

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE PENTATEUCH

I

FROM the very beginning conservative writers perceived the vulnerability of the Wellhausen theory of the composition of the Pentateuch, and several generations of big guns have been pounding away at it with a measure of success. Recently they have found unexpected allies from scholars who are by no means conservative in their general outlook. These allies have not been content with destroying: they are building positive theories of their own.

On the whole, those who believe in the substantial Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch have not been too clear in saying just how we believe Moses did write or compile the Five Books. Yet obviously, if we are to make any serious contribution to the problem of the Pentateuch, we must be able to suggest at least a reasonable theory of how the sections of the Books came to be written, and how far the hand of Moses was responsible for their present form.

This is the purpose of the present paper. We shall not be content with resolving apparent discrepancies, nor with sniping at critical arguments: but we shall try to put ourselves back into the position of Moses, and endeavour to see him at work.

This means that we shall be taking Moses seriously: and we must start with three basic facts. First, we must accept the existence of Moses. Fortunately, with the present trend of modern Old Testament scholarship, we need not stay to argue the point. The other two points may be more debatable, but we cannot go very far unless we accept them.

The second point, then, is the fact of the education of Moses. As a minimum this involves his ability to write: as a maximum it involves, as the Bible indicates, the best education of the day at the court of Pharaoh.

The third point is the reality of the divine inspiration as it came to Moses—or should we make some concession, and say, as Moses believed that it came to him? The relevant passages are Exodus xxxiii. 11, where “Yahweh spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend”; and again Numbers xii. 6-8, where normal prophetic revelation is contrasted with

the manner of revelation to Moses: "with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches"; a similar contrast is made in Deuteronomy xxxiv. 10. Moreover there are several places in the historical record which indicate that Moses heard a voice from Yahweh. To-day one is thankful to see the more serious treatment of prophetic inspiration, and the realization that the prophet himself was conscious of a supernatural voice or vision. This conclusion of course does not compel us to hold that the voice or vision really was from God: we may still need to sift the products of the human Unconscious or Subconscious from anything that may truly be regarded as entirely from God. But at least we can say that there have been people, of whom Moses can be regarded as an outstanding example, who have heard a voice and seen a vision which they have believed to be the voice and vision of God Himself.

Putting now these three initial assumptions together—and of course they are not pure assumptions, but an acceptance of what the Bible actually says—we realize that we are dealing with a scholar, who is firmly convinced that week by week, and possibly day by day, God Himself is speaking to him; not about trivial things only, but about the whole conduct of the life and worship of the nation whom God has taken to be His own people.

Are we prepared to take Moses seriously in this way? If so, it must affect profoundly the attitude that we adopt both to the actual composition of the Pentateuch and to its acceptance by the Nation. If you put an educated man in a position such as that in which Moses found himself, you could not stop him from writing: he would be bound to write. Could any scholar to-day spend forty years in the wilderness and not produce a book? Add to this the belief that he was the recipient of direct divine communications (which God forbid!), and the result would be inevitable.

Here is a question for the reader. What would you write if you believed that you had a call from God to lead a people from one country to another? Obviously you would write some sort of log-book of the journey. Numbers xxxiii. 2 says that "Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of the Lord", and a dull catalogue of places follows. In addition you would give a fuller account of some of the more striking events: and might even thereby

convey the impression that the travels were one long series of excitements. In the next place you would obviously take care to put down accurately what God had said for the permanent guidance or regulation of the people. If you regarded them as His people, in a special relationship to Him, you would realize that His words were of very great importance and would take special care to reproduce them accurately. This also Moses claims to have done.

Here perhaps we may digress for a moment to rule out a possible difficulty. Granted that Moses received what he believed to be a divine revelation, how are we to suppose that he remembered it well enough to reproduce it later in writing? If we turn to the literature of Psychical Research, we find evidence of people who are able to reproduce verbatim, on a later occasion, things that they have received at some sort of revelation while in a state of trance, or semi-trance. In Eugene Osty's book, published in this country under the title of *Supernormal Faculties in Man*, he gives the instance of a M. de Fleurière who had the gift of what is inaccurately called Psychometry, by which one can take some object and perceive things about its past and future, and about the past and future of people who have been associated with it. M. de Fleurière told Dr. Osty that he remembered accurately the exact words that he had used while exercising his gift, and since Dr. Osty always recorded the words in shorthand at the time, he was able to prove that this claim was true (p. 78).

