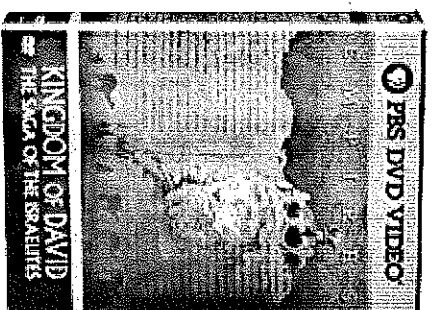


## QUESTIONS [2-2.5 pages, 20 points]:

Based on reading this packet & watching the documentary clips [Kingdom of David], respond to the following:



### 1) Evaluate & explain:

“No one can possibly hope to arrive at a correct estimate of the Bible and a correct interpretation of it who is ignorant . . . of its history, of how and why it came about.”

### 2) Evaluate & explain:

“The *theology* expressed in the scriptures . . . is one thing, and the *history* of ancient Israel and early Christianity which can be written from the evidence of the scriptures is another.”

### 3) Evaluate & explain:

“It’s not important to know who wrote the Bible or when they wrote it. Besides, it’s obvious that Moses wrote the first five books (i.e., Torah or Pentateuch) anyway.”

### 4) Evaluate (agree or disagree):

“Either the bible is **factual** and **historically true exactly** as it is written or it is just made-up **fictional stories with no basis** in reality, there are **no other alternatives.**”

## The Bible: Interpretation & History

**No one can possibly hope to arrive at a correct estimate of the Bible and a correct interpretation of it who is ignorant . . . of its history;** who does not know that for centuries no one has seen an original manuscript of the text, that for centuries the only method of multiplying copies was by handwriting with all the opportunities this offered for the introduction of errors and additions, or the dropping out or insertion of words and phrases, either wilfully or by accident or carelessness; who does not know that the biblical texts we now possess have come down to us by translation and retranslation with inevitable introduction of changes and errors by the translators; who is not familiar with the common custom of copyists of adding marginal comments which in subsequent copyings became incorporated as an integral part of the text; who is not somewhat familiar with the folklore and legends of different ancient peoples so that he may detect these or versions of them in the literature in antiquity; who does not know that high standards of accuracy as to fact in the writing of history and science are comparatively modern, so that **ancient writings are to be judged in accordance with the general conceptions and standards of the age in which they were written, and not by modern standards.** These are only a few illustrations of the circumstances that make a literary criticism of the Bible an absolute necessity if we are sincerely desirous of arriving at a true understanding of the book. We see that the present biblical text itself is a product of evolution, that it has come down to us through a multitude of gradual changes and survivals. . . .

It is important for our purpose to note how insidiously or unconsciously ideas often become a part of one's mental stock in trade. . . . As a result, it often becomes difficult in maturer years to substitute for the earlier and cruder notions more rational conceptions. For example . . . many of us . . . have visualized God as a sort of super-man, with a long flowing beard, hand upraised, and seated on a throne precariously supported in the clouds. . . .

Many devoutly religious people also hold ideas which they think are taught in the Bible, but which were, in reality, first taught in later church literature, especially that embodying the transactions of church councils. . . .

The lesson to be learned by those who wish to know *how* to think about the relation between science and religion is that, in matters where correct ideas are of vital importance, one ought carefully to analyze the probable sources of his ideas and beliefs in order to know whether they have a rational basis. . . . **After such an analysis one often finds that what he thought he thought means that he had not really *thought* at all—that he had only been entertaining an idea whose validity he had never examined.** [pp. 73-76]

Excerpts from *The Relation Between Science and Theology: How to Think About It* (1925)  
By C. Stuart Gager

Richard E. Friedman  
(1987)

## INTRODUCTION

### *Who Wrote the Bible?*

PEOPLE have been reading the Bible for nearly two thousand years. They have taken it literally, figuratively, or symbolically. They have regarded it as divinely dictated, revealed, or inspired, or as a human creation. They have acquired more copies of it than of any other book. It is quoted (and misquoted) more often than other books. It is translated (and mistranslated) more than the others as well. It is called a great work of literature, the first work of history. It is at the heart of Christianity and Judaism. Ministers, priests, and rabbis preach it. Scholars spend their lives studying and teaching it in universities and seminaries. People read it, study it, admire it, disdain it, write about it, argue about it, and love it. People have lived by it and died for it. And we do not know who wrote it.

