BIBLE PROPHECY
Failure or Fulfillment?
Tim Callahan
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Notes on Dating and other Abbreviations

While the author grew up using and is quite comfortable with the abbreviations B.C. and A.D., the fact that the stand for, respectively, "before Christ" and A.D. "(in the year of the Lord") causes discomfort in some due to the inherently Christian bias of those titles. Therefore this book uses in their place B.C.E. ("before the Common Era") and C.E. ("Common Era"), respectively.

Unless specifically stated otherwise biblical quotes are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. The abbreviations of various Biblical translations used in this book are:

RSV .............. Revised Standard Version

OAB or OAV ....... Oxford Annotated Bible (or Version), an annotated edition of the RSV.

NASB .............. New American Standard Bible

NIV .............. New International Version

KJV .............. King James Version

MT .............. Masoretic Text, the final redaction of the Hebrew Scriptures.

JPS 1955 ......... English Translation of the MT by the Jewish Publication Society in 1955.


LXX .............. The Septuagint, Hebrew Scriptures translated into Greek in the third century B.C.E. The Catholic Douay Bible is largely based on the LXX as opposed to the MT.
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the debt I owe to my late parents for providing me with a house full of books and for instilling in me a respect for knowledge and scholarship. I also owe a debt to the public library systems everywhere, repositories of knowledge whose existence has not only provided all of us with books to read but has made possible the writing of so many others.

I would also like to thank my wife for her constant support and inspiration, Dr. Michael Shumaker for suggesting this project, and Betty McCollister for editing the manuscript. I particularly wish to thank Pat Time who, by dint of tireless labor and artistic competence, is largely responsible for the professional quality of the graphics and layout of this book.

In addition, I wish to acknowledge the role of Bob Wunder, my occasionist opponent in a duel of letters to the editor, whose ardent yet friendly antagonism first piqued my interest in the phenomenon of fundamentalism, to the Boynton State News and Larry Wilson, his opinion page editor at the time, for putting up with our prolonged debate, and to all those who joined in on both sides of the issue.

I would particularly like to thank Dr. Gerald Lawes and Dr. Randal Holmes for reading and critiquing my manuscript. In addition, I wish to thank Mlle. Bernadette Lutetier, Conservator-in-Chief of the Department of Egyptian Antiquities, Musée de Louvre, for taking the time to respond to my request for information on the inscription on the statue of Nes-Hor (Cotton 590).
Wright a book that looks at an important part of the Bible with a jaundiced eye! How dare I indeed! Even among people so secular that it is problematic as to whether they will make it in church on either Christmas or Easter, there is an uneasiness about saying anything against the Bible. This is true even of people who have never opened a Bible. In fact, I suspect that their very lack of familiarity with the book is the main source of its mystique. Read the Bible with any degree of intellectual independence and it soon becomes evident that it is full of internal contradictions, faulty history, and ideas seen as ethical that we in the 20th century would find abhorrent. As examples of the later, consider the glorification of genocide in the book of Joshua and the acceptance of slavery found in many of the Pauline epistles.

One problem of dealing with the Bible in an objective manner is that when people do read it, they often do so with an attitude of reverence such that if one points out a preposterous idea the Bible ascribes to God, they will rationalize it or assume that it doesn’t really mean what it so plainly says. Much the way an oyster makes a pearl, they coat the harsh message in layer after layer of symbolic meanings until the hard corners of the offending contaminant are no longer there in their inards. Let us consider just one of these as an example. In 2 Kings 2:23-24, there is a curious incident involving the prophet Elisha:

He went up from there to Bethel; and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, “Go up, baldhead! Go up, baldhead!” And he turned around and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys.
This little tale stands alone. Nothing in the preceding verses leads up to it and what follows is the story of a war between the Israelites and Benja, king of Manah. So here we have a little moral tale meant to warn children into respecting their elders, particularly if those elders are holy men. Since Elisha was just a man, God’s approval of his curse is implicit in its grim fulfillment. There is really no way to interpret this story other than that God sanctions the killing of at least mailing of children for a sin as trivial as raising lam of a haid-headed man. Is this a God anyone would care to worship?

In his Encyclopedia of Bible Dictionaries, Gleason A. Archer Jr. gives the following defense of this incident (1982, p. 705):

A careful study of this incident in context shows that it was far more serious than a “vulgar personal offense.” It was a situation of serious public danger, quite as grave as the large youth gangs that roam the ghetto sections of modern American cities. If these young hoodlums were raging about in packs of fifty or more, derivative toward respectable adults and ready to mock even a well-known man of God, there is no telling what violence they might have inflicted on the citricy of the religious center of the kingdom of Israel (as Bethel was), had they been allowed to continue their riotous course.