The most striking example of such a gift in the Bible is the ability of Jeremiah to dictate to Baruch all his prophecies up to date, and to repeat them yet again when the written copy was destroyed (Jer. xxxvi). One need therefore find no difficulty, even from the purely human point of view, in supposing that Moses was able to reproduce in writing any communication that God had impressed upon him on any occasion.

II

After this appeal to what we ourselves should have done if we had been in Moses' place, it will be as well to see what others have done when they believed themselves to be the recipients of a divine revelation. If one looks at the founders of religions that claim to be given by divine revelation, one sees that their

first step has been to secure that the revelation should be passed on in writing. Gautama Buddha is probably an exception: it is uncertain how much he caused to be committed to writing. But Buddhism is a metaphysic that does not claim any divine authority other than that which is inherent in man himself: and from the beginning the Buddhist Way has been largely propagated by the method of master and pupil working together.

Mohammed is a good example of one who believed himself to be the instrument of God's revelation. According to him the original text of the Koran existed in heaven, but it was dictated to him piece by piece through the mediation of an angel. Mohammed repeated the message after the angel and then proclaimed it to the world. There is some doubt as to whether Mohammed himself could read or write. If he could write, the probability is that he did not normally make use of this gift. Certainly after his migration to Medina (A.D. 622) he dictated short pieces, chiefly legal decisions, to a scribe. The present arrangement of the Koran is confused. Although Mohammed's words may well have been recorded soon after he had uttered them, the tradition is that they were not collected up until after his death, when someone was commissioned to gather together all the writings that existed not only in some sort of collection, but "inscribed on date-leaves, shreds of leather, shoulder-blades, stony tablets, or the hearts of men" (Sir William Muir, *The Caliphate*, p. 152, quoted in *The Expository Times*, July, 1950, p. 292). If Mohammed could not write, he was in a slightly different position from Moses, but he observed the principle of securing that the revelation should go on record.

A man like Swedenborg, who was a great scholar, naturally set about recording his revelations. In a letter written in 1769 he says:

I have been called to a holy office by the Lord Himself, who most mercifully appeared before me, His servant, in the year 1743; when he opened my sight into the spiritual world, and enabled me to converse with spirits and angels, in which state I have continued up to the present day. From that time I began to print and publish the various arcana that were seen by me or revealed to me. . . .

Now all this may appear irrelevant, but it is only irrelevant to those who are content with the academic approach alone. We want to know how people behave when they believe that they have received a revelation that is to be for the benefit of mankind; how they set it down; how they group the isolated

revelations to form one whole. The question is not whether the alleged revelation is true: that must be settled on other grounds. But, if a person believes that the revelation is true, how does he behave? And if we look at the question like that, we may obviously compare Moses with others who have felt themselves to be spokesmen of God. On the basis of that comparison, as well as on the basis of what we ourselves believe that we should do, we can say that Moses would certainly have written down his revelations at the earliest possible moment, and have taken steps to see that the records were preserved. On grounds of probability, therefore, I believe that theories of the oral transmission of the Pentateuch, as revived, for example, by the Uppsala school, are most unlikely, whatever may be the custom of the East with oral transmission in general.

On turning to the Pentateuch itself, we find that direct recording is alleged to be the practice of Moses. Naturally in the majority of records nothing is said about when Moses wrote them. But there are enough indications to show what his custom was.

