the Pentateuch is to teach the message of faith and trust in God.

***The literary structure of Exodus 1–14.*** Following the starting point of an analysis of the theme of faith in the Pentateuch is the internal structure of Exodus 1–14, which is an internally self-contained literary unit. The introductory segment, Exodus 1–4, reaches its literary climax in Exodus 2:23–25, God’s remembrance of his covenant with the patriarchs. At the conclusion of this introductory segment comes a profound emphasis on faith (Ex 4:31). This emphasis is an echo of the earlier emphasis on the faith that the signs given to Moses were to produce (Ex 4:5). Both of these texts use the same terminology of faith (*āman*). At the conclusion of this literary unit, Exodus 14:31, we find the same terminology of faith (*āman*). In Exodus 4:1 the focus on faith shows it to be a divinely given sign. Faith in the divine promise of salvation is strengthened by the witness of the sign.

***The literary links to the other units.*** An emphasis on faith is also found at crucial points in other larger literary units in the Pentateuch—for example, Genesis 15:6; Exodus 19:9; Numbers 14:11; 20:12. Exodus 19:9 is placed within a text that links the exodus narrative to the Sinai narrative. Exodus 19:4 looks back to the exodus from Egypt, and Exodus 19:5 looks forward to the covenant at Sinai. Within this pericope we also find an emphasis on faith. The nature of Israel’s faith in this segment is directed not toward obedience to the Mosaic law, but toward the assurance of becoming “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6). This theme appears repeatedly in the prophetic literature (e.g., Is 61:6) and the NT (e.g., 1 Pet 2:9; Eph 2:8–9).

Genesis 15 is also tied to the notion of faith. The function of Genesis 15:6 is to link the promise of many descendants in Genesis 15:1–5 to the covenant-



guaranteed possession of the land in Genesis 15:7-21. In Genesis 15:6 Abraham's faith is presented as a response to God's gracious assurance. In Genesis 15:7-21 his faith is a sign of God's covenant trustworthiness. This linkage of a sign with faith is identical to the theme of faith in Exodus 19. In both texts faith is directed toward a divinely given sign.

Numbers 14:11 and Numbers 20:12 also occur at crucial points in the structure of the Pentateuch. They answer the question of why the whole generation along with Moses and Aaron were not allowed to enter the land. The answer in both passages is the same: lack of faith. In Numbers 14 the Israelites followed the advice of the ten spies and refuse to take the land. Once again their lack of faith is characterized as a refusal to "believe" in the divine "signs" (Num 14:11) performed in their midst.

The final shape of the Pentateuch is characterized not by a haphazard collection of sacred traditions, but by a dynamic compositional schema that is open to a new work of God in the "last days." Like the prophetic literature in general, the Pentateuch stands open and ready before a new work of God and calls for the response of faith.

### **THE "BAG OF LAWS" IN THE PENTATEUCH**

When God entered into a covenant with Israel at Sinai and gave them his laws, were those laws an essential part of the covenant, or were they merely an addition? Covenant theologians and dispensationalists, though arriving at different conclusions on this question, generally agree on a central matter: they understand the Mosaic law as an essential part of the Sinai covenant. For covenant theologians, the Mosaic law is the basis for their emphasis on the role of the law in the life of the Christian. For dispensationalists, the Mosaic law is the basis for their separation of the Sinai covenant, with its laws, from the life of the Christian.

Historically, there has been little agreement among Christians on the place of the Mosaic law in the Sinai covenant, particularly among covenant theologians. The problem is not new to post-Reformation theology. Beginning with Justin Martyr (A.D. 100-165), a recurring theme occurs in the theology of the church and in Judaism suggesting that the bulk of the Mosaic law given to Israel at Sinai was not originally intended for the Sinai covenant. That covenant, it has been argued, originally was intended as a covenant of grace, and the laws were added secondarily. Justin Martyr says, "Thus also God by the

mouth of Moses commanded you to abstain from unclean and improper and violent animals: when, moreover, though you were eating manna in the desert, and were seeing all those wondrous acts wrought for you by God, you made and worshipped the golden calf” (*Dial.* 20). Irenaeus says, “And He did Himself furnish guidance to those who beheld Him not in Egypt, while to those who became unruly in the desert He promulgated a law very suitable [to their condition]. . . . But when they turned themselves to make a calf and had gone back in their minds to Egypt, desiring to be slaves instead of free-men, they were placed for the future in a state of servitude suited to their wish—[a slavery] which did not indeed cut them off from God, but subjected them to the yoke of bondage” (*Haer.* 4.14.2; 4.15.1). These are strong words about the Mosaic law.