Earlier, Archer had spoken of Elisha’s tormentors as “young men.” In examining a number of editions of the Bible, including a direct Hebrew to English translation of the Hebrew Bible, I have found the orators described as “children.” “small boys” and, in one footnote, boys of at least 12, implying that they should have known better. Yet, in order to rationalize the text, Archer has to transform them from ill-bred children into young men and then, through the agency of an invented context (yet the story isn’t set in any context) from young men into a youth gang. Having done so, he is free to magnify their bratty behavior into a “riotous course.” The allusion to the street gangs of modern cities roving in “packs” of 50 or more sets up the potential for readers to fill in the blanks with their own imaginations. Though not specifically brought up, images of Crips and Bloods and drive-by shootings lie at the edge of one’s consciousness. (Presumably, the gang of Elisha’s day would have whipped by in hot chariots discharging arrows.) Yet there is nothing in the actual story to justify anything in Archer’s interpretation. What the good professor is avoiding is the fact that the message of this passage was acceptable to the harsh society in which Elisha lived, but is appalling to us. That it represents something
that can't possibly be the word of God is unacceptable to Archer, because the freedom to hold such a view would allow people the right to judge what in the Bible they will or will not believe. I suspect that this unwillingness to consider such an unattractive possibility, held up by many people who, if confronted with the verses above, would find them outrageous. In essence it lies beneath the surface of their consciousness and causes them to react with a certain distaste toward biblical criticism. For, secular though they might be, society has drummed into their heads through a thousand subtle messages that the Bible is the "Good Book" and must contain the thoughts and intentions of God.

Another group of people who might be inclined to ask me how I dare write a work on biblical criticism are those who demand credentials before they will listen to what one has to say. As someone holding only a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, how do I presume to write a book on the interpretation of biblical prophecy? First of all, I would point out that it is easy enough for a layman like myself to check a prophecy that fundamentalists claim is true against actual historical fact. As an example of this, consider the prophecy in Jeremiah 25:11 that the Jews would be exiled and in captivity at Babylon for 70 years. So careful is the teaching of history in our schools that I have heard of the Babylonian captivity casually referred to as lasting 70 years from a number of secular sources. Yet the captivity lasted from the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. to the fall of Babylon to the Persians in 538 B.C.E., a period of not quite 49 years.

There are several possible interpretations of Jeremiah's prophecy, including the possibility that the number 70 was meant to be symbolic (a sabbath of decades), that it meant the length of a human life (three score and 10 years) or that it was figurative language for "a long time." One thing that it cannot mean is the literal 70 years fundamentalists claim as the period of the Babylonian captivity.

Several of those who accept the 70 year captivity are, like Gleason Archer, Ph.D.s. It would seem that a doctorate is no defense against sloppy thinking and erroneous conclusions. Nor is scholarship limited to those with degrees. A love of history, particularly ancient history, plus extensive readings in comparative mythology have helped me see such gaps in the scholarship of those with doctorates. An all too common outcome of many scholars in the field of biblical interpretation is to be influenced by the strictures of their belief systems. Put simply, fundamentalist reasoning, even among those whose level of
knowledge should tell them otherwise, is that the Jews had to have been captive 70 years in Babylon because the Bible says they were.

Finally my layman's status may actually be a benefit in that I have the ability to relate the findings of biblical scholars with a clarity they themselves often lack, due to the use of professional jargon inexplicable to many outside their field. The idea to write this book came about largely because there is a lack of anything accessible to the lay person regarding the interpretation and criticism of biblical prophecy. Late in 1994 Michael Shermer accepted an article of mine for Skeptic magazine, debunking Hal Lindsey's "end-time" speculations concerning Russia as fulfilling the role of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel 39 and the "Enemy from the North" in Daniel 11. Dr. Shermer suggested at that time that my writing had a certain clarity that would be useful in a book on the subject of biblical prophecies and their interpretation by various fundamentalist authors such as Lindsey. The end result of that suggestion is this book, in which I not only dare to interpret Bible prophecy with a skeptic's eye, but invite the reader to do so as well.

Pasadena, May 1995
Introduction

WITHOUT PRESUPPOSITION

How to Test a Biblical Prophecy

Before we take a skeptical look at Bible prophecy it is important to understand just what skepticism is. For many the word is synonymous with cynicism, and it is important that we dispel that idea immediately. To be a skeptic means to take nothing on faith. The converse of this is to never automatically eliminate any possible explanation, regardless of how far-fetched it may seem. If someone claims to have evidence of the existence of sea-serpents, the skeptic, while maintaining a "show me" attitude, nonetheless accepts the possibility that the claimant has valid evidence for the existence of sea-serpents, hears the claim out and weighs the arguments based on their own strengths, regardless of the claimant's credentials or lack thereof. The skeptic, then, approaches all questions and issues, as far as humanly possible, without giving in to presuppositions.

