

## THE LEGENDS OF GENESIS.

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[CONCLUDED.]

V. JAHVIST, ELOHIST, JEHOVIST, THE LATER  
COLLECTIONS.

THE collecting of legends began even in the state of oral tradition. In the preceding pages (*Open Court* for September, p. 526) we have shown how individual stories first attracted one another and greater complexes of legends were formed. Connecting portions were also composed by these collectors, such, notably, as the story of the birth of the sons of Jacob, which is not at all a popular legend but the invention of older story-tellers, and must have been in existence even before the work of J and E. And there are further additions, such as the note that Jacob bought a field at Shechem, and other similar matters. Those who first wrote down the legends continued this process of collection. The writing down of the popular traditions probably took place at a period which was generally disposed to authorship and when there was a fear that the oral traditions might die out if they were not reduced to writing. We may venture to conjecture that the guild of story-tellers had ceased to exist at that time, for reasons unknown to us. And in its turn the reduction to writing probably contributed to kill out the remaining remnants of oral tradition, just as the written law destroyed the institution of the priestly Thora, and the New Testament canon the primitive Christian Pneumatics.

The collection of the legends in writing was not done by one hand or at one period, but in the course of a very long process by several or many hands. We distinguish two stages in this process: the older, to which we owe the collections of the Jahvist designated by (J) and the Elohist designated by (E), and then a

later, thorough revision in what is known as the Priestly Codex (P). In the preceding pages as a rule only those legends have been used which we attribute to J and E. All these books of legends contain not only the primitive legends, of which we have been speaking, but also tell at the same time their additional stories; we may (with Wildeboer) characterise their theme as "the choice of Israel to be the People of Jahveh"; in the following remarks, however, they will be treated in general only so far as they have to do with Genesis.

"JAHVIST" AND "ELOHIST" COLLECTORS, NOT AUTHORS.

Previous writers have in large measure treated J and E as personal authors, assuming as a matter of course that their writings constitute at least to some extent units and originate in all essential features with their respective writers, and attempting to derive from the various data of these writings consistent pictures of their authors. But in a final phase criticism has recognised that these two collections do not constitute complete unities, and pursuing this line of knowledge still further has distinguished within these sources still other subordinate sources.<sup>1</sup>

But in doing this there has been a neglect to raise with perfect clearness the primary question, how far these two groups of writings may be understood as literary unities in any sense or whether, on the contrary, they are not collections, codifications of oral traditions, and whether their composers are not to be called collectors rather than authors.

That the latter view is the correct one is shown (1) by the fact that they have adopted such heterogeneous materials. J contains separate legends and legend cycles, condensed and detailed stories, delicate and coarse elements, primitive and modern elements in morals and religion, stories with vivid antique colors along with those quite faded out. It is much the same with E, who has, for instance, the touching story of the sacrifice of Isaac and at the same time a variant of the very ancient legend of Jacob's wrestling with the angel. This variety shows that the legends of E, and still more decidedly those of J, do not bear the stamp of a single definite time and still less of a single personality, but that they were adopted by their collectors essentially as they were found.

Secondly, the same conclusion is suggested by an examination of the variants of J and of E. On the one hand they often agree

<sup>1</sup> Such is the outcome especially in Budde's *Urgeschichte*.

most characteristically: both, for instance, employ the most condensed style in the story of Penuel, and in the story of Joseph the most detailed. For this very reason, because they are so similar, it was possible for a later hand to combine them in such a way that they are often merged to a degree, such that it is impossible for us to distinguish them. On the other hand, they frequently differ, in which case J very often has the elder version, but often the reverse.

Thus the robust primitive version of the Hagar story in J (chap. xvi.) is older than the lachrymose version of E (xxi.); the story of Jacob and Laban is told more laconically and more naïvely by J than by E; in the narrative of the birth of the children of Jacob J speaks with perfect frankness of the magic effect of the mandrakes (xxx. 14 ff.), instead of which E substitutes the operations of divine favor (xxx. 17); in the story of Dinah, J, who depicts Jacob's horror at the act of his sons, is more just and more vigorous in his judgment than E, where God himself is compelled to protect Jacob's sons (xxxv. 5, see variant reading of RV); in the story of Joseph the Ishmaelites of J (xxxvii. 25) are older than the Midianites of E (xxxvii. 28) who afterwards vanish from the account; in the testament of Jacob his wish, according to E (xlviii. 7), to be buried beside his best loved wife is more tender and more sentimental than his request in J (xlvii. 29 ff.) to rest in the tomb with his ancestors; and other similar cases might be cited.

On the other hand, E does not yet know of the Philistines in Gerar of whom J speaks (xxi. 26); the deception of Jacob by means of the garb of skins in E is more naïve than that by means of the scent of the garments in J; the many divine beings whom, according to E, Jacob sees at Bethel are an older conception than that of the one Jahveh in the version of J; only in J, but not yet in E, do we suddenly meet a belated Israelitising of the legend of the covenant of Gilead (xxxi. 52); in the story of Joseph, Reuben, who had disappeared in historical times, occupies the same position as does in J the much better known Judah of later times; the vocabulary of E whereby he avoids the name of Jahveh throughout Genesis, is based, as shown above (in *The Open Court* for September, p. 533), upon an early reminiscence which is lacking in J; on the other hand, one cannot deny that this absolutely consistent avoidance of the name of Jahveh before the appearance of Moses shows the reflexion of theological influence, which is wholly absent in J.

These observations, which could easily be extended, show also that there is no literary connexion between J and E; J has not

copied from E, nor E from J. If both sources occasionally agree verbally the fact is to be explained on the basis of a common original source.

