CONTENTS

1

INTRODUCTION

The five books of the Pentateuch are foundational to all of Scripture and rank as one of the most important sections in God's Word. Just as a knowledge of the four gospels is essential for understanding the New Testament, so the content of the Pentateuch is crucial to the rest of the Old Testament and for that matter the whole Bible.[1] The four gospels tell us about the incarnation as the Son of God came to dwell among men. In Exodus 40:34–38 the glory of God fills the tabernacle as the Lord dwelled among Israel to speak to them and to guide them in their travels. Even though we usually think of the wrath and power of God in connection with the Old Testament, Moses told Israel that God was near them whenever the people prayed to Him (Deut. 4:7). The Lord marvelously protected them from danger and revealed to them His laws and decrees, and even the pagan prophet Balaam had to admit that

> The Lord their God is with them;
> the shout of the King is among them.
> (Num. 23:21)

God worked in a wonderful way in the family of Abraham, not only to make of that people "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6)

1. Samuel J. Schultz, *The Gospel of Moses* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 1.

but also so that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen. 12:3). Ultimately that blessing came in the person of Jesus Christ, who was the mediator of a better covenant than the one established by Moses, so that salvation might come to the whole world.

THE FIVEFOLD DIVISION OF THE PENTATEUCH

The first five books of the Bible are commonly referred to as the "Pentateuch," a word derived from the Greek *penta* ("five") and *teuchos* (a case for carrying papyrus rolls but in later usage the scroll itself). The five-volume book corresponds to the Jewish description of the "five fifths of the Law" found in the Talmud.[2] This division of Moses' writings into five separate books may owe its origin to a practical consideration. No scroll could hold all of the words, whereas the five leather scrolls could be handled quite easily. Such an explanation also fits the division of the book of Psalms into five sections, since the 150 separate hymns likewise took up too much space.

The fivefold division of the law is also attested in the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint, both of which have five names for Moses' writings. The Jewish historian Josephus also spoke of the five books of the law in the first century A.D. Origen was the first to use the word *Pentateuch* in his commentary on John, and he was followed by Tertullian in his disputes with the Marcionites.[3]

Scripture itself refers to Moses' writings as "the Book of the Law" (Josh. 1:8; 8:34), "the Book of the Law of Moses" (Josh. 8:31; 23:6; 2 Kings 14:6), "the Law of Moses" (1 Kings 2:3), "the Book of Moses" (Ezra 6:18; Neh. 13:1; Mark 2:26), "the Law of God" (Neh. 10:28, 29), "the Law of the Lord" (Luke 2:23, 24), "the Law" (Ezra 10:3; Luke 10:26), or simply "Moses" in the phrase "Moses and the Prophets" (Luke 16:29; 24:27).[4]

To the Jews the single word *Torah* best described this part of Scripture. Torah means not only "law" but also "teaching" or "instruction."

2. R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 495.

3. Ibid., citing *Patrologia Latina*, ed. Migne, II, col. 282.

4. E. J. Young, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 39; W. LaSor, F. Bush, D. Hubbard, *Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 62.

These five books contain God's teaching about the origin of the world and of Israel and explain how a sinful people can meet with a holy God. For the Jew the Pentateuch contained an authority that the rest of the Old Testament—the prophets and the writings—did not seem to match, just as the importance of Moses exceeded that of any other Old Testament figure. When the Jews were driven from their homeland to take up residence in exile, it was the books of Moses that were read most frequently in the synagogues. It was common to read through the Pentateuch every three years, whereas other books were covered less systematically.

THE UNITY OF THE PENTATEUCH

The books of Genesis through Deuteronomy present a coherent picture of the origins of mankind and the birth and development of Israel as a nation. Except for the book of Genesis, these volumes focus upon the life and ministry of Moses, a man called by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Shortly after their release from slavery —a release predicted in Genesis 15:14—the people stopped at Mount Sinai, where God revealed to them His law and the principles of holy living. This important encounter lasted almost a year and is described in Exodus 19–40, the whole book of Leviticus, and Numbers 1–10. From Mount Sinai the Israelites journeyed to Kadesh Barnea, where they wavered in unbelief and refused to trust God to bring them safely into Canaan. The rest of Numbers quickly covers the forty years of wandering in the desert prior to the arrival of the Israelites at the plains of Moab in Numbers 22:1. There they barely survive the machinations of Balaam and Balak and were given instructions by Moses about life in the Promised Land. While situated there on the eastern banks of the Jordan River, Moses delivered his final addresses to the people, summarizing God's work on their behalf and encouraging them to be faithful to the Lord in the coming years. These final messages given by the great leader constitute the book of Deuteronomy, which ends with the account of Moses' death.