The problem, of course, is that all of us hold presuppositions—ideas that we assume to be axiomatic without considering that they may be nothing more than bias. Since our presuppositions can cause us to automatically slant our interpretation of data, the scientific method includes as its final test the requirement that independent researchers performing a given experiment under the same strictly controlled conditions will achieve the same results. Likewise, the interpretation of scripture depends a great deal on one's presuppositions, and subjecting one's interpretation to open debate is a way of rectifying the bias of presupposition. I found one example of presuppositional bias when, in the process of researching this book, I read The Bible Handbook, an atheist critique of the Bible. Though I found the volume quite useful, the atheist presupposition that the Bible is something not only full of error, but is a document to be scorned as impeding human progress flavored the critique to
the degree that it became petty, even attacking the Bible for less than euphemistic descriptions of such things as sexual relations and childbirth. In fact, if the Bible had skirted such issues, it could be faulted for its prudery. As an example of how presupposition blinds one to the significance of a subject, consider the atheist objection, in a section of the book called “Bible Immoralties, Indecencies and Obscenities,” to what they refer to as “Ezekiel’s filthy cookery” (p. 239). The verses in question are Ezekiel 4:12-15, in which God tells Ezekiel to bake bread over a fire fueled by human dung. So caught up are the atheists with the “filthy” aspects of the passage that they fail to consider it in context. The entirety of Ezekiel 4 is a series of commands by God to Ezekiel to indulge in what we might call a form of performance art as visual demonstrations of God’s anger toward his people. The baking of bread with human dung is the culmination of these and is meant to show the Jews how they will be forced to eat unclean things when they are scattered among the nations.

Of course, atheists have no corner on presupposition. The assumption by fundamentalists that all who disagree with them are automatically in error; a presupposition that precludes honest debate, is as arrogant in its way as is the atheist position. For example, in his _Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties_, Gleason Archer lists eight procedures for dealing with Bible difficulties. While most of these are well-reasoned, at least two of them are based on presuppositions which indicate that, for fundamentalists, even the possibility of biblical error is excluded before any given verse is examined. Consider Archer’s first recommendation (1982, p. 15):

> Be fully persuaded in your own mind that an adequate explanation exists, even though you have not found it. The aeronautical engineer may not understand how a bumble bee can fly, yet he trusts that there must be an adequate explanation for its fine performance since, as a matter of fact, it does fly! Even so we may have complete confidence that the divine Author preserved the human author of each book of the Bible from error or mistake as he wrote down the original manuscript of the sacred text.

The presupposition of inerrancy precludes considering the possibility that some of the books or at least verses in them were less than divine in origin. It assumes that no material that was not of divine origin could have been allowed into the canon in spite of the fact that the editors were, after all, finite,
error prone humans subject to political and religious bias. To accommodate such a view, not only must the authors of Scripture be inspired, but the people involved in choosing which books were allowed into the canon had to have been under divine guidance as well. Here we run into problems, since there are distinct differences between the Catholic and Protestant canons. If God inspired Jerome’s compilation and translation into Latin of the Vulgate, why didn’t he inspire the man to use the Hebrew canon to the exclusion of the Septuagint, which contained such books as Judith and 1 and 2 Maccabees, not admitted to the Jewish canon? But if Jerome was wrong, hence not inspired, and the proper inspiration did not come until the Protestant canon, why did God let Christianity drift for nearly 1500 years with an erroneous version of the Bible? Further, we are given no particular reason why, for example, the Book of 1 Maccabees was not considered inspired, at least by Protestants, despite its proven historicity, while the Book of Esther, which is demonstrably fictional in spite of purporting to be historical, was allowed into the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant canons.

