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The Interpretation of the Books of Moses in Protestant and Neo-Protestant Theology – A Case Study: Brevard S. Childs, Walter Brueggemann, Richard Elliot Friedman, and John Sailhamer

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Abstract

The author of the article: "The Interpretation of the Books of Moses in Protestant and Neo-Protestant Theology" seeks to highlight the importance of the historicity of the events described in the first section of the Old Testament, also known as the "Torah" or the "Pentateuch" of which the sacred text states that was composed by Moses. Beginning in the 17th century, Protestant theologians disputed the fact that Moses was the author and the historicity of the events described in the Pentateuch. Various hypotheses have been issued, the most elaborate of which was the Documentary Hypothesis of the four sources J, E, D, P, formulated by Julius Wellhausen in 1878. The Enlightenment method called "Historical Criticism" sought to reconstruct the history of events from the Scripture. But lately the acceptance of the historicity of the Pentateuch and of Scripture in general is being discussed. In this work, several theologians from the last half of the 20th century are presented, identifying the steps that were taken towards returning to accepting the historicity of the Books of Moses. The analyzed theologians represent the Protestant and Neo-Protestant perspectives of this period. Protestant theologians such as Brevard Childs who proposes the "canonical method", Walter Brueggemann with the "law court of justice method", including Richard Elliot Friedman who still supports the Documentary Hypothesis will be considered. Among the neo-Protestants, we will

analyze the perspective of John Sailhamer, who insists on the historicity of the Pentateuch's information.

Keywords

The books of Moses, historicity, Protestant theology, Neo-Protestant theology

I. Introduction

Speaking religiously, we will notice that there is a mirage of Jerusalem. This is also proven by the fact that three great religions of the world: Judaism, Christianity and Islam claim this city as the Holy City for their religion.

Jerusalem is currently the Capital of Israel, known in the Judeo-Christian space as the Holy Land or the Land of the Bible. Oxford professor Michael Coogan in his OT introduction book entitled: *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, comparing the civilization of Israel with other civilizations, observes that if the great the civilizations of antiquity left us as a legacy: Ziggurats - Mesopotamia, Pyramids - Egypt, the small civilization of Israel left us a book representative of human culture and spirituality. This literary work not only survived; it became authoritative (normative) Scripture in both Judaism and Christianity. She has deeply influenced and inspired believers, writers, artists and musicians in the Western world and beyond. "But Israelite literature did not just survive; it became authoritative scripture in both Judaism and Christianity, and it has profoundly influenced and inspired believers, writers, artists, and musicians in the Western world and beyond"¹. Its influence exceeds the borders of Christianity. The Bible shaped the modern civilization of the world.

II. Richard Elliot Friedman

Next, I propose to start our analysis with Richard Friedman, in order to respect the evolution of modern theological research, starting from representatives of Protestantism who continue to support the Documentary

¹ Michael COOGAN, *The Old Testament: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2008, p. 1.

Hypothesis, even if from a chronological point of view, we will refer to researchers who lived before. Friedman is currently a supporter of the mentioned hypothesis, making a personal contribution to the theory proposed in the 19th century.

Richard E. Friedman was born in 1946, studied at the University of Miami, receiving his BA in 1968. He continued his studies at Harvard University, receiving his doctorate in theology in 1978 in the field: Jewish Bible, Oriental Languages and Civilizations Near. He was the Katzin Professor of Jewish Civilization and is currently the Ann and Jay Davis Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Georgia. He was also visiting professor at the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford.

Friedman has received numerous awards, including from the American Council of Learned Societies of which he is a member. He is a member of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. He participated in biblical archeological research projects in Jerusalem. This highlights one's own conception with reference to the historicity of some events presented in the Old Testament. Friedman is a fervent supporter of the Documentary Hypothesis as we will see in our study.

Among his works we can mention: *Who Wrote the Bible?* published by Harper Publishers, San Francisco, 1987 (1997), *The Disappearance of God: A Divine Mystery*, by Little, Brown and Company, in 1995, *The Hidden Face of God*, (1996), *Commentary on the Torah*, (2003), books published by Harper Publishing, San Francisco. In 2011, together with Shawna Dolansky, he published *The Bible Now*, at Oxford University Press, and in 2017, he published *The Exodus*, at Harper One.

II.1. Friedman and the Documentary Hypothesis

Discussing the arguments in support of the Documentary Hypothesis, Friedman notes that there are frequent tensions in Scripture between the divine tendency to punish and the tendency to forgive. Therefore, he sought to discover what were the events or aspects of God's character that played an important role in the formation of this amazing and powerful relationship between man and God².

² Richard Elliott FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, Harper & Row, New York, 1987, p. 30.

Being interested in the historicity of biblical accounts, he sought to discover when the writer lived. Did he witness the events he describes? If not, then he sought to discover his sources of inspiration, and what his interests were. Whether the writer was a priest or a layman, a man or a woman, whether he was part of the political class or an ordinary man. What were his preferences? Who was he in opposition to? Where did it come from? and so on³. Friedman recalls that in his second year, he attended a seminar in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, in which Professor Frank Moore Cross, from Harvard, proposed to analyze the text of the Pentateuch from the beginning to its end, disregarding the stage reached by the research with the Documentary Hypothesis or other hypotheses proposed by the researchers⁴.

It was intended to study the biblical passages carefully and without preconceived notions, to see the direction in which the research would lead. Later he had a meeting with Professor Cross whom he asked for assistance in carrying out a study under his guidance. Cross proposed that they resume the same study they had done at the seminar mentioned above, which had taken place years before.

Friedman confesses that he has come to the same ever-present problem of the formation of the biblical text. He tried to analyze the text of the Pentateuch without preconceived ideas about the Documentary Hypothesis. He states that by and large, he has come to the conclusion that the model proposed by researchers in the last centuries is the most viable, seeking to bring new evidence to support the hypothesis. And in certain situations, he specifies the areas in which he has a different opinion compared to previous researchers.