In Exodus xvii. 14 the suggestion is that he recorded the battle with Amalek immediately. In Exodus xxiv. 4 he "wrote all the words of the Lord", which would suggest the contents of what God had just said to him about the general laws for the people, i.e. the Ten Commandments and the so-called Book of the Covenant. In Exodus xxxiv. 27 he is given a similar, yet fresh, set of rules, and is told to write them, presumably on the Mount. We note in passing that this set of rules has far more about the direct duty towards God, since it was this that had been violated through the sin of the golden calf.

Nothing is said about the writing down of the contents of Leviticus and Numbers, but Deuteronomy states that its contents were written down by Moses (xxx. 9). If, as seems probable, Deuteronomy consists of several speeches, Moses presumably wrote it section by section, either before or after reciting it to the people. Such a verse as xvii. 18, commanding the future king to "write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites", presupposes either that the people knew that Moses was recording these speeches day by day, or that Moses actually had the script in front of him as he was speaking. The suggestion in xxxi. 22 is that Moses wrote down the song that follows in xxxii, before he actually recited it to the people.

III

The next important thing to consider is the materials that Moses used, and the language in which he wrote. The four likely materials would be clay, stone, papyrus, or leather. We can probably rule out papyrus, because of the difficulty of obtaining it during the wanderings. Suitable clay ready to hand whenever required would also be difficult to obtain. Stone is a possibility, particularly since the Ten Commandments were inscribed on stone. On the other hand, the fact that attention is called to the use of stone for the Ten Commandments may be an indication that stone was not normally used by Moses.

The material that would be ready to hand in any quantity would of course be leather. Moses would have been familiar with the scroll principle in Egypt, where papyrus was the commonest material for writing. But leather was also used in Egypt. Alan Shorter, in an article in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* for 1934 (p. 34), suggests that leather may have been used for documents that had to be consulted frequently. I understand that very little work has been done on the subject of the types of leather used, and the exact process employed to prepare it. Dr. Alexander Scott in the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* for 1927 (p. 239) says of one particular scroll, "The process used originally to preserve the skin is unknown, but the experiments made so far seem to indicate that it was not by means of 'tanning' as we understand the term".

Presumably Moses would know the process. Leather was there to hand, and leather would be the obvious material to use. The likelihood that he did use it is borne out by the Jewish tradition that the Torah should always be written on leather: and also by the fact that one passage in the Pentateuch that speaks of writing makes better sense if leather was the material that people were using then. The passage is Numbers v. 23, 24, where the priest writes certain curses in a book, and "blots them out into the water of bitterness", which the woman is then made to drink. The written words are dissolved into the water. Clay or stone would be out of the question here, unless ink was used on stone. Ink could easily be washed off leather by dipping it into the water. Of the various possibilities, therefore, I would feel that leather was almost certainly the material that Moses used.

This would mean that Moses did not use a cuneiform script, which can only be employed on clay or stone, but probably used those alphabetical characters that had been in existence for several centuries in Canaan. We may well see the hand of God in the discovery of the alphabetic principle in a part of the world where it could be turned to account for the recording and spreading of the word of God: anyone can learn to read and write alphabetic writing very quickly, whereas very special study is needed for cuneiform. In passing, one notes the hand of God also in the discovery of printing shortly before it was needed for the spreading of the Word of God at the Reformation.

IV

It is of some interest to inquire what language Moses used for his records. There seems to be no reason why it should not have been an early form of Hebrew. The evidence of such early inscriptions as remain shows that very much the same language was spoken up and down Canaan, the difference being mainly dialectical. But one might consider other possibilities. The official Akkadian, the language of the Tell el-Amarna Tablets, is unlikely for documents that were to be consulted frequently: they would need to be translated each time that they were read. The same would be true of Egyptian. Even if the people were bilingual in Egypt, it is obvious that they would not retain the hated Egyptian language once they were free.

If the language used was early Hebrew, we must hold that, whatever language Abraham used when he came from Ur and Haran, he and his son and his grandsons automatically adopted the Canaanite tongue as they moved from place to place. There is a clear indication of this in Genesis xxxi. 47, where Jacob employs a Hebrew name for the memorial stones, while Laban uses an equivalent Aramaic term. It is natural to suppose that the patriarchs would adopt the language of the people amongst whom they moved just as refugees in our own country do. The first generation will be bilingual: the second and third will normally cease to use the language of their forefathers in ordinary conversation, though they will probably be able to read it and to speak it when they wish.

