

The Neo-Documentarian Manifesto: A Critical Reading

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In the recent past, Wellhausen's classic Documentary Hypothesis has been developed and refined by a group of scholars who identify as "Neo-Documentarians." Their approach has been aptly described in a list of seven points published by both Joel S. Baden and Jeffrey Stackert. This list is labeled the "Neo-Documentarian Manifesto" here and will be critically discussed. The evaluation will particularly highlight the methodological separation between literary and historical perspectives and the notion of a mechanical compiler.

In the past few decades, there has been considerable disagreement among scholars from around the world on the question of the validity of the so-called Documentary Hypothesis for explaining the composition of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.¹ To be sure, a limited set of assumptions is shared by almost all scholars on a global scale who are dedicated to historical-critical work on the Bible.

This article goes back to a presentation at the SBL Annual Meeting in 2017 in Boston, Massachusetts, in a unit organized by Ziony Zevit. For an earlier discussion, see Joel S. Baden, "The Continuity of the Non-Priestly Narrative from Genesis to Exodus," *Bib* 93 (2012): 161–86; and Konrad Schmid, "Genesis and Exodus as Two Formerly Independent Traditions of Origins for Ancient Israel," *Bib* 93 (2012): 187–208. I would like to thank my reviewers and David Carr for some helpful comments.

¹See, e.g., Thomas Römer, "Zwischen Urkunden, Fragmenten und Ergänzungen: Zum Stand der Pentateuchforschung," *ZAW* 125 (2013): 2–24; Römer, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament: Die Bücher der Hebräischen Bibel und die alttestamentlichen Schriften der katholischen, protestantischen und orthodoxen Kirchen* (Zurich: TVZ, 2013), 120–68; David M. Carr, "Changes in Pentateuchal Criticism," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. Magne Sæbø (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 3.2:433–66; Reinhard G. Kratz, "The Analysis of the Pentateuch: An Attempt to Overcome Barriers of Thinking," *ZAW* 128 (2016): 529–61; Jan C. Gertz et al., eds., *The Formation of the Pentateuch: Bridging the Academic Cultures of Europe, Israel, and North America*, FAT 111 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016); Thomas B. Dozeman, *The Pentateuch: Introducing the Torah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017); Bradford A. Anderson, *An Introduction to the Study of the Pentateuch*, T&T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies (New York:

First, the Pentateuch is a document written in the first millennium BCE; second, it is composed of sources and redactional elements; third, there is one specific literary layer in the Pentateuch that can be distinguished with sufficient clarity from others, and that is P; fourth, the Pentateuch includes pre-P material; fifth, there are also post-P elements in the Pentateuch; and, sixth, D is a fairly safe and commonly accepted hypothesis among scholars.²

As minimal as these six points may seem, they nevertheless demonstrate that reckoning with independent source texts is a common assumption in current scholarship on the Pentateuch. It is not disputed whether the Pentateuch is compiled of sources, if by “source” a formerly stand-alone literary document is denoted.³ In this sense, all modern Pentateuch scholars are, to a certain extent, “documentarians.” Scholars, however, do not agree whether the traditional sources J, E, D, and P can be maintained altogether or whether, besides D, only distinguishing between the P and non-P material is a better option.

Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017); Joel S. Baden and Jeffrey Stackert, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

²For a discussion of P, see, e.g., Friedhelm Hartenstein and Konrad Schmid, eds., *Abschied von der Priesterschrift? Zum Stand der Pentateuchdebatte*, VWGTh 40 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015); Jakob Wöhrle, “The Priestly Writing(s): Scope and Nature,” in Baden and Stackert, *Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch*, 255–75. For D, see, e.g., Eckart Otto, *Deuteronomium*, 4 vols., HThKAT (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2012–2017); Udo Rütterswörden, “The Place of Deuteronomy in the Formation of the Pentateuch,” in Baden and Stackert, *Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch*, 276–96.

³See in more detail Konrad Schmid, “Has European Scholarship Abandoned the Documentary Hypothesis? Some Reminders on Its History and Remarks on Its Current Status,” in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, FAT 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 17–30. Joel S. Baden misconstrues the “European approach” by stating that “the nonexistence of J has been perhaps” its “central element” (*The Composition of the Pentateuch: Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*, AYBRL [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012], 67). The so-called farewell to J (see Jan Christian Gertz, Konrad Schmid, and Markus Witte, eds., *Abschied vom Jahwisten: Die Komposition des Hexateuch in der jüngsten Diskussion*, BZAW 315 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002]; Thomas B. Dozeman and Konrad Schmid, eds., *A Farewell to the Yahwist? The Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, SymS 34 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006]) does not propagate the idea that the texts traditionally attributed to J lack any coherence, but that J in Genesis and J in Exodus–Numbers does not constitute a continuous literary layer. Within Genesis, on the one hand, and the Moses story, on the other hand, the traditional J texts are indeed well connected among themselves. For the discussion of the crucial gap between Gen 50–Exod 1–2, see the initial footnote above and Konrad Schmid, “The Sources of the Pentateuch: Their Literary Extent and the Bridge between Genesis and Exodus; A Survey of Scholarship since Astruc,” in *Book-Seams in the Hexateuch I: The Literary Transitions between the Books of Genesis/Exodus and Joshua/Judges*, ed. Christoph Berner and Harald Samuel, FAT 120 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 21–41.

In the present discussion one can roughly distinguish three strands of scholarship, the traditional “Documentarians,” the “Neo-Documentarians,”⁴ and finally those who ascribe many pentateuchal texts to supplementary scribal activities. Many pentateuchal scholars, however, do not simply identify as belonging to one specific camp. Most of them would probably express sympathies with different parts of these strands but would not claim to be wedded to a specific position.

The so-called Neo-Documentarians propose and advance a revival and refinement of the Documentary Hypothesis for explaining the composition of the Pentateuch. Building on the work of Menahem Haran, this group includes scholars such as Baruch J. Schwartz, Baden, and Stackert.⁵ Baden and Stackert have agreed on a list of seven points that characterize the Neo-Documentarian approach to the Pentateuch, and this will be labeled here the “Neo-Documentarian manifesto.”⁶ It is first found in Baden’s book *The Composition of the Pentateuch* (2012). Baden’s approach in this book is still identified terminologically as the “Documentary Hypothesis” yet “in its most basic form.”⁷ In the concluding chapter (246–48) Baden outlines seven points that are presented again in a stand-alone online article about his book.⁸ The list of seven points is taken up by Stackert in his monograph *A Prophet like Moses* (2014).⁹ In what follows, I provide a critical reading of that “manifesto.” This is meant as a respectful interaction with one specific position on the question of how the Pentateuch came about. Of course, one needs to take into account, particularly for the presentation of the seven points in Baden’s and Stackert’s monographs, the context of their books. This is particularly true for those points that the authors claim are the results of exegetical evaluations (nos. 2, 5, 6, 7), whereas points 1, 3, and (in part) 4 denote methodological decisions made prior to the analysis of the texts. A full assessment of points 2, 5, 6, and 7 would have to engage in detail with the relevant textual analyses in the author’s books. That would go beyond what can be achieved in the framework of this article, although some preliminary evaluation of those points will be offered. The methodological points

⁴On the provenance of this moniker, see Jeffrey Stackert, *A Prophet like Moses: Prophecy, Law, and Israelite Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 19 n. 63.