The novelties it brings to support the hypothesis have to do with the identification of the two writers of the supposed sources J and E from the Documentary Hypothesis: when and where they lived, the group they belonged to, the relationship they had with important people or events in history.

In relation to the antiquity of documents from the Old Testament, Friedman recognizes like most theologians that the oldest text in the OT

³ Richard Elliott FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p. 30.

⁴ Richard Elliott FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p. 31.

is in Judges 5 - The Song of Deborah, which dates from the 12th or 11th century BC. But not all researchers agree with this perspective. Serge Frolov disputes the fact that this text is older than the contents of the book of Judges and the period of writing of the First Prophets, which in his view was composed during the Babylonian Exile, 6th century B.C.⁵

II.2. Contesting Moses as the author of the Pentateuch

In his article entitled “Torah (Pentateuch)” which he published in the Anchor Bible Dictionary⁶ he makes a clear and well-documented presentation of the composition of the Torah - the section from the Jewish canon, known in the Christian canon as the Pentateuch. Friedman takes and presents in his article the results of researchers and proponents of the documentary theory, to which he adds the results of his own research into the composition of this section of the Old Testament. Speaking about the author, he states that the Pentateuch in its final form was completed in the 5th century, at the time of the reformers Ezra and Nehemiah.

Friedman begins by noting the traditional view regarding the writing of the Torah: “the full Torah was regarded as having been composed by Moses”⁷. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah state in several passages that the author of the Torah was Moses. We will mention a few: Ezra 3, 2; 7, 6; Nah 1, 7-9; 8, 1.14; 9, 14; 10, 30; 13, 1. But Friedman continues to express the skepticism shared by most scholars about the traditional view concerning the composition of this section of the Old Testament. He mentions that for the first time medieval scholars noticed that there were several contradictions in the Pentateuch. “Mosaic authorship came to be doubted on the basis of anachronisms and conflicts within the text. These problems were first expressed by medieval commentators”⁸.

⁵ “How Old Is the Song of Deborah?” by Serge FROLOV, n.p., in <https://www.bibleodyssey.org:443/en/people/related-articles/how-old-is-the-song-of-deborah>. Accessed 26 October 2022.

⁶ See Richard Elliot FRIEDMAN, “Torah (Pentateuch)”, in: David Noel FREEDMAN (ed.), *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, Doubleday, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland, 1992, pp. 605-621.

⁷ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, “Torah (Pentateuch)”, p. 618.

⁸ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, “Torah (Pentateuch)”, p. 618.

II.3. Arguments against Moses as the author of the Pentateuch

Friedman presents several arguments that have led to skepticism among researchers since the Middle Ages. Among these arguments he mentions the fact that Moses is mentioned in these books in the third person, which is unusual for the author of a book. Then the Pentateuch speaks of the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34. So, we cannot accept that Moses records his own death in the book he writes.

Also, in Genesis 36, 31-39 the names of the Edomite kings who lived after the death of Moses are mentioned. It is an anachronism that shows that this text was written by someone who lived during the time of the mentioned Edomite kings.

The expression “the Canaanites were then in the country” used in Genesis (12, 6; 13, 7) shows that the author lived in a time when the Canaanites were no longer the main economic force in the country. Then, in the book of Numbers, the author uses terms superlative to describe Moses. “Moses, however, was a very meek man, more meek than any man on the face of the earth” (Numbers 12, 3), a statement that, normally, an author would not make about himself.

II.4. Doublets found in the Torah

Richard Friedman mentions 24 doublets that the narrative of the Pentateuch contains. It is about two stories about Creation, Adam’s genealogy, the Flood, Abraham’s lie about his wife, the crossing of the Red Sea, the Decalogue, etc. The narrative about the maidservant Hagar and Ishmael is actually a triplet. This would prove that the Pentateuch was composed by several authors.

Then he also notes 24 different terms used in the four sources J, E, D, P, when referring to the name of God, names of localities, etc. For example, we find different names used for the deity: Yahweh or Elohim, and several names for Mount Sinai. In sources J and P we have the name Sinai, and in sources E and D the same mountain is called Horeb.

Then Friedman presents 15 contradictions in the Pentateuch. Among these he mentions: the order of creation in P (plants, animals, man and then woman), while in J the order is different (man, plants, animals and then

woman). He observes contradictions in relation to the number of animals taken in the ark by Noah, about Abraham's homeland - Ur or Haran, Joseph's birthplace - Bethlehem or Padan Aram, the earth swallowing the sons of Korah or their burning, etc.

II.5. Existence of multiple publishers

Friedman disputes the authorship of Moses as the author of the Pentateuch noting that several editors intervened in its completion. He mentions a number of evidences of editors' intervention in the completion of the Pentateuch. The editors used from time to time, the so-called epanalepsis. It is about summary repetitions, harmonizing expressions, organizational formulas for the organization of the text or for its coherence. For example, the editor's use of the term "Toledoth" for structuring the book of Genesis is mentioned.

Friedman notes 20 specific features used by the editors of the four sources of the documentary hypothesis, which we currently encounter in the text of the Pentateuch. He counts 11 situations that show the intervention of the editors to give cursive to the included narratives. The intervention of the authors is also seen in the 38 historical references that highlight the place and time in which they intervened in the text of the Pentateuch. Linguistic arguments characteristic of each of the four hypothetical sources supported by the researchers are also recorded.

Friedman also records a series of combinations made by the editors of the four sources (JEDP), in the process of integrating these sources into a unitary volume, later known as the Torah or Pentateuch. He argues with other researchers that the P Source follows the chronology used by the combined sources J-E. Friedman claims that the combined form of the J-E sources is also quoted and mentioned in other books of the Old Testament. For example, Jeremiah and Ezekiel would allude to source P⁹. Friedman's conclusion from this article is that the Hypothesis of sources J, E, D, P is the most plausible theory that explains the formation of the Pentateuch. From his point of view "the Documentary Hypothesis has remained intact in its essentials"¹⁰.