John Sailhamer has noted that the main narrative sections of the Pentateuch are concluded by poetic material sometimes followed by an epilogue. For example, at the close of the patriarchal narratives stands the poetic blessing of Jacob in Genesis 49 and an epilogue in chapter 50. The Exodus narratives are concluded by the song of Moses in Exodus 15, whereas the wilderness wanderings are followed by Balaam's

oracles in Numbers 23–24. At the end of the Pentateuch we find the double poetic section containing Moses' song of witness and blessing on the twelve tribes in Deuteronomy 32–33 and then the epilogue in chapter 34.[5]

Along with the overall continuity in the narrative, we can also point to the grammatical features that underscore the unity of the Pentateuch. For some reason these five books fail to distinguish between the third person pronouns, "he" and "she." Instead of using *hû* and *hî* like the rest of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch uses only the masculine form. The same is true of the words for "boy" and "girl." "Girl is normally written *na'arâ*, but the Pentateuch uses *na'ar* without the feminine ending."[6]

In spite of strong arguments in favor of the unity of the Pentateuch, a number of scholars support the idea of a hexateuch or a tetrateuch. Julius Wellhausen thought that Joshua should be combined with the first five books to form a "hexateuch."[7] Going in the opposite direction, Martin Noth spoke of a "tetrateuch" ending with Numbers, and he placed Deuteronomy at the head of a history that included the historical books through 2 Kings. The "deuteronomic work," as he called it, was composed during the exile, and Deuteronomy 1–3 functioned as an introduction to the entire corpus.[8] Although it is true that Deuteronomy is closely connected with Joshua, even the first chapter of Joshua distinguishes between the "Book of the Law" and other materials (v. 8). The law was given by Moses, and the unity of the five books is strongly supported by Jewish tradition and by internal considerations.

THE IMPACT OF THE PENTATEUCH ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

Rather than disturbing the unity of the Pentateuch by detaching Deuteronomy from the other four books, we should recognize that Deuteronomy and the rest of the Pentateuch greatly influenced the entire Old Testament. The law of Moses was intended as a guide both to the nation and to individuals within the nation, so it is little wonder that

5. John Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *EBC* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 1:7.

6. Gesenius, Kautzsch, and Cowley, *Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), 107.

7. Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs* (1876–77).

8. Martin Noth, *Uberlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien* (1943 reprint; Tubingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1957), 9.

subsequent writers wrote under the shadow of the Pentateuch. The impact of the Pentateuch was greatest upon the prophetic writers, but as we shall see, it influenced the poets and historians as well.

On the Historical Books

Joshua served many years as Moses' chief aide and commanding general, and the book that bears his name reflects their close association. Three chapters in particular emphasize the book of the law given by Moses (Josh. l, 8, 23), for Joshua was to urge the people to obey the teachings of his great predecessor. If they responded, God would bless the nation abundantly, but if they rebelled, the curses of the law would afflict them (Josh. 8:34; 23:6–13). Judges and part of Samuel recount how these curses did in fact fall upon the nation, but the rule of King David brought a return to godliness and blessing. The promise that David's son would build a house for God's name (2 Sam. 7:13) ties in with the words of Deuteronomy 12:5 that God would choose a place to put His name.

David's final words to Solomon stressed the commands and requirements written in the law of Moses (1 Kings 2:3). In subsequent centuries the godly kings Hezekiah and Josiah followed the Lord with all their hearts and all their strength, according to the commands given through Moses (2 Kings 18:6; 23:25). References to the Mosaic requirements and especially "the Book of Moses" are more frequent in 1 and 2 Chronicles (see 1 Chron. 5:15; 22:13; 2 Chron. 8:13; 25:4; 35:12). Ezra and Nehemiah also refer several times to Moses and his writings, probably because Ezra was a scribe by occupation.

On the Prophetic Books

Both the major and minor prophets contain important links with the books of Moses. Isaiah begins his majestic prophecy by calling on heaven and earth as witnesses, an allusion to the solemn call of Moses in Deuteronomy 30:19 and 32:1. Moses warned that disobedience would bring judgment, and Isaiah is about to announce the disaster soon to come. The God who will judge is called "the Mighty One of Israel" (or "Jacob") in Isaiah 1:24; 49:26; and 60:16—a title drawn from Genesis 49:24. Isaiah also calls God the "Rock" and "Savior" (17:10), names found together in Deuteronomy 32:15. God is the Creator as well as the Redeemer. Just as Israel had been rescued from Egypt, so will the remnant be delivered from Babylon. Isaiah 12:2 quotes those great

lines celebrating the victory won over Egypt at the Red Sea (cf. Ex. 15:2).