⁵See the comprehensive presentation in *ibid.*, 19–20 n. 64, and Joel S. Baden and Jeffrey Stackert, “Convergences and Divergences in Contemporary Pentateuchal Research,” in Baden and Stackert, *Oxford Handbook of the Pentateuch*, 1–22, and, in the same volume, Baruch J. Schwartz, “The Documentary Hypothesis,” 165–87.

⁶Although Baden and Stackert do not refer to these seven points as a manifesto, the term seems appropriate for this consistent declaration of the primary positions of the Neo-Documentarian approach.

⁷Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 246.

⁸Joel S. Baden, “The Re-Emergence of Source Criticism: The Neo-Documentary Hypothesis,” *The Bible and Interpretation*, May 2012, <https://bibleinterp.arizona.edu/articles/bad368008>.

⁹Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 20–21. Stackert explicitly quotes (20 n. 66) the two pieces by Baden and identifies his list as a summary of Baden’s list.

(1, 3, and 4), however, will serve as the primary ground for clarifying disagreements, but also for identifying convergences, between different approaches to the composition of the Pentateuch.

I. NARRATIVE CONTINUITY

The first point on the list deals with the basic methodology for reconstructing source texts in the Pentateuch. Baden highlights the following: “I have argued here for placing the historical claims of the narrative at the forefront of the analysis, with style, theme, and theology playing only secondary, supporting roles.”¹⁰ In the online article, Baden replaces “historical claims of the narrative” with the clearer wording of “plot and narrative continuity,” thus avoiding the term “historical”: “Instead, we place at the forefront of the analysis plot and narrative continuity—the events that occur, the sequence in which they occur, cause, and effect.”¹¹

In his description of the Neo-Documentarian approach, Stackert takes up this first point as follows:

The Neo-Documentary Hypothesis creates a hierarchy of literary features for distinguishing texts that prioritizes plot claims and continuity of narrative over stylistic features and terminology (including the divine name). Indeed, style and terminology are relegated to a *corroborative* role, valuable for the *description* of a source once identified, not primarily for the *identification* of the source material itself.¹²

Stackert speaks of “plot claims” instead of “plot,” which seems to anchor the concept of plot more in the narrative itself than in its interpreter, and he assigns style and terminology not only a secondary but a corroborative role. In addition, Stackert relativizes the significance of the divine name as a source criterion, which meets a basic methodological consideration by Erhard Blum, who is very critical of

¹⁰Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 246. See also the approach in Baden, *The Promise to the Patriarchs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), e.g., 3–6; and the critique by Reinhard G. Kratz, “Die Verheißungen an die Erzväter: Die Konstruktion ethnischer Identität Israels,” in *The Politics of the Ancestors: Exegetical and Historical Perspectives on Genesis 12–36*, ed. Mark G. Brett and Jakob Wöhrle, in collaboration with Friederike Neumann, FAT 124 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 35–66.

¹¹Baden, “Re-Emergence of Source Criticism.”

¹²Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 20. See also Baden and Stackert, “Convergences and Divergences,” 11: “Neo-Documentarian scholarship, by contrast, focuses rigorously, if not exclusively, on the inconsistencies and contradictions inherent in the plot of the narrative.” They concede that the “Neo-Documentarian focus on plot” rather than on “elements of style and terminology” constitutes “a perhaps surprising twist of intellectual history, as it was these types of distinctions that were responsible for the popularization of the classical Documentary theory in the late nineteenth century” (12).

appealing to changes between “YHWH” and “Elohim” as a literary-critically or redaction-critically relevant criterion.¹³ “Theology” is mentioned, albeit as a secondary criterion, by Baden, but not by Stackert.¹⁴

This first point out of seven put forward by Stackert and Baden results from their starting observation that the Pentateuch is seen to be incomprehensible in its present form.¹⁵ The source division, according to the Neo-Documentarian approach, addresses leaps, gaps, and inconsistencies in the Pentateuch’s narrative flow and restores the original narrative threads within the sources.

It goes without saying that the questions of the plot and narrative continuity of an alleged source are *historical problems* and need to be critically informed by a historical and comparative analysis. This is also recognized by Baden, who discusses the challenging or even problematic narrative continuity of E in comparison with the Ugaritic Kirta epic.¹⁶ One may or may not be convinced by Baden’s analysis of Kirta and the resulting conclusions for E; his comparative approach is, however, important and laudable.

Nevertheless, it seems questionable whether a general methodological hierarchy of “plot and narrative continuity” over “style, theme, theology” can be

¹³Erhard Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984), 471–77. Blum stresses that only “YHWH” can be identified as a divine name, whereas “Elohim” is a general term for divine beings. In and of itself, changing between “YHWH” and “Elohim” therefore should not be considered a problem within a unified literary text. P, for instance, uses “YHWH” next to “Elohim” in a coherent way (see, e.g., Gen 17:1; Exod 6:2–3). See also Blum, “Der vermeintliche Gottesname ‘Elohim,’” in *Grundfragen der historischen Exegese: Methodologische, philologische und hermeneutische Beiträge zum Alten Testament*, ed. Wolfgang Oswald and Kristin Weingart, FAT 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 133–54.

¹⁴Stackert seems to be reluctant to use *theology* in a historical, descriptive sense (*Prophet like Moses*, 194–208, esp. 208). For a different view, see Konrad Schmid, *A Historical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019), 15–60.

¹⁵See Joel S. Baden, “Why Is the Pentateuch Unreadable? – Or, Why Are We Doing This Anyway?,” in Gertz et al., *Formation of the Pentateuch*, 243–51; see, e.g., 251: “What makes the Pentateuch unreadable is its thorough-going internally contradictory plot.” In *Promise to the Patriarchs*, 4, Baden speaks of “narrative inconsistencies.” Baruch J. Schwartz describes the combined text of Exod 7:14–25, which serves as his text case (“Documentary Hypothesis,” 177: “The results of this analysis of the account of the plague of blood are not the exception but the rule”) as “unintelligible” and “literary chaos” (178). According to him, “the contradictions, redundancies, discontinuities, and differences of terminology, style, and outlook ... make the canonical Torah unintelligible” (185).