⁹ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, "Torah (Pentateuch)", pp. 608-618.

¹⁰ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, "Torah (Pentateuch)", p. 618.

II.6. The oldest sources in the writing of the Torah: Sources J and E

From his point of view and the supporters of the documentary hypothesis, the oldest sources from the Torah and from the OT in general are: Source J which is dated to the 9th century BC, and source E dated to the 8th century BC. Friedman notes that 19th century Hegelian philosophy also influenced theological research by promoting the concept of the evolution of history. Two personalities of the time had a decisive role: Karl Heinrich Graf and Wilhelm Vatke. Graf tried to prove that certain texts of Scripture preceded other texts or followed other texts already existing in the biblical text¹¹. Vatke sought to explain the evolution of the ancient religion of Israel, analyzing those elements of the sacred texts that would support an earlier or later stage of the Jewish religion.

From Graf's perspective, sources J and E are the earliest documents that record the biblical stories. From his perspective, document D is later because it reflects a later period in the evolution of Israel's history. And the P - priestly source is the latest, referring to various themes that were not known to the early texts of the Bible. It would be about the themes found in the prophetic books. Both Graf and Vatke concluded that the vast majority of the laws and narratives in the Pentateuch were not composed in the days of Moses, and were not written by him, but were composed at the end of the writing period of the sacred text.

The ideas of the two theologians were criticized by ordinary Christians and researchers. Initially even W. DeWete criticized their assumptions, stating that they ignored the information provided by the biblical text regarding the beginnings of Israel's history, the great works of Moses, and based on assumptions he called "worthless nothings"¹². However, the ideas of Graf and Vatke came to dominate biblical research with the publication of the book written by Julius Wellhausen.

II.7. Authors of sources J and E

Friedman argues that the authors of sources J and E belonged to the priestly classes that were in power at the time they wrote. From his point of

¹¹ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, pp. 24-25.

¹² Richard E. FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p. 25.

view, which coincides with the general perspective of the representatives of historical criticism, the authors of sources J and E lived during the existence of the two divided kingdoms.

Regarding the priestly castes in the two kingdoms of Israel, Friedman states that in the Southern Kingdom it is the family of Aaron, supported by Solomon. Zadok was appointed high priest in Solomon's kingdom. In the Northern Kingdom it would be Abiathar, probably from the family of Moses, a priestly caste supported by David. From Friedman's point of view, both families came from the tribe of Levi. Arguments taken from the biblical text are presented¹³.

Friedman confesses in his book that "the first two sources, J and E, were written by two persons who lived during the period that I described in the last chapter. They were tied to the life of that period, its major events, its politics, its religion, and its catastrophes. In this chapter I intend to demonstrate this and to identify the persons who wrote them"¹⁴. Although many researchers have stated these hypotheses, it was specific for Friedman "to present a stronger collection of evidence for this than has been made known before, I mean to be more specific about who the two writers were"¹⁵.

The sanctuaries where these two priests served are mentioned. "We identify the author of E as a Shiloh priest who possibly thought of Moses as his own ancestor, we are not just saying something about his pedigree. We are pursuing an understanding of why he wrote what he wrote. It helps us to understand why the E stories offer a more development of Moses' personality than those of J"¹⁶.

Friedman believes that the moment of the split of the kingdom created the context for the writing of two traditions¹⁷. "The political division of the country into two had enormous implications for the religion"¹⁸.

¹³ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, pp. 26-27, 42, 61.

¹⁴ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, pp. 26-27, 61

¹⁵ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p. 61.

¹⁶ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p. 79.

¹⁷ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p. 44.

¹⁸ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p. 40.

II.8. Friedman and his assumptions

Richard Friedman remained true to the JEDP Documentary Hypothesis. He admits that it is a hypothesis but from his point of view it has no competition. That is why he supports the JEDP model as a scientific hypothesis. Although Friedmann is considered in conservative Christian circles as having liberal views, due to the fact that he supports the Documentary Hypothesis, but from the perspective of other theologians, Friedmann is considered conservative, because he accepts the historicity of some events presented in the narrative of the Pentateuch. This proves once again that theological research has an increased degree of subjectivity.

Where does this subjectivity come from? Theological research is influenced by the presuppositions of the theologian. Scientific and especially theological research is based on hypotheses that can be confirmed and later disproved. We observe the relative and subjective character of research in the field of modern theology and social sciences in particular, which came into existence starting from the 19th century. We wish to illustrate this subjectivism with reference to Friedman. In an interview about biblical archeology Friedmann admitted that he supports the assumptions of the representatives of biblical maximalism¹⁹.

Friedman considers himself a biblical maximalist, although he hates the classification of researchers into “biblical maximalists” and “biblical minimalists”²⁰. The assumptions supported by the representatives of the two positions influenced and influences theological research today. Biblical maximalists accept that there is a historical core to the historicity of the OT narratives. Biblical minimalists totally dispute the existence of people or events that the Old Testament narrative describes, and that are not historically proven. They dispute the existence of Moses, David, Solomon by rejecting the archaeological evidence.

¹⁹ Host Thomas LEVY, of the UCSD Anthropology Dept., welcomes Richard Elliott Friedman, one of the world’s foremost Biblical scholars and an authority on the genealogy of scriptural texts. Series: “Dig This!” [11/2002] [Humanities], in UCTV, Dig This: Richard Elliott Friedman – YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com › watch>. Accessed 2 November 2022.

²⁰ Host Thomas LEVY, “Dig This: Richard Elliott Friedman”, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com › watch>. Accessed 2 November 2022.

Friedman argues that the inscription on the Tel Dan Stela, which is dated to the late 9th-early 8th century, and on which is inscribed in Old Aramaic a text that mentions the victory of a king of Damascus against two kings, one of them it is BYT-DWD. Most scholars translate the phrase as “House of David”. But biblical minimalists argue that these words should be explained differently²¹.