But, thirdly, the principal point is that we can see in the manner in which the legends are brought together in these books the evidence that we are dealing with collections which cannot have been completed at one given time, but developed in the course of history. The recognition of this fact can be derived especially from a careful observation of the manner of J, since J furnishes us the greatest amount of material in Genesis. The observation of the younger critics that several sources can be distinguished in J, and especially in the story of the beginnings, approves itself to us also; but we must push these investigations further and deeper by substituting for a predominantly critical examination which deals chiefly with individual books, an historical study based upon the examination of the literary method of J and aiming to give a history of the entire literary species.

#### THE JAHVIST'S SOURCES.

In J's story of the beginnings we distinguish three sources, two of which present what were originally independent parallel threads. It is particularly clear that J contained originally two parallel pedigrees of the race: beside the traditional Cainite genealogy, a Sethite line, of which v. 29 is a fragment. In combining the two earlier sources a third one was also introduced, from which comes the legend of Cain and Abel, which cannot originally belong to a primitive time. In the story of Abraham also we can recognise three hands: into a cycle of legends treating the destinies of Abraham and Lot have been introduced other elements, such as the legend of Abraham in Egypt and the flight of Hagar, probably from another book of legends; still a third hand has added certain details, such as the appeal of Abraham for Sodom. More complicated is the composition of the stories of Jacob: into the cycle of Jacob, Esau and Laban have been injected certain legends of worship; afterwards there were added legends of the various sons of Jacob; we are able to survey this process as a whole very well, but are no longer able to detect the individual hands.

While the individual stories of the creation merely stand in loose juxtaposition, some of the Abraham stories and especially the Jacob-Esau-Laban legends are woven into a closer unity. This union is still closer in the legend of Joseph. Here the legends of Joseph's experiences in Egypt and with his brothers constitute a

well-constructed composition; but here too the passage on Joseph's agrarian policy (xlvi. 13 ff.), which interrupts the connexion, shows that several different hands have been at work. Furthermore, it is quite plain that the legend of Tamar, which has no connexion with Joseph, and the "blessing of Jacob," which is a poem, not a legend, were not introduced until later.

From this survey we perceive that J is not a primary and definitive collection, but is based upon older collections and is the result of the collaboration of several hands.

The same condition is to be recognised in E, though only by slight evidences so far as Genesis is concerned, as in the present separation by the story of Ishmael (xxi. 8 ff.) of the two legends of Gerar (xx. xxi. 25 ff.) which belong together, or in the derivation of Beersheba from Abraham (xxi. 25 ff.) by the one line of narrative, from Isaac (xlvi. 1-3) by the other.

#### THE PROCESS OF COLLECTION.

The history of the literary collection presents, then, a very complex picture, and we may be sure that we are able to take in but a small portion of it. In olden times there may have been a whole literature of such collections, of which those preserved to us are but the fragments, just as the three synoptic gospels represent the remains of a whole gospel literature. The correctness of this view is supported by a reconstruction of the source of P, which is related to J in many respects (both containing, for instance, a story of the beginnings), but also corresponds with E at times (as in the name Paddan, attached to the characterisation of Laban as "the Aramæan"; cp. the *Commentary*, p. 349), and also contributes in details entirely new traditions (such as the item that Abraham set out from Ur-Kasdim, the narrative of the purchase of the cave of Machpelah, and other matters).

But for the complete picture of the history of the formation of the collection the most important observation is that with which this section began: the whole process began in the stage of oral tradition. The first hands which wrote down legends probably recorded such connected stories; others then added new legends, and thus the whole body of material gradually accumulated. And thus, along with others, our collections J and E arose. J and E, then, are not individual authors, nor are they editors of older and consistent single writings, but rather they are schools of narrators. From this point of view it is a matter of comparative indifference what the individual hands contributed to the whole, because they



have very little distinction and individuality, and we shall probably never ascertain with certainty. Hence we feel constrained to abstain as a matter of principle from constructing a hypothesis on the subject.

#### RELATION OF THE COLLECTORS TO THEIR SOURCES.

These collectors, then, are not masters, but rather servants of their subjects. We may imagine them, filled with reverence for the beautiful ancient stories and endeavoring to reproduce them as well and faithfully as they could. Fidelity was their prime quality. This explains why they accepted so many things which they but half understood and which were alien to their own taste and feeling; and why they faithfully preserved many peculiarities of individual narratives,—thus the narrative of the wooing of Rebekah does not give the name of the city of Haran, while other passages in J are familiar with it (xxvii. 43; xxviii. 10; xxix. 4). On the other hand, we may imagine that they were secretly offended by many things in the tradition, here and there combined different versions (*Commentary*, p. 428), smoothing away the contradictions between them a little (*Commentary*, p. 332) and leaving out some older feature in order to introduce something new and different, perhaps the piece of a variant familiar to them (*Commentary*, p. 59); that they developed more clearly this motive and that, which happened to please them particularly, and even occasionally reshaped a sort of history by the combination of various traditions (*Commentary*, p. 343), and furthermore that they were influenced by the religious, ethical, and æsthetic opinions of their time to make changes here and there.

The process of remodeling the legends, which had been under way for so long, went farther in their hands. As to details, it is difficult, and for the most part impossible, to say what portion of these alterations belongs to the period of oral tradition and what portion to the collectors or to a later time. In the preceding pages many alterations have been discussed which belong to the period of written tradition. In general we are disposed to say that the oral tradition is responsible for a certain artistic inner modification, and the collectors for a more superficial alteration consisting merely of omissions and additions. Moreover, the chief point of interest is not found in this question; it will always remain the capital matter to understand the inner reasons for the modifications.

It is also probable that some portions of considerable size were

omitted or severely altered under the hands of the collectors; thus the legend of Hebron, as the promise (xviii. 10) clearly shows, presumes a continuation; some portions have been omitted from the tradition as we have it, probably by a collector; other considerable portions have been added after the whole was reduced to writing, for instance, those genealogies which are not remnants of legends, but mere outlines of ethnographic relationships; furthermore a piece such as the conversation of Abraham with God before Sodom, which by its style is of the very latest origin, and other cases of this sort. Moreover a great, primitive poem was added to the legends after they were complete (Genesis xlix).

