

WILLIAM HENRY GREEN AND THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH: SOME HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the dominant figures from Princeton Theological Seminary of the late nineteenth century was William Henry Green (1825–1900), Helena Professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature.¹ His many writings on the Pentateuch,² Hebrew grammar,³ and other topics⁴ readily attest to his scholarly acumen and the profound degree to which he had internalized the primary and secondary literature. Green's reputation, however, was largely built around his defense of Princeton's doctrine of Scripture in the context of shifting views in the world of OT scholarship in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

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¹ Green's career spanned over fifty years. He was first appointed as an instructor of Hebrew in 1846 and then elected to the chair of Biblical and Oriental Literature in 1851. This title was changed in 1859 to Helena Professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature "to accommodate J. A. Alexander's desire to teach New Testament instead of history" (Marion Ann Taylor, *The Old Testament in the Old Princeton School [1812–1929]* [San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992] 168).

² *The Pentateuch Vindicated from The Aspersions of Bishop Colenso* (New York: John Wiley, 1863); *Moses and the Prophets* (New York: Robert Carter, 1883); *The Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916); "The Unity of Pentateuch" and "Mosaic Origin of the Pentateuch," in *Anti-Higher Criticism or Testimony to the Infallibility of the Bible* (ed. L. W. Munhall; New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1894) 26–70 and 71–95; *The Hebrew Feasts in their Relation to Recent Critical Hypotheses concerning the Pentateuch* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1885); *The Unity of the Book of Genesis* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895). I interact most directly with *Pentateuch Vindicated*, *Moses and the Prophets*, and *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*, since these are most pertinent to this study. Green's comments on the question of pentateuchal authorship in his other books and essays do not diverge significantly from the more developed arguments found in these monographs.

³ *A Hebrew Chrestomathy; or, Lessons in Reading or Writing Hebrew* (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1870) and *Elementary Hebrew Grammar, with Reading and Writing Lessons and Vocabularyes* (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1875).

⁴ *General Introduction to the Old Testament: The Text* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923); *General Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926); *Old Testament Canon and Philology* (1889); and *The Argument of the Book of Job Unfolded* (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1881). A number of Green's class lectures have been printed (not published) from notes taken by his students, including "Old Testament Literature" (compiled by the class of 1879) and "Old Testament Literature: Lectures on The Poetical Books of the Old Testament: Psalms, Song of Solomon, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes" (1884).

The purpose of this essay is to engage Green on one specific issue, his understanding of the authorship of the Pentateuch, and I wish to do so with an eye toward the historical-intellectual context in which he lived. I am interested not simply in outlining *what* he thought about pentateuchal authorship (an issue that becomes readily apparent in his writings), but also in *why* he argued the way he did. In this brief essay, which admittedly can hardly do justice to Green's life and work, I hope to encourage greater understanding and appreciation of Green's position while also providing a critical assessment of the place of his arguments in the current intellectual climate, which has shifted significantly since Green's day.

There can be little question that Green has done subsequent conservative scholarship a service in outlining the weaknesses of the critical arguments of the time. In fact, many of his observations are still pertinent today and stand as lasting contributions to Christian thought, so much so that those still wishing to take to task current source theories of the Pentateuch would have to begin with the writings of William Henry Green before proceeding with their own. Nevertheless, what constitutes at least part of the motivation for this study is my firm belief that scholarship today should benefit from the work of the past without at the same time being uncritical of that past. As I hope to demonstrate, the manner in which Green defended mosaic authorship was influenced at least in part by a doctrine of Scripture that, ironically, shared certain assumptions with the views of his higher critical opponents, namely, the nature of historiography, the value of eyewitness accounts, and a few other matters. Toward that end, I will below, first, outline Green's own views on pentateuchal authorship; second, examine some of the assumptions that he shared with his critical contemporaries; and, third, make brief but constructive suggestions as to how current reformed and evangelical discussions on mosaic authorship might be conducted with greater profit and understanding.

II. GREEN'S VIEW OF MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP

Green's defense of mosaic authorship was thorough, precise, clear, and unyielding. It was also at times quite acerbic. His first publication on the topic, *The Pentateuch Vindicated*, exhibits well these characteristics. The purpose of this volume was to counter the arguments of John William Colenso (1814–83, Anglican bishop in Natal, South Africa) whose own spiritual-intellectual journey led him to reject traditional views of pentateuchal origins and authorship. Unfortunately, Green's treatment of Colenso regularly degenerates into sarcastic *ad hominem* attacks.⁵ There is no question that Green had read carefully and understood, not only Colenso's arguments against the traditional view of mosaic authorship, but those of the higher critical world in general. Yet the persuasive force of Green's arguments is often lost behind the caustic manner in which he makes his points. Unfortunately, such tactics serve only to shut the door to further scholarly

⁵ See also Taylor, *Old Princeton School* 219.

debate. To be fair, however, it is probably true that Green's goal was not so much to engage critics such as Colenso but to silence them for the sake of the church, since Green considered the current attack on the Pentateuch would, if successful, lead to the erosion of the Christian faith. Moreover, Colenso was, by his own admission, not a scholar, but a missionary, a fact that no doubt contributed to Green's sense of urgency: higher criticism had even infected the mission field. Be that as it may, it is certainly lamentable that Green's strident tone is a legacy that finds occasional proponents to this day, although not necessarily with Green's scholarly sophistication.⁶

On the other hand, Green is at his best, not only here but also throughout his writings, when he focuses his intellectual energy toward the logical and factual flaws of his opponents' arguments.⁷ Colenso in particular held a rather extreme view of pentateuchal origins. He certainly seems to have exaggerated problems (particularly the matter of the large numbers in the Pentateuch) that, it seems, in his mind, he was the first to discover (a perusal of rabbinic literature might have cured him of this perception of novelty). Green was certainly right to answer these arguments.⁸

The manner in which Green defended the so-called "traditional" view of pentateuchal authorship tells us much about the assumptions he held, and these will be discussed in the next section. Here I will sketch Green's own understanding of the authorship of the Pentateuch. From a certain perspective, Green's position is clear. For all intents and purposes, it is fair to say that Green held to what is often referred to today as "essential mosaic authorship." Green himself does not seem to have used the phrase, but it is nevertheless a just summary of his position. Although there are moments in Green's writings where he seems to leave little room for *essential* mosaic authorship and argues for what comes very close to *absolute* mosaic authorship (see below), on the whole Green is well aware of the post-mosaic elements in the Pentateuch but considers them minor elements that have no apparent bearing on the question of pentateuchal authorship. It would be worth asking how much of the Pentateuch Green felt Moses himself needed to have written in order to be considered "essentially" or "substantially" (Green uses the latter term) mosaic, but he gives us no systematic treatment of this question.