His openness to archeology is probably due to the fact that one of his teachers was G. E. Wright, a Presbyterian minister and professor of theology and archaeology. G. E. Wright (1909-1974) was a specialist in Near Eastern archaeology, known for dating pottery. He was part of the Biblical Theology Movement. He studied with William F. Albright, G. E. Wright, who was appointed professor at Harvard Divinity School in 1958 and curator of the Semitic Museum in 1961.

Friedman also admits that he was influenced in adopting the Documentary Hypothesis by another professor he admired, named Frank M. Cross also of Harvard University, a professor of Hebrew and other Oriental languages. He too was a curator at the Harvard Semitic Museum. Beginning in 1953, Cross was appointed a member of the international committee for the editing of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1995 he published *The Ancient Library of Qumran*, third edition. Influenced by these theologians, Friedman takes into account the partial historicity of the biblical text, appealing to archaeological evidence. We see how Friedman’s presuppositions were influenced by his teachers.

II.9. Alternative hypotheses of composition of the Pentateuch

Friedman admits that there are alternative proposals regarding the writing of the Pentateuch. This is the theory proposed by researchers from Scandinavia, which says that the Pentateuch is the result of a written record of several pieces of information that were previously transmitted orally. Torah “is the end product of the merging of numerous orally developed compositions”²².

²¹ “Dig This: Richard Elliott Friedman” – YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch>. Accessed 2 November 2022.

²² Richard E. FRIEDMAN, “Torah (Pentateuch)”, p. 619.

But he rejects this theory saying that “the converging lines of evidence listed above are not accounted for in such a model”²³.

Friedman also mentions the proposals made by J. Van Seters and Rolf Rendtorff who, although they accept in principle the documentary hypothesis, nevertheless propose a much later date for the composition of those sources (not the 9th and 8th centuries BC)²⁴. Unlike of the proposal suggested by Van Seters, Friedman argues that there is nevertheless a historical core of the biblical narrative recorded in the Pentateuch.

In his book entitled *The Exodus*, Friedman tries to identify different fragments which are myths and which are historical when talking about the Exodus narrative. Friedman chooses a middle ground, rejecting the position of biblical minimalists - who deny the historicity of the biblical narrative altogether - and also the position of so-called literalists who claim that the entire narrative of the Pentateuch is historical. From his point of view, a small group of Jews, from the tribe of Levites, came out of the Egyptian captivity. They were the ones who brought monotheism to Canaan, becoming the priestly caste of Israel²⁵.

II.10. William Schniedewind and “How did the Bible become a book?”

In the discussion of Friedman’s perspective on the composition of the Pentateuch, we consider it important to refer to another theologian, Friedman’s supporter. It is about William Schniedewind who tried to go into more detail about how the Jewish Bible was formed. In his book *How the Bible Became a Book*²⁶, he notes that for the past two hundred years scholars have argued that the Jewish Bible was composed during the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

From his point of view, recent research in the field of archeology and linguistic anthropology suggests that we can talk about an earlier period

²³ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, “Torah (Pentateuch)”, p. 619.

²⁴ Richard E. FRIEDMAN, “Torah (Pentateuch)”, p. 619.

²⁵ Richard Elliott FRIEDMAN, *The Exodus*, Harper One, 2017. Vezi și Catholic Herald, *Spirited thinking since 1888*, September 21, 2017 at Catholic Herald’ Books, in <https://catholicherald.co.uk>. Accessed 20 March 2023.

²⁶ William M. SCHNIEDEWIND, *How the Bible Became a Book: the Textualization of Ancient Israel*, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 1-2.

in which these texts were written, namely towards the end of the Iron Age. In his book Schniedewind taking into account recent archaeological discoveries and the history of writing, formulates a personal hypothesis regarding the writing of the Jewish Bible and how it became an authority for the community of faith.

II.11. Schniedewind's assumptions about the composition and normativity of Scripture

He states that “most importantly, written texts for the first time in human history began to have religious and cultural authority. This transference of authority from oral to written is what I refer to in the subtitle of this book, ‘the textualization of ancient Israel’”²⁷.

His conclusion is that “The Bible is really a collection of books and not the product of an individual author. Moreover, what a hypothetical author intended to say often is difficult (if not impossible) to recover for an ancient text like the Bible”²⁸. The assumptions supported by Schniedewind, is that the meaning of the text is given by the reader rather than by the author who wrote the biblical text. This perspective rejects the idea of intentional revelation imposed by the narrative of the biblical text. Schniedewind offers as an analogy the US Constitution which is a reflection of its readers rather than the authors of the constitution. In the same sense, from his point of view the meaning of the biblical text is rather given by its readers than by its authors.

Moses' authorship is also contested due to the assumption that in Moses' time, people were generally illiterate, except for Moses who was educated at Pharaoh's court. Why would Moses write to a horde of slaves, who don't read it anyway? Also, another assumption supported by him is that papyri were expensive at that time²⁹.

Schniedewind weakness is that he looks at the process of writing of the Bible from a sociological perspective and the evolution of human

²⁷ W. M. SCHNIEDEWIND, *How the Bible Became a Book: the Textualization of Ancient Israel*, p. 2.

²⁸ W. M. SCHNIEDEWIND, *How the Bible Became a Book: the Textualization of Ancient Israel*, p. 5.

²⁹ W. M. SCHNIEDEWIND, *How the Bible Became a Book: the Textualization of Ancient Israel*, p. 11.

cultures from orality to writing, and ignores the revelatory dimension of the biblical text. We do not deny the fact that the editing of the Bible on books went through an evolutionary process, but we cannot overlook the claim of the biblical text to the historicity of characters, statements, to the normativity of moral or ceremonial laws, it is true taking into account the context in which it was written the text.

III. Brevard Springs Childs

Brevard Childs was born in 1923 and died in 2007. He received his BA and MA from the University of Michigan in 1947. In 1950, he received his Bachelor of Divinity, an academic graduate program, from Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1955 he received his Doctorate in Theology from the University of Basel. He was considered one of the most important researchers of the 20th century, in the field of the Old Testament. He taught at Yale University for 41 years (1958-1999). In 1992 he was appointed Sterling Professor. He is known for proposing the Canonical method of interpreting Scripture.

