

Recent Pentateuchal Studies

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A. H. J. Gunneweg comments that "the present status of pentateuchal research is unusually complicated and can be described with a simple metaphor: They have embarked for new shores, but land is still not in sight."¹ As he indicates elsewhere in his article, many voices have entered into the protest against the widely approved J E D P documentary approach. Gunneweg moves on to evaluate and to offer some preliminary approval and/or criticism of the recent works of Martin Rose, Hans Heinrich Schmid, John van Seeters, and T. L. Thompson.² In J. Vermeylen's excellent article, "The Formation of the Pentateuch in the Light of Historical-Critical Exegesis,"³ he recounts similarly that this kind of attitude and circumstances prevail in pentateuchal studies. He relates, "The exegetes were never successful at reaching agreement concerning the thorny problem of the origins and the formation of the Pentateuch or the Hexateuch. However, they were never so divided about these matters as during the past few years."⁴ His comprehensive study leads him to assert that until ca. 1975 there was only "in-house" jousting among the J E D P documentarians, but that during recent years the foundation of the documentary theory has been shaken.⁵

Gunneweg and Vermeylen may be overstating the case a bit, but there is indeed a major search underway to find a new or improved perspective on the origin/composition of the Pentateuch.⁶ Many excellent scholars have been involved in this reevaluation of pentateuchal studies.

For those who have a diachronic perspective on pentateuchal studies, however, it appears that pentateuchal studies seem to have always been in a state of relative flux that Heraclitus would have expected. F. V. Winnett's paper, "Re-examining the Foundations,"⁷ seems to have been a major catalyst to some participants in the current debates. His general feeling was, "The whole pentateuchal problem stands in need of fresh investigation" and that "O.T. studies can never rest on a secure foundation until the pentateuchal problem is solved."⁸ James Muilenburg's challenge to go

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beyond form criticism has also had its impact, for rhetorical criticism has helped spur on New Criticism and Structuralist researches and, in general, a literary appreciation of the biblical literature.⁹

Vermeulen's article is very comprehensive and helpful. He classifies current approaches to pentateuchal studies into three categories in order to systematically discuss the issues: documentary, fragmentary, and complementary ("neo" could be placed in front of each word). His procedure proves to be a useful way to get a handle on the multiplicity of problems involved.¹⁰

Vermeulen lists van Seeters, H. H. Schmid and Vorländer as primary supporters of a *neo-documentary approach*.¹¹ These exegetes are, however, largely concentrating upon J, and the symbol really carries a new sense in current studies. J has been, of course, the primary working base of the Wellhausen theory, but J is presently conceived in various ways that differ greatly from past concepts of it. J is currently being placed roughly in the time of the deuteronomic school, i.e. ca. the 6th century B.C. This date is so late as to challenge the past foundations of documentary research. Schmid maintains that, contrary to von Rad, J cannot be conceived of as a single author. J is rather a long and somewhat obscure process. But, J is conceived of in other ways as well by other scholars, and each author tends to nuance his meaning of J in a particular way.

Vermeulen considers C. Houtman and R. Rendtorff¹² as representatives of a *neo-fragmentary approach*. It seems to this writer, however, that in some ways Rendtorff's approach is rather a kind of *supplementary approach*¹³ than a fragmentary approach. Be that as it may, Rendtorff talks about *longitudinal cycles* that developed *independently* of each other and were *finally joined* end to end. He delineates the following blocks of materials:

1. Origins	Genesis 1-11
2. Patriarchal materials	Genesis 12-36
3. Joseph history	Genesis 37-50
4. Exodus from Egypt	Exodus 1-14 (?)
5. Theophany at Sinai	Exodus 19-24, 32-34
6. Sojourn in the desert	Exodus 16-18, Numbers 11:1-20:13
7. Transjordanian conquest	Numbers 20:14-36:13

These independent cycles had a pre-exilic existence and were joined by a redactor(s) only at about the time of the deuteronomist. C. Houtman analyzes the Pentateuch into three grand unities: Genesis, Exodus-Numbers and Deuteronomy, each with a unique character and each having undergone its own unique development. The redactor(s) of Houtman's Pentateuch were also members of the deuteronomistic movement who adeptly joined these complexes. Houtman's theory involves "fragments," in my opinion, even less than does Rendtorff's, if I understand him correctly. E. Zenger observes in his

review of Rendtorff and Schmid that "In the event that a new 'pentateuchal model' is ever put forth in the near future, this model will involve a combination of original documents, fragments and supplements."¹⁴ More or less, and in different degrees and in different ways this sketch indicates some basic parameters within which most scholars are working out the pentateuchal problem. Conservative scholars in general are not offering serious rebuttals or constructive alternatives, although the time seems to be right for such attempts. However, keen reviews and helpful suggestions are sometimes offered.¹⁵

Finally, Vermeylen classifies several modern pentateuchal approaches as *neo-complementary*, one of which we will look at more closely in this article. He lists H. Lubczyk, S. Tengström and H. C. Schmitt in his evaluations. Several others could be listed here, such as F. Cross, G. Wenham, Vermeylen himself, D. B. Redford and Loren Fischer.¹⁶ Several of these scholars claim to discern a basic continuous epic that is *still evident* in the *present text*, although other scholars feel that its presence is only discernible *behind the extant readings*. After Vermeylen surveys the major hypotheses he concludes that "Of the old models, the least detrimental one is thus without doubt the model that employs complements, but even this model can be understood in a sense that is as mechanical as the documentary model."¹⁷ His concern is that any new complementary hypothesis be conceived in such a way that rewritings, updates and *relectures* flow from the life situations of Israel herself.¹⁸ Vermeylen states, therefore, "It is under the pressure of crucial needs that the oldest kernel of the Pentateuch, commonly represented by the sign J has been enriched, reshaped and finished, as a plant develops and evolves with the rhythm of the seasons."¹⁹ Current anthropological approaches, as well as sociological approaches, are clearly influencing scholars to take this perspective.