We cannot get a complete general view of the changes made by these collections, but despite the fidelity of the collectors in details we may assume that the whole impression made by the legends has been very considerably altered by the collection and redaction they have undergone. Especially probable is it that the brilliant colors of the individual legends have been dulled in the process: what were originally prominent features of the legends lose their importance in the combination with other stories (*Commentary*, p. 161); the varying moods of the separate legends are reconciled and harmonised when they come into juxtaposition; jests, perhaps, now filled in with touches of emotion (p. 331), or combined with serious stories (*Commentary*, p. 158), cease to be recognised as mirthful; the ecclesiastical tone of certain legends becomes the all-pervading tone of the whole to the feeling of later times. Thus the legends now make the impression of an old and originally many-colored painting that has been many times retouched and has grown dark with age. Finally, it must be emphasised that this fidelity of the collectors is especially evident in Genesis; in the later legends, which had not such a firm hold upon the popular taste, the revision may have been more thorough-going.

#### RELATION OF JAHVIST TO ELOHIST.

The two schools of J and E are very closely related; their whole attitude marks them as belonging to essentially the same period. From the material which they have transmitted it is natural that the collectors should have treated with especial sympathy the latest elements, that is, particularly those which were nearest to their own time and taste. The difference between them is found first in their use of language, the most significant feature of which is that J says Jahveh before the time of Moses, while E says Elohim. Besides this there are other elements: the tribal patriarch

is called "Israel" by J after the episode of Penuel, but "Jacob" by E; J calls the maid-servant "sipha," E calls her "'ama," J calls the grainsack "saq," E calls it "'amtahat," and so on. But, as is often the case, such a use of language is not here an evidence of a single author, but rather the mark of a district or region.

In very many cases we are unable to distinguish the two sources by the vocabulary; then the only guide is, that the variants from the two sources present essentially the same stories which show individual differences in their contents. Thus in J Isaac is deceived by Jacob by means of the smell of Esau's garments, in E by the skins, a difference which runs through a great portion of both stories. Or we observe that different stories have certain pervading marks, such as, that Joseph is sold in J by Ishmaelites to an Egyptian householder, but in E is sold by Midianites to the eunuch Potiphar. Often evidences of this sort are far from conclusive; consequently we can give in such cases nothing but conjectures as to the separation of the sources. And where even such indications are lacking there is an end of all safe distinction.

In the account of the beginnings we cannot recognise the hand of E at all; it is probable that he did not undertake to give it, but began his book with the patriarch Abraham. Perhaps there is in this an expression of the opinion of the school that the history of the beginnings was too heathenish to deserve preservation. Often but not always the version of J has an older form than that of E. J has the most lively, objective narratives, while E, on the other hand, has a series of sentimental, tearful stories such as the sacrifice of Isaac, the expulsion of Ishmael, and Jacob's tenderness for his grandchildren.

Their difference is especially striking in their conceptions of the theophany: J is characterised by the most primitive theophanies, E, on the other hand, by dreams and the calling of an angel out of heaven, in a word by the least sensual sorts of revelation. The thought of divine Providence, which makes even sin contribute to good ends is expressly put forth by E in the story of Joseph, but not by J. Accordingly there is reason for regarding J as older than E, as is now frequently done. Their relation to the Prophetic authors is to be treated in subsequent pages.

Inasmuch as J in the story of Joseph puts Judah in the place of Reuben, since he gives a specifically Judean version in the case of the legend of Tamar, and because he has so much to say of Abraham, who, it seems, has his real seats in Hebron and in Negeb (southward of Judah), we may agree with many recent critics in



placing the home of this collection in Judah. It has been conjectured on the contrary that E has its home in Northern Israel; in fact this source speaks a great deal of Northern Israelitic localities, but yet, at the same time, much of Beersheba; furthermore, in the story of Joseph E hints once incidentally at the reign of Joseph (xxxvii. 8), though this too may be derived from the tradition. Certainly it cannot be claimed that the two collections have any strong partizan tendency in favor of the north and south kingdoms respectively.

Other characteristics of the collectors than these can scarcely be derived from Genesis. Of course, it would be easy to paint a concrete picture of J and E, if we venture to attribute to them whatever is to be found in their books. But this is forbidden by the very character of these men as collectors.<sup>1</sup>

#### THE AGE OF THE JAHVIST AND ELOHIST SCHOOLS.

The question of the absolute age of J and E is exceedingly difficult. We, who believe that we have here to deal with a gradual codification of ancient traditions, are constrained to resolve this question into a number of subordinate questions: When did these traditions arise? When did they become known in Israel? When did they receive essentially their present form? When were they written down? That is to say, our task is not to fix a single definite date, but we are to make a chronological scale for a long process. But this is a very difficult problem, for intellectual processes are very difficult in general to fix chronologically; and there is the further difficulty that blocks us in general with all such questions about the Old Testament, that we know too little about ancient Israel in order to warrant positive conclusions in the present case. Very many of the chronological conjectures of literary criticism, in so far as they are based only upon the study of the history of religion, are more or less unsafe.

The origin of many of the legends lies in what is for Israel a prehistoric age. Even the laconic style of the legends is primitive; the stories of the "Judges" are already in a more detailed style. After the entrance of Israel into Canaan foreign themes come in in streams. Very many of the legends presuppose the possession of the land and a knowledge of its localities. Among the Israelitish subjects, the genealogy of the twelve sons of Jacob

<sup>1</sup> If the reader cannot be satisfied with the little that we have given, he must at least be very much more cautious than, for instance, such a writer as Holzinger on the Hexateuch.

does not correspond with the seats of the tribes in Canaan, and must, therefore, represent older relations. The latest of the Israelitish legends of Genesis that we know treat the retirement of Reuben, the origin of the families of Judah and the assault upon Shechem, that is, events from the earlier portion of the period of the "Judges." In the later portion of this period the poetic treatment of races as individuals was no longer current: by this time new legends of the patriarchs had ceased to be formed.