He has published several books and studies in specialized journals. Among his works we mention: *Introduction to the Old Testament As Scripture* (SCM Press, London, 1979), *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1970), *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (OTL; Westminster, Philadelphia, 1974), *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1985), *The New Testament As Canon: An Introduction* (Trinity Press International, Valley Forge, 1984, republished 1994), and the masterpiece his *A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testament* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1993).

III.1. The problems of the Documentary Hypothesis

Brevard Childs was a disciple of leading theologians of the Historical Criticism method of his time, such as: Karl Barth and Gerhard von Rad. Childs studied and knew from the inside the method of historical criticism.

However, he also noticed a number of shortcomings of this method. Regarding the interpretation of the Pentateuch, Brevard Childs has several questions about the credibility of the Documentary Hypothesis of the composition of the Pentateuch.

III.2. Lack of consensus in the formulation of the Documentary Hypothesis

In his book *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, Childs notes the diversity of opinion among theologians when it comes to the proposed theories of composition of the Pentateuch. Speaking of the patriarchal narratives of Genesis 12-50, he discusses this section in light of Wellhausen's hypothesis that the author used three sources: J, E, and P³⁰.

He also mentions the contributions of researchers: Herman Gunkel, M. Noth, von Rad, Van Seters, Rolf Rendtorff, but also the contribution of theologian and archaeologist Albrecht Alt in explaining the text of the Pentateuch. In this sense, he highlights the diversity of hypotheses proposed by researchers in the reconstruction of the religion of the patriarchs. He also observes that important theologians such as R. de Vaux and Cazeles failed to discover the way of composing the patriarchal narrative.

III.3. Problems of dating the text of the Pentateuch

Childs's conclusion regarding the formation and dating of the Pentateuch is formulated by him in the book mentioned above. Childs discusses the composition of the patriarchal narrative, but also of the Pentateuch in general. From his point of view establishing an absolute chronology for the patriarchal narrative remains elusive, despite the research of leading scholars such as de Vaux and Cazeles.

However, it must be emphasized that Van Seters' attempt to return to Wellhausen's position of locating patriarchal narratives in the monarchical period remains equally unconvincing. Often the attention of biblical writers is focused elsewhere, and extra-biblical sources regarding this period, are largely inconclusive. But even Albrecht Alt's highly sophisticated approach

³⁰ Brevard S. CHILDS, *A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testament*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1993, pp. 124-125.

in his book *Gott der Vater* (God of the Fathers), in which the author tries to reconstruct the religion of the Patriarchs, is not without its problems. His ingenious hypothesis showed signs of weakness. It is no longer supported with the same conviction that Martin Noth and G. von Rad did.

In conclusion, Childs argues that, to date, due to the lack of consensus among scholars, any attempt to reconstruct the tradition and history behind the patriarchal material remains tentative and must be viewed with great caution. However, Childs states that despite the collapse of general theories of the composition of the Pentateuch, we must recognize the value of many individual observations regarding this text, both with reference to oral or literary transmission and with reference to redactional process. Many of these observations are worthy of consideration, they have often maintained their validity³¹.

III.4. Childs' perspective on the hypotheses of the composition of the Pentateuch

Childs rejects the idea that the Documentary Hypothesis is the correct and complete explanation for the composition of the Pentateuch. He notes that renowned scholars have proposed several hypotheses for the writing of the Pentateuch. Although considerable efforts have been made and certain results have been obtained regarding the understanding of the process of composition of the first section of the Old Testament, the lack of consensus and the shortcomings of each hypothesis prove that none of them can be considered as normative.

Supporters of a certain hypothesis try to impose their position, by demonstrating that the other propositions are erroneous to a greater or lesser extent. Referring strictly to the patriarchal narrative (Gen 12-50), Childs cautions us to be circumspect when studying these hypotheses. They must be considered as mere theories. "Because of the lack of consensus any attempt at a reconstruction of the tradition and history behind the patriarchal material remains provisional and must be viewed with considerable caution"³².

³¹ B. S. CHILDS, *A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testament*, pp. 124-125.

³² B. S. CHILDS, *A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testament*, pp. 124-125.

On the other hand, Childs informs us that the main concern should not be the precise identification of the process of formation of the books of the Bible, but the actual study of these books. The reader is advised to focus on the content of the biblical text as we have it in its final form - the canonical form. The content of the text in its final form should be the subject of the interpreter's research.

IV. Walter Brueggemann

Walter Brueggemann was born in 1933. He received his BA from Eden Theological Seminary in 1958. In 1961 he received a doctorate in theology from Union Theological Seminary, and in 1974 he received his Ph.D. degree from Saint Louis University. He is also ordained as a pastor at the United Church of Christ. He was appointed professor of Old Testament at Eden Theological Seminary for 25 years, between 1961-1986. From 1986 he was appointed professor at Columbia Theological Seminary from where he retired in 2000. He is the editor of the Journal for Preachers.

He is considered one of the most influential theologians in the field of the Old Testament in recent decades. He is a representative of progressive Christianity considering that the Church through its counter-witness reacts to the current tendency of society towards consumerism and nationalism, offering a viable alternative.

He wrote a number of 58 books, several commentaries on some books of Scripture, including Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, I - II Samuel, Isaiah and Jeremiah. He has also published hundreds of articles. He is a supporter of the rhetorical method, combining philology and sociology. He was an editor at Fortress Press.

Among the published books we mention: *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, 1984), *The Prophetic Imagination*, (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1978), *Genesis: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1982), *Hopeful Imagination: Prophetic Voices in Exile* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1986), *A Commentary of Jeremiah: Exile*

& Homecoming (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids and Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998), In *Man We Trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith* (John Knox Press, Richmond, s.a.), *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme, and Text*, editor: Patrick D. Miller (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1992), and the masterpiece his *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1997).