Jeremiah is heavily indebted to the book of Deuteronomy for some of its concepts. The stubbornness of the people's hearts—mentioned in 9:14; 13:10; 23:17; and elsewhere—confirms the evaluation of their condition in Deuteronomy 9:27. Moses had said that an idolater was like a root that produced "bitterness" and "poison" (Deut. 29:18 [HB 29:17]). These two words—*rō'š* and *la'anâ*—occur together in Jeremiah 9:14; 23:15 and in Amos 6:12. The fruit had been borne, and judgment was soon to follow. Repeatedly Jeremiah, who derives his wording from Deuteronomy 28:37, notes that Judah will be devastated and become an object of scorn and ridicule (25:9, 11; 29:18; etc.).

A sizable number of the curses found in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28–29 are cited in the prophetic books, an indication that these chapters were among the best-known in the Old Testament. For example, the blight and mildew threatened in Deuteronomy 28:22 do ruin the crops in Amos 4:9 and Haggai 2:17. Droughts and insects also ravage fields and vineyards (Hag. 1:10–11; Joel 1:4), in accord with the predictions of Deuteronomy 28:23, 38–39.

On the Poetic Books

The influence of the Pentateuch is not as pervasive in the poetic books, where even the word *torah* can mean "teaching" or "instruction" rather than the "Law" of Moses (cf. Prov. 1:8). Much of the poetic materials deal with either reflective or practical wisdom, concentrating on the meaning of life (as Job or Ecclesiastes) or on the importance of hard work and controlling the tongue (as Proverbs). Nevertheless, the book of Psalms begins where Joshua did, encouraging meditation upon "the law of the Lord . . . day and night" (cf. Ps. l:2; cf. Josh. 1:8). Psalms 19 and 119 also extol the law with its precepts and statutes. Since the priests did much of the teaching in Israel it is likely that "the strands of reflective and practical wisdom and the Temple and priests were closely associated."[9]

THE IMPACT OF THE PENTATEUCH ON THE NEW TESTAMENT

The ministry of Jesus and the apostles took place in a century when the Jews were keenly interested in the law of Moses, so it is not

9. C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Poetic Books* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 26.

surprising that there are numerous references to the Pentateuch in the New Testament.

Quotations

Except for Psalms and Isaiah, the books of the Pentateuch are the most frequently quoted in the New Testament. Deuteronomy is a close third over all, followed by Exodus, Genesis, and Leviticus.[10] Only Numbers with its three quotations lags behind. The chapters most frequently cited are Genesis 2, 12, and 15, Exodus 3 and 20, Leviticus 19, and Deuteronomy 5, 6, and 32. Leviticus 19:18 is quoted some nine times in the synoptic gospels (Matt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27) as well as Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; and James 2:8. The whole law could be summed up in the one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Likewise the crucial doctrine of justification by faith is firmly rooted in Genesis 15:6 (cf. Rom. 4:3, 9, 22; Gal. 3:6). When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the desert, He quoted three verses from Deuteronomy (8:3; 6:13, 16; cf. Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).

Typology

The experiences of the patriarchs and of the children of Israel are often used as "examples" or "types" (1 Cor. 10:6, 11) to illustrate spiritual truths.[11] Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High, enabled the writer of Hebrews to speak of Christ as a priest "in the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 7:1–17). The rivalry between Hagar and Sarah and their offspring in Genesis 16–21 was used by Paul to illustrate slavery and freedom, bondage to the law versus freedom in Christ (Gal. 4:24–31).

Israel's wandering in the wilderness formed the background to Paul's reference to drinking "from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:3). The episode at Mount Horeb where Moses struck the rock emphasized the satisfaction of physical

10. This comparison uses the index in the 3d edition of *The Greek New Testament*, ed. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo Martini et al. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975), 897–900.

11. Because of the fanciful interpretation of some commentators, typology was largely ignored for many years. In recent times it is making a comeback, however, partly due to the influence of Gerhard von Rad in his *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 2:363–87.

thirst (Ex. 17:6). Similarly the manna God sent to sustain Israel during those forty years led Jesus to refer to Himself as the "bread from heaven" and the "bread of Life" (John 6:32, 35). The bread was Jesus' flesh, which He would "give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). Finally those who looked in faith at Moses' bronze snake and recovered from the bites of poisonous snakes (Num. 21:9) were like those who look to Jesus for deliverance from eternal death (John 3:14–15).

Christ's death is also compared in some detail to the ministry of the high priest in Moses' tabernacle. On the day of atonement the high priest had to enter the most holy place to sprinkle blood on the cover of the ark of the covenant (Lev. 16:15–17). Hebrews 9:12 says that Christ "entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption." The "manmade sanctuary . . . was only a copy of the true one"; Jesus "entered heaven itself" (Heb. 9:24–25).

Through His death, Christ became the mediator of the new covenant, a covenant far superior to the old one made at Mount Sinai. The new covenant "is founded on better promises" (Heb. 8:6) and associated with joy, not the darkness and terror of Mount Sinai (Heb. 12:18–22).