But might not the same be true of the people in Egypt? Probably not: since here the children of Israel were settled

in the Goshen area, and, being together, would retain what was now their own language, even though they would be able to speak Egyptian as well. They would be like the Jews in the ghettos, speaking Yiddish amongst themselves, but able to speak also the language of the country in which they were born. When therefore they came out of Egypt, they would speak and write in the language of Canaan, which was the language used by their forefathers when they went down into Egypt.

This does not mean of course that every word that Moses wrote was in the form in which it now stands in our Hebrew Bibles. However sacred a writing may be, it will continue to undergo minor revision so long as the language in which it is written continues to be spoken. One can see this in our Authorized Version, and in the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England. Although these are standard from generation to generation, there is a considerable difference between an original edition and one of the present day. The differences are mostly in spelling, but occasionally words are altered to make better sense. Thus my copy of the Authorized Version, in the interest of clarity, has altered the notorious trap for readers in Luke xxiii. 32, from "two other, malefactors" to "two others, malefactors". There would seem no reason why more extensive alterations than this should not take place in a sacred text down the course of the years, so that obsolete words disappear and new turns of expression are substituted for old. There does, however, come a time when extreme veneration for the text becomes paramount, and no further alterations are allowed.

V

After this lengthy attempt to clear the ground, we must try to visualize Moses in action. We see him in Egypt, as an educated man of forty, brought up at Pharaoh's court, yet conscious of his origin. He had been nursed by his own mother, and had evidently kept in touch with his family, since he and Aaron were no strangers to each other later in life (Exodus iv. 27, etc.). This would mean that he would be familiar with the spoken language of his people, quite apart from what he learnt of it at Pharaoh's court from Canaanite writings and visitors.

Either at this time, or after the Exodus, he became aware of certain family documents that had been handed down by the heads of the families. We know that it was the custom to keep

family records, and numerous clay tablets of such records have come to light. If the patriarchs realized that they had been chosen by God for a special purpose, it is even more likely that they would have kept a record of God's dealings with them.

In a booklet I wrote several years ago, *How Moses compiled Genesis* (Church Book Room Press), I tried to indicate the source and authors of the documents that Moses used in compiling Genesis. Working backwards from the time of Moses, one may assume the existence of a Joseph story, comparable to the *Story of Sinuhe*, presumably written in Egyptian. Moses combined this with Judah records, particularly in the early part of Joseph's life. Before that there would be records kept by Jacob and Esau, possibly by Isaac, and then by Abraham. Earlier still there would be Noah and his sons, and eventually the record would be led back to Adam. This does not necessarily mean that each record was still separate at the time of Moses, nor that Adam actually wrote down a record himself. These things may or may not be so. Oral tradition alone, or oral tradition supplemented by mnemonic drawings, could have transmitted the earliest stories accurately until such time as they could be inscribed on clay tablets, and passed down in sets from father to son. The important thing is that if there were documents, handed down by the heads of the families, Moses is just the man to have edited them and to have written them down as a continuous record on a roll. This does not mean that later additions could not have been made. Marginal comments could be added to bring a reference up to date, and the chronological list of Edomite kings in Genesis xxxvi was evidently completed later. Such a chapter as Genesis xiv, which introduces Abram in verse 13 as though he had not been mentioned before, may belong to old Jerusalem records that came into the possession of David when he captured the city. Such additions could be made when a copy was made of the existing roll; or the skin could be cut, and a column or two joined in on fresh skin.

VI

Genesis is a unified book, and we may well believe that Moses was its unifier. That is to say, Moses was its compiler in more or less its present form. Of the remaining four books only one has a similar unity: this is Deuteronomy. This book professes to belong to a single occasion, relatively speaking, and

definitely asserts that Moses wrote it down (xxx. 9). Arguments that would put this book later than Moses seem to me quite unconvincing: it fits the time of Moses better than any other time. The only exceptions that one needs to make are the record of the final chapter, and perhaps the last part of chapter iv, from verse 44 or verse 41, where an historical statement and a general summary break the thread of the discourses.