It is fair to say that Green focused most of his attention on the question of the origin of the mosaic law. This stands to reason, since it is precisely the late dating of the law that was central to the higher critical reconstruction of Israelite religious history; hence, the anagram "JEDP," with J representing

⁶ On the whole, I find Green's later writings to be less caustic, although not without their moments (e.g. *Moses and the Prophets* 28–32).

⁷ In addition to his arguments against Colenso, see also his excellent survey of inconsistencies in the Documentary Hypothesis in *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* 88–98.

⁸ Green was by no means the first or only respondent to Colenso. The Anglican church charged Colenso with heresy and excommunicated him, not only for his views of biblical criticism, but also for teaching a universalist Christianity. See Peter Hinchliff, *John William Colenso: Bishop of Natal* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1964). For a briefer overview of Colenso's thought and Green's response to it, see Ronald L. Numbers, "The Most Important Biblical Discovery of Our Time": William Henry Green and the Demise of Ussher's Chronology," *Church History* 69 (2000) 257–76.

the Yahwist (German: Jahweh) source, E the Elohist, D the Deuteronomist, and P the Priestly source. Both J and E are considered to be large bodies of narrative material. The D source is roughly equivalent to the book of Deuteronomy with some D "influence" allegedly detected in other portions of the Pentateuch. It is the P source that is largely responsible for the legal material of the Pentateuch. According to the general outlines of classical source criticism, at least for Wellhausen, JEDP represented a chronological continuum with the P source documenting a post-exilic trend toward the arid, legalistic institutionalization of Israelite religion. The law was not only late (post-mosaic) but also out of harmony with the general witness of the Pentateuch and the prophets. Indeed, it is the tensions between the law and other portions of the OT that attest to the law's late date.⁹

If, as source critics argued, the law is of post-exilic origin, then the traditional view of mosaic authorship was completely lost, since it was Moses who was to have received the law from God. Hence, if Green could demonstrate the antiquity of the law, the traditional view would remain at least viable, and other "minor" post-mosaic elements could be handled in turn. Moreover, if such a demonstration were to prove successful, it would pose a viable argument that would soundly contradict the then-current higher critical scheme. Conversely, if he failed, the authority of the Bible and the truth of the gospel would crumble. This is what was at stake for Green, and so it is for this reason that he focused much of his intellectual energy on demonstrating the reasonableness of the traditional position that the law was of mosaic origin.¹⁰ Concerning Deuteronomy, for example (no earlier than the late seventh century according to Wellhausen and others), Green writes:

And the whole book of Deuteronomy purports to be a series of discourses delivered by Moses to the people in the plains of Moab, inculcating and enforcing this Law. The Professor reminds us that these were not "taken down by a shorthand reporter," and he queries whether it is certainly the meaning of Deut. xxxi. 24 that we have this body of laws "word for word" as it is written down by Moses. But under cover of this regard for absolute precision, it will not do to fritter away the entire record. *That Moses in his oral discourse uttered in every case exactly the words reported to us, just those and nothing less nor more, we are not concerned to affirm; but that he did deliver such discourses, and that they are here preserved in their substantial import, is fully certified, unless the credibility of the book be impeached.* And this code of laws is substantially as it came from the *pen of Moses*, if any reliance can be placed upon the record.¹¹

⁹ Wellhausen lays out his arguments in a passionate and engaging style in his famous *Geschichte Israels*, published in 1878. A second addition was published in 1883 with the better-known title *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, which was translated into English two years later as *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (with an introduction by W. Robertson Smith). The English translation was reprinted in 1957 by Meridian Books.

¹⁰ Geerhardus Vos's thesis at Princeton, completed under Green, follows the same reasoning (*The Mosaic Origin of the Pentateuchal Codes* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1886]).

¹¹ *Moses and the Prophets* 53–54 (my emphasis). "The Professor" referred to is W. Robertson Smith, against whom Green's arguments are directed in chapter 3 of this book. A helpful summary of the debates between Green and Smith may be found in Warner M. Bailey, "William Robertson Smith and American Biblical Studies," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 51 (1973) 303–7.

There is some ambiguity in Green's comment. One gathers midway through the quote that the importance of the matter lies in whether Moses "uttered" and "delivered" the deuteronomic law, and not in whether he or anyone else recorded it "word for word," thus implying—or at least leaving open the option—that Moses had delivered the speeches ("oral discourse") and that they were "preserved in their substantial import" at some later unspecified time. Toward that end, however, Green states that the canonical version of the deuteronomic law "is substantially as it came from the pen of Moses," implying that for Green it is important that Moses is responsible for having *written* Deuteronomy (unless we take "pen" metaphorically, which Green gives us no reason to). Moreover, as mentioned above, it is a recurring ambiguity in Green's writings that he does not attempt a more specific definition of concepts such as "substantial" or the like, although it seems generally clear from the general thrust of his writings that later editing and additions are minimal and inconsequential. A final ambiguity concerns the element of circularity in Green's argument. The fact that Moses delivered speeches is "fully certified" in Deuteronomy "unless the credibility of the book be impeached." Green seems to be saying that, although he is willing to concede that the recording of the speeches may be post-mosaic, Deuteronomy clearly gives testimony to the fact that these speeches were given by Moses. To deny that Moses spoke them would be to impeach the credibility of Deuteronomy. In other words, Green argues on the basis of biblical authority (the witness of Deuteronomy), that what Deuteronomy says about Moses making speeches is accurate. Yet, of course, it is precisely such credibility in Deuteronomy that the higher critics are questioning.

Be that as it may, the main point of this citation (at least for this study) should not be lost. Despite the ambiguities, it seems that Green did not have a vested interest in demonstrating that the legal material in Deuteronomy *as we have it* necessarily came *fully* from Moses' *hand*. What is of central concern for Green is the mosaic origin of the pentateuchal codes, a point he stresses often in *Moses and the Prophets* and *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch*.