H. Lubczyk²⁰ offers a combined documentary/complementary/redactional hypothesis, a common procedure in the current literature. He posits two documents as the basis of the Pentateuch: J and E. J stems from Juda and reports the origins of Abraham and Isaac, and develops a universal theology. E offers histories of Jacob, Joseph and Moses and brings together central Palestinian traditions and stresses the election of Israel. Next comes an *elohistic commentary* influenced by prophecy and finally a *yahwistic redaction* whose *leitmotif* is the election of Israel. H. C. Schmitt finds that the formation of the Pentateuch probably reflects the following process: (1) The creation of a primitive J document which was much shorter than the classical J; (2) A revision of J by E, a *lively, active revisor of J* who holds a new, theological, coherent conviction that he has worked out during or after the exile; (3) A final late J was completed and forms a nearly final edition of the Pentateuch.²¹ He does not go on to discuss P. It is then a general consensus of the complementary approach that "It is then through a work of successive

rewritings that the Pentateuch has taken on, little by little, the contours that we recognize in it.”²²

Not all epical approaches to the origin and composition of the Pentateuch necessarily imply a complementary approach to the genetic issues. Conroy, as we also noted, identifies, quite rightly it seems, two classes of opinion among those who employ epical concepts when dealing with the genetic problems of the Pentateuch. Some hold that parts of the *existing text actually display an ancient epic*, while some consider the truth to be that epical material *only underlies* parts of the present biblical text.²³ In a very challenging and skillful article, G. Wenham has suggested that an epical approach to parts of Genesis at least, especially the flood narrative, might explain some of the tight coherence of the material.²⁴ Tengström’s approach, which we will examine in more detail in *The Hexateuchal Narrative*, is classified as complementary by Vermeylen and epical in the first sense of the word given above by Conroy. Conroy notes that Tengström’s study of the present Hexateuchal narrative is in the line of Herder, Augusti and de Wette, i.e. he sees part of the *present* Hexateuch as epical. However, Tengström does not insist upon the term epic exclusively, for he talks of an Israel Saga or a basic narrative of the Hexateuch.²⁵

Before looking at Tengström’s approach to the Hexateuch it will be helpful to summarize the major emphases that are being stressed in pentateuchal studies. Vermeylen is helpful here, too, although even more needs to be reported than he highlights,²⁶ especially in the light of the plethora of literary approaches appearing in print.

- a. A great deal of attention is being given to J now,²⁷ “which had appeared to be above any suspicion until these past few years.”
- b. The sigle J is being retained, but the content behind the symbol is flexible and often very different from what it was in the classical hypothesis.
- c. The work of J is often spread over a long period of time, diffused. He (or the process) is often seen as engaged in a long process of composition. Others see several literary layers of “J” at least, produced over a period of many years.
- d. A new emphasis upon the unity of the materials is often found. This is explained in several ways.
- e. The importance of the sixth century is increasing along with the connecting lines drawn to the deuteronomistic school (Schmid, Vorländer, Van Seeters, etc. place the principal redaction of J here). Rendtorff and Houtman place the redactors who assembled the “cycles” or “blocks” of material into one grand history at this time.
- f. Everyone finds “P” material, perhaps as a particular document (less often) or as a framework or as the evidence of a series of additions that

amount to a series of redactions of the work.

g. A real dilemma is sensed as to *what kind of literature we have before us*. Is it history? Is it pure story? Is it historical fiction or fictional history? Is it Hebrew epic? Is it theological history? Is it fictionalized history? There is and has always been an ongoing genre problem. Augusti, mentioned above, spoke of a real Hebrew epic, and noted that if this term was unacceptable, it could be replaced as long as it were recognized that the Pentateuch is *no ordinary history book*. Today we would all probably question what he meant by the term “ordinary” as well as “history.” This is an attempt to reject historicism and to assert the literariness of the biblical literature that conveys truth in various ways.

h. The influence of sociological and anthropological studies seems evident in all of this—one might say *interdisciplinary studies in general*.²⁸

i. In general literary approaches are prevalent and literary criticism, linguistics and philosophy of language are calling for a new look at the texts which lie before us and for scholars to take account of the Bible as history *and* its character as imaginative literature.²⁹ Poetics has become a major hermeneutical discipline and tool for uncovering both the nature of the text and its meaning. Insights are gained that are vital to discerning the probable composition, form and origin of the texts. No new approach in this area has won the day. In fact the strength of this whole movement (including points a-h above) is the implication that a multiplex approach must be used to mine such a variegated text as the Old Testament.

Rebuttals from various angles are being produced. The articles by Gunneweg, Zenger, Vermeylen and Schmitt offer some significant critiques, but appreciation as well. Gunneweg, for example, raises some perceptive questions important for the new pentateuchal studies to consider carefully: (1) Is J to be dated with D simply because of literary affinities? (2) Does the attempt to deal with the present text ignore evident indications of a composite construction of the text? (3) Is a level of fundamentalistic mentality showing through? (4) Is the agreement among some to devalue and refuse the attempt to reconstruct a pre-text tradition healthy? (5) Is an unhealthy Positivism (with its attendant dangers) present? (6) Is the tendency to see the text (e.g. Patriarchal traditions) as literary constructs self-defeating? His continued analysis and comments in his second article critique Vorländer, H. Donner, Schmitt, Tengström and Rendtorff. Gunneweg is very helpful, although he does not address all of the issues raised. He is relatively harsh with Tengström’s position, but admits that it is easier to critique new models than it is to create them.³⁰