Yet this last addition may give some clue as to Moses' methods. It comes at the end of what was evidently one speech. If Moses was recording as he went along, this probably formed the end of a roll, and could have left a blank column at the conclusion, on which the collector of Moses' works added these extra pieces of information.

A similar example may perhaps be found in x. 6-9. It may be that x. 5 formed the end of the second speech, while x. 10, which goes back in point of history, was the introduction to the next speech. In the space at the end of the one speech this additional material was inserted, chiefly to bring in the choice of the Levites, which had been omitted in ix, but also bringing in the death of Aaron, which is not mentioned elsewhere. Alternatively, if Deuteronomy represents material that Moses first wrote and then read, I wonder whether x. 6-9 could be rough notes added at the end of the roll by Moses himself, as a reminder of two or three other points that he must speak about.

In the remainder of the books it is difficult to reach any certainty as to how far the present order is due to Moses himself. Let us try once again to put ourselves in his position. Sometimes he is recording history; sometimes he is receiving from God instructions for the regulations of the life of the people. Occasionally a group of such instructions are given together, as on Sinai; and these naturally go on to one skin. Others are given as separate units from time to time. These also may go on one skin, or may be kept on separate pieces.

Now we have to face a similar problem when we are taking notes. We can either use an exercise book, and work solidly through it; or we can use a loose-leaf system. If we use the latter we file the leaves as soon as possible into appropriate sections. Whether Moses used small pieces of skin, or longer rolls, he would need to adopt some system of filing until the skins could be joined together. The historical notes and records would be his own property, and would be kept in his tent. But the instructions for the priests would be handed to them imme-

diately, so that they could consult and learn them. The priests again would tend to keep their rolls of instructions in appropriate pigeon-holes, or perhaps jars or boxes. In this way they would overcome the problem of quick consultation which is not easy with a lengthy roll.

Yet obviously there would also be the wise tendency to join small rolls together, since this also would make for ease of consultation. This would be particularly natural with sections of history. Once a series of events had been recorded, there would be little point in keeping them isolated, and every reason for joining them into one consecutive narrative.

Now supposing towards the end of his life Moses decided to bring together all that he had written. He would have a set of historical records, and various notes of people, genealogies, and places. The priests would have everything that had been given directly by God on Sinai, or in the Tabernacle. Either Moses or the priests would also have the more formal records of the census, gifts made, and other things.

On the other hand it is possible that Moses himself did not weld all these documents into one. The task may have been undertaken by Joshua or Eleazar immediately after Moses' death. We must say "immediately", because the indication of Joshua i is that Joshua had the law in book, or roll, form, and at the end of his life Joshua was able to add something further to it (Joshua xxiv. 26). It is however possible that this refers to Deuteronomy alone, though I personally think it unlikely.

VII

Moses, then, or some authorized person after Moses' death, prepared to collect the writings into a manageable number of volumes. Genesis already forms one roll, so what is needed is a brief prelude to the account of the Exodus, to link the two stories together. This is Exodus i. 1-7. The story then runs smoothly up to Exodus vi. 12, 13. Then there is an interruption. A list of the heads of houses is preceded and followed by general observations about Moses and Aaron and the difficulties they had with Pharaoh. It looks as if the first roll ended at vi. 12. Before the next one was joined to it, a list is inserted that largely deals with the family tree of Moses and Aaron. We

should have preferred to have it earlier, but on the loose-leaf principle this is the first convenient place for it to be slipped in.

It seems likely that vi. 10-13 and vi. 28—vii. 7 represent the conclusion of one roll and the beginning of another. The similarities between them are the indications that they are to be joined, but there is enough at the beginning of the second to make it possible to know what has been happening when one begins to read.