The matter becomes a bit more complex with respect to the differences in details among the various legal portions of the Pentateuch. Although he refers to the "unvarying permanence of the written code,"¹² Green also recognizes the differences in detail between the various legal portions of the Pentateuch and that such data require an explanation. The explanation he offers is chronological: "[The] Mosaic Code leaves abundant room for all the *modifications* that could be demanded by the *progressive* life of the people."¹³ Green certainly introduces a tension here: the law of Moses is unvaryingly permanent while also allowing for modifications. Green does not attempt to reconcile this tension. Nevertheless, the general thrust of Green's argument is that the law, although of mosaic origin and binding upon subsequent generations, "leaves abundant room" to allow it to adapt to changes in society

¹² *Ibid.* 61; see also *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* 41.

¹³ *Moses and the Prophets* 69 (my emphasis).

over time.¹⁴ This is how Green accounts for the differences in detail between Deuteronomy and Exodus. Elsewhere Green refers to “modifications and additions” to Deuteronomy.¹⁵ As for Leviticus, its unique contours vis-à-vis Exodus and Deuteronomy (well-noted by critical scholars) are due to the fact that it is a “professional” rather than “popular” book.¹⁶

Although some might chose to augment such ambiguities in Green’s thinking, it certainly speaks to his clear willingness to allow the complexities of the final form of the Pentateuch to stand on their own merits. In some cases, the differences in the legal codes can be harmonized. Nevertheless,

... even where the law has been *changed* in any of its provisions, and a *later* statute *abrogates or modifies* another given previously, this may still be *consistent with the Mosaic record*, provided it admits of a satisfactory explanation from the *different times and circumstances* under which the law was given, and the different ends which it was intended to subserve.¹⁷

This might appear to be a somewhat startling statement from Green’s pen, but it shows again his recognition of the Pentateuch’s flexibility concerning the authorship of its final form. This statement is not the special pleading of a fundamentalist wishing to maintain a rigid theory of the Pentateuch, but that of a scholar and churchman who is zealous to maintain the “substantial” mosaic origin of the legal codes while at the same time admitting that there are laws in the Pentateuch that, although “consistent with the Mosaic record,” are nevertheless later abrogations and modifications. And even though Green does not take the time to describe specifically how much later these changes came about, there is little question in my mind that, for Green, these changes are post-mosaic (at least in this quote), since he speaks of “later times and circumstances” and of the consistency of these later changes “with the Mosaic record.” The main issue for Green, as he repeats over and over again in his writings, is whether biblical interpreters in his day wish to augment the diversity at the expense of the unity or hold the two in some tension. It is this line of thinking that motivates much of Green’s arguments against Bishop Colenso.

What in my opinion is lacking in Green’s argument is a more positive interaction with this issue of later editing or reworking of the law and what

¹⁴ Ibid. 70.

¹⁵ *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* 145.

¹⁶ Ibid. 146. Although this is a highly plausible theory, it would have been stronger had Green explored why a professional law book would differ in detail from a popular one if both are inspired by God and of mosaic origin. This would have provided a very helpful theological and hermeneutical investigation. Regarding modifications in the law in general, the following statement of Green’s seems out of accord with what has been cited here: “The unity and harmony of the law as shown by the careful study of its provisions [*sic*]. It composes one system, and is the outgrowth of one idea. It has no such discordant parts as it must have exhibited if produced by the accretion of many minds and ages” (“Old Testament Literature” 53). I am not suggesting that Green is contradicting himself as much as emphasizing a more defensive posture over against the sentiment cited above. I would suggest the reason for the more strident tone of the immediately preceding citation is due to it being comments found in class lectures. Still, such ambiguity does not help us achieve clarity on Green’s views.

¹⁷ *Moses and the Prophets* 73 (my emphasis).

such a phenomenon can tell us about the nature of inspiration. Rather, comments such as those quoted above, in the overall context of Green's writings have the feel of passing concessions to an unfortunate state of affairs (diversity) that distract Green from his defense of mosaic origin. It is certainly true that higher critics augmented diversity, but, in the long run, a more positive, constructive conservative agenda might have emerged had Green been more intentional in highlighting—even embracing—this diversity in (of all things) the law, as God-given diversity, and explored what could be learned from it about such things as the incarnational nature of God's self-revelation amid changing social circumstances.

Yet, readers of Green's writings on the Pentateuch may be left somewhat frustrated. Comments such as we have just seen certainly seem to allow for some post-mosaic elements in the Pentateuch, even though these instances are "very few" and do not affect the question of mosaic origin.¹⁸ On the other hand, one can just as easily find other statements where Green is quite concerned to show that post-mosaic elements are only alleged and ought to be explained otherwise. For example, Green concludes that it is ultimately of little concern to the question of mosaic authorship whether Moses wrote Num 12:3 (Moses' humility), but that is only after he spends some time arguing for its mosaic origin.¹⁹ Likewise, the often-cited problem of Deut 1:1 ("These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan"; NRSV), Green argues, is not at all post-mosaic but a fixed geographical term.²⁰ One wonders, in view of Green's positive statements elsewhere concerning post-mosaic elements, what would have been lost had he simply continued to maintain a defense of the "mosaic origin" of Deuteronomy while admitting to later reshaping of the narrative as a whole, by, say, a frame-narrator responsible for chapters 1 and 34. To say that the book of Deuteronomy represents "substantially" the "utterances" of Moses that have been brought together at a later time would in no way affect the point Green seems at pains to argue, that the pentateuchal legal codes are not post-exilic inventions but of mosaic origin.²¹

What is it that makes Green so apparently unwilling to allow post-mosaic elements in practice while accepting them in theory? It is my general impression that Green's ambiguity about post-mosaic elements arises out of his desire to protect the church from liberalism on the one hand, but to allow

¹⁸ See *ibid.* 61; "Old Testament Literature" 63.

¹⁹ *Moses and the Prophets* 61.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 161; *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* 50.