IV.1. Brueggemann's conception concerning the composition of the Pentateuch

Walter Brueggemann in section iv, entitled "Israel's Embodied Testimony", in his *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, speaks of the "Torah as Mediator", meaning that the Torah (or the Pentateuch) is one of the witnesses who plead in favor of Yahweh.

In this section Brueggemann explains and summarizes very well how he understands the origin and function of the Torah (Pentateuch). In his view, the Torah evolved from a series of ad hoc proclamations, oracular utterances, and commandments, later becoming a large literary work. When we refer to the Torah, we must also consider the traditions derived from this text, which have preserved certain characteristics of some original oral utterances. But at the same time, the Torah followed its own path in its evolution, understanding and application in the community of faith.

IV.2. Interpretation of the Pentateuch

From his point of view, it is not the theologian's responsibility or task to study the tortuous and sometimes obscure route of the formation of the text of the Pentateuch. It is sufficient, as a point of reference, to insist that the result of the compilation and putting into text of those sayings which at first circulated as oral tradition, and which then became part of the Torah in its present form, must be read as part of the whole body of literature, which structures and reshapes the text we have in its current form³³.

³³ "Torah evolved out of a series of ad hoc proclamations, oracular utterances, and commandments, into a more holistic literature and practice that retained some properties of those initial utterances, but also took on a life of its own. It is not our responsibility or proper task here to trace the difficult and obscure route of the

Brueggemann states that the Torah was originally formed from a series of proclamations that were formulated in certain circumstances as a necessity for the life of the community of faith. These utterances took on the form of an oracle, of commandments for the community. These sayings multiplied and gathered over time, which were later included in a literary work known as the Torah or the Pentateuch.

IV.3. The documentary hypothesis and the theory of evolution

His own opinion regarding the Documentary Hypothesis and the research method that supports this hypothesis: the historical-critical method, Brueggemann observes that the rise of historical criticism has materialized in what he calls the “Wellhausian synthesis”. The documentary hypothesis formulated in its final form by Julius Wellhausen is, from his point of view, a product of the evolution of theological research in the modern period.

For Brueggemann, the fact that the documentary hypothesis governed the research of the Old Testament speaks of the spirit that characterized that era. He compares the theory supported by the researchers of the method of historical criticism regarding the supposed evolution of the hypothetical JEDP sources, and the modern era’s conception of the evolution of the religion of Israel, influenced by the Theory of Evolution - Darwinism, which was in vogue in the 18th -19th centuries. The formation of the four alleged documents was in accordance with the mentality of the time also adopted by theologians in modernism.

Thus, it was possible for theologians to agree that there was first a series of early documents (sources J and E), followed by the middle period (source D) and the late period (source P). The philosophy of the evolutionary theory of the 18th century can be found in the way the theologians of that time thought about the religion of Israel, which would have evolved from simple forms of religious manifestation and articulation to more and more complex forms, which from their point of view acquired

development of the Torah. It is enough, as a baseline, to insist that whatever remains of those specific utterances in the present completed Torah, they are now to be read as part of a larger whole, which impinges upon and reshapes concrete utterance”. See also Walter BRUEGGEMANN, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1997, p. 578.

extreme, totalitarian forms, expressed in the politics of the ruling class. Brueggemann describes the perspective of modern theology regarding the evolution of Israel's religion according to the following patterns: primitive-early, ethical-monotheistic, and "degenerate legalism"³⁴.

From his point of view, the consensus of theologians of historical criticism must be seen as a general acceptance among researchers of a simple hypothesis grafted onto the evolutionary theory of the time and does not necessarily reflect the real historical context of the actual formation of the Pentateuch.

In conclusion, we will note that Brueggemann challenges and criticizes the historical-critical method, rejecting the unanimous acceptance of the Documentary Hypothesis proposed to modern theologians, as a real historical process of the composition of the five books of the Pentateuch. He disputes its use in the interpretation of the Old Testament. Brueggemann brings other arguments in support of his position. For example, he observes that the Documentary Hypothesis and the Critical Historical Method are inconsistent in the model they propose. This can be seen by comparing the discrepancies and the difference between the way the critical method was used in the 18th century and the way the method was interpreted and used in the 19th century.

V. John Sailhamer

John Herbert Sailhamer was born in 1946 and died in 2017. He was a professor of Old Testament at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in California. He also served as president of the Evangelical Theological Society. He received his BA from California State University, Th.M., at Dallas Theological Seminary, and his doctorate at the University of California, Los Angeles.

³⁴ "The rise of criticism that eventuated in the Wellhausian synthesis is a product of the rise of modernity... the Wellhausian synthesis that has governed Old Testament scholarship reflects the spirit of the age. In that synthesis, it was possible for scholars to agree upon early (JE), middle (D), and late (P) documents, which in turn reflected Israel's religion: early-primitive, ethical monotheism, and "degenerate legalism"', W. BRUEGGEMANN, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1997, pp. 12-13.

In 1975, he began his career as a professor of Old Testament at Biola University. He taught theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and between 1995-1998 at Western Seminary. Between 1999-2006 he served as a professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was part of the translation team of two versions of the Bible: The New Living Translation and the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

He published several books and articles in specialized journals, among which we mention: Genesis: The Expositor's Bible Commentary, in 1990, NIV Compact Bible Commentary in 1999, An Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach, in 1995 and The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary, also published in 1995.

V.1. The interpretation of the Pentateuch from a neo-Protestant perspective

John Sailhamer observes that even among the neo-Protestants there are theologians who appeal to the reconstruction of history to rediscover the meaning of the events in the Pentateuch. He calls this reconstitution, the theologian's preoccupation with the historical understanding of the meaning of the biblical text.

Speaking about the attitude of Protestant interpreters towards theological research in the modern period, Sailhamer observes that the main concern of the neo-Protestant theologians who wrote the theology of the Old Testament in the 19th and 20th centuries was concentrated in two directions. On the one hand, they were concerned with the archaeological research that provides evidence in support of the historicity of the biblical narratives, and on the other hand, they focused on the message that the biblical text contains, intended by the authors of the holy books. It is about understanding the evolution of the process of salvation history³⁵.