We will now consider briefly Tengström’s epic-complementary approach. The new literary criticism has attempted to stress the unity and literary genius of the pentateuchal narrative. This is evident in Tengström’s work. After a quick review of the classical literary criticism approach and of the history of

traditions approach, Tengström raises some questions about the past assumptions of these approaches. One is especially important for Tengström's methodology. Gunkel had asserted that the ancient world had satisfied itself with only the smallest literary creations. Tengström rejects this generalization since he believes that the Israelites and their predecessors could always have narrated long and involved stories—histories, more or less accurate remembrances concerning the course of events.³¹

He also questions the importance of oral tradition and its necessary part in the final literary processes the materials of the Pentateuch underwent. He observes that "In the high cultures that surrounded Israel, and by whom she was influenced from the beginning, writing and the conscious creation of literary works of art was common for many centuries."³² He notes as examples the Gilgamesh Epic and the literary discoveries at Ras Shamra.

Thirdly, an important methodological consideration for Tengström calls for the need to allow the *largest existing context in the literary work* under discussion to set the meaning, significance and function *for the smaller literary unities* in that larger context.³² So he holds to Eissfeldt's conclusion, as one basis for his investigation, that the narratives (stories) in the narrative books were in their multiplicity originally conceived and created as part of a larger literary context. He feels that freestanding stories are there, but very infrequent.³³

Fourthly, Tengström, after discussing Noth and von Rad, concludes that the relationship of the books of Moses to the following historical books is very complicated. However, he feels that the solution to this problem cannot be solved if "the Hexateuch is not somehow looked upon as an original unity, which fact must then lead to the assumption that the deuteronomic history originated as a continuation of this old narrative."³⁴

Fifthly, then, Tengström feels that his task is to examine the Hexateuch from new perspectives. He proposes to examine the texts from purely literary perspectives, so he deals very little, if at all, with pre-literary tradition, since it is often only possible to come to tentative suppositions about it. He does not want to suppose a mere redactional unity of the material, so he elects to use an investigative approach that proceeds neither according to the handing down of beliefs and customs or according to tradition history. He attempts rather to begin with the present text that lies before us and to analyze its structures and contexts and to avoid the manipulation of redaction criticism and redaction history. These latter assumed that the unity of the text was only exclusively or at least essentially redactional. Tengström opts rather to give careful notice to the literary aspects of the material as a creative unity. By this means he hopes to proceed to some extent from new starting points in the framework of the analysis of the composition and independent of the source theory. His goal is not to separate literary layers and find their relative dates, which is a

process much more at home in a history of literature approach to the extent that it was possible. (This goal was an overarching aim of past literary analysis.) However, as he indicates, the fact that the newer structurally-oriented study of the literature pushes these traditional issues into the background is unfortunate.³⁵ Tengström restricts his present literary-historical investigation to an attempt to discern the oldest framework of the Hexateuch. He proposes further to keep his investigation centered on definite, clear, demonstrable mainlines of evidence. He promises to do more with other layers later. His work on P was published in 1982, as *The Generations Formula and the Literary Structure of the Priestly Expansion Layer in the Pentateuch*.³⁶

Sixthly, Tengström feels that there is converging evidence that a thoroughly unified epic work appeared in central Palestine *before* the time of the monarchy.³⁷ In his literary study he does not let historical issues and historical geography fall by the wayside. The following major lines of evidence are offered for his conclusion.³⁸

- a. The circumstances and events of the time of the monarchy are foreign to the Hexateuchal narrative, except for a few isolated, easily identified texts.
- b. The overall view of the concept of the 12 tribes found in the Hexateuch clearly did not come from the time of the monarchy.
- c. Rachel and Joseph, as well as the Rachel tribes and house of Joseph, are held in the highest esteem while Juda is presented as a rather dishonorable person in Gen. 38. Achan's treatment in Joshua 7 may display an anti-Judean tendency!
- d. The narrative dealing with the possession of the land is also rooted in the area of the Rachel tribes. The desert wanderings also point to the importance of taking the land by crossing the Jordan north of the Dead Sea.
- e. The traditions about Abraham and Isaac, although connected with South Palestine, seem to have received their literary form in central Palestine.
- f. He feels that *perhaps the most important* fact is that Shechem, the ancient common center of the Joseph tribes, is *brought forth programmatically* throughout the narrative of the Hexateuch. Mention of Shechem is made in most important texts. Jerusalem is hardly evident at all, except in clearly secondary traditions.

Tengström's basic conclusion is, thus, that we can assume that a great Israelite Saga originated in Shechem or in its vicinity at the latest shortly before the founding of the kingship in Israel. The purpose of the composition was to relate the origin and early history of the Israelite tribal society, and to represent literarily and ideologically the unity and solidarity that was presupposed, at least in principle, since the "*Landtag von Sichem*" between

the twelve tribes. This relationship between the tribes was based upon the assumption of a common ethnic origin (as painted in the patriarchal story), a common cult of Yahweh (the exodus, stories of the origin of the Yahweh cult), the demand for solidarity among the tribes in the time of war (the taking of the land and the theory and teaching about Yahweh's wars), as well as upon a common secular and sacred justice system (the Shechem covenant, supposedly in an original form of the text the oldest covenantal story).

The coherence of the basic ground plan for the epic is so clear that it can very well have been the work of a single author. Tengström concludes that earlier traditional materials of various kinds must have been available for this composer to use. It is evident that at many points it was difficult for the composer to work over the different kinds of material that he had before him.