It is a strange fact that we have never known with certainty who produced the book that has played such a central role in our civilization. There are traditions concerning who wrote each of the biblical books—the Five Books of Moses are supposed to be by Moses, the book of Lamentations by the prophet Jeremiah, half of the Psalms by King David—but how is one to know if these traditional ascriptions are correct?

Investigators have been working on the solution to this mystery for nearly a thousand years, and particularly in the last two centuries they have made extraordinary discoveries. Some of these discoveries challenge traditional beliefs. Still, this investigation did not develop as a controversy of religion versus science or religion versus the secular. On the contrary, most of the investigators were trained in religious traditions and knew the Bible as well as those who accepted only the traditional answers. Indeed, from the outset to the present day, a significant proportion of critical biblical scholars, perhaps the majority, have been, at the same time, members of the clergy. Rather, the effort to discover who wrote the Bible began and con-

tinued because the answer had significant implications for both the traditional and the critical study of the Bible.

It was the Bible, after all. Its influence on Western civilization—and subsequently on Eastern civilization—has been so pervasive that it has hardly been possible to recognize its impact, much less to accept its authority, without caring from where it came. If we think that the Bible is a great work of literature, then who were the artists? If we think of it as a source to be examined in the study of history, then whose reports are we examining? Who wrote its laws? Who fashioned the book out of a diverse collection of stories, poetry, and laws into a single work? If we encounter an author when we read a work, to whatever degree and be it fiction or nonfiction, then whom do we encounter when we read the Bible?

For most readers, it makes a difference, whether their interest in the book is religious, moral, literary, or historical. When a book is studied in a high school or university class, one usually learns something of the author's life, and generally this contributes to the understanding of the book. Apart from fairly advanced theoretical literary considerations, most readers seem to find it significant to be able to see connections between the author's life and the world that the author depicts in his or her work. In the case of fiction, most would find it relevant that Dostoyevsky was Russian, was of the nineteenth century, was an orthodox Christian of originally revolutionary opinions, and was epileptic and that epilepsy figures in important ways in *The Idiot* and in *The Brothers Karamazov*; or that Dashiell Hammett was a detective; or that George Eliot was a woman. Similarly in nonfiction, there appears to be no limit to the fascination people have with Freud the man and the degree to which his own experience is reflected in his writings; or with Nietzsche, where everything from his insanity to his relationship with Lou Salomé to his sometimes uncanny bond with Dostoyevsky figures in readings of his works.

The more obvious this seems, the more striking is the fact that this information has been largely lacking in the case of the Bible. Often the text cannot be understood without it. Did the author of a particular biblical story live in the eighth century B.C. or the fifth?—and thus when the author uses a particular expression do we understand it according to what it meant in the eighth century or the fifth? Did the author witness the events in the story? If not, how did the author come to have an idea of what happened? Was it through

written sources, old family stories, divine revelation, completely fictional composition, or some other means? How much did the events of the author's own day affect the way in which the author told the story? Did the author write the work with the intent that it should become a sacred, authoritative text?

Such questions are important to understanding what the text meant in the biblical world itself. But they also offer an opportunity for producing a new and richer understanding of the book today, for both the religious and the nonreligious reader, once we come to know the persons and forces that produced it.

## The Five Books of Moses

It is one of the oldest puzzles in the world. Investigators have been wrestling with it practically since the Bible was completed. As it happens, it did not start as an investigation into the authorship of the Bible. It simply began with individuals raising questions about problems that they observed in the biblical text itself. It proceeded like a detective story spread across centuries, with investigators uncovering clues to the Bible's origin one by one.

It began with questions about the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. These books are known as the Pentateuch (from Greek, meaning "five scrolls") or the Torah (from Hebrew, meaning "instruction"). They are also known as the Five Books of Moses. Moses is the major figure through most of these books, and early Jewish and Christian tradition held that Moses himself wrote them, though nowhere in the Five Books of Moses themselves does the text say that he was the author.<sup>1</sup> But the tradition that one person, Moses, alone wrote these books presented problems. People observed contradictions in the text. It would report events in a particular order, and later it would say that those same events happened in a different order. It would say that there were two of something, and elsewhere it would say that there were fourteen of that same thing. It would say that the Moabites did something, and later it would say that it was the Mi-

dianites who did it. It would describe Moses as going to a Tabernacle in a chapter before Moses builds the Tabernacle.