Unlike liberal theologians who focused on reconstructing the history of the biblical narrative, conservative neo-Protestant theologians believed that the primary concern of the interpreter is to describe and reconstruct

³⁵ John SAILHAMER, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1995, p. 82.

the history of redemption intended by Yahweh as we find it in the sacred text. Neo-Protestant theologians accept and seek to identify the historicity of the message presented in the books of the Pentateuch and the other books of the Old and New Testaments.

V.2. Divergences in conservative and liberal interpretation

Sailhamer also notes that there were great divergences between the representatives of radical historical criticism and the supporters of conservative biblical interpretation. In this sense, he refers to the theologian Brevard Childs, whom he says builds his method on von Rad's interpretation. The idea taken from von Rad makes the interpreter aware that he should not focus only on the prehistory of the formation of the biblical text³⁶.

The representatives of historical criticism aimed to identify the historical events and experiences to which the biblical text refers, and which lie behind the biblical text. Only after the supposed identification of those text-independent events do the theologians of historical criticism attempt to reconstruct the so-called real history.

Sailhamer notes that also from Childs's perspective, the theologian should have as his research objective the study of the biblical text in its final form. The interpreter should research the message of the text, as we currently have it in the canon of the Old Testament.

From his point of view, it is a mistake to research only the events and experiences mentioned in the text in isolation, ignoring the narrative that integrates these events and realities into the final form of the text. Sailhamer argues that the literary material for theological analysis is not constituted by the events and experiences that lie behind the text or that are independent of the Scripture written by the faith community.

V.3. On the historicity of the Pentateuch

Reflecting on the importance of the historicity of the text in the process of interpreting Scripture, Sailhamer asserts that a neo-Protestant

³⁶ Brevard CHILDS, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1986, p. 6.

theologian cannot speak of a separation between the two. He says we cannot choose between Scripture and history. The theologian should affirm the absolute importance of both dimensions, both the historicity of the biblical narrative and the importance of the narrative of the biblical text. For a neo-Protestant he should not doubt the biblical narrative that speaks of Yahweh's intervention. He must accept as real that God has acted in history according to that narrative.

Sailhamer observes that the historical basis of biblical faith is fundamental to interpretation and will always remain so. He notices one essential thing about the performer. A theologian's real problem is his commitment to an inspired written Word of God as the locus of God's special revelation.

From his perspective, the theologian's commitment to the sacred text, seen as the written Word of God, will decide how the interpreter will use the historical sources at his disposal in the process of interpretation³⁷. The history imposed by the biblical narrative represents a fundamental milestone in the process of interpretation the Scriptures.

V.4. Reconstructing biblical history in conservative interpretation

Sailhamer observes that even among conservatives there are theologians who reconstruct history, with the aim of rediscovering the meaning of the events presented in the text. Reconstruction aims at the historical understanding of meaning. He explains this process as follows: When the biblical text explains a certain event (B), the theologian allows himself to describe the actual event in a slightly modified manner, which he symbolizes with the small letter (b).

It means that from the point of view of the conservatives, the event described by the author of the sacred text should be interpreted as a figure of speech, or poetic language, which would mean a slight modification of the event. Thus, in the conservative neo-Protestant interpretation, the biblical events represented by the letters A, B, C could be presented by the interpreter as having a slight modification, represented by the letters A, b, C.

³⁷ John SAILHAMER, "Genesis", coll. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1990, p. 7.

Sailhamer provides an example, referring to the first plague in the book of Exodus. The text tells us that Moses lifted the staff and struck the waters of the Nile which turned into blood, the fish died and the river began to smell (Ex 7, 20). He identifies three events: a) Moses raises the staff, b) the water turns into blood, c) the fish die. Sailhamer says that pre-Critical theologians believed that water turned into blood, as the biblical text states³⁸.

But the conservatives, influenced by historical criticism, recognized the miraculous dimension of the text, but interpreted the text through the analogy that is found in human language. For example, C. Keil claims that the transformation of water into blood was not a chemical one, but the fact that the color of the water changed - resembling blood. Keil goes on to explain that the waters of the Nile change color, the flow of the river decreases³⁹.

Sailhamer's conclusion is that through the accomplished interpretation conservatives retain the miraculous element but explain it in terms of natural phenomena that could have produced the change. Comparing conservative theologians with representatives of historical criticism, Sailhamer notes that both groups focus on reconstructing the event behind the text, which leads to the shift of the interpreter's attention from the biblical narrative itself to the so-called historical events behind the sacred text. So, the neo-Protestant theologians of the 19th and 20th centuries focused on two directions: on archeology - to identify the historical events in the text, and on the history of salvation, which aims at the actual narrative⁴⁰.

V.5. Revelation and Religion in Interpretation

Trying to answer the question: "What is Old Testament Theology?", Sailhamer explains that the term "theology" has been associated in

³⁸ Henry AINSWORTH, *Annotations upon the Second Book of Moses Called Exodus*, M. Parsons, London, 1639, p. 23.

³⁹ C. F. KEIL, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 1, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1971, p. 478. Also see C.F. KEIL, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 3, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1975, p. 13, about the historicity of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

⁴⁰ J. SAILHAMER, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 1995, p. 82.

interpretation with two different concepts: with divine “revelation” and with “religion” (p. 11). He states that the term “revelation” describes the actions of God. It would mean that God made Himself known in the Bible. Instead, the term “religion” used by theologians describes human actions. Revelation describes the actions of God, while religion describes the actions of man in relation to the Divinity⁴¹.

Sailhamer uses the term “revealed theology”. Theology allows itself to affirm “thus speaks the Lord” while other sciences cannot make such an affirmation. Theology speaks for God on the basis of revelation. He also discusses the normativity of theology. The theologian is faced with the question: Does the Bible record what God said? If he accepts that God spoke in the Bible, which is still relevant to the reader today. But no theology can have the same claim to authority as the message of the biblical text. From his point of view, no theological content is infallible, only the Bible⁴².