However, Tengström, in keeping with his announced methodological procedures, declines to attempt to reconstruct any preliterate unified story forms of the epic's structure or to attempt to reconstruct the original reading of the material. This procedure simply leads to failure, in his opinion. His conclusion is then that we, therefore, cannot deal with any earlier (than the text we now have) developmental phase of the tradition of the story than with the total composition of the Israelite saga which has come to us out of Shechem.³⁹

Tengström feels strongly, as we have noted many do, that the deuteronomists probably built upon this original basis. He feels that this seems all the more probable when one realizes that the deuteronomists also had their origin in Central Palestine.⁴⁰ He discerns deuteronomistic activity in two basic areas: (1) they formed Deuteronomy which they inserted from the beginning into the narrative context and (2) they continued the story and developed the presentation of Israel's history. The first deuteronomistic activity may be placed in ca. 722 after the fall of the Northern Kingdom near Shechem. About this time Deuteronomy probably received its basic underlying structure.⁴¹ After the fall of Samaria many deuteronomists, originally Levites, fled to Juda and Jerusalem from Shechem and the Northern Kingdom, and the old Israelite traditions of the Hexateuch came with them. Apparently these traditions only acquired a growing influence during Hezekiah's time, and these deuteronomists certainly inspired Josiah's reform. The ancient Israelite traditions prevailed and also the Passover was introduced for the first time in Jerusalem. This festival had been the major festival in Shechem. After the fall of Jerusalem the final redaction of the deuteronomistic history work occurred.

Tengström finds that it is probable that the old Israelite Saga was developed in Shechem even before deuteronomistic activity had taken place. Possibly Judges 1-9, which deals largely with Benjamin, Manasseh-Ephraim, is connected with Shechem.

Finally, concerning P Tengström holds that P is a later collective designation of one—or more—reworkings of and expansions of the material as it came from the Deuteronomistic School. P did, however, collect materials which were rooted in the ancient Jerusalem traditions;⁴² thus the interest of these sections in the Temple Cult and the function of the priests (especially the *Kultgesetze*) is explained. The P school from the beginning placed the occurrences at Sinai into the framework of events. Also a reworking and a systematizing of the received framework was undertaken by P. This activity of the P school seems either *exilic or post-exilic*. Its concern is the recovery of ancient norms which would be binding for the post-exilic community. Included in P's *Weltanschauung* is a cosmological ordering of creation, a successive establishment of the cultic ordinances and the covenants with Noah and Abraham up to the time of Moses and the covenant at Sinai. At Sinai the Torah was given and fixed for all time,⁴³ so that nothing could change now from that decisive moment! Tengström feels that much of what was earlier ascribed to the traditional sources can be interpreted as a mark of the basic literary composition—not *Grundlage*, à la Noth.

It is necessary now to observe a few further presuppositions of Tengström's approach, a brief review of his approach to studying the Hexateuch and a brief picture of the basic content of the framework of the *Grundkomposition* of the Hexateuchal Narrative. A few concluding comments will be offered.

Tengström stresses the unity of the Hexateuch from the outset. His program calls for a study of those passages which display a comprehensive awareness of the entire literary corpus. This is especially true of those parts which serve as the framework of the entire corpus and of those passages which serve to bind the parts of the corpus together. In addition all of this material must contain a comprehensive and consistent development of the ongoing events that are connected to the ongoing themes of the Hexateuch.⁴⁴ Tengström feels that his purpose is to demonstrate the ongoing literary unity of the basic narrative and to order this *according to an appropriate historical context*. Thus the basic methodology calls for "In this way we proceed from an analysis of the whole narrative account, while keeping a specific consideration of the conclusion in mind."⁴⁵ The smaller units and even major and subordinate sections are to be handled in the light of their *function* in the larger contexts. This will hopefully indicate whether these units were formed for the *purpose of inclusion* in the larger context. He allows that some secondary additions and pre-literary material may be present that the composer took up without working it into his composition with complete success.

Another major assumption of Tengström is that the various different literary layers do not have to be assigned to independent narratives. The best option he feels is to consider material that had been assigned to these strands in the past as (1) variations of the framework that have occurred because of secondary reworkings of the texts or (2) scattered additions that presuppose

the context of the earlier stratum and depend on it for orientation. Operating from this perspective, he feels it is clear that a *literary analysis* is the primary task at hand.⁴⁶ As the ongoing theme(s) of the total work is revealed “Many narrative and remaining texts show themselves to be completely foreign to the original major context, for which reason these texts are to be cut out of the original major context as secondary additions (such as Sinai and the Balaam narrative).”⁴⁷ Tengström observes that this procedure highlights a major failure of the old literary criticism: too little concern for the larger literary contexts and too much concern for detailed study of isolated texts, with an improper application of the acquired criteria for source separation in other places. Tengström’s modest goal is to demonstrate the cumulative indications favorable to his approach to such an extent that his proposed hypothesis will be considered as a valid option for further Hexateuchal study.

In the space left it will be possible to indicate only the major axes that Tengström develops quite well in the rest of his monograph. This can be brief since they have been alluded to already.