THE THEOLOGY OF THE PENTATEUCH

Almost from start to finish the Pentateuch contains a rich store of theological truth, touching virtually every major area of theology. We learn about God's power and transcendence, but at the same time we see Him walking in the garden of Eden or fellowshiping with Moses on Mount Sinai. God is the sovereign Creator unlike any other god, but He reveals Himself by word and deed to individuals and to His covenant people Israel. Even the Egyptians learned that Yahweh was God.

Although man was made in the image of God, Genesis quickly tells us of man's sin and graphically describes the judgment of God. Yet in the midst of a fallen world, God graciously reached down to bring people back to Himself. Sacrifices can be offered to make atonement for sin, and Leviticus in particular describes how a sinful people can approach a holy God. The slaying of the Passover lamb in Exodus 12 and the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 wonderfully portray the ultimate sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. In His loving dealing with mankind, God forgives sin and calls for the wholehearted obedience

of His people. In spite of His righteous anger that repeatedly brought down judgment on sinners, the Lord is the "compassionate and gracious God . . . abounding in love and faithfulness" (Ex. 34:6). Nowhere are these qualities seen more clearly than in the Pentateuch.

God

God as Creator. The Pentateuch begins with a description of God as Creator of heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1), and it ends with a reference to God as the Father and Creator of Israel (Deut. 32:6, 15). The verb *create* (*bārā'*) occurs five times in Genesis 1 (vv. 21, 27) and another five times between Genesis 2:4 and 6:7. God is always the subject of the verb, and there is never a reference to any material used in creating. The verb translated "Creator" in Deuteronomy 32:6 is *qānâ*, which can also mean "to possess," "to buy," or "to bring forth" (Gen. 4:1; but see Ps. 139:13). This verb also appears in Genesis 14:19, 22, where Melchizedek calls on "God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth." In Genesis 1 the climax of God's creative activity is the creation of man—both male and female—in verse 27. A more detailed account of the making of Adam in 2:7 states that God "formed man from the dust of the ground." *Formed* (*yāṣar*) is the verb used of a potter as he fashions the clay (cf. Isa. 45:9, 11).

God as Creator is separate from and prior to the material world, whereas according to a Babylonian creation epic, the universe was made from the body of the slain Tiamat, and man was created from the blood of another god named Kingu.[12] God's separateness from nature is also evident in that the sun and the moon, commonly worshiped as gods throughout the ancient Near East, are mentioned only as "the greater light" and "the lesser light" (Gen. 1:16). The same verse includes the creation of the stars almost as an afterthought. The great creatures of the sea, likewise feared by the ancients, are fully under God's control (v. 21). God alone is the sovereign one, the God whom all must worship.

God as Redeemer. A second major portrait of God is His work as Redeemer. This is directly linked to the rescue of the nation of Israel from the land of Egypt, the greatest example of salvation in the Old Testament. The word *redeem* (*gā'al*) is explained most fully in Leviticus 25, a chapter that describes how property and personal freedom may be recovered. Land that was sold could be repurchased by the original

12. Alexander Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis* (Chicago: U. of Chicago, 1951), 118.

owner or by a relative of his (vv. 25–27). If a man became poor and had to sell himself into slavery, he or a relative had the right to purchase his freedom. This, too, is referred to as being "redeemed" (vv. 47–49). Another important use of "redeem" occurs in Numbers 35, a passage dealing with murder and accidental homicide. When a man was killed, it was up to a relative to put the murderer to death. This relative was called "a redeemer of blood" (*gō 'ēl dam*), translated as "a blood avenger," or "avenger of blood" (v. 19). If the killing was accidental, the individual was protected from the avenger of blood as long as he stayed in one of the cities of refuge (vv. 25–27).

God's work as Redeemer blends together the concepts of purchasing freedom and also avenging mistreatment. During the four hundred years in Egypt, the Israelites were oppressed and badly beaten as the slave drivers "worked them ruthlessly" (Ex. 1:12–13; 5:14). When the Pentateuch mentions the redemption of Israel, it usually links it with freedom from slavery (Ex. 6:6). Deuteronomy states repeatedly that God "redeemed you from the land of slavery" (7:8; 13:5). In the song of victory commemorating the triumph over Pharaoh at the Red Sea, Israel is referred to as "the people you [God] have redeemed" (Ex. 15:13). Moses connects the redemption from Egypt with the fulfillment of God's promises to the patriarchs (Deut. 7:8). Since God is faithful to His word, the people are urged to love Him and to follow His commands and decrees.

As a title for God, "Redeemer" is developed most fully by the prophet Isaiah. Between 41:14 and 63:16 the word occurs thirteen times, and other forms of the verb are also used. Isaiah argues that the God who redeemed Israel from Egypt will be able to rescue them from Babylon: a new "exodus" is in the offing. Because of His great love for Israel, God will ransom His people as He takes vengeance on the Babylonians. Israel's release is called "the year of my redemption" in Isaiah 63:4, and in 52:9 the prophet speaks of the songs of joy that will accompany freedom from Babylon.[13] Just as a kinsman-redeemer bought back the land of a relative, so Israel's Redeemer will restore the nation to her homeland and even enlarge her borders (54:1–8).