¹⁶See Joel S. Baden, “Continuity between the Gaps – The Pentateuch and the Kirta Epic,” in Gertz et al., *Formation of the Pentateuch*, 283–92; and, in the same volume, Jeffrey Stackert, “Pentateuchal Coherence and the Science of Reading,” 253–68. A detailed methodological approach is offered by D. Andrew Teeter and William A. Tooman, “Standards of (In)coherence in Ancient Jewish Literature,” *HeBAI* 9 (2020): 94–129, here 108–12; and Michael E. Lyons, “Standards of Cohesion and Coherence: Evidence from Early Readers,” *HeBAI* 9 (2020): 183–208, here 201.

maintained within a historical-critical approach to the Pentateuch. The weight of observations regarding plot, style, theme, and theology depends on the specific texts under analysis, and it is hard to imagine why one set of observations should *generally* be more important than another for the reconstruction of the literary history of the Pentateuch. In addition, it is far from clear that style, terminology, or theology always, or at least more often than not, “support” or even “corroborate” the observations stemming from the analysis of plot and narrative continuity. In many cases, these different perspectives yield conflicting results and then have to be weighed according to their plausibility, not whether they belong to a certain methodological set. As Stackert puts it, stylistic features and terminology play only a secondary, not a “primary,” role in ascribing texts to sources. This is a methodological decision that one may or may not make; at any rate, it is not self-evident or a priori superior to other methods of identifying different layers in the Pentateuch. If a general agreement could be reached that any methodology has to be subordinated to the specifics of the texts, not the other way around, this would be already an important step forward in the discussion.

II. A COMMON FRAMEWORK OF THE PENTATEUCHAL SOURCES

The second point on the list pertains to the content of the reconstructed sources of the Pentateuch. Baden maintains, “We should recognize that the sources in fact tell very different stories within the same larger framework, with different episodes, in different orders, and with very different viewpoints.”¹⁷ This point is repeated in similar terms in the online article: “The sources in fact tell very different stories within the same larger framework, with different episodes, in different orders, and with very different viewpoints.”¹⁸ Stackert writes, “The Neo-Documentary Hypothesis recognizes that, in the midst of their common framework, the Torah sources may each tell its own story.”¹⁹

Both Baden and Stackert highlight the “larger” or “common framework” within which the different stories of the Pentateuch are situated. Stackert’s version of Baden’s second point is put in a more cautious way: instead of Baden’s formulation “the sources in fact tell very different stories,” Stackert limits himself to “may each tell its own story.” What is meant by “very different” or “its own story”? One source may tell about Abraham’s sacrifice on Mount Moriah, others may not. One source may include Pharaoh’s dreams in the Joseph story, the others may not. Is

¹⁷ Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 247.

¹⁸ See Baden, “Re-Emergence of Source Criticism.”

¹⁹ Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 20. See also Schwartz, “Documentary Hypothesis,” 178 (emphasis original): “Not all four [sources] are detectable at every point in the Torah, however, because *the four sources do not relate all of the same events.*”

this really “very different” in light of the overall story line that covers (at least)²⁰ the whole Pentateuch for all four sources according to the Neo-Documentarian approach? Baden and Stackert address a very important point here, but in my view they could go yet further. The Pentateuch’s source texts do not tell the same story *at all*. It is necessary to jettison the qualification in the midst of their “larger” or “common framework.” The assumption of a common framework for J, E, and P is very difficult to demonstrate even by the methodological means of the Neo-Documentarian approach set out in the first point—highlighting narrative continuity over against terminology, theology, and style. In my view, this is particularly evident for the transition between Genesis and Exodus: whether there are sources other than P that bridge this literary gap is questionable and disputed.²¹

Within the traditional Documentary Hypothesis, the similar outlook of the sources J, E, and P can be described as an expected outcome of primary focus on the problem of doublets in the Pentateuch. These served as the cornerstones of the theory; therefore, it was only natural that the sources reconstructed primarily on the basis of such doublets turned out to be similar in plot, given that they shared the same cornerstones. An additional, important argument was provided by Gerhard von Rad’s study on the form-critical problem of the Hexateuch. He had argued for a very ancient blueprint of the overall narrative plot of J, E, and P in the “small historical creed” present in texts like Deut 26:5–9.²² His view was accepted by Martin Noth and became a nearly canonical notion for pentateuchal scholarship in the twentieth century.²³ At the beginning of his *History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (1948), Noth stated:

This basic form [of the Pentateuch] did not finally emerge as the later consequence of a substantive combination and arrangement of *individual* traditions and individual complexes of traditions. Rather, this form was already given in the beginning of the history of traditions in a small series of themes essential for

²⁰On this question, see Baruch J. Schwartz, “The Pentateuchal Sources and the Former Prophets: A Neo-Documentarian’s Perspective,” in Gertz et al., *Formation of the Pentateuch*, 783–94; Baden and Stackert, “Convergences and Divergences,” 15 (“P, J, and E did not originally end with the death of Moses, but continued on. The compiler, however, was evidently not interested in what happened after Moses, because the aim was to create a law book”). See also Schwartz, “Documentary Hypothesis,” 184.

²¹See the discussion mentioned in nn. 1 and 4 above.

²²Gerhard von Rad, “Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuchs,” in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, TB 8 (Munich: Kaiser, 1958), 9–86; for the English translation, see von Rad, “The Form Critical Problem of the Hexateuch,” in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 1–78.

²³Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson, Scholars Press Reprint 5 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981; German original, 1948), 20; Noth, *Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtsweke im Alten Testament*, vol. 1 of *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, SKG.G 18 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1943), 211.

the faith of the Israelite tribes.... This has been clearly shown by Gerhard von Rad in his important study on the "Hexateuch."²⁴

Today, however, von Rad's position is no longer tenable: Deut 26:5–9 reflects not only Deuteronomistic but also Priestly language and texts and is rather a late summary than an early creed.²⁵ So there is no need to assume a basic earlier plot within the Pentateuch, articulated with minor variations between the sources. To be sure, neither Baden nor Stackert based his argument for a "larger" or "common framework" of the Pentateuch on Deut 26:5–9. Instead, the assumption of this framework stems from their perception of narrative continuity within their reconstructed sources. Nevertheless, the Neo-Documentarian picture of a broad similarity in plot between the sources of the Pentateuch—with many specific differences—bears some resemblance to the older documentary approach that it aims to replace. Some of the basic convictions of traditional documentary scholarship regarding the similar basic story line of J, E, and P still seem to be of residual significance, although the exegetical foundations of these convictions have already been abandoned.