Tengström proposes that the basic narrative of the Hexateuch is made up of an impressive epical story of Shechemite origin. This epic probably arose in the mid-eleventh century during the time of the judges. It was first adapted by a series of deuteronomic additions, then polished off by some priestly increments. As already noted, P is not a separate source, but one or several redactions of the whole corpus by several or even the same person.⁴⁸

Specifically, Tengström considers Gen. 11:27-13:18 to be the introduction to this ancient Shechemite epic. In a rather detailed study of these verses he notes that two major divisions are discernable: first, he believes that 11:27-32 forms an entry into the whole work that prepares for the major narrative. In these verses a greater background is indicated and genealogical relationships are given that have vital significance for the following contexts. Secondly, he identifies 12:1ff as the beginning of the body of the narrative itself with a command to Abraham, the giving of the promises of Yahweh to him and the wandering motif of Abraham.⁴⁹

He points out that this skillful literary creation at the beginning of the ancient Israelite Saga arouses the following expectations in the reader:

In order for the fulfillment of the promises Sarah’s barrenness must be removed as a first obstacle, so that she can bear a son to Abraham. Then the story of how Abraham’s descendents became a great people is to be related and, finally, how this great people received the promised land. It is to be observed that even in the series of items outlined in Gen. 12:1-7 the promise of descendents and the land is given in this order.⁵⁰

Corresponding to this expectation, Tengström notes that the narrative of the Hexateuch works this out impressively as follows:

1. Sara bears Isaak.
2. Jacob, Isaak's son, receives the name Israel and becomes the *Ahnherrn* of the nation.
3. Jacob's sons are the fathers of the twelve tribes and become a great *Volk* in Egypt. Thus the first promise is fulfilled.
4. The multiplication of the people in Egypt brings a cruel oppression upon them that threatens their existence.
5. The people are rescued under Moses in order to attain the promised land. The wilderness wandering and the Exodus stands within the theme of the promised land.
6. All the promises to Abraham are realized only with the conquering of the land, and thereby the Hexateuchal narrative is almost concluded.

As a result of the fulfillment of the promises to Israel, Tengström observes that the people are responsible now to serve Yahweh. In other words, *the covenant at Shechem* (Joshua 24) that stresses the responsibilities of the people finds its *original and only logical place at the end of the whole work*.⁵² And, it is striking that the covenant narrative itself is completed "where Abraham had received the promises."⁵³

Tengström's final chapter of 52 pages concerns itself exclusively with tracing the fulfillment of the promises to the fathers—the major literary themes.⁵⁴ It seems to this reader that it is harder for him to justify leaving out certain materials than it is for him to argue congenitally about the inclusion of certain materials, i.e. it seems that more could be included in the basic literary composition than is.

Conroy, working with traditional concepts, responds to calling the pentateuchal materials discussed by such terms as epic, especially questioning the use of the term "epic" in respect to the J E proto-document (*Vorlage*). He suggests that the use of the term epic could be applied in a descriptive manner to *certain literary qualities* of the J E *Vorlage*, e.g. "epic tonality," "epic range of concern," "epic objectivity," etc.⁵⁵ This, he feels, is possible without going too far. On the other hand Conroy feels the material cannot be classified as *primary traditional* epic on a par with Homer, or Canaanite/Mesopotamian epics. Depending, however, upon how one uses the term "national epic," he is of the opinion that "the J E *Vorlage* could perhaps be viewed as *Israel's* national epic."⁵⁶ In the light of Conroy's careful study, Tengström's use of "epic" should have to be more carefully defined. Tengström does not take time to delineate his usage of the word and sometimes speaks of an *Israelsaga* instead. More clarity is needed here, but his

thesis is not thereby demolished, and, as noted earlier, his use of multiple terms may be helpful.

Earlier comments about pentateuchal studies in general will serve to indicate some strengths and weaknesses of Tengström's efforts and show that his work reflects certain current trends in the field. His early dating of an ancient Israel Saga contrasts with a stronger tendency to date documents late by most recent studies. And his history of the literature approach is in direct opposition to Rendtorff's tradition/form historical approach. His concerns are reminiscent, of course, of Cross and Wenham, as noted above and in several other notes below. Especially helpful is his attempt to *combine* new literary criticism concerns with a vital need to *flesh out* the *history* and *Zeitgeist* within which the given literary corpus most likely arose.⁵⁷ In fact, the two middle chapters of his monograph present a lengthy discussion concerning the *history* and *historical geography* of the *probable milieu* from which the original epical hexateuchal narrative came, so his efforts are not a mere consideration of an autonomous text divorced from society. Gunneweg is quite doubtful that Tengström's literary analysis will find many who will agree with it.⁵⁸ His second monograph concerning the P elements, along with his first, provides, however, one place from which to begin further considerations about the "Continuing 'Epic' of 19th-20th Century Tetrateuchal-Pentateuchal-Hexateuchal studies." Every, even partially successful, attempt to take us closer to the origin/composition of the text *helps to interpret* this foundational document for Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

Notes

1. "Die gegenwärtige Situation der Pentateuch-forschung ist ungemein kompliziert und lässt sich gleichwohl mit einem einfachen Bild beschreiben: 'Man brach auf zu neuen Ufern, aber Land ist noch lange nicht in Sicht'" (A. H. J. Gunneweg, "Anmerkungen und Anfragen zur neueren Pentateuchforschung," TRu 48 [1983] 227.) Similar observations are made by Hans-Christoph Schmitt: "Wer in der gegenwärtigen Situation versucht, eine Aussage über den neusten Stand der Pentateuchforschung zu machen, der kann nur Enttäuschung verbreiten: Weitgehend anerkannte Auffassungen über die Entstehung des Pentateuch gibt es nicht mehr, und die Hoffnung auf einen neuen Konsens in der Pentateuchkritik scheint zur Zeit nur noch als 'Hoffnung wider allen Augenschein' möglich zu sein." ("Die Hintergründe der 'neusten Pentateuchkritik' und der literarische Befund der Josefsgeschichte," ZAW Band 97 Heft 2 [1985] 161). Erich Zenger's observations agree in his perceptive review and critique of Schmid and Rendtorff: "Die traditionelle Pentateuchexegese in der Nachfolge J. Wellhausens, nicht nur von der jüdischen Forschung schon immer mit Skepsis betrachtet, sondern auch von der skandinavischen Schule, und ja auch lange Zeit von der katholischen Exegese weitgehend abgelehnt, gerät nun auch in ihrem 'Heimatland' immer mehr ins Kreuzfeuer der Kritik" ("Wo steht die Pentateuchforschung heute?" BZ 24 [1980] 115.) R. E. Clements continues to argue for basic stability in OT Pentateuchal studies and feels that there is still simply no viable alternative to the view that the J, E, D and P documents at one time existed as separate documents ("Pentateuchal Problems," in *Tradition and Interpretation*, ed. G. W. Anderson [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979], p. 96-124.) But, a Graeme Auld seems more accurate. "Recent studies are witness to instability prospering better than