The period of the formation of legends of the patriarchs is, then, closed with this date (about 1200). The correctness of this estimate is confirmed by other considerations: the sanctuary at Jerusalem, so famous in the time of the kings, is not referred to in the legends of the patriarchs; on the contrary the establishment of this sanctuary is placed by the legends of worship in the time of David (2 Sam. xxiv). The reign of Saul, the conflict of Saul with David, the united kingdom under David and Solomon, the separation of the two kingdoms and the war between them,—we hear no echoes of all this in the older legends: a clear proof that no new legends of the patriarchs were being formed at that time. At what time the legends of Moses, Joshua and others originated is a question for discussion elsewhere.

#### RE-MODELING OF THE LEGENDS.

The period of the formation of the legends is followed by one of re-modeling. This is essentially the age of the earlier kings. That is probably the time, when Israel was again gathered together from its separation into different tribes and districts to one united people, the time when the various distinct traditions grew together into a common body of national legends. The great growth which Israel experienced under the first kings probably yielded it the moral force to lay claim to the foreign tales and give them a national application. At this time the Jacob-Esau legend received its interpretation referring to Israel and Edom: Israel has in the meantime subjected Edom, the event occurring under David, and Judah retaining her possession until about 840. Meanwhile Ephraim has outstripped Manasseh, probably in the beginning of the period of the kings. In the legend of Joseph there occurs an allusion to the dominion of Joseph (xxxvii. 8, E), which, however, found its way into the legend at some later time. The dreadful Syrian wars, which begin about the year 900, are not yet mentioned in the Jacob-Laban legend, but only occasional border forays. The city of Asshur, which was the capital until 1300, is passed from

the memory of the Hebrew tradition; but Nineveh (x. 11), the capital from about 1000 on, seems to be known to it. Accordingly we may at least assume that by 900 B. C. the legends were essentially, as far as the course of the narrative goes, as we now read them.

As for allusions to political occurrences later than 900, we have only a reference to the rebellion of Edom (about 840), which, however, is plainly an addition to the legend (xxvii. 40*b*). The other cases that are cited are inconclusive: the reference to the Assyrian cities (x. 11 ff.) does not prove that these passages come from the "Assyrian" period, for Assyria had certainly been known to the Israelites for a long time; just as little does the mention of Kelah warrant a conclusion, for the city was restored in 870, though it had been the capital since about 1300 (in both of these points I differ from the conclusions of Cornill, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*,<sup>3</sup> p. 46). According to Lagarde, *Mitteilungen*, III., p. 226 ff., the Egyptian names in Genesis xli. bring us down into the seventh century; but this is by no means positive, for the names which were frequently heard at that time had certainly been known in earlier times.

But even though no new political references crept into the legends after about 900, and though they have remained unchanged in their essentials from this time on, they may nevertheless have undergone many interior alterations. This suggests a comparison with a piece like Genesis xlix.: this piece, coming from the time of David, harmonises in tone with the oldest legends. Hence we may assume another considerable period during which the religious and moral changes in the legends above mentioned were taking place. This period lasts over into that of the collection of the legends and is closed by it.

#### RELATION OF THE COLLECTIONS TO THE PROPHETS.

When did the collection of the legends take place? This question is particularly difficult, for we have only internal data for its solution, and we can establish these in their turn only after establishing the date of the sources. So unfortunately we are moving here in the familiar circle, and with no present prospect of getting out of it. Investigators must consider this before making unqualified declarations on the subject. Furthermore it is to be borne in mind that not even these collections were completed all at once, but grew into shape through a process which lasted no one can say how many decades or centuries. The real question in

fixing the date of the sources is the relation of the two to the authors of the "Prophets." Now there are to be sure many things in Genesis that suggest a relation with these Prophets, but the assumption of many modern critics that this relation must be due to some direct influence of the Prophetic writers is very doubtful in many cases; we do not know the religion of Israel sufficiently well to be able to declare that certain thoughts and sentiments were first brought to light by the very Prophets whose writings we possess (all later than Amos): the earnestness with which the legend of the Deluge speaks of the universal sinfulness of mankind, and the glorification of the faith of Abraham are not specifically "Prophetic." The hostility of the collectors to the images of Jahveh and to the Asherim (sacred poles), of which they never speak, to the Massëbâh (groves), which J passes over but E still mentions, to the "golden calf" which is regarded by the legend according to E (Exodus xxxii.) as sinful, as well as to the teraphim, which the Jacob-Laban legend wittily ridicules (xxx. 30 f.),—all of this may easily be independent of "Prophetic" influence. Sentiments of this nature may well have existed in Israel long before the "Prophets," indeed we must assume their existence in order to account for the appearance of the "Prophets."

True, E calls Abraham a "nabi" (prophet), xx. 7; that is to say, he lived at a time when "Prophet" and "man of God" were identical; but the guild of the N<sup>c</sup>biim was flourishing long before the time of Amos, and in Hosea also, xii. 14, Moses is called a "Prophet." Accordingly there is nothing in the way of regarding E and J both as on the whole "pre-Prophetic." This conclusion is supported by a number of considerations: the Prophetic authors are characterised by their predictions of the destruction of Israel, by their polemic against alien gods and against the high places of Israel, and by their rejection of sacrifices and ceremonials. These very characteristic features of the "Prophets" are absent in J and E: in Genesis J has no notion of other gods at all except Jahveh, and Jacob's abolition of alien gods for the sake of a sacred ceremony in honor of Jahveh, xxxv. 4 in the tradition of E, does not sound like a "Prophetic" utterance. Of an opposition to strange gods there is never any talk, at least not in Genesis.