The story continues to xii. 41 or 42, where again it is interrupted. The regulation for the first Passover in xii. 1-36 seems to be an integral part of the story, but the various regulations in xii. 43—xiii. 16 may come from the priestly pigeon-holes. They may or may not have been given on this occasion, but clearly they were intended to be filed for reference. If the next roll ends here, obviously it is a good place to include these rules. The historian has to decide continually whether to arrange his history by subjects or in chronological order, and frequently he is forced to compromise between the two. So here a number of Passover regulations are inserted in a gap in the story.

The next roll of the history begins with xiii. 17, and, like the previous roll, again has a slow-moving introduction to show the reader what has been happening. The story then runs on to the giving of the Ten Commandments.

To say that these are the ending of a roll would be a purely subjective judgment, since there is no obvious break here. What we do know is that the contents of xx. 22—xxiii. 33 once existed as a separate document, or were bound up with the Ten Commandments, since in xxiv. 4 Moses wrote them down to form the basis of the covenant that was then made. Presumably they were filled by the priests, yet obviously one cannot imagine the historical sections that precede and follow existing by themselves. It would seem likely that in view of the importance of the covenant on Sinai, Moses from the beginning wove together history and laws here. The most that one can say is that there may be an ending somewhere in the closing verses of xix or in xx. 18-21. The latter might, however, represent the prelude of a new roll.

The next obvious ending is at xxiv. 18, when a complete roll of Tabernacle regulations is inserted. These details, given on the Mount, were of very great importance, and were obviously preserved carefully, and were available for inclusion here. Moses was apparently taught them orally on the Mount, but

naturally recorded them as soon as possible to guide Bezalel and Oholiab, and others.

The history is picked up again with the story of the Golden Calf in xxxi. 18, and includes the sequel, with its giving of a further set of regulations on the Mount. These regulations also existed at one time on their own, as we gather from xxxiv. 27, when Moses is told to write them down.

If we make a further break after xxxiv. 28, the remainder of the book is the solemn record of how the details ordered on the Mount were carried out. The roll ends with a colophon about the Tabernacle and the cloud in xl. 36–38, which is taken up again in Numbers ix. 15–23. It would seem as though the next roll in the history began there. In between, Moses or the compiler has collected all those contents of the priestly files that recorded the regulations made at this period.

It is impossible here to follow through all these regulations, but it is worth noticing that in one place here one sees evidence of a section inserted into a place where perhaps one roll once immediately followed another. The block of chapters, Leviticus xi–xv, interrupts the sequence as can be seen from the opening words of xvi. For x ends with an incident following on the death of the sons of Aaron, while xvi begins with the words, “And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron. . . .”

Apart from this it would probably be safe to say that the introductory formula, “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying . . .” represents in each case a fresh revelation, which would be recorded normally on a separate piece of skin. The priests would tend to sort the individual pieces according to subjects, and eventually to join them together into one volume.

It would be interesting to speculate how the opening chapters of Numbers came to be in their present position. Chapters i–iv represent records from a different pigeon-hole, dealing with the census and regulations for the march. In v and vi, with rules about such things as uncleanness, trial by ordeal, and the Nazarite vow, the priestly files are used again, but vii goes back to records of offerings of the princes. Chapter viii. 1–4 concerns the lamps in the Tabernacle, while viii. 5–26, dealing with the separation of the Levites, might quite well have followed after iv. But ix. 1–14 is dated at about the time when the Tabernacle was set up, and before the census. I would suggest tentatively that, after the collection of priestly documents had been strung

together, the census and other records belonging to the Sinai period were added: and in convenient places, before these other documents were joined together, two rolls were inserted from a file labelled *Uncleanness* or *Separation*, or else from a file which had been ignored in Leviticus because it was known to belong to another period.