Since the time of the Reformation, the chief representative of this view has been Johann Coccejus (1603–1669), the father of covenant theology. Louis Berkhof summarizes Coccejus’s view: “Coccejus saw in the Decalogue a summary expression of the covenant of grace, particularly applicable to Israel. When the people, after the establishment of this national covenant of grace, became unfaithful and made a golden calf, the legal covenant of the ceremonial service was instituted as a stricter and harsher dispensation of the covenant of grace. Thus the revelation of grace is found particularly in the Decalogue, and that of servitude in the ceremonial law.”<sup>25</sup>

Although Berkhof makes no mention of it, we should note that Coccejus found his primary exegetical support in Galatians 3:19, where Paul says, the law “was added because of the transgressions, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made.” Berkhof’s primary critique of Coccejus lies in his judgment that Coccejus’s view could find no support from Scripture. Berkhof says, “These views are all objectionable for more than one reason: (1) They are contrary to Scripture in their multiplication of the covenants. It is un-Scriptural to assume that more than one covenant was established at Sinai, though it was a covenant with various aspects. (2) They are mistaken in that they seek to impose undue limitations on the decalogue and on the ceremonial law.”<sup>26</sup> Berkhof’s critique is curious not only because Coc-

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<sup>25</sup>Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), p. 299.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. Berkhof’s most regrettable omission is the lack of attention he devoted to Deuteronomy 29:1, which specifically mentions and discusses a covenant with Israel and others that was different and distinct from the Sinai covenant.

cejus did make extensive use of Scripture in his argument,<sup>27</sup> but also because Berkhof offers no evidence from Scripture to refute him.

Coccejus's view of the law seems to find support in the compositional strategy of the Pentateuch outlined above. When viewed in light of its final composition, the overall literary strategy of the Pentateuch suggests that God's original plan for Israel at Sinai did not include the vast collections of law found in the Pentateuch. Rather, the Pentateuch suggests that the Mosaic law was added to the Sinai covenant because of Israel's many transgressions in the wilderness (cf. Mt 19:8).

### TEXTUAL STRATA IN THE PENTATEUCH

In the Pentateuch there are three major types of literary sources: collections of laws (legal corpora), narratives and poetry. I will briefly discuss two of these (laws and narratives) and then present ideas on their arrangement (compositional strategy) in the final shape of the Pentateuch.

*Collections of laws (legal corpora).* The legal codes comprise the largest portion of the center section of the Pentateuch.<sup>28</sup> Clearly recognizable collections of laws in the Pentateuch are the Decalogue (Ex 20:1-17), the Covenant Code (Ex 20:22-23:33), the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26), and the Priestly Code (Ex 25-Lev 16). Belonging to this last corpus are the instructions concerning the pattern of the tabernacle (Ex 25-31) and its construction (Ex 35-40). The important task is to discover the purpose of these various collections in the final arrangement and shaping of the Pentateuch. What does each collection contribute to the message of the Pentateuch? Why has the author of the Pentateuch put them where they are in the text? Why so many different collections?

It has long been recognized that basic differences exist between these collections of laws. The requirements for the building of an altar (Ex 20:24-25) in the Covenant Code, for example, are different from those in the Priestly Code. According to the Covenant Code, the altar was to be made of earth or stones and could be set up "in every place" where God caused his name to be remembered (Ex 20:24). This was a simple form of altar reminiscent of the

<sup>27</sup>Johann Coccejus, *Summa theologiae ex scripturis repetita*, in *Opera omnia* (Amsterdam, 1701), 7:281-90.

<sup>28</sup>Some of the following discussion of law collections in the Pentateuch is drawn from John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), pp. 275-81, 288-89, and is used by permission.

altars in the patriarchal period. According to the Priestly Code, the altar was to be made of acacia wood overlaid with bronze (Ex 27:1-3) and was to be placed in the tabernacle, where only the priests would have access to it. This is a different sort of altar.

There have been numerous attempts to harmonize these two altar laws. According to one traditional harmonization, Israel was to have two altars, an earthen one for the burnt offering and a wooden one for burning incense.<sup>29</sup> The problem with this explanation is that in Exodus 38:1 the altar used for the burnt offering was to be made of wood. Another common harmonization is that the bronze altar of Exodus 27 was to be hollow (Ex 27:8) and therefore to be filled with dirt or stones to make the earthen altar of Exodus 20.<sup>30</sup> Thus, what appears to be a description of two distinct altars is in fact two aspects of one altar. Such attempts underscore the problem rather than provide a solution. Among modern conservative scholars, the tendency is to allow the two passages to stand without a harmonization; the earthen altar is taken merely as a temporary measure.<sup>31</sup> Although this explanation may provide a solution to the historical problem of the purpose of the two altars, it completely misses the literary question of why the two types of altars are prescribed in the Pentateuch without an attempt to harmonize or explain their differences. Our task is to identify the strategy behind the placement of these collections of laws rather than explain them away.

***Narratives in the Pentateuch.*** Numerous narrative texts of varying lengths are also found in the central portion of the Pentateuch. Not only do these texts provide the general framework for the legal collections, but also they are embedded within the various collections of laws. The general framework of this center section comprises three complex narratives: the exodus narrative (Ex 1–18), the Sinai narrative (Ex 19–34) and the wilderness narrative (Num 10:11–21:35). There are several smaller but strategically important narratives within this section that are also related to the larger framework—for example,

<sup>29</sup>Michael Walther, *Harmonia totius S. Scripturae* (Strasbourg, 1627), p. 176.