²¹ Concerning Deut 1:1 specifically, Green mounted an argument that seems to have been uncritically accepted in conservative circles since, namely, that "beyond the Jordan" is a fixed geographical term rather than a relative one. For example, the East River in NYC and South Central L.A. are called so regardless of the stance of the speaker. (South Central L.A. does not cease to be "south" just because I am standing further south making it north from my vantage point.) The problem with this analogy is that the Hebrew phrase in question, בעבר הירדן, is clearly not a fixed geographical term in Deuteronomy. The term is found on Moses' own lips in Deut 3:25 and 11:30 referring to Canaan. The term means "on the other side of the Jordan" from the point of view of the speaker/observer. Since Moses never made it to Canaan, Deut 1:1 is spoken by someone who did cross the Jordan and who is looking back recounting Moses' speeches on the other side.

the OT to speak for itself, on the other. That said, however, Green's defense of mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch made serious (albeit brief) attempts to account for the presence of post-mosaic elements. It is ironic that in our day admitting to the existence of post-mosaic elements and later "modifications and additions" to the law is for some tantamount to resuscitating Wellhausen when in fact it is simply acknowledging what Green himself understood.

These post-mosaic elements did not, as the critics argued, necessarily demonstrate the *essential* post-mosaic *origin* of the Pentateuch. Rather, they attest to the clear post-mosaic dimension of the final form of the Pentateuch. What is lacking in Green's writing is a vigorous *defense* of these post-mosaic elements *as post-mosaic*, that is, a systematic exposition of what these post-mosaic elements might be. Also missing is a treatment of these post-mosaic elements that goes beyond an apparently reluctant concession as to their existence to treat them as fodder for further theological and doctrinal reflection on the nature of Scripture. But this lack in Green's thinking does not provide warrant for us to follow suit.

III. GREEN'S ASSUMPTIONS

As mentioned earlier, it is clear from Green's writings that he is in "battle mode," and so perhaps his strident tone can find some justification. Consider, for example, the following.

The adoption of these [higher critical] views would be attended with very far-reaching consequences. It would render necessary a complete reconstruction of Old Testament history; it would alter our views entirely as to the mode and the nature of God's revelation to Israel. It would compel a revision of the question: In what sense can the Scriptures be regarded as the Word of God, and what measure of authority can be attributed to them?²²

What is at stake for Green is nothing less than the survival of traditional, orthodox Christianity.

The question, however, is actually more involved than Green argues here. It is my contention that the nature of Green's defense of mosaic authorship is actually founded upon a number of assumption that he himself shares with his critical opponents. In reading through Green's arguments for mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, I have stopped myself occasionally to ask what those assumptions are. Why does he proceed along certain logical paths? In attempting to follow Green's line of thinking, I began compiling a list of assumptions that he appears to make. It is partly the thesis of this essay that Green's defense of the gospel would have taken on a very different shape had that defense included questioning the modernist assumptions of his critics rather than participating in them.

I outline below these assumption that I feel are relevant to the subject at hand. This list is in no way intended to be exhaustive, nor are the assump-

²² *Moses and the Prophets* 28.

tions to be considered mutually exclusive; a number of them are interconnected. They are separated simply for heuristic purposes and listed in no particular order.

1. *Discrepancies in the Pentateuch would impugn its integrity and therefore ought to be harmonized.* In the opening pages of *Pentateuch Vindicated*, Green makes it very clear that discrepancies in the Pentateuch are minor and ought to be harmonized. Much of Green's scholarly energy, in fact, can be said to be taken up with this assignment.

[A]n impartial judge or jury will be disposed to examine the matter patiently, knowing that nothing is of easier or more frequent occurrence than seeming and superficial discrepancies, when the facts are imperfectly known, and which would be at once removed if some missing links could be supplied. As long as any *rational hypothesis* suggests itself, therefore, by which the various statements can be harmonized, *the credibility of the witness is not impugned*; and even if some things should remain unexplained, his general truthfulness and fidelity will enable us to credit him.²³

Without wishing to overread this comment, it seems clear that for Green the purpose for harmonizing is that, if an actual discrepancy were to be found, the credibility of the Pentateuch would be "impugned." In other words, he assumes that there can be no contradictions or discrepancies in the Pentateuch.

Of course, in principle, few evangelicals would want to quibble over this. Moreover, Green is certainly correct that a good number of discrepancies are in fact "superficial." Still, the entire matter turns on what would be considered a contradiction and what is or is not a "rational hypothesis" for solving such contradictions. In other words, what really *are* contradictions, may they exist in Scripture, and, if so, would *reconciling* such contradictions truly be in keeping with the rationality of the Scriptures? By whose standards should the church define such concepts as "rational" or "contradiction"—those of modernity?

For example, the laws concerning the release of slaves in Exod 21:2–11 and Deut 15:12–18 differ on at least one well-known point: the former does not allow for the freeing of female slaves, while the latter does. How is this discrepancy to be handled? Although Green does not deal with this problem in the following manner, he himself suggests a principle (mentioned earlier) that would work well in this instance: the historical circumstances from the time of Exodus and Deuteronomy are different. Here the law is demonstrating a "flexibility" to adapt to changing circumstances, a quality Green praises elsewhere.²⁴ Such an approach to the problem would have been a helpful

²³ *Pentateuch Vindicated* 1 (my emphasis). Green makes the similar point in a number of places including the following: "It is the fashion now to ridicule the harmonistic treatment of the Mosaic laws, and the development theory is all the rage. Nevertheless, every one must concede that if, upon any fair interpretation of their language, these laws can be shown to be mutually consistent and harmonious, this is entitled to the preference over any view which represents them as incompatible and conflicting" (*Moses and the Prophets* 73; see also n. 16 above).

²⁴ See nn. 13–16 above.

line of inquiry, although Green does not opt to employ that explanation here. To explain the differences between the slave laws by appealing to adaptation over time would not be “harmonizing” these laws in any accepted sense of the word. Rather, it would be an appeal to an external factor, namely, changes over time, to reconcile two disparate texts precisely to *avoid* harmonizing them in a superficial manner. The fact remains that in the end the Bible has two different provisions regarding the release of slaves and any “rational” attempt to reconcile these “contradictions” comes close to dismissing the witness of Scripture itself.