III. THE COMPOSITION OF THE PENTATEUCH AS A STRICTLY LITERARY PROBLEM

The third point pertains to the literary nature of the Neo-Documentarian approach. In both versions of his seven points, Baden identically states: "The literary question is primary, and is in fact the only question that can be answered by the documentary theory."²⁶ Stackert formulates it as follows:

The Neo-Documentary Hypothesis divorces the division of the Torah sources from the reconstruction of Israelite religion. It is not that the former is irrelevant for the latter; I am arguing in this book for the fundamental relevance of literary analysis for reconstructing Israelite religious perspectives. It is simply that the two are properly independent of each other.²⁷

²⁴Noth, *History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, 2; see also Baden and Stackert, "Convergences and Divergences," 12. For a history of scholarship regarding the literary extent of the sources of the Pentateuch, see Konrad Schmid, "Sources of the Pentateuch."

²⁵See, e.g., among many others, Jan Christian Gertz, "Die Stellung des kleinen geschichtlichen Credos in der Redaktionsgeschichte von Deuteronomium und Pentateuch," in *Liebe und Gebot: Studien zum Deuteronomium*, ed. Reinhard G. Kratz and Hermann Spieckermann, FRLANT 190 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 30–45; Eckart Otto, *Deuteronomium 23,16–34,12*, HThKAT (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2017), 1865–89. For Gertz, Deut 26:5–9 is entirely Deuteronomistic, while Otto discerns a Deuteronomistic kernel in Deut 26:5a, 10a, and a postexilic expansion in Deut 26:5–9.

²⁶Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 247; Baden, "Re-Emergence of Source Criticism."

²⁷Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 20. Following John Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany* (London: SPCK, 1984), 260–66, Stackert turns directly

This third point is one of the most defining characteristics of the Neo-Documentary Hypothesis, which at the same time constitutes one of the major reasons why there is little enthusiasm among some European strands of pentateuchal scholarship for this approach. Traditional biblical scholarship, especially in Europe, has been strongly influenced by nineteenth-century historicism and is reluctant to analyze texts by bracketing out their historical contexts, especially if the analysis is aimed at reconstructing the literary growth of a given textual body. Both Baden and Stackert claim that the Neo-Documentarian approach to the Pentateuch is a literary solution to a literary problem.²⁸ Of course, according to them, it is possible as a second step to use these literary findings for historical investigation and reconstruction, but the two approaches have to be kept apart. The missing other half in Stackert's quote is conspicuous: "It is not that the former is irrelevant for the latter." This statement is true as far as it goes, but what about the opposite: Are historical questions relevant for dealing with the literary problem of the Pentateuch? Most biblical scholars would indeed claim that this is the case.²⁹ If the Pentateuch is an ancient text dating back to the first millennium BCE, how could scholarship *not* include every possible historical consideration in its methodology of how to explain its literary formation?

This methodological statement marks one of the most serious divergences in current Pentateuch research. It is not to be expected that scholars will reach a compromise any time soon. If the problem of the Pentateuch's composition is considered to be *only* a literary question and is dealt with *only* in terms of literary analysis,

against Wellhausen with this claim: "In his evaluation of Wellhausen, John Rogerson emphasizes the fundamental connection between Wellhausen's literary criticism and his historical reconstruction of Israelite religion. Rogerson argues that, to rebut Wellhausen's historical arguments, it is necessary to engage his literary analysis of the Torah sources. This is precisely the course taken in this study" (Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 19). Wellhausen himself was very skeptical about what he called the "mechanistic mosaic hypothesis" ("die mechanische Mosaikhypothese"); see Julius Wellhausen, "Brief vom 8.11.1880," in *Briefe*, ed. Rudolf Smend (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 78.

²⁸ But see the considerations of Stackert proposing a rather early historical setting of the sources of the Pentateuch (*Prophet like Moses*, 31–34), for instance: "Thus, a seventh-century date for P is possible" (33).

²⁹ See, e.g., R. Norman Whybray, *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 12–29; Ernest W. Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century: The Legacy of Julius Wellhausen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 244–45; Odil Hannes Steck, *Exegese des Alten Testaments: Leitfaden der Methodik; Ein Arbeitsbuch für Proseminare, Seminare und Vorlesungen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 7–14, 54–57, 73, 95, 126–56; Jean-Louis Ska, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*, trans. Pascale Dominique (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2006), 184–216; Jan C. Gertz et al., *T&T Clark Handbook of the Old Testament: An Introduction to the Literature, Religion and History of the Pentateuch* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 235–71; David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 115–17; Teeter and Tooman, "Standards of (In)coherence," 98–105; Lyons, "Standards of Cohesion and Coherence," 208.

then there is little hope that traditional scholarship on the Pentateuch will meet the proponents of this approach halfway in that regard. In addition, if the Neo-Documentarian approach insists on factoring out basic historical perspectives when reconstructing the Pentateuch's sources, then even the use of the term *documents* becomes difficult. To speak of the sources of the Pentateuch as "documents" goes back to the German term *Urkunde*, and an *Urkunde* is not only a written text but also a text that witnesses to something. From the very beginning, critical European scholarship was interested in the characteristics of the sources as historical sources, and not just as literary texts. Already Jean Astruc spoke of "mémoires originaux" ("original memories") when he identified the sources Moses used when compiling the Pentateuch.³⁰ And nineteenth-century biblical scholars were convinced that the sources of the Pentateuch were in one way or another "documents" relating to specific historical facts. In this perspective, the Neo-Documentarian approach is more a "literary" than a "documentary" theory.³¹

IV. THE DATING AND THE SEQUENCE OF THE PENTATEUCHAL SOURCES

The fourth point pertains to the dating of the Torah sources. Baden states:

In the Documentary Hypothesis as espoused here, the absolute dating of the sources is not a topic of investigation. There is little in the sources themselves that allows for any absolute dating. What is possible is relative dating, though only in one particular case. The relationship of D to E and J makes clear that D was written after the other two non-priestly documents. Yet whether J or E came first, or how P fits into this picture, are questions for which the literary data simply do not provide evidence. Nor does the theory rest on any specific dating of the documents: if all four were written within twenty years of each other, the literary evidence would not change; if J were written in the tenth century and P in the Middle Ages, the literary evidence would not change. The dating of the sources does not affect the Documentary Hypothesis.³²

³⁰ [Jean Astruc], *Conjectures sur les mémoires originaux, dont il paroît que Moïse s'est servi pour composer le livre de la Genèse* (Brussels: Fricx, 1753 [published anonymously]).