<sup>30</sup>H. S. Horowitz, ed., *Mechilta D'Rabbi Ismael* (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1970), p. 242. "Alij melius sic conciliant, internam altaris partem fuisse de terra solida et compacta, externam autem de lignis dictis" (Walther, *Harmonia totius S. Scripturae*, p. 176). "The enclosing copper case served merely to keep the earth together" (Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1945], 1:391).

<sup>31</sup>Walter Kaiser Jr., "Exodus," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 2:428.

the oppression narrative (Ex 1); the calls of Moses (Ex 3; 6) and of Joshua (Num 27:12-23); the accounts of the faith of Moses, Aaron and the people (Ex 4; 19) and of their lack of faith (Num 13-14; 20); the narratives of Aaron's calf idol (Ex 32) and of Israel's goat idols (Lev 17:1-9); the narratives of Moses and Pharaoh (Ex 7-12) and of Balaam and Balak (Num 22-24). Although each of these narrative units has a discernible internal structure, our interest in them at the present time is their relationship with each other and with the collections of laws discussed above. It is our task to explain the inter-relationship of these narrative texts and the collections of laws.

### TEXTUAL STRATEGY IN THE PENTATEUCH

*The collections of laws (legal corpora) and the Sinai narratives.* A curious feature of the Sinai narratives is the way in which they envelop and thus serve to link the collects of laws in the Decalogue, the Covenant Code and the Priestly Code.

1. The Decalogue follows the account of the covenant ceremony in Exodus 19:1-25. This narrative is complex and includes two major segments. The first is an account of the establishment of an initial covenant on Mount Sinai Ex (19:1-16a), and the second is an account of Israel's fearful retreat from God (Ex 19:16b-25).
2. The Decalogue (Ex 20:1-17), in turn, is followed by a short narrative, again recounting the fear of the people at Sinai (Ex 20:18-21).
3. The Covenant Code is then embedded in the Sinai narrative between Exodus 20:21 and Exodus 24:1-18.
4. That narrative is followed by the Priestly Code (Ex 25-Lev 16).
5. Furthermore, the account of the making of the golden calf (Ex 32) and the reestablishment of the Sinai covenant (Ex 33-34), both parts of the Sinai narrative, break into the Priestly Code just after the instructions for making the tabernacle (Ex 25-31) and before the account of its completion (Ex 35-40).
6. Consequently, the instructions for building the tabernacle are separated from the remainder of the Priestly Code by the account of the failure of the house of Aaron in the incident of the golden calf (Ex 32) and by the account of the renewal of the Sinai covenant (Ex 33-34).

These observations raise important literary questions. What is the effect of the arrangement of the laws and narrative in the present shape of the text? Is there a sense to be gained from the pattern of narratives and laws in the Pentateuch? Is the shape of the text a part of its meaning? I will address this matter by attempting to unravel and reflecting on the literary strategy behind the shape of the Sinai narrative.

By means of the arrangement of the narrative, the Sinai covenant before the incident of the golden calf is characterized by the laws of the Decalogue, the Covenant Code and the instructions for building the tabernacle. However, the Sinai covenant after the incident of golden calf is characterized by the fundamentally different and more extensive Priestly Code (Ex 35–Lev 16). In other words, after the incident of the golden calf, the bulk of the priestly laws (Ex 35–Lev 16) takes the place of the Decalogue, the Covenant Code and the tabernacle (Ex 19–24). The incident of the golden calf has caused a fundamental change in the nature of Israel's covenant relationship.

With the texts positioned in this way, the changes perceived between the laws in the two codes (e.g., two kinds of altars) are presented as part of a larger change in the nature of the Sinai covenant itself, a change resulting from the incident of the golden calf. Rather than attempting to harmonize the differences between the two law codes, the author uses these differences as part of his message. It is these differences that show that a change had come over Israel's covenant with God because of the sin of the golden calf. Israel's initial relationship with God at Sinai, characterized by the patriarchal simplicity of the Covenant Code (Ex 20–23), was now represented by the complex and restrictive laws of the Priestly Code (Ex 35–Lev 16).

What emerges in this way of understanding the narrative strategy is the notion that the biblical portrayal of Israel's relationship with God in the covenant at Sinai was not meant to be read in a static way. The author wanted to show that Israel's relationship with God, established at Sinai, underwent important changes due to Israel's repeated failure to obey God. What began as a covenant between God and Israel, fashioned after that of the patriarchs (the Covenant Code), had become a law code increasingly more complex (the Priestly Code) as Israel failed to obey God. Israel's propensity to follow "other gods," demonstrated in these narratives by the transgression of the golden calf, necessitated God's giving them the additional laws found in the Priestly Code.