In any event, it seems clear that Green’s general approach to the problem of contradictions is to accept the current paradigm that no document worthy of logical assent—particularly Scripture—would differ in any matters of detail. Although some such discrepancies can certainly be harmonized—and the possibility of harmonization should not be dismissed at the outset—such discrepancies cannot all be handled in such a way. In many cases, as with the slave law, the Bible itself forces us to reconsider what might or might not be acceptable of Scripture and forces us to wrestle with alternate explanations. Green’s defense of the Pentateuch was well at home in the current of thought of his day. Today, however, a more penetrating defense of the Pentateuch as the Word of God would need to move beyond attempts to defend the Bible by harmonizing discrepancies according to standards of rationality that the Bible itself may not support. What would be needed is to call into question the thoroughly modernist-critical assumption that discrepancy/contradiction = error/mistake.

2. *“History” and “fiction” are mutually exclusive. An objective historical record can be written.* Green seems to leave little to no room for what in today’s intellectual climate is considered a simple matter-of-fact: all historiography is written from the perspective of the writer, and that perspective affects what the writer chooses to include and how he or she shapes this retelling. Every attempt to recount historical events is for a certain purpose or goal, and any purpose or goal will either consciously or subconsciously influence the historiographical task. In other words, an objective account of past events is neither possible nor is it even the goal of historiography. Histories are recorded to inspire, motivate, inculcate, indoctrinate, teach. They are not merely intended to state the facts for their own sake, but to bring the past to bear on the lives of those present.²⁵

Green, however, is very concerned to demonstrate that the Pentateuch records “accurately” the events described, by which he clearly means an “objective” account untainted by homiletical or theological augmentation or agendas. To use his own words, he is interested in the “real facts of the his-

²⁵ Two evangelical treatments of biblical historiography that generally support such a view are R. L. Pratt, Jr., *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student’s Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1990) and V. P. Long, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 5; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994).

tory.”²⁶ This also explains, at least in part, Green’s attitude toward contradictions (discussed above): the presence of actual contradictions “quite destroys” whatever value the documents might have as “truthful histories.”²⁷

Green cannot be criticized too harshly for holding such a view of the nature of historiography. It was certainly a well-accepted fact in his day that objectivity and truth were incompatible with personal perspective. He does not challenge this modernist assumption because he himself accepted it. It is up to evangelical thinkers today to build upon and move beyond Green’s historically conditioned critique of pentateuchal criticism. Challenging such modernist assumptions today would go a long way toward an even more thorough critique of the modernist agenda.

A related issue is that the value of the Pentateuch for Green is primarily that of a historical document. He does not seem to devote much space to the Pentateuch as theology, that is, how a historical record can be shaped by a theological concern or agenda. For example, Green correctly chides those who argue that later redactions of the Pentateuch have yielded a document that is somewhat confused and haphazard. The result of such redactional activity, Green argues, is a historical document lacking historical integrity and value, as it is fraught with inaccuracies and events that are out of order.²⁸ Later redactional activity implies that errors have been introduced into an originally pristine document.

To be sure, the extreme lengths to which the critics went to introduce inconsistencies into the Pentateuch should be engaged on a scholarly level, as Green did. But the mere fact of later redactional activity does not necessarily imply in and of itself that inaccuracies have been introduced. To put it another way, could not redactional activity be part of the inspiration process? This was not a viable option for Green, because he was working with a model of redactional activity that led to rather disjointed conclusions. But rather than arguing wholesale against the idea of later redactional activity in principle, why not question the critical assumption that later redactions distort and warp the “proper original intent”²⁹ of the documents, especially in view of the fact that Green himself, as we have seen, allows for post-mosaic elements in the Pentateuch? In other words, what would be lost for Green’s main argument if the *final form* of the Pentateuch were the result of post-mosaic redaction? Green addresses this very question.

But if the authors of the several documents were infallibly inspired, and if the redactors were likewise divinely guarded from error, would we not then have a perfectly trustworthy record, as much so though it were produced in a comparatively late age, *as if* it had been contemporaneous with the events themselves? This fond fancy is dispelled the moment we come to *examine the actual working of the hypothesis*. . . .³⁰

²⁶ *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* 158.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 159.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 161–62.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 162.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 168 (my emphasis).

First, it is worth questioning the assumption that the Pentateuch is narrated "as if" it were *written* as a contemporary account. The Pentateuch is narrated in the third person and past tense, which would imply a non-contemporaneous *recording* of past events. Second, it is clear from this quotation that the only option open to Green for a redactional paradigm for the final form of the Pentateuch is the largely destructive model provided by the scholarship of the time. But to accept redactional activity in principle would in no way affect the question of the origin of the Pentateuch; it would simply provide an explanation of how it might have been modified (to use Green's word) at some later time under the leading of the Spirit. This would not imply that Green or anyone else would accept every conclusion of redaction criticism, but that redactional work would not be precluded at the outset on the basis of the critical assumption that redaction distorts historical records. Green was correct in defending the Pentateuch against such extremes, but his defense implicitly adopted the critical assumption that redaction implies distortion.

3. *An eyewitness account insures historical accuracy.* A recurring theme in Green's writings is that either the traditional view of mosaic authorship is correct (despite Green's occasional acknowledgment of post-mosaic elements) or the critics are correct: the choice is between Moses and Wellhausen. Again, the extreme form this argument takes can be understood in the context of Green's intellectual climate where only these two options set the poles for the debate. Unfortunately, this stark dichotomy is perpetuated even to today in some circles.

Green argues quite clearly that the statements in the Pentateuch referring to Moses' act of writing (Exod 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Num 32:2; Deut 31:9, 22, 24) imply that Moses wrote the Pentateuch as a whole. This is because the rest of the Pentateuch is also important and therefore it is vital that Moses should commit these things to writing "for safe preservation."³¹ To be sure, an early date for the law was essential to maintaining the orthodox view of pentateuchal origins. Green extends this argument to include those portions of the Pentateuch where no explicit, or even implicit, authorial citation is given. The reason for such a logical move is Green's assumption that an eyewitness account insures historical accuracy.