It is a relief to pick up the history again in ix. 15, where the slow-moving introduction indicates the beginning of another roll. The regulation about the trumpets (x. 10) is quite in place here. An obvious break comes at the end of xiv, with the failure to enter the promised land. Moses or the compiler here deliberately inserted a law about sacrifice to apply "when ye be come into the land of your habitations" (xv. 1), a verse which indicates that Amos is correct when in v. 25 he suggests that the people as a whole did not offer sacrifices in the wilderness; presumably the supply of animals would be insufficient. Other laws also are joined on here, and it is also quite possible that the whole story of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, belonged, with chapters xviii and xix that follow, to a file labelled *Priestly Prerogatives*.

One can hardly avoid the conclusion that xx and xxi are a scrapbook of incidents during the years that followed. It would seem as though Moses was growing weary of recording the struggles towards the end of this period, and was content to leave short notes, which a compiler put together in chapter xxi, supplementing them with a brief itinerary, and with some songs that existed in a book that no longer remains.

The story of Balaam in xxii-xxiv is a return to detail. One cannot say who originally recorded it, since no Israelite was present during the incidents that are here described. One may surmise that a powerful diviner like Balaam would have at least one faithful disciple, who observed and noted all that his master did and said. Maybe he was sufficiently impressed by the enforced prophecies that Balaam delivered, to go over to Israel and become a convert to Yahweh. When the story was recorded, Moses added an epilogue, consisting of xxv.

The conclusion of a roll here, leaving the story of the vengeance on the Midianites to be resumed on another roll in xxxi, gives an opportunity for the insertion of the second census material and some other facts, including the appointment of Joshua as Moses' successor.

The puzzling feature about the insertions here is the fresh set of regulations about the Feasts. Why could they not have been included in Leviticus xxiii? One may hazard two possible suggestions. The first is chronological: that, as the wilderness wanderings were drawing to an end, a fresh reminder was given about the solemn requirements of the festivals, perhaps because under the wilderness conditions the celebrations had tended to become somewhat of a "utility" nature; we remember that even circumcision was neglected during this time (Joshua v. 5). A second possibility is the explanation of a different file, Numbers xxviii and xxix being from a file labelled *Festival Offerings*, which existed apart from the slightly more general regulations for the people in Leviticus xxiii.

The final history from the pen of Moses is in xxxi-xxxii. 32 or 33, and the book ends with another collection of pieces, including the outline chronicle of places visited between the Exodus and the entry into Canaan.

This brings us back to Deuteronomy, with which we have already dealt.

The object of this paper has been to stimulate study in a positive direction, and it is no more than a pioneer effort that may lead to far more useful conclusions than I have been able to draw.

What it all amounts to is this. During the last forty years of his life, Moses, believing himself to be the recipient of continual divine revelations, and the leader of God's people, kept careful records of what God said to him and of how the people experienced the mercy and judgment of God. Many of the revelations were handed to the priests to keep; statistics were filed; and the historical notes and stories were stored in a safe place. Gradually the documents were joined together into larger wholes, until at last Moses himself, or someone after Moses' death, set about making a complete roll, or several large rolls, of all the pieces. His aim was to keep a chronological order as far as possible, but wherever two rolls needed to be joined together, he took the opportunity of inserting other material. We need not ascribe all the insertions to the final occasion when the book was compiled. Some may have come about while the smaller units were growing together, so that, for example, the law-giving section from Exodus xix to xxiv has attained a smooth blend of laws and history that makes it foolish to attempt to break it up now.

What one visualizes is an original Pentateuch, made up into one, or several, scrolls from the individual pieces of leather on which records and revelations had been recorded. This completed work then formed the "fair copy" which could be reproduced, and to which nothing substantial was added afterwards.

It may be that some readers of this paper will feel that the attempt to break any of the record up is foolish. But any who feel interested enough to follow up some of the ideas here, could begin by taking an old Bible, and starting to mark the obvious divisions, noting the similarities and differences of length, and whether a thought that closes one section is picked up later in the book. Out of all this some positive idea may begin to emerge, and the student will find himself, I hope, with a clearer picture of Moses, the inspired scholar, at work day by day on his record of what God said, and what God did, to the people whom He had chosen for Himself.

J. STAFFORD WRIGHT.

Tyndale Hall, Bristol.