³¹ On current literary theories that also proclaim a disinterest in history, see Ulrich Schmid, ed., *Literaturtheorien des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2010), 39–193; and, for historically oriented approaches, 294–417. Both chapters include extensive bibliographies. Schwartz gives a more general explanation for the term *documentary*, which "is intended to convey that the Torah was created through the amalgamation of independent *written* texts, each of which was already a complete and self-contained work, a *document*, by the time it was incorporated in the Torah" ("Documentary Hypothesis," 184; emphasis original).

³² Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 247. In "Re-Emergence of Source Criticism," Baden similarly says, "In the Neo-Documentary Hypothesis, the absolute dating of the sources is not a

Stackert takes this point up as follows:

The Neo-Documentary Hypothesis also divorces the division of the Torah sources from their dating. The hypothesis is simply a literary separation of the sources on the basis of their internal, narrative claims and narrative continuity ... and it is irrelevant to their separation which source came earlier or later.³³

This fourth point is a corollary of the third one: the dating of the sources and their sequence do not affect the solution of the literary problem. Of course, Baden and Stackert are open to offering suggestions on how to date J, E, D, and P, but again, these are only secondary questions that do not impact the Neo-Documentary Hypothesis in its methodology or results.

Yet there is a significant implication hidden in this fourth point. The sequence of the sources becomes irrelevant only if one thinks that the sources, particularly J, E, and P, were written in splendid isolation one from another. There seems to be some variability within Neo-Documentarian approaches to this question. Baden names the priority of J and E over D.³⁴ Stackert, for instance, denies a direct literary dependence of Lev 26 on Deut 28 but reckons with some other kind of familiarity between these two texts.³⁵ Be that as it may, to assume that J, E, and P did not know each other or did not *want* to know each other may, of course, be a possible result of textually analyzing the Pentateuch. But to conclude that the literary data “simply do not provide evidence” for answering the question “whether J or E came first, and how P fits into this picture” is too cautious a statement.³⁶ Especially regarding the literary contacts between P and the non-P material, there is ample discussion in current scholarship that cannot simply be dismissed by claiming that there are not enough data to determine possible literary dependencies and their directions.³⁷ A

topic of investigation.... The dating of the sources has no impact on the Neo-Documentary Hypothesis.”

³³Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 20. See also above n. 28.

³⁴See also Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 32. Baden and Stackert state that there is a “general lack of precise linguistic correspondences” among J, E, and P, and that they were “essentially unaware of each other” (“Convergences and Divergences,” 12).

³⁵See Jeffrey Stackert, “Distinguishing Innerbiblical Exegesis from Pentateuchal Redaction: Leviticus 26 as a Test Case,” in Dozeman, Schmid, and Schwartz, *Pentateuch: International Perspectives*, 369–86, here 376: “It is enough to say here that, though structurally similar to Deut 28, Lev 26 does not evince the close language parallels with the Deuteronomic blessings and curses that would by themselves recommend a conclusion of direct literary dependence. Other proposed instances of dependence upon D in Lev 26 are likewise inconclusive. Yet because Lev 26 is an inseparable part of a larger corpus that does exhibit significant literary parallels with the non-Priestly Torah sources, it is likely that the Holiness author in this chapter simply was less slavish in his literary reuse of the non-Priestly material at his disposal.”

³⁶See n. 32 above.

³⁷See, e.g., Jakob Wöhrle, *Fremdlinge im eigenen Land: Zur Entstehung und Intention der priesterlichen Passagen der Vätergeschichte*, FRLANT 246 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 223–26; Erhard Blum, “Noch einmal: Das literargeschichtliche Profil der P-Überlieferung,”

good example in this respect is the relation between Gen 35:9–15 (usually attributed to P) and Gen 28:10–22 (usually attributed to J/E). Those two texts are replete with thematic and terminological links. In addition, there is a clear tendency in Gen 35:9–15 to correct some basic tenets of Gen 28:10–22, so that it seems difficult to deny that P, at least in some capacity, knows, presupposes, and reworks the non-P parallel in Gen 28:10–22.³⁸ Baden, of course, acknowledges the repetition of Gen 28 in Gen 35, but he distributes the text in Gen 35 among E and P in a way that links between Gen 35 and Gen 28 belong to one and the same source: E. This results in a picture of P in Gen 35 that lacks clear parallels in Gen 28.³⁹ However, some problems remain. For instance, he argues that the particle עוֹד (“again”) in Gen 35:9 (“God appeared to Jacob again”), which is usually identified as P, needs to be attributed instead to the compiler who created the problem of the sequence for the two theophanies in Bethel in the first place and apparently solved it in that minimalistic way.⁴⁰ The price for this solution is that Gen 35:14, now identified as belonging to E, loses its function as a critical quotation of Gen 28 in P and stands in an odd sequence in E.

There he [Jacob] built an altar and named the site El-bethel, for it was there that God had revealed himself to him when he was fleeing from his brother. Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and was buried under the oak below Bethel; so it was named Allon-bacuth. Jacob set up a pillar, a pillar of stone, and he offered a libation on it and poured oil upon it. (Gen 35:7, 8, 14)

In this reconstruction, Jacob’s erecting a pillar is the reaction no longer to a theophany but to the death of a person, and it takes place in Allon-bacuth instead of in Bethel. The libation then is hard to understand. In addition, the expression במקום אשר־דבר אֵתוֹ (“in the place where he had spoken to him,” Gen 35:14) would need to be relegated to the compiler, as in E God did not speak to Jacob in Gen 28.⁴¹ This

in Hartenstein and Schmid, *Abschied von der Priesterschrift*, 32–64; David M. Carr, *The Formation of Genesis 1–11: Biblical and Other Precursors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 250–64.

³⁸ See, e.g., Erhard Blum, “The Jacob Tradition,” in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, VTSup 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 181–211, esp. 191–92 (191: “These two episodes provide a text book example of a literary doublet indeed. The same event is described twice: after a divine revelation [including promises to the Patriarch], Jacob erects a *Massebah* in Gen 35 [exactly as in ch. 28], pours oil over it [as in 28] and names the place ‘Bethel’ [as in 28]”); Konrad Schmid, “Shifting Political Theologies in the Literary Development of the Jacob Cycle,” in *The History of the Jacob Cycle (Genesis 25–35): Recent Research on the Compilation, the Redaction, and the Reception of the Biblical Narrative and Its Historical and Cultural Contexts*, ed. Benedikt Hensel, *Archaeology and Bible 4* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 11–34, esp. 15–16.

³⁹ See his reconstruction in *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 239–40.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 242. On Gen 28:10–22, see also *ibid.*, 49–50; Baden, *Promise to the Patriarchs*, 73.