And while these collections contain nothing that is characteristically Prophetic, they have on the other hand much that must needs have been exceedingly offensive to the Prophets: they have, for instance, an especially favorable attitude toward the sacred places which the Prophets assail so bitterly; they maintain toward



the primitive religion and morality an ingenuous leniency which is the very opposite of the fearful accusations of the Prophets.

We can see from the Prophetic redaction of the historical books what was the attitude of the legitimate pupils of the Prophets to ancient tradition: they would certainly not have cultivated the popular legends, which contained so much that was heathen, but rather have obliterated them.

In view of these considerations we must conclude that the collections took shape in all essentials before the period of great Prophetic writings, and that the touches of the spirit of this movement in J and E but show that the thoughts of the Prophets were in many a man's mind long before the time of Amos. This conclusion is supported by a number of other considerations: the legend of the exodus of Abraham, which glorifies his faith, presumes on the other hand the most flourishing prosperity of Israel, and accordingly comes most surely from the time before the great incursion of the Assyrians. And pieces which from the point of view of the history of legends are so late as chapter 15, or as the story of the birth of the sons of Jacob, contain, on the other hand, very ancient religious motives.

But this does not exclude the possibility that certain of the very latest portions of the collections are in the true sense "Prophetic." Thus Abraham's conversation with God before Sodom is in its content the treatment of a religious problem, but in form it is an imitation of the Prophetic "expostulation" with God. Joshua's farewell (Joshua xxiv.) with its unconcealed distrust of Israel's fidelity is also in form an imitation of the Prophetic sermon. In the succeeding books, especially the portions due to E, there is probably more of the same character, but in Genesis the instances are rare.

Accordingly we may locate both collections before the appearance of the great Prophets, J perhaps in the ninth century and E in the first half of the eighth; but it must be emphasised that such dates are after all very uncertain.

#### THE JEHOVIST REDACTOR.

The two collections were united later by an editor designated as R<sup>JE</sup>, whom, following Wellhausen's example, we shall call the "Jehovist." This union of the two older sources took place before the addition of the later book of legends to be referred to as P. We may place this collector somewhere near the end of the kingdom of Judah. R<sup>JE</sup> manifests in Genesis the most extraordinary



conservatism and reverence; he has expended a great amount of keenness in trying to retain both sources so far as possible and to establish the utmost possible harmony between them. In general he probably took the more detailed source for his basis, in the story of Abraham J. He himself appears with his own language very little in Genesis. We recognise his pen with certainty in a few brief additions which are intended to harmonise the variants of J and E, but of which there are relatively few: xvi. 9 f.; xxviii. 21<sub>b</sub>, and further in xxxi. 49 ff.; xxxix. 1; xli. 50; xlv. 19; xlvi. 1; l. 11; and several points in xxxiv; but the most of these instances are trifles.

Furthermore, there are certain, mostly rather brief, additions, which we may locate in this period and probably attribute to this redactor or to his contemporaries. Some of them merely run over and deepen the delicate lines of the original text: xviii. 17-19; xx. 18; xxii. 15-18; some are priestly elaborations of profane narratives: xiii. 14-17; xxxii. 10-13; the most of them are speeches attributed to God: xiii. 14-17; xvi. 9 and 10; xviii. 17-19; xxii. 15-18; xxvi. 3<sub>b-5</sub>, 24, 25<sub>a</sub>; xxviii. 14; xlvi. 3 $\beta$  (xxxii. 10-13; l. 24 $\gamma$ ); which is characteristic for these latest additions, which profess only to give thoughts and not stories, speeches containing especially solemn promises for Israel: that it was to become a mighty nation and take possession of "all these lands." Incidentally all the people are enumerated which Israel is to conquer: xv. 19-21; x. 16-18. These additions come from the period when the great world crises were threatening the existence of Israel, and when the faith of the people was clinging to these promises, that is to say, probably from the Chaldæan period. Here and there we meet a trace of "Deuteronomistic" style: xviii. 17-19; xxvi. 3<sub>b-5</sub>.

## VI. PRIESTLY CODEx AND FINAL REDACTION.

Besides those already treated we find evidence of another separate stream of tradition. This source is so distinct from the other sources both in style and spirit that in the great majority of cases it can be separated from them to the very letter. This collection also is not limited to Genesis, on the contrary, the legends of the beginnings and of the patriarchs are to it merely a brief preparation for the capital matter, which is the legislation of Moses. The Priestly Codex is of special importance for us because the entire discussion of the Old Testament has hitherto turned essentially upon its data. It is Wellhausen's immortal merit (*Prolegomena*<sup>4</sup>,

p. 299 ff ) to have recognised the true character of this source, which had previously been considered the oldest, to have demonstrated thus the incorrectness of the entire general view of the Old Testament, and thus to have prepared the field for a living and truly historical understanding of the history of the religion of Israel.

The style of P is extremely peculiar, exceedingly detailed and aiming at legal clearness and minuteness, having always the same expressions and formulæ, with precise definitions and monotonous set phrases, with consistently employed outlines which lack substance, with genealogies and with titles over every chapter. It is the tone of prosaic pedantry, often indeed the very style of the legal document (for instance xi. 11; and xxiii. 17, 18); occasionally, however, it is not without a certain solemn dignity (especially in Genesis i. and elsewhere also, cp. the scene xlvii. 7-11). One must really read the whole material of P consecutively in order to appreciate the dryness and monotony of this remarkable book. The author is evidently painfully exact and exemplary in his love of order, but appreciation of poetry was denied him as to many another scholar.