People also noticed that the Five Books of Moses included things that Moses could not have known or was not likely to have said. The text, after all, gave an account of Moses' death. It also said that Moses was the humblest man on earth; and normally one would not expect the humblest man on earth to point out that he is the humblest man on earth.

At first the arguments of those who questioned Mosaic authorship were rejected. In the third century A.D. the Christian scholar Origen responded to those who raised objections to the unity and Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The rabbis of the centuries that followed the completion of the Hebrew Bible (also known as the Old Testament or the Holy Scriptures) likewise explained the problems and contradictions within the boundaries of the tradition: contradictions were only apparent contradictions. They could be explained through interpretation—often very elaborate interpretation—or through the introduction of additional narrative details that did not appear in the biblical text. As for Moses' references to things that should have been unknown to him, they were explained as owing to the fact that Moses was a prophet. These tradition-oriented responses to the problems in the text prevailed into medieval times. The medieval biblical commentators, such as Rashi in France and Nachmanides in Spain, were especially skillful at seeking explanations to reconcile each of the contradictions. But, also in the medieval period, investigators began to give a new kind of answer to the old questions.

## Six Hundred Years of Investigation

At the first stage, investigators still accepted the tradition that Moses wrote the Five Books, but they suggested that a few lines were added here or there. In the eleventh century, Isaac ibn Yashush, a Jewish court physician of a ruler in Muslim Spain, pointed out that a list of Edomite kings that appears in Genesis 36 named kings who lived long after Moses was dead. Ibn Yashush suggested that the list

was written by someone who lived after Moses. The response to his conclusion was that he was called "Isaac the blunderer."

The man who labeled him Isaac the blunderer was Abraham ibn Ezra, a twelfth-century Spanish rabbi. Ibn Ezra added, "His book deserves to be burned." But, ironically, ibn Ezra himself included several enigmatic comments in his own writings that hint that he had doubts of his own. He alluded to several biblical passages that appeared not to be from Moses' own hand: passages that referred to Moses in the third person, used terms that Moses would not have known, described places where Moses had never been, and used language that reflected another time and locale from those of Moses. Nonetheless, ibn Ezra apparently was not willing to say outright that Moses was not the author of the Five Books. He simply wrote, "And if you understand, then you will recognize the truth." And in another reference to one of these contradictory passages, he wrote, "And he who understands will keep silent."

In the fourteenth century, in Damascus, the scholar Bonfils accepted ibn Ezra's evidence but not his advice to keep silent. Referring to the difficult passages, Bonfils wrote explicitly, "And this is evidence that this verse was written in the Torah later, and Moses did not write it; rather one of the later prophets wrote it." Bonfils was not denying the revealed character of the text. He still thought that the passages in question were written by "one of the later prophets." He was only concluding that they were not written by Moses. Still, three and a half centuries later, his work was reprinted with the references to this subject deleted.

In the fifteenth century, Tostatus, bishop of Avila, also stated that certain passages, notably the account of Moses' death, could not have been written by Moses. There was an old tradition that Moses' successor Joshua wrote this account. But in the sixteenth century, Carlstadt, a contemporary of Luther, commented that the account of Moses' death is written in the same style as texts that precede it. This makes it difficult to claim that Joshua or anyone else merely added a few lines to an otherwise Mosaic manuscript. It also raises further questions about what exactly was Mosaic and what was added by someone else.

In a second stage of the process, investigators suggested that Moses wrote the Five Books but that editors went over them later, adding an occasional word or phrase of their own. In the sixteenth century, Andreas van Maes, who was a Flemish Catholic, and two

Jesuit scholars, Benedict Pereira and Jacques Bonfrere, thus pictured an original text from the hand of Moses upon which later writers expanded. Van Maes suggested that a later editor inserted phrases or changed the name of a place to its more current name so that readers would understand it better. Van Maes' book was placed on the Catholic Index of Prohibited Books.