⁴¹ Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 243. On the overwriting of Gen 28:10–22 in Gen

is all possible to assume, but the driving force of this new source analysis seems to be the separation of P from its echoes of non-P texts.

V. THE LITERARY HISTORY OF THE PENTATEUCHAL SOURCES BEFORE AND AFTER THEIR COMPILATION

The fifth point in the Neo-Documentarian manifesto is the most interesting and remarkable one. It deals with the literary history of the individual sources before compilation and of the Pentateuch after the sources were combined. Baden writes, “The Documentary Hypothesis does not deny that each source has a history, nor does it deny that the Pentateuch itself has a history after the compilation of the documents.”⁴²

Stackert offers the following wording:

The Neo-Documentary Hypothesis proper concerns only the penultimate stage in the composition of the Torah, not the earlier stages in the composition of the sources that likely occurred nor the later, post-compilational redactional activity for which there is good evidence in the Torah.⁴³

Stackert’s last words here are noteworthy—there is good evidence for redactional activity in the Torah after the compilation of the sources. Baden does not deny it,⁴⁴ but neither does he stress this point.

35:9–15, see also Mark G. Brett, *Locations of God: Political Theology in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 105–7.

⁴²Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 248. The online article is very similar: “The Neo-Documentary Hypothesis does not deny that each source has a history, nor does it deny that the Pentateuch itself has a history after the compilation of the documents,” just replacing “Documentary Hypothesis” with “Neo-Documentary Hypothesis” (“Re-Emergence of Source Criticism”).

⁴³Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 20. See also Baden and Stackert, “Convergences and Divergences,” 8: “Those who identify a single, major compilation of pentateuchal source documents also readily observe the growth of the pentateuchal sources prior to their compilation. This is especially the case for the pentateuchal Priestly source. A majority of scholars, regardless of the other details of their reconstruction of pentateuchal compositional history, identify a P(g) base text that has been supplemented by at least one major stratum (H), and many scholars identify additional strata within or beyond H.”

⁴⁴See Joel S. Baden, “Source Stratification, Secondary Additions, and the Documentary Hypothesis in the Book of Numbers: The Case of Numbers 17,” in *Torah and the Book of Numbers*, ed. Christian Frevel, Thomas Pola, and Aaron Schart, FAT 2/62 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 233–47. See also Baden and Stackert, “Convergences and Divergences,” 13: “Redactional hands are associated directly with conceptual innovation. In the Neo-Documentarian model this is not unheard of—it is essentially what one finds in the prevailing theory of the relationship between H and P, for example.” In addition, Baden and Stackert admit that there were “ideologically motivated insertions in the pentateuchal text.” But “such literary interventions are seen as

If one is allowed to take this point at face value, then two very important perspectives discussed within redaction-historical approaches to the Pentateuch are back on the table in the dialogue with the Neo-Documentarians: the Pentateuch has a literary and redactional history both before and after the compilation of the sources. These are two very important elements of convergence between the Neo-Documentarian approach and other reconstructions of the literary growth of the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is the result of a very complex process that lasted for centuries and includes many more aspects than just combining formerly independent sources. The Neo-Documentarian is concordant here with Julius Wellhausen, who wrote in his *Composition des Hexateuchs*:

For reasons of simplicity, I prescind in most cases from the fact that the literary process in fact was more complex and the so-called supplementation hypothesis in a subordinate way can indeed be used. J and E were probably edited and augmented several times (J¹ J² J³, E¹ E² E³), and they were combined not as J¹ and E¹ but as J³ and E³. A similar process took place for JE, Dt, and Q before they were combined with the relevant unities.⁴⁵

Even more explicit was Hermann Gunkel: “J’ and ‘E’ are not individual writers but schools of narrators.”⁴⁶ Modern scholarship—Documentarian, Neo-Documentarian, or more redaction-historically oriented—into the early history of the Pentateuch provides an apt illustration of the basic adequacy of Wellhausen’s and Gunkel’s statements.⁴⁷ Following Julius Popper and Abraham Kuenen, Wellhausen also reckoned with further additions to the Pentateuch after the combination of JE

distinct from the redactional process by which the sources were brought together. In a sense, then, this approach simply takes a more restrictive view of what is labeled as redaction. The melding of combination and supplementation so prominent in the transmission-historical approach is largely absent from the Neo-Documentarian. More precisely, the Neo-Documentarian theory works in terms of process, rather than actual literary hands. It is possible that the same figure who combined the pentateuchal sources also added blocks of text to the near-finished product. But because these are separate literary processes, they are kept distinct, with the understanding that it is impossible to confidently assign both to the same literal hand” (“Convergences and Divergences,” 14).

⁴⁵ Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Reimer, 1899), 207: “Der Einfachheit wegen abstrahire ich meistens davon, dass der literarische Process in Wirklichkeit compliciter gewesen ist und die sogenannte Ergänzungshypothese in untergeordneter Weise doch ihre Anwendung findet. J und E haben wol erst mehrere vermehrte Ausgaben (J¹ J² J³, E¹ E² E³) erlebt und sind nicht als J¹ und E¹, sondern als J³ und E³ zusammengearbeitet. Ähnliches gilt von JE, Dt und Q, bevor sie mit den betreffenden grösseren Ganzen vereinigt wurden.”

⁴⁶ Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, 6th ed., HKAT 1.1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964); repr. from 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910), lxxxv: “J’ und ‘E’ sind also nicht Einzelschriftsteller, sondern Erzählerschulen.”

⁴⁷ See nn. 1 and 3 above.

and P.⁴⁸ This research perspective has been significantly developed in the past few decades.⁴⁹

It is helpful to retain this basic consensus among the different approaches. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to see more reconstructions particularly of earlier layers before the penultimate stage in the composition of the Pentateuch from the proponents of the Neo-Documentarian approach, despite some statements to the contrary that hold this enterprise as not very promising.⁵⁰

VI. THE COMPILATION OF THE PENTATEUCHAL SOURCES

The sixth point is somewhat surprising after the fifth one, which stated that there is a history of the Pentateuch before and after compilation of the sources. This sixth point returns to the specific question of the compilation of the four sources and asks, Who combined the sources? Here, Baden differs from the classical approach of the Documentary Hypothesis, which posited three redactors: R^{JE}, R^{JEP}, and R^{JEDP}. He states, “In stark contrast, I have argued that the evidence requires but a single compiler, who was responsible for the combination of all four sources.”⁵¹ The online article adds the qualification “almost mechanical,” explaining that the compiler hardly added any text of his own. Instead, he basically tried to combine the sources at hand in the most logical and least conflicting way possible: “The