The placement of the other law codes throughout this narrative shows further signs of the same strategy on the part of the author of the Pentateuch. The Priestly Code (Ex 25–Lev 16) is followed by the Holiness Code (Lev 17–26). The specifically unique feature of the Holiness Code is that in its introduction, and throughout its laws, the audience that it addresses is not the priests as such, but the whole of the congregation (the priests and the people). It calls them to holiness. As has long been observed, the Holiness Code is not attached directly to the Priestly Code. Between these two legal codes lies an obscure but striking account of Israel's offering sacrifices to "goat idols" (Lev 17:1–9). This short fragment of narrative is the work of the author who portrays the Israelite people as forsaking the tabernacle and sacrificing "outside the camp."

Though brief, the content of this "goat idol" narrative is remarkably similar to the incident of the golden calf. There are also literary parallels between this text and the opening sections of the other law codes—for example, the establishment of the proper place of worship (Ex 20:24–26; 25:1–26:37; Deut 12; cf. Ezek 40–48).<sup>32</sup> The people have ignored the Lord and his provisions in order to worship and follow other gods, in this case, the goat idols. Unlike the narrative of the golden calf, which places the blame on the priests, in this narrative the people are responsible for the idolatry. Thus, within the logic of the narrative, the incident of the people's sacrificing to the goat idols plays a similar role to that of the priests' involvement with the golden calf. Just as the narrative of the golden calf marked a transition in the nature of the covenant and additions to its laws, so here the incident of the goat idols marks the transition from the Priestly Code to that of the additional laws in the Holiness Code. There is an ever-increasing cycle of disobedience and the addition of more laws.

This structure divulges a strategy at a high level in the writing of the Pentateuch. The laws of the Covenant Code are part of the original covenant at Sinai (Ex 19–24). The laws of the Priestly Code, on the other hand, are associated with the "covenant renewal" after the sin of the golden calf (Ex 32–34). The laws of the Holiness Code are placed in the context of the incident of the people's offering sacrifices to the goat idols outside the camp (Lev 17) and the "covenant renewal" in Leviticus 26.<sup>33</sup>

**Summary and conclusion.** When viewed from the perspective of the Penta-

<sup>32</sup>Alfred Bertholet, *Leviticus* (KHC 3; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1901), p. 58.

<sup>33</sup>For a fuller development of this literary strategy, see Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*.

teuch's strategy of composition and treatment of the various collections of laws, the narratives present themselves as an extended treatise on the nature of the Sinai covenant. The author of the Pentateuch seems intent on showing that Israel's immediate fall into idolatry with the golden calf brought with it a fundamental shift in the nature of the Sinai covenant. At the outset of the covenant, the text portrays the nature of the covenant in much the same light as that of the religion of the patriarchs. Like Abraham, Israel was to obey God (Ex 19:5; cf. Gen 26:5), keep his covenant (Ex 19:5; cf. Gen 17:1-14), and exercise faith (Ex 19:9; cf. Gen 15:6). Although immediately agreeing to the terms of this covenant (Ex 19:8), Israel quickly proved incapable of keeping it (Ex 19:16-17). In fear, they chose Moses to stand before God while they stood "afar off" (Ex 19:18-20; 20:18-21). In response to the people's fear, God gave Israel the Decalogue, the Covenant Code and the tabernacle. As depicted in the Covenant Code, Israel's relationship with God was based on the absolute prohibition of idolatry and the simple offering of praise and sacrifice. The covenant was still much like that of the patriarchal period.

The people of Israel, however, led by the priests of the house of Aaron, fell quickly into idolatry in the incident of the golden calf. Even while the laws were still being given to Moses on Mount Sinai, Aaron the priest was making the golden calf. Hence, the covenant was broken almost before it was begun (Ex 32). The incident of the golden calf marks a decisive moment in the course of the narrative. In his grace and compassion (Ex 33), God did not cast Israel off. The covenant was renewed (Ex 34). But, in the renewal of the covenant, additional laws were given. These are represented in the remainder of the code of priestly laws (Ex 35–Lev 16). Although these laws appeared to keep the priests in check, it became apparent in the people's later sacrifices to goat idols that more laws were needed. God therefore gave them the Holiness Code (Lev 17–25) and again renewed the covenant (Lev 26).

It should be clear from the foregoing discussion that the narrative strategy outlined above is similar to that which has been read from these texts since the time of Justin Martyr and particularly that developed by Johann Coccejus in his treatment of the place of law in the "covenant of grace." It also reflects the argument of the apostle Paul that the law was added to the covenant because of the transgressions of the people (Gal 3:19).