In the third stage of the investigation, investigators concluded outright that Moses did not write the majority of the Pentateuch. The first to say it was the British philosopher Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century. Hobbes collected numerous cases of facts and statements through the course of the Five Books that were inconsistent with Mosaic authorship. For example, the text sometimes states that something is the case "to this day." "To this day" is not the phrase of someone describing a contemporary situation. It is rather the phrase of a later writer who is describing something that has endured.

Four years later, Isaac de la Peyrère, a French Calvinist, also wrote explicitly that Moses was not the author of the first books of the Bible. He, too, noted problems running through the text, including, for example, the words "across the Jordan" in the first verse of Deuteronomy. That verse says, "These are the words that Moses spoke to the children of Israel across the Jordan. . . ." The problem with the phrase "across the Jordan" is that it refers to someone who is on the other side of the Jordan river from the writer. The verse thus appears to be the words of someone in Israel, west of the Jordan, referring to what Moses did on the east side of the Jordan. But Moses himself was never supposed to have been in Israel in his life. De la Peyrère's book was banned and burned. He was arrested and informed that in order to be released he would have to become Catholic and recant his views to the Pope. He did.

About the same time, in Holland, the philosopher Spinoza published a unified critical analysis, likewise demonstrating that the problematic passages were not a few isolated cases that could be explained away one by one. Rather, they were pervasive through the entire Five Books of Moses. There were the third-person accounts of Moses, the statements that Moses was unlikely to have made (e.g., "humblest man on earth"), the report of Moses' death, the expression "to this day," the references to geographical locales by names that they acquired after Moses' lifetime, the treatment of matters that were subsequent to Moses (e.g., the list of Edomite kings), and

various contradictions and problems in the text of the sort that earlier investigators had observed. He also noted that the text says in Deuteronomy 34, "There never arose another prophet in Israel like Moses. . . ." Spinoza remarked that these sound like the words of someone who lived a long time after Moses and had the opportunity to see other prophets and thus make the comparison. (They also do not sound like the words of the humblest man on earth.) Spinoza wrote, "It is . . . clearer than the sun at noon that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but by someone who lived long after Moses." Spinoza had been excommunicated from Judaism. Now his work was condemned by Catholics and Protestants as well. His book was placed on the Catholic Index, within six years thirty-seven edicts were issued against it, and an attempt was made on his life.

A short time later, in France, Richard Simon, a convert from Protestantism who had become a Catholic priest, wrote a work that he intended to be critical of Spinoza. He said that the core of the Pentateuch (the laws) was Mosaic but that there were some additions. The additions, he said, were by scribes who collected, arranged, and elaborated upon the old texts. These scribes, according to Simon, were prophets, guided by the divine spirit, and so he regarded his work as a defense of the sanctity of the biblical text. His contemporaries, however, apparently were not ready for a work that said that any part of the Five Books was not Mosaic. Simon was attacked by other Catholic clergy and expelled from his order. His books were placed on the Index. Forty refutations of his work were written by Protestants. Of the thirteen hundred copies printed of his book, all but six were burned. An English version of the book came out, translated by John Hampden, but Hampden later recanted. The understated report by the scholar Edward Gray in his account of the events tells it best: Hampden "repudiated the opinions he had held in common with Simon . . . in 1688, probably shortly before his release from the tower."

## The Sources

Simon's idea that the biblical writers had assembled their narrative out of old sources at their disposal was an important step on the way to discovering who wrote the Bible. Any competent historian knows the importance of sources in writing an ongoing narrative of events. The hypothesis that the Five Books of Moses were the result of such a combining of several older sources by different authors was exceptionally important because it prepared the way to deal with a new item of evidence that was developed by three investigators in the following century: the doublet.

A doublet is a case of the same story being told twice. Even in translation it is easy to observe that biblical stories often appear with variations of detail in two different places in the Bible. There are two different stories of the creation of the world. There are two stories of the covenant between God and the patriarch Abraham, two stories of the naming of Abraham's son Isaac, two stories of Abraham's claiming to a foreign king that his wife Sarah is his sister, two stories of Isaac's son Jacob making a journey to Mesopotamia, two stories of a revelation to Jacob at Beth-El, two stories of God's changing Jacob's name to Israel, two stories of Moses' getting water from a rock at a place called Meribah, and more.