consensus" ("Keeping Up With Recent Studies," *ET* 91 Oct.-Sept. (1979-80) p. 297. Lothar Ruppert, "Die Aporie der gegenwärtigen Pentateuch diskussion und die Josepherzählung der Genesis," *BZ* 29 (1985) 31-48. To the present writer it seems that a paradigm shift is in process. See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed. (University of Chicago Press, 1970) for insights into these kinds of situations.

2. Martin Rose, *Deuteronomist and Jahwist*, *ATHANT* 67, 1981. Hans Heinrich Schmid, *Der sogenannte Jahwist. Beobachtungen und Fragen zur Pentateuchforschung*, Zürich, 1976, *Ibid.* *Auf der Suche nach neuen Perspektiven für die Pentateuchforschung*, VT S 32, 1981, pp. 375-394. John Van Seeters, *Abraham in History and Tradition*, New Haven and London, 1975. Thomas L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives. The Quest of the Historical Abraham*, *BZAW* 133, 1974.

3. J. Vermeylen, "La formation du Pentateuque à la lumière de l'exégèse historico-critique" *RTL* 12 (1981) 324 Vermeylen is Professor au Centre d'études théologiques et pastorales (Bruxelles). Cette étude a été préparée pour le colloque de l'Institutum Iudaicum, tenu à Bruxelles les 10 et 11 novembre 1980. Its observations are still valid today.

4. "Jamais les exégètes ne réussirent à se mettre d'accord quant à l'épineux problème des origines et de la formation du Pentateuque ou de l'Hexateuque. Jamais, cependant, ils ne furent aussi divisés que ces dernières années."

5. *Ibid.*

6. Among the papers prepared for discussion at the One Hundred Twenty-first Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in Anaheim, CA, Dec., 1985, was one presented by Dr. Rolf Knierim which views the Pentateuch as an ancient biography of Moses and stresses its coherent nature ("The Composition of the Pentateuch" *SBL Seminar Papers*, vol. 24 (1985) 393-415).

7. Frederick V. Winnett, "Re-examining the Foundations," *JBL* 84 March (1965) 1-19.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

9. James Muilenburg, "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969) 1-18. This article is also reprinted in John Maier and Vincent Tollers, eds., *The Bible in its Literary Milieu* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 362-380.

10. Cf. Schmitt, "Die Hintegrund der 'neusten Pentateuchkritik'" pp. 169-171. Schmitt classifies current attempts to delineate the origin/composition of the Pentateuch into four basic models.

A. *Modell A*: "... hält an der traditionellen Auffassung von einem jahwistischen, einem elohistischen und einem priesterschriftlichen Geschichtswerk fest, rechnet aber gleichzeitig mit umfangreichen redaktionellen Zufügungen." (p. 169).

B. *Modell B*: "... nimmt eine Spätdarierung des Jahwisten bzw. des Jahwisten an" (p. 170).

C. *Modell C*: This model is von R. Rendtorff vertreten." Er nimmt eine eigenständige vorexilische Geschichte der Traditionsblöcke des Pentateuch wie Urgeschichte, Erzvätergeschichte, Exodusgeschichte etc. an" (p. 170). These texts were united in their present form by a deuteronomistic redaction for the first time. The Exodus tradition and the traditions of the fathers were bridged by a priestly covenantal text.

D. *Modell D*: This is "eine Redaktionshypothese." "Nach ihr hat es in der frühen Königszeit—ähnlich wie bei Rendtorff—nur 'protojahwistische' Darstellungen

von Teilüberlieferungen des Pentateuch gegeben wie z. B. eine protojehowistische Darstellung der Abrahamsgeschichte der Josefgeschichte etc. Diese alten Materialien dann einer sukzessiven Bearbeitung und Ergänzung durch 1. eine elohistische, 2. eine späte (dem Deuteronomismus nahenstehende) jahwistische und 3. eine priesterliche Redaktion unterzogen worden" (171).

11. Vermeylen, pp. 325-326.

12. Vermeylen, pp. 326-327.

13. Robert North, in his review of Rendtorff's hypothesis says that Rendtorff's own study may lead him into a "neo-Fragment Hypothesis" ("Can Geography Save J from Rendtorff?" *Bib* 63 (1982) 47-). Note G. J. Wenham, "The Religion of the Patriarchs" in *Essays on Patriarchal Narratives* eds. A. R. Millard and D. J. Wiseman (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983) pp. 183-185.

14. "Falls es überhaupt in naher Zukunft zu einem neuen 'Pentateuchmodell' kommen wird, wird dieses eine Kombination aus Urkunden, Fragmenten und Ergänzungsmodell sein müssen" (E. Zenger, "Wo steht die Pentateuchforschung heute" p. 115). Zenger himself continues (p. 115-116) by referring to R. Smend's observation in his *Einleitung in das AT*, "Die Pentateuchkritik hat fortschreitend [in a progressive manner] einsehen müssen, das sie es mit einem überaus komplizierten Gegenstand zu tun hat, dessen Entstehung sich niemals in allen Einzelheiten wird rekonstruieren lassen. Jede der entwickelten Hypothesen hat sich in der Erklärung eines Teils der Tatbestände bewährt; jede von ihnen ist aber schnell zum stumpfen Werkzeug geworden, wenn sie gewaltsam auf Tatbestände angewendet wurde, denen sie nicht gemäss war. Wenn irgendwo, dann ist hier die unablässige Orientierung am Gegenstand geboten" (p. 38). Schmitt quotes Zenger's similar words in "Die Hintergründe . . ." p. 178.