⁴⁸See Julius Popper, *Der biblische Bericht über die Stiftshütte: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Composition und Diaskeue des Pentateuch* (Leipzig: Hunger, 1862); Abraham Kuenen, *An Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin and Composition of the Hexateuch (Pentateuch and Book of Joshua)*, trans. Philip H. Wicksteed; London: Macmillan, 1886), 315; Kuenen, *De Godsdienst van Israel Tot den Ondergang van den Joodschen Staat*, 3 vols. (Harlem: Kruseman, 1870), 2:265–66; Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs*, 329. On Popper, see Ran HaCohen, *Reclaiming the Hebrew Bible: German-Jewish Reception of Biblical Criticism*, SJ 56 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 137–41; on Kuenen and Wellhausen, see Rudolf Smend, “Kuenen and Wellhausen,” in *Abraham Kuenen (1828–1891): His Major Contributions to the Study of the Old Testament; A Collection of Old Testament Studies Published on the Occasion of the Centenary of Abraham Kuenen’s Death (10 December 1991)*, ed. P. B. Dirksen and A. van der Kooij, OtSt 29 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 113–27, here 125; Smend, “The Work of Abraham Kuenen and Julius Wellhausen,” in Sæbø, *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, 3.1:424–53.

⁴⁹See Konrad Schmid, “Post-Priestly Additions in the Pentateuch: A Survey of Scholarship,” in Gertz et al., *Formation of the Pentateuch*, 589–604.

⁵⁰See, e.g., Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 81: “The J document—like all documents of the Pentateuch—is founded on a variety of traditions, some, if not all, of which were originally independent oral traditions. Yet the written text, the literary work, is so thoroughly interconnected and interdependent; continuous and coherent and well developed in plot, character, and concept; and full of explicit cross-references and thematic consistencies that it cannot but be considered a unified piece.”

⁵¹Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 248.

Neo-Documentary Hypothesis posits a single, almost mechanical compiler, who was responsible for the combination of all four sources.”⁵² Stackert’s version of that point is as follows: “The Neo-Documentary Hypothesis posits that a single compiler, working with a consistent method, is responsible for the combination of the four Torah sources into a single story in a single compilational event.”⁵³

Stackert’s wording replaces “almost mechanical” with “working with a consistent method,” thus avoiding the technological imagery for the compiler’s method. In addition, he describes his *modus operandi* as follows: “The principles of this compilational method are chronological arrangement [with reference to the chronologies of the plots of the sources it combines], preservation of source material, and minimal intervention.”⁵⁴

There is some kind of theoretical link between the isolation of the sources from one another and the requirement of a single, “almost mechanical” compiler.⁵⁵ If the sources, particularly J, E, and P, do not have anything to do with one another such that they existed separately from one another, then apparently it was simply a matter of collecting these sources that led to their combination by R in a “mechanical way.”⁵⁶

Within the Neo-Documentarian approach, this “mechanical” notion of the compiler is a direct corollary of its way of reconstructing the sources of the Pentateuch by paying attention to plot and narrative rather than to theme, style, or theology: The more complex the sources are allowed to be, the simpler the compiler’s (or redactor’s)⁵⁷ work can be described. Of course, biblical redactors are very hard to grasp, as their characterization depends on which texts are ascribed to them.⁵⁸

⁵²Baden, “Re-Emergence of Source Criticism.” Baden and Stackert highlight that describing the compilation as “mechanical” “need not be pejorative” (“Convergences and Divergences,” 13).

⁵³Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 21.

⁵⁴Ibid. See also Schwartz, “Documentary Hypothesis,” 185: “It is equally apparent that the combination of these four sources was undertaken with the express aim of preserving intact the precise verbal form of each one to the greatest extent possible and intervening—altering, adding, deleting, or rearranging ... only when absolutely unavoidable.”

⁵⁵The term *author* for this compiler is consciously avoided: “Neo-Documentarians clearly distinguish between the authors who composed the Torah sources and a compiler who subsequently combined them” (Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 21 n. 67; see also Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 220). For the term *redactor*, see nn. 56–59 below.

⁵⁶See Joel S. Baden, “Redactor or Rabbenu? Revisiting an Old Question of Identity,” in *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls: John Collins at Seventy*, ed. Joel Baden, Hindy Najman, and Eibert Tigchelaar, 2 vols., JSJSup 175 (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 1:96–112.

⁵⁷See Baden’s wording in *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 217–18: “the redactor, that is, the compiler.” See also Baden and Stackert, “Convergences and Divergences,” 13: “the redactor, usually referred to in this approach as ‘the compiler.’”

⁵⁸See further Herbert Donner, “Der Redaktor: Überlegungen zum vorkritischen Umgang mit der Heiligen Schrift,” in *Aufsätze zum Alten Testament aus vier Jahrzehnten*, BZAW 224 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 259–85.

But, historically, it is doubtful that a “mechanical” compiler or redactor is the most plausible explanation for how the Pentateuch came about.⁵⁹ As a consequence, Baden’s own view of R is more theoretical than historical.

The redactor was, and remains, nothing more than a necessary theoretical figure, whose existence is entirely dependent on the fact that the canonical version is made up of multiple sources, and someone, somewhere, at some time had to combine them.⁶⁰

This notion of a very passive compiler would denote peculiar phenomena in the growth of the Hebrew Bible. In and of itself, this is, of course, not a problem: in all historical phenomena, there may be the need to reckon with exceptional or singular events. The question is just how likely such events are. Baden and Stackert claim that their reconstruction of the compiler can be “evidenced in the Torah.”⁶¹ Yet, if literary and historical considerations are to be held separate, as the Neo-Documentarian approach posits, the argument for such a compiler immunizes itself from historical critique and will be compelling only for those who accept this methodological separation. For others, questions will remain. The scribes responsible for

⁵⁹Odil Hannes Steck aptly describes the redaction history of the Hebrew Bible as an inner-biblical reception process (*Die Prophetenbücher und ihr theologisches Zeugnis: Wege der Nachfrage und Fahrten zur Antwort* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996], 141–42 n. 27). Even Donner’s very reduced notion of a “redactor’s” work (see n. 58) is not limited to “chronological arrangement . . . , preservation of source material, and minimal intervention” (Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 21). According to Baden, the “compiler lived and worked . . . in the Persian period—not too much earlier, then, than the author of Chronicles. The mode of interpretation, if not the specific interpretation, employed by the Chronicler . . . may therefore not have been completely unknown to the compiler of the Torah.” Nevertheless, Baden hastens to add that he does not “intend to suggest that perhaps the compiler was himself some sort of early biblical interpreter. His methods and his results suggest quite the opposite: that he was trying very hard not to interpret his sources but rather to let them stand as much on their own as possible” (Baden, “Redactor or Rabbenu?” 110). The extent to which the “methods” and the “results” of the compiler are dependent on the methods of what textual material is assigned to him will remain a question of debate. Particularly noteworthy in this respect is point 4 above: if the sequence of the sources (except for J and E before D) is irrelevant, then hardly any option apart from a mechanical compiler is feasible.