Those who defended the traditional belief in Mosaic authorship argued that the doublets were always complementary, not repetitive, and that they did not contradict each other, but came to teach us a lesson by their "apparent" contradiction. But another clue was discovered that undermined this traditional response. Investigators found that in most cases one of the two versions of a doublet story would refer to the deity by the divine name, Yahweh (formerly mispronounced Jehovah), and the other version of the story would refer to the deity simply as "God." That is, the doublets lined up into two groups of parallel versions of stories. Each group was almost always consistent about the name of the deity that it used. Moreover, the investigators found that it was not only the names of the deity that lined up. They found various other terms and characteristics that

regularly appeared in one or the other group. This tended to support the hypothesis that someone had taken two different old source documents, cut them up, and woven them together to form the continuous story in the Five Books of Moses.

And so the next stage of the investigation was the process of separating the strands of the two old source documents. In the eighteenth century, three independent investigators arrived at similar conclusions based on such studies: a German minister (H. B. Witter), a French medical doctor (Jean Astruc), and a German professor (J. G. Eichhorn). At first it was thought that one of the two versions of the stories in the book of Genesis was an ancient text that Moses used as a source and that the other version of the stories was Moses' own writing, describing these things in his own words. Later, it was thought that both versions of the stories were old source documents that Moses had used in fashioning his work. But ultimately it was concluded that both of the two sources had to be from writers who lived after Moses. Each step of the process was attributing less and less to Moses himself.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the two-source hypothesis was expanded. Scholars found evidence that there were not two major source documents in the Pentateuch after all—there were four! Two scholars found that in the first four books of the Bible there were not only doublets, but a number of triplets of stories. This converged with other evidence, involving contradictions and characteristic language, that persuaded them that they had found another source within the Pentateuch. And then a young German scholar, W. M. L. De Wette, observed in his doctoral dissertation that the fifth of the Five Books of Moses, the book of Deuteronomy, was strikingly different in its language from the four books that preceded it. None of the three old source documents appeared to continue into this book. De Wette hypothesized that Deuteronomy was a separate, fourth source.

Thus from the work of a great many persons, and at personal cost for some of them, the mystery of the Bible's origins had come to be addressed openly, and a working hypothesis had been formed. It was a remarkable stage in the Bible's history. Scholars could open the book of Genesis and identify the writing of two or even three authors on the same page. And there was also the work of the editor, the person who had cut up and combined the source documents into a single story; and so as many as four different persons could have

contributed to producing a single page of the Bible. Investigators were now able to see that a puzzle existed and what the basic character of the puzzle was. But they still did not know who the authors of any of the four old source documents were, when they lived, or why they wrote. And they had no idea who the mysterious editor was who had combined them, nor did they have any idea why this person had combined them in this complex way.

## The Hypothesis

To state it as succinctly as possible, the puzzle was as follows:

There was evidence that the Five Books of Moses had been composed by combining four different source documents into one continuous history. For working purposes, the four documents were identified by alphabetic symbols. The document that was associated with the divine name Yahweh/Jehovah was called J. The document that was identified as referring to the deity as God (in Hebrew, Elohim) was called E. The third document, by far the largest, included most of the legal sections and concentrated a great deal on matters having to do with priests, and so it was called P. And the source that was found only in the book of Deuteronomy was called D. The question was how to uncover the history of these four documents—not only who wrote them, but why four different versions of the story were written, what their relationship to each other was, whether any of the authors were aware of the existence of the others' texts, when in history each was produced, how they were preserved and combined, and a host of other questions.

The first step was to try to determine the relative order in which they were written. The idea was to try to see if each version reflected a particular stage in the development of religion in biblical Israel. This approach reflected the influence in nineteenth-century Germany of Hegelian notions of historical development of civilization. Two nineteenth-century figures stand out. They approached the problem in very different ways, but they arrived at complementary findings. One of them, Karl Heinrich Graf, worked on deducing from references in the various biblical texts which of the texts logi-

cally must have preceded or followed others. The other investigator, Wilhelm Vatke, sought to trace the history of the development of ancient Israelite religion by examining texts for clues as to whether they reflected early or late stages of the religion.