Above all, the message of the Pentateuch is centered on God's grace. Israel continually fell short of obedience to his will. God did not cast them off. God



gave them more laws to guard them and to keep their lives pure and undefiled. The giving of the law to Israel is thus shown to be an act of God's grace. In the end, the Pentateuch makes it clear that something must be done about the human heart. The Sinai covenant was passing away. God's will had to be written on the human heart, not merely on tablets of stone. At the conclusion of the Pentateuch, therefore, Moses calls for a new heart and a new covenant. When that time came, God would "circumcise" Israel's heart so that they would "love the LORD with all [their] heart and soul" and thus would "live" (Deut 30:6). This is the same message as Jeremiah 31:31-32 and Ezekiel 36:24-28. It is also the same message as Romans 8:4, where Paul says that God acts "so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

### **A COMPOSITIONAL APPROACH TO THE OLD TESTAMENT CANON**

As noted above, an evangelical compositional approach to biblical authorship identifies Moses as the author of the Pentateuch and seeks to uncover his strategy in putting the book together. The author's intent is reflected in that strategy. In this view, the Mosaic Pentateuch is understood as the original version of the canonical Pentateuch. As far as we know, the Mosaic Pentateuch is identical with the canonical Pentateuch with only few exceptions. Those exceptions consist of parts of the Pentateuch that likely were not the work of Moses. Two notable examples are the account of the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34 and Moses' final words in Deuteronomy 33. Such comments, though possibly spoken by Moses, were added late in Israel's history, likely as part of a "new edition" of the Pentateuch ("Pentateuch 2.0," in the lingo of today's computer world). Contrary to the prevailing view of biblical authorship, both critical and evangelical, the compositional approach suggests that the Pentateuch was not the product of a long and complicated process of literary growth, but comes to us more or less as an updated edition of a single earlier Mosaic composition. The present canonical Pentateuch is thus an updated version of the Mosaic Pentateuch produced, perhaps, by the "author" of the OT as a whole (Tanak).

The grounds for dating the composition of the canonical Pentateuch so late in Israel's history lie partly in the fact that the numerous glosses and comments that have found their way into the canonical Pentateuch appear not only to be aware of an earlier, or original, Pentateuch in some need of expla-

nation (see Gen 13:10), but also share a common purpose or strategy. A notable example is the Pentateuch's interpretation of Balaam's oracles in light of events forecast in Daniel 11:30. The explanatory nature of the additional material in Balaam's early poems (Num 24:24) suggests that his words were being explained and commented on in order to bring the "Mosaic Pentateuch" up to date compositionally and theologically. These kinds of comments assume that the shape of the first Pentateuch was essentially the same as the present canonical one, although, as already mentioned, still in need of some exposition and commentary along the lines of that described in Ezra and Nehemiah 8:8 (those who understood the OT helped those who did not). The present textual locations of large, theologically dense poetic commentary in the Pentateuch (Gen 49; Num 24; Deut 33) appear to have the same shape and follow the same pattern laid down by the poems that they are intended to explain (Gen 48; Num 23; Deut 32). One set of poems, in Genesis 48, Numbers 23 and Deuteronomy 32, is explained by another set in Genesis 49, Numbers 24 and Deuteronomy 33. In a similar example from the pentateuchal narratives, the last chapter of the Pentateuch (Deut 34) is a theological commentary on the identity of the "prophet like Moses" in Deuteronomy 18 that reflects the anticipation of a temporary end to prophecy and hence a closing of the OT canon. This important commentary at the close of the canonical Pentateuch assumes that Deuteronomy 18 was part of the original Pentateuch, and that its wording was in need of some commentary on the identity of the "prophet like Moses." The comment in Deuteronomy 34 makes it clear that this prophet was to be understood as a particular individual and not merely signifying the office of prophecy in a general sense, as might be argued from Deuteronomy 18 alone. The statement that "the prophet like Moses never came" (Deut 34:10) clarifies the understanding that Deuteronomy 18 speaks of an individual prophet yet to come. Such explanatory comments within the seams that shape the Tanak reflect the same understanding of Deuteronomy 18 as in some NT texts (e.g., Acts 3:22; 7:37). Not only does the last chapter in the Pentateuch record the death of Moses and his burial, but also it makes the sweeping statement that "no prophet like Moses ever arose again" in Israel. The scope of such a comment divulges the viewpoint of one who knows Israel's history from its beginning to its end. It is the view of one for whom the whole array of Israel's prophets have come and gone, each having been disqualified as being a "prophet like Moses." It is, then, the

viewpoint of one who knows Scripture from beginning to end and is intent on interpreting Scripture from that perspective. It is the viewpoint of one who sees a genuine continuity between the ancient (Mosaic) Pentateuch and its canonical final form (*Endgestalt*). The shape and the compositional strategy of the Mosaic Pentateuch are preserved by its canonical commentary.<sup>34</sup> Who better to interpret Scripture by Scripture than an “author” of Scripture in its entirety (the OT canon)?

Essential to the compositional approach is its view of the relationship of the individual comments within the Pentateuch to the Pentateuch as a whole. Those comments are not random bits of data intended to clarify isolated features of the text. On the contrary, such comments can be correlated with other similar comments and linked to the central themes and compositional strategies of the Pentateuch. As such, these comments appear to be the work of a single author.<sup>35</sup> He is one who knows thoroughly the shape and strategy of the Mosaic Pentateuch as well as the theology that emerges from that strategy. These numerous comments suggest that the canonical Pentateuch did not originate in a gradual process of redaction or literary expansion. They are, instead, evidence of intelligent design behind the whole of its present shape, and they appear to have originated during a single period as an intentional and sympathetic “retrofit” of the original Mosaic Pentateuch. It was a remake in the sense that it preserved the original Pentateuch by retrofitting it within the broader context of the rest of Scripture as the Tanak.