The selection of material both in large and in small matters is highly characteristic in P. The only stories of any length which he gives us are those of the Creation and the Deluge, of God's appearance to Abraham and of the purchase of the cave at Machpelah; all else is details and genealogies. From by far the greatest number of narratives he found use only for separate and disconnected observations. One has only to compare the ancient variegated and poetic legends and the scanty reports which P gives of them, in order to learn where his interests lie: he does not purpose to furnish a poetic narrative, as those of old had done, but only to arrive at the facts. This is why he was unable to use the many individual traits contained in the old legends, but merely took from them a very few facts. He ignored the sentiments of the legends, he did not see the personal life of the patriarchs; their figures once so concrete have become mere pale types when seen through his medium. In times of old many of these legends had been located in definite places, thereby gaining life and color; P has forgotten all but two places: the cave of Machpelah, where the patriarchs dwelt and lie buried, and Bethel, where God revealed himself to Jacob. On the other hand, he has a great predilection for genealogies, which, as we have seen, were the latest elements to be contributed to the accumulation of the legend, and which are

in their very nature unconcrete and unpoetical. A very large portion of P's share in Genesis is genealogy and nothing more.

Even those narratives which are told by P at length manifest this same lack of color. They are narratives that are not really stories. The account of the purchase of the cave of Machpelah might have been nothing but an incidental remark in one of the older story tellers; P has spun it out at length because he wanted to establish as beyond all doubt the fact that the cave really belonged to the patriarchs and was an ancestral sepulcher. But he had not the poetic power necessary to shape the account into a story. In the great affairs of state which P gives instead of the old stories, story-telling has ceased, there is only talking and negotiating (Wellhausen). Even the accounts of the Creation, the Deluge and the Covenant with Abraham manifest a wide contrast with the vivid colors of the older legends; they lack greatly in the concrete elements of a story. Instead of this P gives in them something else, something altogether alien to the spirit of the early legend, to wit, legal ordinances, and these in circumstantial detail. Another characteristic of P is his pronounced liking for outlines; this order loving man has ensnared the gay legends of the olden time in his gray outlines, and there they have lost all their poetic freshness: take as an illustration the genealogy of Adam and Seth. Even the stories of the patriarchs have been caged by P in an outline.

#### IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO CHRONOLOGY.

Furthermore P attaches to the legends a detailed chronology, which plays a great rôle in his account, but is absolutely out of keeping with the simplicity of the old legends. Chronology belongs by its very nature to history, not to legend. Where historical narrative and legend exist as living literary species, they are recognised as distinct, even though unconsciously. This confusion of the two species in P shows that in his time the natural appreciation for both history and legend had been lost. Accordingly it is not strange that the chronology of P displays everywhere the most absurd oddities when injected into the old legends: as a result, Sarah is still at sixty-five a beautiful woman whom the Egyptians seek to capture, and Ishmael is carried on his mother's shoulder after he is a youth of sixteen.

There has been added a great division of the world's history into periods, which P forces upon the whole matter of his account. He recognises four periods: from the creation to Noah, from Noah

to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses on. Each of these periods begins with a theophany, and twice a new name for God is introduced. He who is Elohim at the creation is El Shaddai in connexion with Abraham and Jahveh to Moses. At the establishment of the Covenant certain divine ordinances are proclaimed: first, that men and beasts are to eat only herbs, and then, after the Deluge that flesh may be eaten but no men be slain, and then, especially for Abraham, that he and his descendants shall circumcise themselves; finally, the Mosaic law.

In connexion with these, certain definite divine promises are made and signs of the Covenant given. What we find in this is the product of a great and universal mind, the beginning of a universal history in the grand style, and indeed P shows a genuinely scientific mind in other points: consider, for instance, his precision in the order of creation in Genesis i. and his definitions there. But the material of the legends which this grandiose universal history uses stands in very strong contrast with the history itself: the signs of the Covenant are a rainbow, circumcision and the Sabbath, a very remarkable list! And how remote is this spirit of universal history, which even undertakes to estimate the duration of the entire age of the world, from the spirit of the old legend, which originally consists of only a single story and is never able to rise to the height of such general observations: in J, for instance, we hear nothing of the relation of Abraham's religion to that of his fathers and his tribal kinsmen.

#### THE RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF THE PRIESTLY CODEX.

Furthermore, we cannot deny that this reflexion of P's, that Jahveh first revealed himself in quite a general form as "God," and then in a concreter form as El Shaddai, and only at the last under his real name, is after all very childish: the real history of religion does not begin with the general and then pass to the concrete, but on the contrary, it begins with the very most concrete conceptions, and only slowly and gradually do men learn to comprehend what is abstract.

It is characteristic of the religion of the author P that he says almost nothing about the personal piety of the patriarchs; he regards only the objective as important in religion. For instance, he says nothing about Abraham's obedience on faith; indeed does not hesitate to report that Abraham laughed at God's promise (xvii. 17). The religion that he knows consists in the prescription of ceremonies; he regards it of importance that the Sabbath shall

be observed, that circumcision shall be practised, that certain things shall be eaten and others not. In such matters he is very scrupulous. He abstains, evidently with deliberation, from telling that the patriarchs offered sacrifice in any certain place, and this evidently for the reason that these places were regarded as heathenish in his time. Similarly, in his account of the Deluge he does not distinguish the clean and the unclean beasts. It is his opinion that established worship and the distinction of clean and unclean were not introduced until the time of Moses.

But in this we hear the voice of a priest of Jerusalem, whose theory is that the worship at his sanctuary is the only legitimate worship and the continuation of the worship instituted by Moses. The Israelitish theocracy—this, in modern phrase, is the foundation thought of his work—is the purpose of the world. God created the world in order that his ordinances and commandments might be observed in the temple at Jerusalem.