15. J. G. McConville, "The Pentateuch Today," *Them* 9 (3, 1983) 5-11.

16. See especially Charles Conroy, "Hebrew Epic: Historical Notes and Critical Reflections," *Bib* 61 (1980), 1-30. L. Fisher, "The Patriarchal Cycles," in H. A. Hoffner ed. *Orient and Occident: Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon* (AOAT 22; Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn 1973), 59-65, and Gordon J. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," *VT* 28 (1978) 336-348, esp. 347-8. Wenham suggests an epical source that was reshaped by a later priestly editor. Helpful insights are found in Isaac Kikawada and Arthur Quinn, *Before Abraham Was* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1985).

17. "Des anciennes hypothèses, la moins mauvaise est donc sans doute celle des compléments, mais celle-ci peut être comprise dans un sens aussi mécanique que l'hypothèse documentaire" (Vermeylen, p. 345).

18. *Ibid.* This is a broadly based concern in literary criticism in general: Robert Weimann, *Structure and Society in Literary History* enl. ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1984). This, of course, creates a tension with the New Literary Criticism that has been dominant since ca. 1947. Cf. Schmitt, "Die Hintergründe . . ." p. 169.

19. "C'est sous la pression de nécessités vitales que le noyau le plus ancien du Pentateuque, représenté conventionnellement par le sigle J, a été plusieurs fois enrichi, remodelé, complété, comme une plante se développe et évolue au rythme des saisons" (Vermeylen, p. 345). Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy and Society in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980); J. W. Rogerson, *Anthropology and the Old Testament* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984) and *Anthropological Approaches to the Old Testament* Bernhard Lang, ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983). A closer, organic connection between literature and society is imperative for some literary critics.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 327-329. See H. Lubsczyk, *Elohim beim Jawisten*, dans Congress Volume Gottingen VT Suppl. 29, (Leiden, 1978) 226-253.
21. Vermeylen, p. 328. H. C. Schmitt, *Die nicht priesterliche Josephgeschichte. Ein Beitrag zur neuesten Pentateuchkritik* (ZAW Beih 154), Berlin - New York, 1980.
22. "C'est donc par un travail de relectures successives que le Pentateuque a pris, peu a peu, le visage que nous lui connaissons" (Vermeylen, p. 328).
23. Conroy, pp. 28-29.
24. Wehnam, "The Coherence" 336-348.
25. Sven Tengstrom, *Die Hexateucherzählung: eine literaturgeschichtliche Studie*, Deut. Übersetzung von Hannelore Zeitler, Coniectanea Biblica, Lund, 1976, pp. 1-187. J. G. Herder, *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie*, (Leipzig, 1985; 1st pub., 1782-83), II, 72, 75. J. C. W. Augusti, *Gründriss einer historischkritischen Einleitung in's Alte Testament* (Leipzig, 1827), 137-149. Augusti observes that the Bible is "no ordinary history book," (p. 149). W. M. L. de Wette, *Lehrbuch der historischkritischen Einleitung in die kanonischen und apokryphischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin, 1822/1852), 212-213, 171-172. Vermeylen describes Tengström's position as follows: "Selon S. Tengström, le fond ancien de l'Hexateuque est constitué par une vaste épopée d'origine sichémite et remontant au XI siècle, soit à l'époque des Juges; et ensemble aurait été complété d'abord par une série d'additions deuteronomistes, puis par des éléments de type sacerdotal (dans cette hypothèse, P ne constitue pas une source séparée, mais représente une ou plusieurs rédactions du grand récit" (La Formation . . ." p. 327).
26. Vermeylen, pp. 328-339.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 328, "qui paraissait jusqu'à ces dernières années au-dessus du tout soupçon."
28. Contrary to what some seem to assert, however, these two areas have always been highly influential especially since the 19th century. See especially, John W. Rogerson, *Anthropology and the Old Testament* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978); Bernard Lang, ed. *Anthropological Approaches to the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985). See Robert Wilson's work referred to in note 19.
29. Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Chicago: Winston Press, 1985) esp. pp. 1-12. Only a few other books are noted here out of the dozens available, to say nothing of the relevant articles: Edgar V. McKnight, *The Bible and the Reader* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); David J. A. Clines, David M. Gunn, and Alan J. Hauser eds. *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* JSOT Supplement Series, 19 (Sheffield, 1982); William Ray, *Literary Meaning* (New York: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1984); Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1983); Terence J. Keegan, *Interpreting the Bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985); John Barton, *Reading the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984); Robert M. Polzin, *Biblical Structuralism* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1977); Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), Jane P. Tompkins, ed. *Reader-Response Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1980). See especially the bibliography in the books by Keegan and McKnight. McKnight gives a helpful view of the development of the OT criticism over the last few decades. Inherent in the impact of these materials is the fact that methodology dictates to some extent the answer to genetic and compositional questions. The major catalyst for some of the new linguistic-language concerns was, of course: Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (London, 1978).