Graf concluded that the J and E documents were the oldest versions of the biblical stories, for they (and other early biblical writings) were unaware of matters that were treated in other documents. D was later than J and E, for it showed acquaintance with developments in a later period of history. And P, the priestly version of the story, was the latest of all, for it referred to a variety of matters that were unknown in all of the earlier portions of the Bible such as the books of the prophets. Vatke meanwhile concluded that J and E reflected a very early stage in the development of Israelite religion, when it was essentially a nature/fertility religion. He concluded that D reflected a middle stage of religious development, when the faith of Israel was a spiritual/ethical religion; in short, the age of the great Israelite prophets. And he regarded the P document as reflecting the latest stage of Israelite religion, the stage of priestly religion, based on priests, sacrifices, ritual, and law.

Vatke's attempt to reconstruct the development of the religion of Israel and Graf's attempt to reconstruct the development of the sources of the Pentateuch pointed in the same direction. Namely, the great majority of the laws and much of the narrative of the Pentateuch were not a part of life in the days of Moses—much less were they written by Moses—nor even of life in the days of the kings and prophets of Israel. Rather, they were written by someone who lived toward the end of the biblical period.

There were a variety of responses to this idea. The negative responses came from both traditional and critical scholars. Even De Wette, who had identified the D source, would not accept the idea that so much of the law was so late. He said that this view "suspended the beginnings of Hebrew history not upon the grand creations of Moses, but upon airy nothings." And traditional scholars pointed out that this view pictured biblical Israel as a nation not governed by law for its first six centuries. Graf's and Vatke's ideas, nonetheless, came to dominate the field of biblical studies for a hundred years primarily because of the work of one man: Wellhausen.

Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) stands out as a powerful figure in the investigation into the authorship of the Bible and in the history

of biblical scholarship in general. It is difficult to pinpoint any one person as the "founder," "father," or "first to" of this enterprise, because a number of persons made contributions that brought the search to some new stage. Indeed, books and articles on the field of biblical scholarship attribute these titles variously to Hobbes, Spinoza, Simon, Astruc, Eichhorn, Graf, or Wellhausen. Wellhausen himself applies such a term to De Wette. But Wellhausen occupies a special place in the history of this enterprise. His contribution does not so much constitute a beginning as a culmination in that history. Much of what Wellhausen had to say was taken from those who preceded him, but Wellhausen's contribution was to bring all of these components together, along with considerable research and argumentation of his own, into a clear, organized synthesis.

Wellhausen accepted Vatke's picture of the religion of Israel as having developed in three stages, and he accepted Graf's picture of the documents as having been written in three distinct periods. He then simply put the two pictures together. He examined the biblical stories and laws that appear in J and E, and he argued that they reflected the way of life of the nature/fertility stage of religion. He argued that the stories and laws of Deuteronomy (D) reflected the life of the spiritual/ethical stage. And he argued that P derived from the priestly/legal stage. He traced the characteristics of each stage and period meticulously through the text of each document, examining the way in which the document reflected each of several fundamental aspects of religion: the character of the clergy, the types of sacrifices, the places of worship, and the religious holidays. He drew on both the legal and the narrative sections, through all five books of the Pentateuch, and through other historical and prophetic books of the Bible. His presentation was sensible, articulate, and extremely influential. His was a powerful construction, above all, because it did more than just divide the sources by the usual criteria (doublets, contradictions, etc.). It tied the source documents to history. It provided a believable framework in which they could have developed. Thus the Wellhausen model began to answer the question of why the different sources existed. The first real acceptance of this field of study, then, came when historical and literary analyses were first successfully merged. This model of the combination of the source documents came to be known as the Documentary Hypothesis. It has dominated the field ever since. To this day, if you want to dis-

agree, you disagree with Wellhausen. If you want to pose a new model, you compare its merits with those of Wellhausen's model.

## The Present State

Religious opposition to the new investigation persisted during the nineteenth century. The Documentary Hypothesis became known in English-speaking countries in large part because of the work of William Robertson Smith, a professor of Old Testament in the Free Church of Scotland college at Aberdeen and editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. He wrote articles in the encyclopedia and published articles by Wellhausen there as well. He was put on trial before the church. Though he was cleared of the charge of heresy, he was expelled from his chair. Also in the nineteenth century, in South Africa, John Colenso, an Anglican bishop, published similar conclusions, and within twenty years three hundred responses were written. He was called "the wicked bishop."