The attributes of God. Although the work of God as Creator and Redeemer is emphasized in the Pentateuch, other aspects of His character and work are also given due attention. For example, the holiness of God is especially seen in Leviticus, where the nation of Israel is

13. See Herbert M. Wolf, *Interpreting Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 214.

commanded to "be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (19:2). A holy God could only be worshiped in a sanctuary set apart from the community at large and under the supervision of a priesthood consecrated to Him. Yet the entire nation was to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" to demonstrate to the whole world the difference between their God and lifeless idols (Ex. 19:5). As God revealed Himself to the people at Mount Sinai, the whole mountain became holy ground, just as it had been for Moses a year earlier (Ex. 3:5; 19:11–13).

The holy and awe-inspiring God was clearly sovereign over His creation, fully able to take a Noah and an Abraham and through them to bring blessing to a cursed earth. When it appeared that God's purposes were being thwarted with the sale of Joseph to Egypt, God turned the intended harm into blessing for his brothers and for many surrounding nations as well (cf. Gen. 45:7; 50:20). When the Egyptians conveniently forgot all about Joseph and subjected the Israelites to cruel punishment, God taught Pharaoh through the plagues and the destruction at the Red Sea that He alone was Lord (cf. Ex. 15:11). As if to prove His sovereignty Yahweh "made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people" (Ex. 11:3) so that as they left the country they in effect "plundered" the people who had oppressed them (Ex. 12:36).

Throughout the Pentateuch we also learn that this powerful God is a God of love. He is "the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Ex. 34:6)—a description repeated in part in Numbers 14:18; Psalm 103:8; Joel 2:13; and Jonah 4:2. In spite of the stubbornness of the Israelites and their apostasy in the golden calf incident, Yahweh had mercy on them in response to Moses' intercession. Israel was indeed punished for their sins, but Yahweh would keep His "covenant of love to a thousand generations" (Deut. 7:9; cf. Ex. 20:6). When the people were groaning because of their slavery, God "remembered his covenant with Abraham" (Ex. 2:24), just as He had "remembered Noah" in the midst of the flood (Gen. 8:1). Even during the predicted exile, God would take delight in His people and bring them back to the Promised Land (Deut. 30:9).

Although we prefer to emphasize God's love and compassion, it is equally clear that His holiness and justice demand that sinners be punished. In Genesis God's wrath was poured out on a corrupt world through the waters of the flood, and Noah's descendants were themselves punished for trying to build the tower of Babel. In Canaan the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed for their sexual immorality, even though

Abraham begged "the Judge of all the earth" to do right and spare the righteous who lived there (Gen. 18:25). The awesome power of God was displayed in the plagues that ravaged Egypt and humiliated Pharaoh and his army at the Red Sea.

After the exodus it was Israel's turn to feel the wrath of God as thousands died at Mount Sinai and on the plains of Moab for their idolatry (Ex. 32:28; Num. 25:9). Aaron's two oldest sons perished for offering "unauthorized fire before the Lord" (Lev. 10:1–2), and the earth swallowed up Korah and his followers for rebelling against Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:31–33). Those who complained about conditions in the wilderness were struck down by fire or fiery snakes (Num. 11:1; 21:6). Finally Yahweh warned the Israelites that, even after they entered the Promised Land, if they disobeyed His commands He would be angry with them and drive them into exile in humiliation and disgrace (Lev. 26:27–32; Deut. 28:58–64). The diseases and plagues of Egypt would be sent to ruin them as they had destroyed Pharaoh.

The names of God. The Pentateuch contains almost all the major names for God. God reveals Himself to the patriarchs and to Moses through His actions and also through His names. Since a person's name expresses his nature and his very essence, great importance must be attached to the various designations for deity.

God. The Hebrew for "God" is *'elōhîm*, the generic word for "God" equivalent to Ugaritic *el* or Akkadian *ilu*. Elohim is the word used throughout Genesis 1, where it stresses God's work as Creator (see above). The Hebrew form is a plural, but it is consistently used with a singular verb. Scholars have explained this as a plural of majesty or of respect,[14] although W. F. Albright points also to the use of "Ashtoroth" (the Ashtoreths) and suggests that this connotes a deity's "totality of manifestations."[15] It is wrong to argue that the plural proves the doctrine of the Trinity, but it does allow for its later development.[16]

Elohim is often used in conjunction with the personal name "Yahweh," which precedes Elohim. The compound name, usually translated "LORD God," first occurs in Genesis 2:4. In Genesis 24 Elohim is "the God of heaven and the God of earth" (v. 3) and the "God of my master

14. R. J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Toronto: U. of Toronto, 1976), 6.

15. W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 2d ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U., 1957), 213.