30. Gunneweg, "Anmerkungen" Passim. _____, "*Anmerkungen und Anfragen zur neueren Pentateuchforschung*," TRu 50 (May, 1985) 107-131. 131. Gunneweg is quite in sympathy with Rendtorff's position (Rolff Rendtorff, *Das Überlieferungsgeschichte Problem des Pentateuch*, ZAW Heft 147 [Berlin-New York, 1977]). Rendtorff's approach is rejected by Tengström. Gunneweg himself concludes:

(1) E is not a document, but a matter of fragments,

(2) P is a work of redaction, but with a real contribution of P who brings given traditions, but also new traditions to his task,

(3) J is to be treated similar to P. There are, however, transitional pieces (Gen. 12:1-3, J as author?), unifying parenthesis, etc., and subsequent additions in the style of J. He notes that from Exodus on it is much more difficult to separate sources. He asserts that a layer that has been reworked (Bearbeitungsschicht) and a source (Quelle) should not be considered as absolute alternatives. For him, the major pentateuchal problem is to solve the unity that is clearly there, while recognizing the multiplicity of sources that are evident. He opts for a modified, but not suffusive source theory (*eine modifizierte und nicht überzogene Quellentheorie*) (pp. 124, 130-1).

31. Tengström, *Hexateucherzählung*, p. 8.

32. "*In den benachbarten Hochkulturen, von denen Israel von Anfang an entscheidende Eindrücke empfing, waren die Schrift und das bewusste literarische Kunstschaffen seit langen gebräuchlich*" (Ibid.).

33. Ibid., p. 9.

34. "*der, 'Hexateuch' nicht irgendwie als ursprüngliche Einheit anerkannt wird, was dann auch zu der Annahme führen muss, das sie deuteronomistische Geschichte als Fortsetzung dieser älteren Erzählung entstand*" (Ibid., p. 12).

35. Ibid., p. 13.

36. Ibid., p. 13. Sven Tengström, *Die Toledotformel und die literarische Struktur der priesterlichen Erweiterungsschicht im Pentateuch*, Deut. Übersetzung von Hannelore Zeitler, (Coniectanea Biblica, OT Series 17; Lund, 1982.) pp. 1-81.

37. Tengström, *Hexateucherzählung*, pp. 13-14.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., pp. 14-15.

40. Ibid., p. 15.

41. Ibid., p. 15.

42. Ibid., p. 16.

43. Ibid., p. 16.

44. Ibid., p. 17.

45. "*Dabei gehen wir von einer Analyse der Einleitung des gesamten Erzählwerks, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Schlußes aus*" (Ibid., p. 17).

46. Ibid., p. 18.

47. "*Viele erzählerische and sonstige Texts erweisen sich als dem ursprünglichen Hauptzusammenhang völlig fremd, weshalb sie als sekundäre Zusätze auszuscheiden sind (so der Sinai und die Bileamerzählung)*" (Ibid., p. 18).

48. Ibid., p. 18.

49. Ibid., p. 25.

50. "Diese Einleitung erweckt folgende Erwartungen: damit die Verheissungen in Erfüllung gehen können, muss als erstes Hindernis die Unfruchtbarkeit Sarais behoben werden, sodass sie Abraham einin Sohn gebären kann; danach muss erzählt werden, wie Abrahams Nachkommen ein grosses Volk werden, und schliesslich muss die Geschichte davon handeln, wie dies Volk das verheissene Land in Besitz nimmt. Es ist zu beachten, dass die Verheissung der Nachkommenschaft und die des Landes in eben dieser Reihenfolge in Gen. 12, 1—7 gegeben wird" (Ibid., p. 33).

51. "Entsprechend entwickelt sich auch die Erzählung des Hexateuchs: Abraham wird ein Sohn verheissen und Sara gebiert Isaak; Jakob, der Sohn Issaks, erhält den Namen Israel und wird damit zum Ahnherrn des Volkes; seine Sohne sind die Väter der zwölf Stämme; in Ägypten werden sie ein grosses Volk und damit ist die erste Verheissung an Abraham erfüllt. Das Volk hat jedoch kein eigenes Land und da es zahlreich und mächtig ist (XXXXXXX, Ex. 1,9), erregt es Furcht, die zu einer so schweren Unterdrückung führt, dass die Existenz des Volkes selbst gefährdet wird. Die Situation wird aber dadurch gerettet, dass die zweite Verheissung sich nun verwirklicht: unter der Führung Moses wird das Volk aus Ägypten befreit, um zum verheissenen Land zu gelangen. Der Auszug aus Ägypten und die Wüstenwanderung stehen also ganz unter dem Thema der Landesverheissung, Ex. 3—Deut. 34. Erst mit der Eroberung des Landes sind aber alle Verheissungen an Abraham verwirklicht worden, und damit ist auch die Hexateucherzählung—nahezu—abgeschlossen" (Ibid., p.33).

52. Ibid., p. 33.

53. "wo Abraham die Verheissungen empfangen hatte" (Ibid., p. 33).

54. Ibid., pp. 104-154.

55. Conroy, "Hebrew Epic," p. 29.

56. Ibid., p. 28. Conroy's study has received a cogent reply from Frank M. Cross who maintains that it is still permissible to delineate epic as "... the traditional narrative cycle of an age conceived as 'normative,' the events of which give meaning, self-understanding to a people or nation" ("The Epic Traditions of Early Israel: Epic Narrative and the Reconstructions of Early Israelite Institutions" in *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism*, ed. Richard Elliott Friedman [Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1983], pp. 13-39). Cross defines his use of epic (p. 19) as including the following:

- 1) "oral composition in formulae and themes of a traditional literature,
- 2) narrative in which acts of gods and men form a double level of action,
- 3) a composition describing traditional events of an age conceived as normative or glorious,
- 4) a 'national' composition, especially one recited at pilgrimage festivals." JE is Cross's focus and he conceives a J and E (largely parallel traditions of the events of Israel's origin) as "variant forms of an older, largely poetic epic cycle, and hence he terms JE 'epic sources'" (p. 20).

57. Tengström, pp. 37-101.

58. Gunneweg, 'Anmerkungen,' pt. 2.

This paper was first read at the midwest regional meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, Illinois, March 1985.