The theophanies of P are characterised by their inconcreteness: he tells only that God appeared, spoke, and again ascended, and leaves out everything else. In this then he follows the style of the latest additions to JE, which also contain such speeches attributed to God without any introduction. It is evident that in this there is expressed a religious hesitation on the part of P to involve the supermundane God with the things of this world; it seems as though he suspected the heathen origin of these theophanies. At the same time we perceive what his positive interest is: he cares for the content of the divine revelation, but not for its "How." Moreover, it is no accident that he conceives of these speeches of God as "covenant-making": evidently he has in mind this originally legal form. This union of the priest, the scholar, and the distinctive lawyer, which seems to us perhaps remarkable at first, is after all quite natural: among many ancient races the priesthood was the guardian of learning and especially of the law. And thus it surely was in Israel too, where from primitive times the priests were accustomed to settle difficult disputes. P developed his style in the writing of contracts—this is quite evident in many places.

But it is especially characteristic of P that he no longer refers to the sacred symbols, which had once possessed such great importance for the ancient religion, as may be seen particularly in the legends of the patriarchs; in him we no longer find a reference to the monuments, the trees and groves, and the springs at which, according to the ancient legends, the divinity appeared. P has



expunged all such matter from the legend, evidently because he considered it heathenish. Here we see plainly the after-effects of the fearful polemics of the Prophets: it is the same spirit which branded the ancient sacred place of Bethel as heathen (in the "reform" of Josiah) and which here rejects from the ancient legends everything that smacks of heathenism to these children of a later time.

This much, then, is certain, that the conceptions of God in P are loftier and more advanced than those of the old legends; and yet P is far below these older authors, who had not made the acquaintance of the sacerdotalism of Jerusalem, but who did know what piety is. Just as P purified the religion of the patriarchs, so did he also purge their morality. Here too P adds the last word to a development which we have followed up in J and E. The old legends of the patriarchs, being an expression of the most primitive life of the people, contained a great deal that those of a later time could not but regard as wrong and sinful, if they were quite honest about it.

And yet, the belief of the time was that the patriarchs were models of piety and virtue. What pains had been taken to eliminate at least the most offensive things in this line so far as possible! When it comes to P at last, he makes a clean sweep: he simply omits altogether what is offensive (for instance, the quarrel of the shepherds of Abraham and Lot, Lot's selfishness, the exile of Ishmael, Jacob's deceptions); he even goes to the length of maintaining the precise contrary of the tradition: Ishmael and Isaac together peacefully buried their father (xxv. 9), and so did Jacob and Esau (xxxv. 29). Facts which cannot be obliterated receive a different motivation: thus he explains Isaac's blessing of Jacob as a result of Esau's sinful mixed marriages (xxvi. 34 f.; xxviii. 1 ff.), and he lays the crime against Joseph at the door of the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah (xxxvii. 2).

From all of this it appears clear that P dealt very arbitrarily with the tradition as it came down to him. He dropped old versions or changed them at pleasure; mere incidents he spun out to complete stories, and from whole stories he adopted only incidents; he mingled the motives of various legends, declaring, for instance, that the blessing received by Jacob from Isaac was the blessing of Abraham, which had been entirely foreign to the thought of the old story tellers (xxviii. 4; other instances may be found pp. 237, 247, 350 of the *Commentary*); from the stories of the old tradition, which stood in loose juxtaposition, he formed a continuous narra-

tive with close connexion,—this, too, a mark of the latest period. In place of the legends he placed his chapters with regular headings!

This narrator, then, has no conception of the fidelity of the older authors; he probably had an impression that it was necessary to lay to vigorously in order to erect a structure worthy of God. The older authors, J and E, were really not authors, but merely collectors, while P is a genuine author; the former merely accumulated the stone left to them in a loose heap; but P erected a symmetrical structure in accordance with his own taste. And yet we should be wrong if we should assume that he deliberately invented his allegations in Genesis; tradition was too strong to permit even him to do this. On the contrary, he simply worked over the material, though very vigorously indeed; we can often recognise by details how he followed his source in the general outline of events when no personal interest of his own was involved (see p. 139 of the *Commentary*). But this source, at least for Genesis, was neither J nor E, but one related to them.

#### THE AGE OF THE PRIESTLY CODEX.

After this portrayal of the situation the age of P is evident. It belongs by every evidence at the close of the whole history of the tradition, and certainly separated by a great gap from J and E: the living stream of legend from which J and E the old collectors had dipped, must by that time have run dry, if it had become possible for P to abuse it in this fashion for the construction of his history. And in the meanwhile a great intellectual revolution must have taken place,—a revolution which had created something altogether new in the place of the old nationality represented in the legends.

P is the documentary witness of a time which was consciously moving away from the old traditions, and which believed it necessary to lay the foundations of religion in a way differing from that of the fathers. And in P we have revealed the nature of this new element which had then assumed sway,—it is the spirit of the learned priest that we here find expressed. Furthermore, this also is clear to us from the whole manner of P, and particularly from his formal language, that we have not here the work of an individual with a special tendency, but of a whole group whose convictions he expresses. P's work is nothing more nor less than an official utterance.

It is the priesthood of Jerusalem in which the document P originated. Hence the applicableness of the designation "Priestly

Codex." Wellhausen has revealed to us the time to which this spirit belonged. This is the epoch following the great catastrophe to the people and the state of Judah, when the people, overwhelmed by the tremendous impression of their measureless misfortune, recognised that their fathers had sinned, and that a great religious reformation was necessary. Only in connexion with this period can we comprehend P, with his grandiose want of respect for what had been the most sacred traditions of his people. We know also well enough that it was the priesthood alone in that day which held its own and kept the people together after all other authorities had worn themselves out or perished: after its restoration the congregation of Judah was under the dominion of priests.