16. Jack Scott, *TWOT*, ed. Laird Harris et al. (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 1:44.

Abraham" (vv. 12, 26, 43). He is called the God of Abraham and Isaac (28:13) and "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Ex. 3:6).

LORD (Yahweh). The personal name for God, whose meaning was explained most fully to Moses, was "Yahweh," better known as "Jehovah." The exact pronunciation of this name is not clear; only the four consonants—YHWH —are given in the Hebrew Bible. In scholarly discussion the intriguing name is sometimes called the tetragrammaton, the Greek word for "four letters." The vowels are not indicated because the Jews eventually refused to pronounce the name, not wanting to take the name of Yahweh in vain (Ex. 20:7) and perhaps to prevent pagan people from misusing it. When this sacred name appeared in a verse the Jews pronounced it "Adonay," the other word for "Lord" (see below). The vowels of "Adonay" were merged with YHWH to produce "Yehowah" (=Jehovah). The correct pronunciation was probably closer to "Yahweh," whose first syllable is preserved in "Hallelujah"—that is, "Praise Yah"—"Yah" being a shortened form of "Yahweh." Most modern translations avoid the problem by using "LORD" to render this name.

When Moses asked God what name he should use when the Israelites inquired as to who sent him to lead the nation from Egypt, God said to tell them that "I AM has sent me to you" (Ex. 3:14). Since "I AM" is a word spelled almost like "YHWH," we are quite sure that it holds the key to the meaning of this most intimate name for God. In verse 12 God says, "I will be with you," and this is likely the way "I AM" is also to be understood: "I am he who is there (for you)—really and truly present, ready to help and to act," especially in a time of crisis.[17] Just as Immanuel means "God with us" (Isa. 7:14), so "Yahweh" indicated that the God of Abraham had not forgotten His promises. The patriarchs were familiar with this name, but they did not know the full dimensions of its meaning (cf. Ex. 6:3). When Israel experienced God's redemption from Egypt (6:6–7), the people would understand Yahweh's gracious provision more fully.

Because the words "I AM" are ambiguous, some interpreters connect them with God's role as Creator, the One who exists eternally or who brings into being. Although these meanings make excellent sense in the light of

17. LaSor et al., *Survey*, 136. Cf. Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 150–51; Gleason Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 128; J. B. Payne, in *TWOT*, 1:210–12.

Genesis 1 and similar passages about creation, the contexts in which the name is used indicate otherwise. Yahweh first appears in Genesis 2 in connection with the garden of Eden and God's instructions to Adam. The name is often used in a covenant context since it indicates God's desire to fellowship with man. This is especially evident in the passages that describe the establishment of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12:1–9; 15:1–19). Similarly, when God entered into a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, the name "Yahweh" appeared frequently (Ex. 19:7–10; 20:2; 24:1–18). Moses warns the people that if they disregard the covenant, Yahweh will send plagues and disasters against them. Therefore, they must "revere this glorious and awesome name—the LORD your God" (Deut. 28:58–59). When Jesus claimed the name "I AM" in John 8:58, He clearly identified Himself with the God of the Old Testament and in doing so was nearly stoned for blasphemy. The Israelite who "blasphemed the Name" and was stoned to death at Moses' command probably was guilty of cursing the sacred name of Yahweh (Lev. 24:11, 16).

Lord (Adonay). The other word for "Lord," *'adōnay*, has the basic idea of "Lord" or "master." Pharaoh is referred to as "their master, the king of Egypt" (Gen. 40:1), and Sarah refers to Abraham as "my master" (Gen. 18:12; cf. 1 Pet. 3:6). Abraham uses the same word to address his heavenly visitors in Genesis 18:3, although it is not clear that he was aware of their supernatural character (cf. 19:2). When applied to God Himself, "Adonay" is usually combined with "Yahweh" and is rendered "Sovereign LORD" in the NIV (Gen. 15:2, 8). Both verses in Genesis 15 and the two in Deuteronomy (3:24; 9:26) employ "Sovereign LORD" in a context of prayer. Abraham pleads with the Lord for an heir, whereas Moses begs the Lord not to destroy His people and later prays that he might be allowed to see the Promised Land. In Deuteronomy 10:17 Yahweh is called "God of gods and Lord of lords."