The greater the length of time that transpires between the events and the recording of those events, the greater chance there is of introducing error. Hence, it is vital to affirm mosaic authorship, not only of the law, but also of the Pentateuch as a whole. As Green puts it,

If Moses himself committed to writing the events in which he bore so conspicuous a part, and the laws and institutions enacted by him, and this product of Moses's own pen has been preserved to us in the Pentateuch, we have a *voucher of the very first order of the accuracy of the narrative*, in every particular, proceeding as it does not only from a contemporary and *eye-witness cognizant of every detail*, but from the leader and legislator whose genius shaped all

³¹ *Moses and the Prophets* 50.

that he records, and who was more than any other interested in its true and faithful transmission.³²

Yet, one might argue, even if an eyewitness could be “cognizant of every detail,” it is still worth pondering whether eyewitness testimony necessarily assures the accuracy of what is reported, as if historiography is merely transcribing events by one “cognizant” of the events. Eyewitnesses are easily capable of allowing their predilections to interfere with their perception of the events—a fact easily verifiable by watching court proceedings or scanning the evening newscasts. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, it is axiomatic in today’s intellectual climate to acknowledge that any report of an event will necessarily be influenced by the perspective of the one doing the reporting.

One might retort, however, “But the Bible is different. There, God did not allow human perspective to interfere. The record is inspired by God.” Apart from the perennial issue of human influence in Scripture, however, such a retort runs into a number of thorny problems. For one thing, there are at least two fairly large segments of the OT that were not recorded by eyewitnesses: Genesis (especially the primeval history) and Chronicles. The former is particularly interesting, since it is so important to Green that the Pentateuch be written by Moses and that his eyewitness testimony be “a voucher of the very first order” of its accuracy. Likewise, Chronicles is clearly a post-exilic document, a fact accepted by all, yet it recounts events from the early monarchic period up to the exile, often in very different ways than its synoptic counterparts Samuel and Kings.

Regarding Genesis, Green acknowledges the possibility that Moses learned of the events of Genesis from “pre-existing writings, or from credible [oral?] tradition, or from his own personal knowledge, or from immediate divine revelation.”³³ What is important for Green is that these pre-mosaic elements were either compiled by Moses, “or at least that the completed work passed under his eye and received his sanction.”³⁴ The critics impugned the Pentateuch as a historical source because of the alleged late dates of the four documents that made up the Pentateuch. Green accepted the assumption that late = inaccurate, and so proceeded to mount an argument that rendered all of the Pentateuch as the product of Moses’ eyewitness accounts—with the glaring exception of Genesis. It does not seem to have entered Green’s mind to challenge this critical assumption and to mount a counter-argument that God can inspire later writers to record earlier events in the manner in which he wants those events recorded—much like he argues that God inspired Moses to record Genesis. Again, given the intellectual and ecclesiastical atmosphere of the time, perhaps we should not expect such an approach of Green. To acknowledge that the final form of the Pentateuch may be the result of an inspirational process would in no way damage the heart of Green’s argument: that the events of the Pentateuch (except for

³² *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* 167 (my emphasis).

³³ *Ibid.* 60.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 68.

Genesis) *originate* from Moses' time, and that especially the law is of mosaic origin, regardless of when its final form was codified.

4. *Mosaic authorship is "innocent until proven guilty."* Throughout his writings, Green argues from the basis of the tradition of mosaic authorship which is "explicitly and repeatedly certified by the earliest tradition that we are able to summon."³⁵ Without wishing to sound redundant, such a starting position is perfectly understandable in light of the academic and ecclesiastical concerns of Green's day. Some acknowledgment of "substantial" mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch has been the position throughout most of recorded Christianity and Judaism. Although there certainly were notable pre-modern exceptions, the full frontal assault on this traditional view has its roots in fairly recent Jewish and Christian intellectual history, namely the writings of Spinoza and the general acceptance and elaboration of such an approach in the following centuries.

As mentioned at the outset, Green is at his best when he takes the critical arguments one by one and exposes some inherent flaws in their logic. Green's logical instincts served him and the church well. On the other hand, taken cumulatively, not all of Green's arguments are convincing at every turn. Many of Green's arguments chime the same bell: critical arguments are explained away by arguing that the traditional view remains "possible" despite critical observations. Such an argument may ring true if used occasionally, but when used too often begins to sound like special pleading. If one assumes the point to be proven, namely, that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch more or less as we have it, and if counter-arguments are merely deflected by retaining the "possibility" that one's position can still be true, such a line of argumentation will only be convincing to those who share the assumption.

To be more direct, Green's defense of the traditional view of Pentateuchal authorship sometimes leads him to tease out more of the biblical evidence than seems warranted. This is precisely the criticism he leveled against the higher critics. Green is certainly correct that the critics err in deducing from the post-mosaic elements of the Pentateuch that the historical origins of the Pentateuch as a whole (law and narrative) are post-mosaic. His error, however, is in making the same mistake in the opposite direction: he exaggerates the clear biblical assertions regarding Moses' writing activity and deduces that Moses must have been responsible for the whole. Also, Green argues that the "abundant and explicit" references to the Pentateuch in Amos and Hosea (the oldest writing prophets) and the other prophets attest to the antiquity of the tradition that the Pentateuch was "firmly credited to be the word of God" and that "it unquestionably is what it professes to be, the genuine product of Moses."³⁶ It is worth noting that one of the pil-

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Pentateuch Vindicated* 166–67. See also *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* 46: "They [the books of the Pentateuch] are ascribed to [Moses] by unanimous and unbroken tradition from the days of Moses himself through the entire period of the Old Testament, and from that onward."

lars of Wellhausen's argument against mosaic authorship was precisely the lack of explicit references to the Pentateuch among the writing prophets; moreover, where reference is made, Wellhausen argued that the prophets often contradict the Pentateuch. Hence, Green's desire to assess the prophetic evidence is to be expected.

To be sure, Wellhausen may have exaggerated the disjunction between Moses and the prophets, but for Green to argue that the tensions between these two portions of the OT are superficial is likewise stretching the evidence. Indeed, Green spends nearly one hundred pages of detailed argumentation to counter the arguments of W. Robertson Smith. Apparently, the critical arguments were threatening enough to require considerable energy to dispute. In any event, if Green were correct in his counter-arguments, it is still the case that the most that can be reasonably shown from such arguments is that the Pentateuch contains material that was considered authoritative by the prophets, and that may very well go back to either the words or, in the case of the legal material, the pen of Moses. Green has not demonstrated, however, that Moses authored the Pentateuch as we have it. Green's counter-argument simply allows for the possibility that the Pentateuch was authored by Moses. It by no means establishes it as fact. To put it another way, the default, traditional view of mosaic authorship is not vindicated by simply countering the arguments of the critics. The problems with mosaic authorship of the final form of the Pentateuch still remain, even if the source-critical explanation is found wanting.