In keeping with this period also is the remarkably developed historical scholarship of P. The older epoch had produced excellent story tellers, but no learned historians, while in this period of exile Judæan historiography had lost its naïve innocence. Under the powerful influence of the superior Babylonian civilisation Judaism also had acquired a taste for precise records of numbers and measures. It now grew accustomed to employ great care in statistical records: genealogical tables were copied, archives were searched for authentic documents, chronological computations were undertaken, and even universal history was cultivated after the Babylonian model. In Ezra and Nehemiah and Chronicles we see the same historical scholarship as in P, and in Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zechariah the same high value placed upon exact chronology. The reckoning of the months also, which is found in P, was learned by the Jews at this time, and probably from Babylonia. The progress represented by this learned spirit as compared with the simplicity of former times is undeniable, even though the products of this learning often fail to appeal to us. It is probably characteristic of the beginnings of "universal history" that such first great historical constructions as we have in P deal largely with mythical or legendary materials, and are consequently inadequate according to our modern notions. In this respect P may be compared to Berosus.

The emphasis laid by P upon the Sabbath, the prohibition of bloodshed, and circumcision, is also comprehensible to us in the light of this period: the epoch in which everything depended on the willingness of the individual emphasised the religious commandments which applied to the individual. Indeed it may be said, that the piety of the patriarchs, who are always represented as "gerim" (strangers), and who have to get along without sac-

rifices and formal ceremonies, is a reflexion of the piety of the exile, when those who lived in the foreign land had neither temples nor sacrifices.

P's religious criticism of mixed marriages also, especially those with Canaanitish women, whereby the blessing of Abraham was forfeited (xxviii. 1-9) connect with the same time, when the Jews, living in the Dispersion, had no more zealous desire than to keep their blood and their religion pure.

Much more characteristic than these evidences taken from Genesis are the others derived from the legal sections of the following books. Finally there is to be added to all these arguments the late origin of the style of P.<sup>1</sup> And in accordance with this the fixing of the date of P as coming from the time of the exile is one of the surest results of criticism.

We need not attempt to determine here in just what century P wrote; but this much may be said, that the Law-book of Ezra, in the opinion of many scholars, upon which the congregation took the oath in 444, and in the composition of which Ezra was in some way involved, was P. Hence we may place the composition of the book in the period from 500 to 444. P too was not completed all at once, though this is hardly a matter of importance so far as Genesis goes.

#### THE FINAL REDACTOR.

The final redactor, who combined the older work of JE and P, and designated as R<sup>JE P</sup>, probably belongs, therefore, to the time after Ezra, and surely before the time of the separation of the Samaritan congregation, which carried the complete Pentateuch along with it—though we are unable, indeed, to give the exact date of this event. The fact that such a combination of the older and the later collections was necessary shows us that the old legends had been planted too deep in the popular heart to be supplanted by the new spirit.

Great historical storms had in the meantime desecrated the old sacred places; the whole past seemed to the men of the new time to be sinful. And yet the old legends which glorified these places and which gave such a naïve reflexion of the olden time, could not be destroyed. The attempt of P to supplant the older tradition had proven a failure; accordingly a reverent hand produced a combination of JE and P.

<sup>1</sup>Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, p. 393 ff. Ryssel, *De elohistae pentateuchici sermone*, 1878. Giesebrecht, *ZAW*, 1881, p. 177 ff. Driver, *Journal of Philology*, 1882, p. 201 ff.



This last collection was prepared with extraordinary fidelity, especially toward P; its author aimed if possible not to lose a single grain of P's work. We shall not blame him for preferring P to JE, for P never ceased to dominate Jewish taste. Especially notable is the fact that the redactor applied the chronology of P as a framework for the narratives of J and E. In Genesis there are a very few features which we can trace with more or less certainty to his hand: such are a few harmonising comments or elaborations like x. 24; xv. 7, 8, 15; xxvii. 46; xxxv. 13, 14; and further some retouching in vi. 7; vii. 7, 22, 23; and also vii. 3, 8, 9; and finally the distinction between Abram and Abraham, Sarai and Sarah, which is also found in J and E, and some other matters.

With this we have covered the activities of all the various redactors of Genesis. But in smaller details the work on the text (*Diaskeuase*) continues for a long time. Smaller alterations are to be found in xxxiv. and in the numbers of the genealogies, in which the Jewish and the Samaritan text, and the Greek translation differ. More considerable alterations were made in xxxvi. and xlvi. 8-27; while the last large interpolation is the narrative of Abraham's victory over the four kings, a legend from very late times, and of "midrash" character.

#### SUMMARY.

Thus Genesis has been compounded from very many sources. And in the last state we have described it has remained. In this form the old legends have exercised an incalculable influence upon all succeeding generations. We may perhaps regret that the last great genius who might have created out of the separate stories a great whole, a real "Israelitic national epic," never came. Israel produced no Homer. But this is fortunate for our investigation; for just because the individual portions have been left side by side and in the main unblended is it possible for us to make out the history of the entire process. For this reason students of the legend should apply themselves to the investigation of Genesis, which has not been customary hitherto; while theologians should learn that Genesis is not to be understood without the aid of the methods for the study of legends.

#### HOW GENESIS CAME TO BE ATTRIBUTED TO MOSES.

One word more, in closing, as to how Genesis has obtained the undeserved honor of being regarded as a work of Moses. From primitive times there existed a tradition in Israel that the divine



ordinances regarding worship, law and morality, as proclaimed by the mouth of the priests, were derived from Moses. When, then, these ordinances, which had originally circulated orally, were written down in larger or smaller works, it was natural that they passed under the name of Moses. Now our Pentateuch consists, in addition to the collections of legends, of such books of law from various periods and of very diverse spirit. And because the legends also, from the time of the Exodus, have to do chiefly with Moses, it was very easy to combine both legends and laws in one single book. Thus it happened that Genesis has become the first part of a work whose following parts tell chiefly of Moses and contain many laws that claim to come from Moses. But in its contents Genesis has no connexion with Moses. These narratives, among them so many of a humorous, an artistic or a sentimental character, are very remote from the spirit of such a strenuous and wrathful Titan as Moses, according to the tradition, must have been.