God Most High. The name *El Elyon* (*'ēl `elyôn*) is composed of the shorter equivalent of Elohim, plus the adjective/substantive *'elyôn*, which means "high, most high." It occurs four times in Genesis 14:18–22 and once in Numbers 24:16 and Deuteronomy 32:8. In Genesis, Melchizedek is introduced as "priest of God Most High." Twice the name is coupled with "Creator of heaven and earth" (vv. 19, 22). Both names are associated with Canaanite deities also, although this does not mean Melchizedek worshiped false gods. The Ugaritic equivalent of Elyon, *'ly,* is an epithet of the god Baal in the Keret epic.[18]

18. See *Ugaritic Textbook* 19, no. 1855: 3:6–9; G. Lloyd Carr, *TWOT*, 2:668–70.

In Numbers 24:16 "Most High" is used by another non-Israelite, Balaam, as he uttered an oracle about Israel. Both this verse and Deuteronomy 32:8 occur in poetic passages that talk about God's sovereignty over the nations.

God Almighty. Shaddai (*šadday*) is one of the most common names for God in the book of Job (thirty-one times), and it occurs eight times in the Pentateuch. Six of those times it is preceded by the word "El," (God). *El Shaddai* may mean "God of the mountain" if the connection with Akkadian *šadû* is correct.[19] The power and strength of the age-old mountains belongs to God.

El Shaddai is used in passages in which God appears to Abraham and Jacob to confirm the covenant with them and to assure them of increasing numbers (Gen. 17:1; 35:11). In three other passages Isaac (Gen. 28:3) and then Jacob (Gen. 43:14; 48:3) speak to their sons with the prayer that God Almighty will bless them and show them mercy. In Exodus 6:3 God reminds Moses that He appeared to all three patriarchs as "God Almighty" rather than "the LORD." In Numbers 24:4 and 16 Balaam speaks as "one who hears the words of God" and "who sees a vision from the Almighty." Each verse is followed by an announcement of blessing upon the tribes of Israel, even though Balaam had been hired by the king of Moab specifically to curse them.

Eternal God. After Abraham made a treaty at Beersheba with Abimelech king of Gerar, he planted a tamarisk tree and "called upon the name of the Lord, the Eternal God" (*'ēl 'ôlām*, Gen. 21:33). Although this name per se does not occur elsewhere in the Pentateuch, the concept of God's eternality appears at least twice more. Exodus 15:18 states that "the Lord will reign for ever and ever," and Deuteronomy 32:27 contains these beautiful lines: "The eternal God [*'elôhê qedem*] is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Israel had undergone terrible suffering and was faced with many enemies, but the God who had maintained her in Egypt and in the barren wilderness would never cease to help her.

The Fear of Isaac. Genesis 31:42 contains a reference to "the Fear of Isaac" (*paḥad yiṣḥāq*), which may very well be a name for God corresponding to "the Mighty One of Jacob" (see below). In Genesis 31 Jacob meets for the last time with Laban and speaks about the assistance of

19. See W. F. Albright, "The Names Shaddai and Abram," *JBL* 54 (1935): 173–93; Victor P. Hamilton, *TWOT*, 2:907.

God, "the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac." As the two made a covenant not to harm one another, "Jacob took an oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac" (v. 53). Speiser has suggested "the Awesome One of Isaac" as a preferable translation of the name,[20] whereas Albright adopts the less likely alternative of "the kinsman of Isaac."[21]

The Mighty One of Jacob. Another significant title is "the Mighty One of Jacob" (*'abîr ya'aqōb*) found in Genesis 49:24 and five other verses (Ps. 132:2, 5; Isa. 1:24; 49:26; 60:16). The word *'abîr* is probably related to the adjective *'abbîr*, which also means "strong" or "powerful" and is used to describe warriors (Jer. 46:15), bulls (Ps. 22:12; Isa. 34:7), and horses (Judg. 5:22).[22] In Genesis 49:24 the "Mighty One of Jacob" is linked with several other names for God in a context that emphasizes God's provision for Joseph. In spite of the great adversity Joseph suffered, he did not weaken and fail, because the God of Jacob helped him and blessed him. God's ability to save and redeem His people is also mentioned twice in Isaiah where "the Mighty One of Jacob" occurs (49:26; 60:16).

The Rock. Deuteronomy 32 contains the words of a song Moses recited before the whole assembly of Israel, and in this song the name "Rock" (*ṣûr*) is used for God several times (vv. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31). "Rock" is parallel to "fortress" in Isaiah 17:10, for God is like an inaccessible fortress where men can flee for safety. This sort of rock is a place of refuge (Deut. 32:37; Ps. 18:2), a secure stronghold that cannot be breached. Since God is Israel's Rock, their armies cannot be defeated unless God abandons them (Deut. 32:30). There is no god with greater power than the Rock of Israel (v. 31).

Another possible connotation of God as the Rock has to do with the time Moses struck the rock and water flowed out for the thirsty people (Ex. 17:6). Although this connection is not made in Deuteronomy 32, Psalm 78:20 refers to water gushing from the rock, and verse 35 mentions "God their Rock." A more precise identification is found in 1 Corinthians 10:3–4, where Paul speaks of Israel in the wilderness drinking from the spiritual rock, "and that rock was Christ."