5. *The Bible is disconnected to its culture.* As with a number of the assumptions discussed thus far, there is a fair degree of ambiguity here as well. The question is to what extent the Bible participates in the cultural conventions of the day. To be sure, there is no question that Green was well aware of and quite ready to accept the fact that the OT is a product of various ancient Near Eastern settings, and, therefore, it behooves the modern reader to understand the OT in light of those settings.

No objection can be made to the demand that the sacred writings should be subject to the same critical tests as other literary products of antiquity. When were they written, and by whom? For whom were they intended, and with what end in view? These are questions that may fairly be asked respecting the several books of the Bible, as respecting other books, and the same criteria that are applicable likewise in the other. *Every production of any age bears the stamp of that age. It takes its shape from influences then at work. It is part of the life of the period, and can only be properly estimated and understood from being viewed in its original connections.* Its language will be the language of the time when it was produced. The subject, the style of thought, the local and personal allusions, will have relation to the circumstances of the period, to which in fact the whole and every part of it must have its adaptation, and which must have their rightful place in determining its true explanation. *Inspiration has no tendency to obliterate those distinctive qualities and characteristics which link men to their own age.*³⁷

³⁷ *Moses and the Prophets* 17–18 (my emphasis).

Green could not have made himself clearer. Moreover, he correctly chides his opponents for failing to remember this principle by “measuring ancient oriental narratives by the rules of modern occidental discourse.”³⁸

Green, however, applies this principle at best inconsistently when the subject turns to the authorship of the Pentateuch. Once again we must keep in mind that the critical climate of the time was oriented toward dismissing the revelatory nature of the OT. In confronting his critics one should not expect Green to augment that which his opponents adduced in favor of their position, namely, the Bible as a product of its culture. Hence, in moments of heated exchange, Green fears that the critical agenda, if victorious, will mean that there is “no immediate and positive disclosure of the mind and will of God” in Scripture.³⁹

Green is on firm ground when he argues that the Bible should not be treated as a “purely human product.”⁴⁰ The Christian confession of the Bible is that it is both human and divine, and that neither should be sacrificed.⁴¹ The question, however, is how far one is willing to go in employing such a principle. Are there limits? For Green, concerning the authorship of the Pentateuch, the limit is reached with the “inspired and infallible testimony of Christ and his Apostles in the N.T.” that Moses wrote the Pentateuch.⁴² The passage with which he occupies himself most is John 5:46–47, where Jesus states that Moses “wrote concerning me.”

John 5:46–47 is perhaps too tempting a passage to overlook in the heat of battle. The Pentateuch, after all, was being attacked by those who meant no good will toward the church. By claiming the Lord’s *imprimatur* concerning mosaic authorship, Green can have the final word against all his opponents who still wish to maintain some semblance of Christian obedience. For Green, Christ’s testimony is crystal clear and incontrovertible. “And when the Son of God explicitly says, John v. 46, ‘Moses wrote of me,’ all who have any reverence and love for this heavenly Teacher, will undoubtedly receive his testimony.”⁴³ To deny mosaic authorship means to give up one’s “faith in the authority and infallibility of Christ’s instructions.”⁴⁴

There are some difficulties encountered in employing John 5:46–47 as a proof-text for mosaic authorship. First, in John 5:46–47, Jesus is not “instructing” us or his first-century listeners on the thoroughly modern matter

³⁸ *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* 113. Green is referring here to the critical tendency to “magnifying molehills into mountains” (ibid.) by exaggerating the differences between the alleged J and E documents. The German demand for scientific precision in historiography in an ancient Semitic document is certainly a major weakness in their arguments.

³⁹ Ibid. 164.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 173.

⁴¹ B. B. Warfield’s term for such an understanding of Scripture is “concursum” (B. B. Warfield, “The Divine and Human in the Bible,” in *Evolution, Scripture, and Science: Selected Writings* [ed. M. A. Noll and D. N. Livingstone; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000] 51–58). Others refer to it as the incarnational or Christological analogy: as Christ is both fully human and divine, so is Scripture.

⁴² “Old Testament Literature” 52. See *Moses and the Prophets* 345, where Green states that “Moses’ authorship has the explicit sanction of our blessed Lord.”

⁴³ *Pentateuch Vindicated* 19.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

of the authorship of the Pentateuch. His words in John 5 do not settle the matter, because this is not the issue Jesus is addressing. It may be that one can extrapolate from these comments what Jesus' views on mosaic authorship might have been (total mosaic authorship, essential, etc.), but unless John 5:46–47 were to say, "Moses wrote the final form of the Pentateuch," it is overstating the case to adduce John 5:46–47 as a proof-text. Since Jesus' words are found in the context of a rather heated polemic against Jews who were persecuting him (John 5:16–18), it is at least as plausible to posit the theory that Jesus' words here should be read as a device to convict these Jews on the grounds of what they hold most dear: their authoritative Scripture.

It is this suggestion that Green explicitly rejects. After all, it is Bishop Colenso himself who argues that he would not expect Jesus "to speak about the Pentateuch in other terms, than any other devout Jew of the day would have employed."⁴⁵ In other words, the thought that Jesus' words in John 5:46–47 could reflect the Jewish tradition of the time was unacceptable to Green. If Jesus' words here are to be understood as an accommodation to Jewish convention, "[W]hat is there left of his [Colenso's] Christianity worth retaining?"⁴⁶ It is unclear on what basis Green can discern what in the Bible is cultural accommodation and what is not. Is it because Jesus, being the Son of God, does not accommodate? Could one not just as easily make the counter-argument that we would fully expect Jesus, precisely because he is God *incarnate*, to exhibit such marks of accommodation? But for Green, Jesus' words can admit of no such accommodation, at least not here, and so his argumentation devolves into simple insistence and circularity:

It has been said that our Lord here speaks not authoritatively but by accommodation to the prevailing sentiment of the Jews; and that it was not his purpose to settle questions in Biblical Criticism. But the fact remains that he, in varied forms of speech, explicitly confirms the current belief that Moses wrote the books ascribed to him. For those who reverently accept him as an infallible teacher this settles the question.⁴⁷ [The] notion that our Lord and his apostles accommodated their teaching to the errors of their time, refutes itself to those who acknowledge their divine authority.⁴⁸

It would be worth exploring why accommodation on Christ's part here would deal such a critical blow to Christianity, as Green claims. To be sure, the position that the words of Christ are to be understood in the context of the first-century Jewish/Hellenistic world of which he was a part raises hermeneutical and doctrinal challenges.⁴⁹ However, to drive a wedge between

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* See also Hinchliff's summary of Colenso's views on the matter: "If Christ's childhood was a real childhood he cannot have possessed more information about the Pentateuch than is proper to a child. To suppose He later acquired 'full and accurate information on these points' is itself difficult. 'Why should it be thought that He would speak with certain *Divine* knowledge on this matter more than upon other matters of ordinary science or history?" (*Colenso* 95).

⁴⁶ *Pentateuch Vindicated* 19.

⁴⁷ *Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch* 33.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 51.

⁴⁹ I have attempted to address this difficult issue in "The 'Moveable Well' in 1 Cor 10:4: An Extra-Biblical Tradition in an Apostolic Text," *BBR* 6 (1996) 23–38.

the incarnate Son of God and the world into which he came poses perils of its own. Moreover, if Moses is allowed such an obvious dimension of cultural acquaintance, there is no real logical reason to deny the same of Christ unless one wishes to suggest that portions of Scripture are inspired differently, which is something Green certainly would not want to say.

There can be little question that, for Green, the uniqueness of Christ over against his environment would present a powerful apologetic vis-à-vis Green's opponents. No doubt some of the harsher critics of orthodox Christianity would delight in pointing out how much of Jesus' words were conditioned by his cultural milieu. However, in today's world, in light of the work that has been going on for decades, particularly after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Christians can no longer look upon Jesus' first-century contours as an embarrassment to be explained away, but as evidence of the lengths to which God will condescend to redeem his people.

IV. CLOSING REMARKS

Green's contributions to conservative Christian thought in the wake of modernist attacks speak for themselves. And nothing in this brief article should lead readers to conclude that I have anything but the highest respect for him and his work. Green is a major figure in my own heritage as a reformed/evangelical Old Testament scholar. Indeed, I would be quick to argue that modern evangelicalism owes a great debt to the academic trajectories set by Green and his Old Princeton colleagues. Nevertheless, although the Christian faith and the Word upon which it is founded are true and abiding, our own attempts to articulate these truths must always have about them a "work in progress" dimension. As thorough and forceful as Green's arguments were, they were to a certain extent enmeshed in the modernist assumptions of his time, and, hence, cannot be accepted uncritically today.

A challenge before us—as it was for Green—is to articulate the gospel to the world in which we live. All our attempts to express the gospel will invariably take on the cultural conventions (e.g. philosophical, rhetorical, etc.) of the times in which we live. It is unfortunately the case that these conventions can sometimes act as barriers to a fuller understanding of Scripture, and so self-critical reflection must be our constant companion.

In closing, I would like to offer briefly three suggestions for parameters for further discussion. The first suggestion concerns the Pentateuch specifically and the other two concern the matter of Christian dialogue and doctrine more broadly.

First, it seems to me a more proper line of inquiry would be to speak of mosaic *origin* of the Pentateuch rather than mosaic *authorship*.⁵⁰ The latter implies that Moses *wrote* all or nearly every word of the final product, which is a position that is difficult to maintain. Such a stance tends to minimize the post-mosaic elements in the Pentateuch, which leads to attempts to ex-

⁵⁰ E. J. Young has offered a rather cryptic comment regarding mosaic "authorship." After defending mosaic authorship for several pages, he concludes his discussion with a definition of

plain them away. Yet, if there are post-mosaic elements in the Pentateuch, this is part of the structure of the inspired word. It is not a factor to be "dealt with," but a characteristic to be understood, and our apologetic efforts should embrace this.

Second, related to this first suggestion is that we should not presume to know what the Bible can or cannot do. Throughout Green's writings we see assumptions he made that are more in keeping with the tenor of his times than with the character of Scripture. On what basis should we assume that strict historical precision is necessary of an inspired text, or that theological bias should not influence one's recording of history? One's cultural conventions must always be open to scrutiny. We must maintain a healthy element of critical self-reflection, for we do not see as clearly as we sometimes think. To put it another way, our doctrine of Scripture must make every effort to reflect how the Bible behaves. Our doctrine of Scripture must be flexible enough to allow for—even invite—continued reflection when the diverse data of the Bible call for it. Doctrines of Scripture that need to expend considerable energy to account for portions of Scripture that resist conventional classifications are demonstrating their own inadequacies.

Third, and perhaps more importantly, the conservative Christian world simply must find ways of discussing difficult and challenging subjects without the air of suspicion that too often characterizes such exchanges. This is no less true of our age than it has been in the past. Older paradigms for explaining the origin of the Pentateuch, to give just one example, are just that: paradigms. To reject or call for modifications in a paradigm should not be confused with rejecting Scripture or the Christian faith. When we allow our own paradigms to serve as litmus tests of orthodoxy, we run the risk of violating one of the most basic teachings of the New Testament: to love one another. An unhealthy fixation on one's own ideas breeds a type of intellectual territorialism that can only damage the body of Christ. We should seek truth, to be sure, and we should proclaim without hesitation that which is central to the faith. But we should not treat brothers and sisters in Christ harshly when we disagree on non-essential matters. If anything, I hope this brief essay contributes toward that higher goal.

authorship that suggests his overriding concern is actually mosaic origin rather than authorship of the final product: "When we affirm that Moses wrote, or that he was the author of, the Pentateuch, we do not mean that he himself necessarily wrote every word. To insist upon this would be unreasonable. . . . Our Lord was the author of the Sermon upon the Mount, but He did not write it Himself. . . . The witness of sacred Scripture leads us to believe that Moses was the *fundamental* or *real* author of the Pentateuch" (*An Introduction to the Old Testament* [rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960] 45).