Things began to change, though, in the twentieth century. There had been considerable opposition to this investigation in the Catholic Church for centuries, but a major turning point was the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of Pope Pius XII in 1943. It has been called "a Magna Carta for biblical progress." The Pope encouraged scholars to pursue knowledge about the biblical writers, for those writers were "the living and reasonable instrument of the Holy Spirit..." He concluded:

Let the interpreter then, with all care and without neglecting any light derived from recent research endeavor to determine the peculiar character and circumstances of the sacred writer, the age in which he lived, the sources written or oral to which he had recourse and the forms of expression he employed.

As to the results of the Pope's encouragement, the Catholic *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, which appeared in 1968, began with this statement by the editors:

It is no secret that the last fifteen or twenty years have seen almost a revolution in Catholic biblical studies—a revolution encouraged by authority, for its Magna Carta was the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of Pope Pius XII. The principles of literary and historical criticism, so long regarded with suspicion, are now, at last, accepted and applied by Catholic exegetes. The results have been many: a new and vital interest in the Bible throughout the Church; a greater contribution of biblical studies to modern theology; a community of effort and understanding among Catholic and non-Catholic scholars.

Opposition to the critical examination of the Bible has also diminished among Protestants. The Bible has come to be studied and taught by critical scholars, in leading Protestant institutions of Europe and Great Britain. In the United States as well, critical scholars teach at major Protestant institutions such as Harvard Divinity School, Yale Divinity School, Princeton Theological Seminary, Union Theological Seminary, and a great many others. Critical examination of the text and its authors also has become accepted at leading Jewish institutions, particularly Hebrew Union College, which is the Reform rabbinical school, and the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Conservative rabbinical school. It is also taught at major universities around the world.

Until the past generation there were orthodox Christian and Jewish scholars who contested the Documentary Hypothesis in scholarly circles. At present, however, there is hardly a biblical scholar in the world actively working on the problem who would claim that the Five Books of Moses were written by Moses—or by any one person.<sup>2</sup> Scholars argue about the number of different authors who wrote any given biblical book. They argue about when the various documents were written and about whether a particular verse belongs to this or that document. They express varying degrees of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the usefulness of the hypothesis for literary or historical purposes. But the hypothesis itself continues to be the starting point of research, no serious student of the Bible can fail to study it, and no other explanation of the evidence has come close to challenging it.

The critical analysis of authorship has also extended beyond the Five Books of Moses and has touched every book of the Bible. For

example, the book of Isaiah was traditionally ascribed to the prophet Isaiah, who lived in the eighth century B.C. Most of the first half of the book fits with such a tradition. But chapters 40 through 66 of the book of Isaiah appear to be by someone living about two centuries later. Even the book of Obadiah, which is only one page long, has been thought to be a combination of pieces by two authors.

In our own day, new tools and new methods have produced important contributions. New methods of linguistic analysis, developed largely within the last fifteen years, have made it possible to establish relative chronology of portions of the Bible and to measure and describe characteristics of biblical Hebrew in various periods. In the simplest terms, Moses was further from the language of much of the Five Books than Shakespeare was from modern English. Also since Wellhausen's days there has been an archeological revolution, which has yielded important discoveries that must now figure in any research into the Bible's authors. I shall discuss the relevant archeological finds in the course of this book.

Still, the simple fact is that, in large part, the puzzle remains unsolved. And the elusiveness of the solution continues to frustrate our work on a variety of other questions about the Bible. My own experience is a case in point. When I was introduced to this area of biblical studies in my college years, I responded that it just did not matter very much to me, that my interest was in what the text said and what its relevance was today—not in who wrote it. But as I worked more and more with the text through my graduate years, I found that, no matter what question I addressed, it always came back to this problem.

If I worked on a literary question, I wanted to know why the text told the story this way and not another way. For example, consider the story of the golden calf. In the book of Exodus, God speaks the Ten Commandments out loud to the Israelites from the heavens over the mountain of God. Moses then climbs the mountain alone to receive a carved set of the commandments on stone tablets. When Moses delays to return, the people make a golden calf and sacrifice in front of it. Their leader, the man who personally makes the golden calf, is Moses' own spokesman, Aaron. When Moses returns and sees the calf, he throws down and smashes the tablets in his anger. He destroys the golden calf. He asks Aaron, "What did this people do to you that you brought a great sin on them?" Aaron