The account of the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34:5 can be understood in light of this stage of composition. At the time of the composition of the Mosaic Pentateuch, there were no other biblical texts. In a canonical sense, the Mosaic Pentateuch was all there was of Scripture. It was meant to be read alone, within its own context. By the time of “Pentateuch 2.0,” most, if not all, of the canonical Scriptures were complete. They would have included the literary productions of the prophetic scribes and the sages. Also by that time, the gathering and shaping of the various books of Scripture into a canonical whole was clearly well underway. We know from reading the prophetic (and wisdom) books not only that their authors were well versed in the Mosaic Pentateuch as a literary text, but also that the compositional seams of

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<sup>34</sup>See Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, pp. 239–52.

<sup>35</sup>I do not have in mind here the obvious comments about something that still exists “until this day,” which led some to conclude that the Pentateuch left few signs of its compositional origins.

books such as Proverbs often were modeled after and built on the compositional seams of the Pentateuch. The introductory words about Agur in Proverbs 30:1-2 clearly are linked to Balaam's introduction in Numbers 24:3. Prophecy becomes wisdom (Hos 14:9) until the return of a future prophet—a common theme along the seams of the OT canon (cf. Num 27:18 with Deut 34:9; Is 2:1-4). Most of these early canonical books themselves had grown out of the close study of the Mosaic Pentateuch and represented an ongoing attempt of these prophetic authors to apply its lessons to the changing situations in their day. The purpose of this prophetic and wisdom retrofit of the Mosaic Pentateuch was to preserve the original Mosaic Pentateuch by recasting and positioning it within the growing body of scriptural literature (books) that was to become the canonical OT. The final canonical Pentateuch thus was a major step toward the formation of the whole OT canon (Tanak).

The canonical Pentateuch concludes with Deuteronomy 34:5-12, the notice of the death and burial of Moses. In the Hebrew canon Deuteronomy 34 serves as a canonical link to the book of Joshua and the Former Prophets. It is likely that the new canonical edition of the Pentateuch was the work of one or more of the prophetic authors of the rest of Scripture. Hendrik Koorevaar, among others, argues that the author of Chronicles, the final book in many versions of the OT canon (Tanak), was also the “author” of the OT canon.<sup>36</sup> In Deuteronomy 33:4 Moses the prophet (Deut 34:10) is credited with giving God's commandments to Israel, just as Ezra 9:10-11 credits the prophets with carrying out the same task. The work of this anonymous prophetic author might well be similar to that of the Chronicler, who also recasts and retrofits Samuel and Kings within a more recent biblical theological context.

In its view of the shaping of the Mosaic Pentateuch, the compositional approach does not differ significantly from the classical evangelical view. It sees an original Mosaic Pentateuch with several important post-Mosaic additions. Where the compositional view does differ from the classical view is in its attempt to point to meaningful interrelationships between the Mosaic (1.0 version) and the canonical Pentateuch (2.0 version). The present canonical Pentateuch is the same Pentateuch as the Mosaic one, though it is a more recent edition of that Pentateuch and has been refitted (retrofitted) with new “prophetic extras” designed with its new canonical environment in mind. The

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<sup>36</sup>Hendrik J. Koorevaar, “Die Chronik als intendierter Abschluss des alttestamentlichen Kanons,” *JETH* 11 (1997): 42-76.

new Pentateuch interfaces with the rest of the OT canon. It is intertextual and now has connectivity with the whole of Scripture. Much had happened since the first edition of the Pentateuch was written, and this new edition intends to bring its readers into the conversation and in touch with the future of God's work with Israel and the nations. For the most part, the new edition replicates the original Mosaic Pentateuch, but it has a wider screen. Rather than reading the Pentateuch from the viewpoint of the beginning of Israel's history, as no doubt was intended in the original Mosaic Pentateuch, the new edition looks at the Pentateuch from the perspective of the end of Israel's history and God's further work with Israel and the nations. The "beginning times" have become a prophetic symbol of the "end times." This new context is a reflection of the viewpoint of both the biblical prophets and the sages who came at the close of Israel's history. In that sense, the canonical Pentateuch is a prophetic rewrite of the Mosaic Pentateuch.

The value of a compositional approach to the OT canon is that it takes seriously the statements within the Bible regarding Moses as the author of a book (e.g., Josh 1:8) and at the same time acknowledges that the canonical Pentateuch contains material and insights from a time much later than Moses.