20. E. A. Speiser, ed., *Genesis*, AB (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964), 243.

21. Albright, *From the Stone Age*, 248. D. R. Hillers argues against Albright in "Pahad YISHAQ," *JBL* 91: 90–92. "Kinsman" comes from the meaning of "thigh" for a different root, *paḥad* (cf. Job 40:17).

22. The Ugaritic *'br* ("bull") may also be related. See *TWOT*, 1:8–9; *TDOT*, 1:42–43.

In Jacob's final blessing he uses a closely related title for God, "the Stone of Israel" (*'eben*, Gen. 49:24). This name is parallel to "the Mighty One of Jacob" (see above) and may not be noticeably distinguishable from "Rock." Yet the prophet Isaiah refers to "a stone in Zion" parallel to "a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation" (28:16). Those who build their lives upon the God of Israel will not be disappointed.

Father. Only once in the Pentateuch is the name "Father" applied to God (Deut. 32:6), but it is nonetheless an important concept. God was Israel's Father because He was their Creator, the one who made them and formed them. The verb *qānâ*, which follows "Father," can also mean "to bring forth" (see "God as Creator" above) and fits in with the picture given in verse 18, where God is the One "who gave you birth."

God was the Father of Israel in that He chose that one nation to be His special people. The exodus was a demonstration of God's love for them (cf. Ex. 6:6–7), and at Mount Sinai a covenant relationship between God and Israel was formalized (Ex. 19:5–6). All the years that the nation wandered in the desert God carried them "as a father carries his son" (Deut. 1:31), an act of compassion referred to by Isaiah centuries later (Isa. 63:9, 16). God's love was so great that Moses was amazed at the rebellion of the nation. The people "acted corruptly toward him" (Deut. 32:5) and generally abandoned God's laws and commandments. Moses warned them that unless they responded to God in obedience and trusted Him as an honored father they would face His judgment.

Man

The books of Moses present a portrait of man that reaches extremes found nowhere else in Scripture. We see a sinless Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and we see a totally corrupt society in Sodom. Enoch and Noah walked with God, but the rest of mankind excelled only in wickedness, so God destroyed them in a flood. Exodus describes Moses on Mount Sinai fellowshipping with God face-to-face, while at the same time the nation of Israel was at the foot of the mount engrossed in sin. Genesis introduces us to an unselfish Abraham and to a Jacob who burned with undying love for Rachel, but it also tells us how Cain murdered Abel and how Joseph's brothers callously sold him to Egypt. Joseph was a source of great blessing for Egypt, and yet after Joseph was gone the Egyptians oppressed the Israelites and worked them mercilessly. God marvelously rescued Israel from that house of slavery, but

the people soon complained bitterly about life in the desert.

Made in God's image. Since man is like God, he was given authority over the rest of creation as God's representative on earth. Man was made ruler over the fish and the birds and the animals (1:26) and was told to subdue the earth (1:28). *Rule* and *subdue* are strong terms and imply a measure of opposition against man's authority, but as the writer of Hebrews notes, man has by no means achieved full dominion over creation (Heb. 2:8). Through Christ's death and exaltation, redeemed mankind will someday be able to exercise the dominion that was crippled by the fall (cf. Heb. 2:9).

The early church Father Irenaeus argued that there was a difference between the "image" and "likeness" of God in man, the former consisting of rationality and free will, whereas the latter was the gift of God's righteousness. The reformers rightly rejected this distinction, asserting that after the fall man's whole moral fiber was damaged and he was no longer free to obey God.[23]

Although the word *image* (*ṣelem*) is sometimes used for the idols worshiped by the pagans (cf. 2 Kings 11:18), the Old Testament makes very clear that God was never to be represented by any idols (Ex. 20:4–5). God is incomparable, and no image can be placed alongside Him (Isa. 40:18). At the same time we are warned not "to project God in man's image" and make man divine.[24] When Herod Agrippa I was praised for having "the voice of a god, not of a man" (Acts 12:22), "an angel of the Lord struck him down" because he failed to give God the glory (v. 23).

The climax of Genesis was the creation of man in the image of God on the sixth day. Both male and female were made in God's image and likeness and this distinguished them from all other creatures. Man is like God primarily in his moral and spiritual capacity and was created with the ability to be righteous and holy (cf. Eph. 4:24). He was given a glory and honor above all the other creatures and possessed a mind that also reflected the person of the Creator. Karl Barth has argued that the plural pronouns "us" and "our" in Genesis 1:26 anticipate the human plurality of male and female and indicate something about the nature of the divine existence also. This "conjunction of man and man"

23. H. D. McDonald, "Man, Doctrine of" in *EDT*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 678–79.

24. Carl F. H. Henry, "Image of God," in *EDT*, 545–46.