⁶⁰Joel S. Baden, *J, E, and the Redaction of the Pentateuch*, FAT 68 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 286. In his criticism of the “European approach,” Baden states, “In short, the latest layer does not always succeed in reconfiguring the text in its own image; if that is understood as the purpose of the redaction, then we have to reckon with fairly inept redactors. This was a weakness of the Supplementary Hypothesis in the early nineteenth century, and it remains a weakness in the modern incarnation of the theory” (*Composition of the Pentateuch*, 66). Redaction-critical approaches to the Pentateuch do not claim that the final redactor aligns the text fully according to his own ideas. Rather, he adds his views while respecting the older traditions as expressed in earlier layers of the text. For the historical hermeneutics of this process, see, e.g., Reinhard Kratz, “Biblical Interpretation and Redaction History,” *HeBAI* 9 (2020): 209–46. See also n. 16 above.

⁶¹Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 21 n. 67.

the large body of texts now called “rewritten Bible,” for instance, operated remarkably differently.⁶²

VII. METHODOLOGICAL ECONOMY

The seventh point reads as follows in Baden’s book: “I have tried in this book to restore the economy of the earlier scholarship. The Documentary Hypothesis presented here requires precisely four sources and one compiler.”⁶³ In the online article, “economy” is replaced by “simplicity”: “The Neo-Documentary Hypothesis restores the simplicity of the earlier scholarship. It requires precisely four sources and one compiler.”⁶⁴ Stackert sticks with “economy” but associates “economy” with “defensibility” and speaks of “seeking” instead of “restoring.”

In line with the foregoing, the Neo-Documentary Hypothesis seeks a more economical and defensible solution to the problem of the incomprehensibility of the Torah than previous iterations of the Documentary Hypothesis (or, for that matter, current, non-Documentary alternatives).⁶⁵

This seventh point is difficult to accept for two reasons. The first is the quest for simplicity *as such*. Of course, scientific theories should be as simple or “elegant” as possible, but they cannot be simplistic.

The second difficulty with point 7 results from point 5 above: if the Neo-Documentary Hypothesis would explain the formation of the Pentateuch in full, then it would indeed be a simple hypothesis. However, given that it—correctly—allows for a history before and after compilation of the sources, it is difficult to see how the argument for simplicity remains valid in the world of history, rather than theory.

⁶² See, e.g., the addition of a promise to the text of Gen 32:25–30 in 4Q158 (Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, vol. 1, 1Q1–4Q273 [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 304–5), and the evaluation of 4Q158 by Molly M. Zahn, *Rethinking Rewritten Scripture: Composition and Exegesis in the 4Q Reworked Pentateuch Manuscripts*, STDJ 95 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 25–74 (for 4Q364–367, see 75–177), particularly 71: “the manuscript demonstrates a hermeneutical concern with coordination or connection of parallel or related texts.” See further Sidnie White Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times*, SDSSRL (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 19–59; Molly M. Zahn, “Editing’ and the Composition of Scripture: The Significance of the Qumran Evidence,” *HeBAI* 3 (2014): 298–316, here 315: “To my mind, the evidence places the onus on opponents of redaction criticism to make a convincing argument demonstrating why the closest available textual analogues should not be regarded as relevant.” See also Reinhard Müller, Juha Pakkala, and Bas ter Haar Romeny, eds., *Evidence of Editing: Growth and Change of Texts in the Hebrew Bible*, RBS 75 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014).

⁶³ Baden, *Composition of the Pentateuch*, 248.

⁶⁴ Baden, “Re-Emergence of Source Criticism.”

⁶⁵ Stackert, *Prophet like Moses*, 21.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This critical reading of the Neo-Documentarian manifesto has highlighted a series of seven self-characterizations that can claim to be convincing in two cases—points 2 and 5, although point 2 needs to be discussed critically with regard to the similar framework that is retained for the pentateuchal sources in the Neo-Documentarian approach. According to this evaluation, the methodological points 1, 3, and 4 are questionable and points 6–7 are, in my view, difficult to maintain. But the aim of scholarship is not to agree but to discuss differences in order to identify problems in the discipline and to refine our own positions with regard to methodology and possible results.

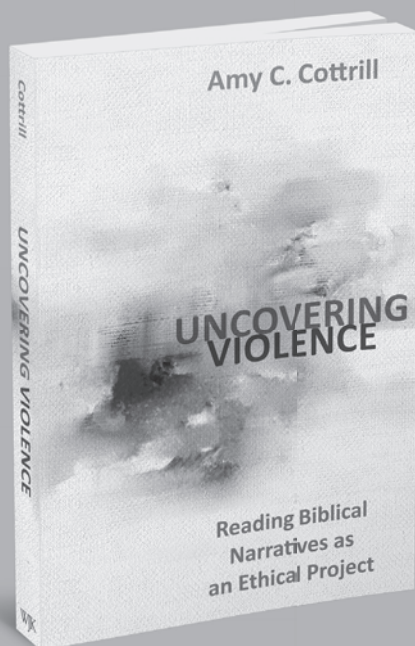
Isaiah Berlin's essay on the hedgehog and the fox, alluding to a fragment by the ancient Greek poet Archilochus—"a fox knows many things, but a hedgehog one big thing"—might serve as an example for characterizing the Neo-Documentarian position.⁶⁶ It rather seems to be a hedgehog's than a fox's position. Points 2 and 5, however, as mentioned above, add important "foxian" elements to it. The discussion of the Pentateuch will continue from different angles of scholarship and, due to the lack of external evidence of biblical texts from the biblical period itself, results will continue to be contentious.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, the interaction among scholars holding different methodological convictions and formulating specific hypotheses is crucial for the field. Disagreements will not be overcome lightly, but analyzing and trying to understand them is a first step for progress. It may well be, however, that the central issue of how much historical contextualization is necessary for reconstructing the literary composition of the Pentateuch will not be decided by particular observations, arguments, and conclusions. It is rather a matter that depends on general hermeneutical suppositions (as the "Vorverständnis" according to Hans-Georg Gadamer)⁶⁸ regarding the interpretation of cultural artifacts. But these need to be, of course, subject to critical assessment as well.

⁶⁶ Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1953).

⁶⁷ See the discussion in Konrad Schmid and Jens Schröter, *The Making of the Bible: From the First Fragments to Sacred Scripture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021), 43–69.

⁶⁸ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1960), 278, 314–15 et passim.

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