V.6. The Pentateuch’s claim to historicity

The texts of the Pentateuch claim the historicity of Moses and the fact that he is the author of these books. In Deuteronomy 31, 9.24-26 we read:

“Then Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of the Levites, who carried the ark of the law of the Lord, and to all the elders of the children of Israel... When Moses wrote in the book all the words of its law to the end. Then Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the law of the Lord and said: «Take this book of the law and put it on the right side of the ark of the law of the Lord your God, and it will be there as a testimony against you»”.

We also read about the historicity of the character of Moses in Deuteronomy 34, where we talk about the age at which he died and his appreciation. “And Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he

⁴¹ J. SAILHAMER, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, pp. 11-12.

⁴² J. SAILHAMER, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, p. 16.

died; but his sight had not weakened and his strength had not diminished (Deut 34, 7) ... From that time there did not arise in Israel a prophet like Moses whom God knew face to face (Deut 34, 10).

In the New Testament, Christ supports the historicity of Moses, in John 5, 45-47: “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you trusted. That if you had believed Moses, you would also have believed Me, for he wrote about Me. And if you don’t believe what he wrote, how will you believe my words?”

VI. Conclusion

In this work we have sought to review how the “Pentateuch” was interpreted by the four theologians mentioned above. I discussed Richard Friedman who continues to support the Documentary Hypothesis of Pentateuch composition. In the research he did in his books and studies, he was interested in the historicity of the biblical accounts, seeking to discover when the writer lived, if he witnessed the events, sought to discover the sources from which the authors of those sources were inspired, with whom he was in opposition, etc.

From his point of view, the oldest sources from the Torah and from the Old Testament in general are Source J which is dated to the 9th century BC, and source E dated to the 8th century BC. Friedman notes that Hegelian philosophy also influenced theological research, through the idea of the evolution of history. He notes that William deWete himself initially criticized the assumptions of the representatives of the Documentary Hypothesis, stating that they ignored the great works of Moses and relied on presuppositions he called “worthless nothings”.

Friedman argues that the time of the split of the kingdom of Israel created the context for the writing of two traditions. The failure of the documentary hypothesis is also proven by the way Friedman is viewed among researchers. He is considered conservative by more progressive scholars because he accepts the historicity of some events presented in the narrative of the Pentateuch. This proves the increased degree of subjectivity of the proposed hypotheses.

Theological research is influenced by the presuppositions of the theologian. We observe the relative and subjective character of research in the field of modern theology and social sciences in particular. Similarly, Schneidewind, a supporter of Friedman, looks at the writing of the Bible from a sociological perspective and the evolution of human cultures from orality to writing, ignoring the revelatory dimension of the biblical text. We do not deny the fact that the editing of the Bible on books went through an evolutionary process, but we cannot overlook the claim of the biblical text to the historicity of the characters, of the statements, to the normativity of the moral laws.

Brevard Childs, who proposes the Canonical Method of interpreting Scripture, argues that due to the lack of consensus among scholars, any attempt to reconstruct the tradition and history behind the patriarchal material remains tentative and must be viewed with great caution. Yet Childs recognizes the value of many individual observations on the Documentary Hypothesis, both with reference to oral or literary transmission and with reference to the editorial process, are worthy of consideration.

Walter Brueggemann states that the Torah was formed starting from a series of proclamations formulated in certain circumstances as a necessity for the faith life of the community. These sayings multiplied and gathered over time, being later included in a large literary work known as the Torah or the Pentateuch.

In Brueggemann's view, the documentary hypothesis governed the research of the Old Testament due to the spirit of the time. He observes a direct connection between the supposed evolution of the hypothetical JEDP sources and the philosophy of life of the modern age, concerning the evolution of the religion of Israel, influenced by the Theory of Evolution – Darwinism.

And the Theory of Evolution has its presuppositions, requiring the reader to accept these presuppositions. Among the beliefs of evolutionism, we mention: The world appeared by chance, Matter is eternal, There is no creator of the universe, etc. But all these cannot be proven. The atheist perspective requires to believe in the theory of evolution, just as the Christian require to believe in the historicity and normativity of the biblical text.

Sailhamer notes that conservative neo-Protestant theologians have been primarily concerned with identifying the historicity of the message of the Pentateuch and the other books of the Old and New Testaments. In his view, the theologian's concern should not be to study in isolation only the events and experiences mentioned in the text, ignoring the narrative that integrates these events and realities into the final form of the text. For him, the purpose of the theologian is not to discover the events and experiences behind the text, independent of the narrative of Scripture.

Sailhamer observes that the historical basis of biblical faith is fundamental to interpretation and will always remain so. A theologian's real problem is his commitment to the inspired written Word of God as the locus of God's special revelation. Sailhamer uses the term "revealed theology". Theology allows itself to affirm "thus speaks the Lord" while other sciences cannot make such an affirmation. Theology speaks for God on the basis of revelation.

It is true that the OT and NT contains laws that were related to a cultural context of the time. But the text of the Pentateuch, as well as the other writings, claim to have a general message valid for all of history. Hans Frei, in his book *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* condemned Historical Criticism for ignoring the significance of the biblical narrative as a norm of faith⁴³. The interpreter has the responsibility to discover how he and his community fit into the world of the Bible.

Ignoring the text's claims to historicity has particular consequences for the readers of the Pentateuch. Renunciation of the morality claimed by the text, leads the interpreter and the reader in general to a relativization of biblical morality, and possibly the adoption of alternative moral solutions.

The shortcomings of scientific research that defy the text's claim to historicity consist in the fact that this method also proposes certain hypotheses to explain the recommended interpretive model. But these assumptions are subjective. History, Sociology, Philology, Philosophy, etc., have their gaps.

⁴³ Hans FREI, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, London and Yale University Press, 1974, pp. 1-16.