The well-known examples of post-Mosaica in the Pentateuch are evidence of the new viewpoint of the canonical Pentateuch. The death of Moses and the list of "kings who reigned in Edom" (Gen 36:31) are recounted in the canonical Pentateuch without a hint of a sense of anachronism. That is because the late viewpoint of the present Pentateuch is itself part of its compositional strategy. As I have suggested, the canonical Pentateuch sees itself within the context of the end of Israel's history and the beginning of God's work with the nations. It intends to be a comprehensive overview of the whole of history, not just its beginnings under Moses at Sinai. Thanks to the author of the book of Daniel and the prologue provided by Genesis 1–11, the Sinai covenant and its laws are now viewed within the scope of the history of the world and all of creation. The "rest of the story" is more than a rerun of the Mosaic Pentateuch; it is a reflective memoir of the life of Moses and an honest critique of Israel's common humanity with Adam. To be sure, this "new" evaluation of Moses and Sinai was itself drawn from the prophetic Scriptures that had taken their place alongside the Mosaic Pentateuch as its interpreters. Those prophetic Scriptures themselves were a product of the Mosaic Pentateuch. They were the work of nameless prophets who had read and studied

the Mosaic Scriptures (e.g., Josh 1:8) and were very much aware of their continuing relevance.

To have ignored this “effective history” of the Pentateuch and have kept only the immediate perspective of the Mosaic Pentateuch, which focused on the Sinai covenant and not also the new covenant, would have meant a continual rereading of the canonical Pentateuch solely within the context of the original covenant at Sinai. It would have been a “planned obsolescence” for the Pentateuch as Scripture and would thereby have been destined for the hermeneutical chop shop.

In light of the increasingly pessimistic viewpoint of the prophets regarding the Sinai covenant, merely restating the originally positive aspects of that covenant would have unnecessarily isolated it from the rest of Israel’s history and from the prophetic Scriptures’ own inspired evaluation of that history. It would have been unnecessary because the Mosaic Pentateuch already contained the seeds of the prophet’s pessimism regarding Sinai.<sup>37</sup> In addition, such a restatement would have permanently linked the Pentateuch to the Sinai covenant and suggested its eventual obsolescence with the passing of that covenant. As it now stands, the present canonical Pentateuch is not, and should not, without further reflection, be identified with the Sinai covenant (cf. Deut 29:1). On the contrary, the present Pentateuch cast itself as a revisiting of that covenant and a consequent reevaluation of it in light of the prophetic hope of a new covenant (Jer 31:31). Although the hope for a new covenant was already an essential part of the Mosaic Pentateuch (Deut 30:6), without a reading of the Pentateuch within the context of the message of the prophets and the new covenant, there remained a clear and present danger of that message not being heard. As Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 8 make clear, the Pentateuch continues to stand in need of interpretation by “those who understand it.” Even the prophetic literature recognized a need for the clarification and explanation of their message (see Dan 9). It is here we should place the author of the book of Hebrews, who in the same way uses the OT Scriptures (Jer 31) as a critique of the “old covenant” and as the basis of his hope for a future grounded in the “new covenant” (e.g., Heb 8:13).<sup>38</sup>

***Moses and the prophets.*** The compositional approach explains the appearance of the prophets and their message not by assuming that they were reli-

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<sup>37</sup>Compare the response to the Pentateuch in 2 Kings 22.

<sup>38</sup>Paul also does this in Romans 10.

gious geniuses,<sup>39</sup> but simply by noting that they had been, as Joshua 1:8 urges, reading the Mosaic Pentateuch “day and night” and were feeling God’s call on their lives from within its perspective of hope and divine grace.

An important additional feature of a compositional approach to the Pentateuch and the OT canon is its attempt to describe the theological payoff of the Pentateuch’s composition within Israel’s subsequent history and to attempt to locate it within the larger parameters of the book as such. It also differs, as I have suggested, in its view of the nature of the canonical Pentateuch. The present canonical Pentateuch is the same book as the Mosaic Pentateuch in the sense that it is a preservation of that original Pentateuch within the context of Scripture and canon. This means that in the canonical Pentateuch we are invited to read the Mosaic Pentateuch within its own effective history, or as Geiger would put it, within its own internal development (*Entwicklung*) within Ur-Judaism and/or Ur-Christianity.<sup>40</sup> There are not two Pentateuchs in the HB, the one Mosaic, the other canonical.<sup>41</sup> There is only one, the canonical Pentateuch. In the OT canon the Mosaic Pentateuch has become the canonical Pentateuch. The OT canon does not aim merely to provide us with a Mosaic Pentateuch to satisfy our historical curiosity. The canonical Pentateuch is the Mosaic Pentateuch to the extent that it is by means of the canonical Pentateuch that the original Mosaic Pentateuch has been preserved and interpreted for us.

***How did Moses “make” the Pentateuch?*** As I described it earlier, the nature of the composition of the Pentateuch is similar to that of the books of Samuel and Kings, as well as the Gospels. Moses used written texts that he gathered from various sources and provided them with commentary, much like a modern producer of a film documentary.

Some aspects of the compositional approach’s view of the making of the Pentateuch are similar to the views of earlier evangelical scholars Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown in their commentary on the OT (ca. 1863). They say in their discussion of the Pentateuch, “It may be conceded that . . . Moses would and did avail himself of existing records which were of reliable authority; . . . he interwove them into his narrative conform-

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<sup>39</sup>The view of Wellhausen and Kuenen.

<sup>40</sup>Abraham Geiger, *Urschrift und Übersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer Abhängigkeit von der innern Entwicklung des Judentums* (Breslau: Julius Hainauer, 1857).

<sup>41</sup>As there are two histories of Samuel–Kings and Chronicles.

ably with the unity of design which so manifestly pervades the entire Pentateuch.<sup>42</sup> The compositional view is specifically stated in Louis Gaussen's remarkably lucid comment on biblical authorship: "Whether [the biblical authors] describe their own emotions, or relate what they remember, or repeat contemporary narratives, or copy over genealogies, or make extracts from uninspired documents—their writing is inspired, their narratives are directed from above."<sup>43</sup>

This way of framing the question of authorship represents the widely held evangelical view from as early as the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Campegius Vitringa describes, almost in modern terms, Moses' procedure in making the Pentateuch. According to Vitringa, Moses collected various written documents, sorted them, and prepared them for use by filling in missing details and sections from other documents. These he then "made" (*confecisse* [*conficio*]) into the Pentateuch. It was, he suggests, a process of "collecting, sorting, preparing, and, where they are lacking, filling out and making from them the first of his books."<sup>44</sup>

In a compositional view, passages such as Deuteronomy 34 are considered important additions to the Mosaic Pentateuch. They provide vital clues to how authors at the end of the biblical period (ca. 300 B.C.) understood the Pentateuch. The addition of such formative parts of the Pentateuch was not an afterthought. On the contrary, it was part of the larger compositional strategy that embraced the whole of the OT canon (Tanak). To understand the theology of the Pentateuch, one does well to pay close attention to that strategy. The canonical composition of the Pentateuch (*Endgestalt*) was

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<sup>42</sup>Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Old and New Testaments*, 1:xxxii.

<sup>43</sup>Louis Gaussen, *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, trans. David D. Scott (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971), p. 25.

<sup>44</sup>"Has vero schedas & scrinia patrum, apud Israelitas conservata, Mosen opinamur collegisse, digessisse, ornasse, &, ubi deficiebant, compleesse, atque ex iis primum librorum suorum confecisse" (Campegius Vitringa, *Sacrarum observationum libri quatuor* [Franeker, 1700], p. 35). Note Fausset's veiled citation of Vitringa's view of Mosaic authorship: "arranging, abridging, selecting, and adapting them to his purpose" (Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Old and New Testaments*, 1:xxxi). Since the rise of biblical and historical criticism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the conservative position has, understandably, shied away from talking about "sources" or "written records." But, if pressed, this remains the view of most American evangelical OT scholars today. The only variation on this is that many hold that the "sources" available to Moses were not yet written. Moses relied on oral tradition. This not only fails to deal adequately with the realities of the text itself, but also introduces an unnecessary level of uncertainty into the process. Where would we be today in NT studies if we believed that the Gospels were written from "oral sources"? See Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, p. 274.



shaped by, and grounded in, a developed messianic hope already embodied in the Mosaic Pentateuch at a “grassroots” level. Not only do the comments about a future prophet in Deuteronomy 34 reflect on and interpret Deuteronomy 18, but also they are echoed by the same kind of comments lying along the seams of the Tanak as a whole. Those seams are found in Joshua 1; Malachi 4 (3 in HB); Psalms 1–2; 2 Chronicles 36.<sup>45</sup>

Such textual features suggest that during the pre-Christian period there was already considerable discussion about the meaning of the whole of the HB (Tanak). Judging from the kind of theologically motivated themes we find expressed in these canonical seams, we may conclude that those discussions often turned on the question of the messianic and biblical theological import of crucial parts of the HB.<sup>46</sup>

In this introduction I have sought to show the new directions open to an evangelical approach to the OT as Scripture and to sketch out what such an approach might look like. The rest of the book follows this same line of argument with considerably more discussion. This introduction is intended to help readers find their way through the book.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>An additional element of this (compositional) approach is its sensitivity to the layers of “postbiblical” (and therefore secondary and uninspired) interpretation that accompanied and many times found its way into the Tanak itself. Here I have in mind the version of the HB that lies behind the earliest editions of the OT, such as the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the LXX, the Hebrew texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and some parts of the MT (e.g., Jeremiah).

<sup>46</sup>For example, is Numbers 24:7 about Agag or Gog (see *BHS* apparatus ad loc.; cf. Ezek 38:17-18; see also, in chap. 2 below, “The Coming Eschatological King”), and is the “anointed one” of 2 Samuel 23:1-7 David or the Messiah (see Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, p. 221)?

<sup>47</sup>Regarding the use of foreign languages and quotations in this book: (1) all quotations in the body of the book are given in English; (2) quotations in the footnotes are given in English if the point being made is essential to the argument; (3) quotations from rare and hard-to-find books are in their original language.