The other inerrantist presupposition in Archer’s procedures is that in the case of parallel passages, harmonization of the various versions is the only method that can be justified. He goes on to state that, in the interest of justice, jurors at a trial would have to assume the truthfulness of each witness, regardless of the variance of their testimonies, i.e. that they were each telling the truth from their perspective, said assumption to hold except in cases where the witness has been demonstrated to be of questionable integrity (p. 16). Archer must have a rather odd view of how juries deliberate if he thinks they harmonize varying testimonies. More than likely, a jury will discard the conflicting testimonies of equally reputable witnesses and consider the matter on which there is disagreement as beyond the jury’s power to fathom—specifically because reputable witnesses can’t agree on it. The jury will then concentrate on the material on which there is agreement. Harmonization of testimony might work if two witnesses disagree by describing someone as wearing either a red shirt according to one witness, or a purple shirt according to the other. However, if one witness describes the shirt as red, and the other witness says it was green, the jury can hardly harmonize the two colors as brown. If one verse in Judges says that the Israelites took the town of Jebus from the Canaanites and another verse says that they failed to take it, the two verses can no more be harmonized than can a red shirt with a green shirt (see
Judges 1:8, 1:21, 19:11-12 and 2 Samuel 5:6). In any case, the presupposition that harmonization of varying accounts is the only method that can be justified is totally unsupported. It also runs afoul of Archer's earlier inerrantist presupposition. How can we accept that “the divine Author preserved the human author from error,” if two human authors of canonical works disagree? Wouldn’t keeping them both error result in their complete agreement and eliminate conflicting parallel accounts?

Despite these rather obvious objections to inerrancy, the doctrine that the Bible is true in all that it says is a basic presupposition of fundamentalist biblical interpretation. So too is the position that inerrancy has been the historical position of the Christian church from its inception. As Archer puts it (p. 19):

Except for heretical groups that broke away from the church, it was always assumed that Scripture was completely authoritative and trustworthy in all that it asserts as factual, whether in matters of theology, history, or science.

In his foreword to Archer's book, Kenneth S. Kantzer backs this position (p. 7):

Readers well soon discover that the view of inerrancy set forth by Dr. Archer is the historical position of the church in all of its major branches. Behind it stand the illustrious names of Augustine, Aquinas, John of Damascus, Luther, Calvin, Wesley and a host of others.

It is interesting that the first name on Kantzer's list of church fathers is Augustine. Protestants, particularly fundamentalist Protestants, derive much of the emphasis of their beliefs from Augustine, while Catholics tend more toward Aquinas. In point of fact, were he alive today, Augustine would not support Archer's view of inerrancy. In Book VI of his Confessions, Augustine tells how Ambrose removed one of the great barriers to his accepting Christianity by pointing out that Scripture isn't always to be taken in a literal sense. In Book XIII, Augustine gives an allegorical interpretation of the six-day creation story in Genesis 1. He clearly did not think that this tale, so hotly defended by fundamentalists, was the literal truth. Augustine is not the only early church father who felt he could be a devout Christian and still not embrace inerrancy. Jerome, for example, accepted the view put forth by the pagan philosopher Porphyry that the book of Daniel was written at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, between 175 and 163 B.C.E., rather than during the Exile (587-586 B.C.E.) as the book purports. He did not have to believe in
Daniel's historicity to accept that Jesus was God incarnate. Another name on Kantzer's list was that of John Calvin. Yet Calvin, who was greatly influenced by Augustine, also rejected the inerrantist view as necessary for accepting the Bible as the word of God (Rogers and McKim, 1979):

Just as Calvin did not expect the Bible to be a repository of technically accurate information on language or history, neither did he expect that biblical data should be used to question the findings of science. The purpose of Scripture was to bring persons into a right relationship with God and their fellow creatures. Science was in another sphere and was judged by its own criteria.

Calvin's view is often referred to as accommodation. This is the idea that God accommodated his word to the limitations of the scientific understanding of those to whom he revealed it, a view which avoided forcing theologians to defend as scientifically valid statements in the Bible that said the sun rises and sets; and would, if it were used by modern-day fundamentalists, allow them to believe in the Bible without having to champion creationism.

As an exercise in how we might avoid such presuppositions as those Archer and Kantzer have fallen prey to let us consider the full range of possible truths regarding the divinity or even the historical existence of Jesus. It is possible that (1) Jesus never existed, that he is nothing more than an amalgam of fertility god death and resurrection myths; (2) that he was historical but had no supernatural powers; (3) that he did indeed have supernatural powers but was not a god; or (4) that he was and is God incarnate. Neither the divinity nor the existence of Jesus is a major concern of this book. But if it were, the skeptic's position would be to accept all alternatives as possible. The existence of supernatural powers and agencies would not be automatically discounted, as would be the case in an atheist critique; nor would the possibility that there never was a real Jesus, a position automatically excluded in fundamentalist presuppositions.

Looking at prophecy without presuppositions—the aim of this book—means that in considering any given prophecy we have at least three possibilities as to its validity: (1) it is true; (2) it is false; (3) it is so vague as to be open to many interpretations. For an example of (1), Isaiah's prophecies in 7 and 8, predicting the imminent destruction of the kingdoms of Israel and Syria at the hands of the Assyrians, were clearly true. For an example of (2), Isaiah 17:1 says that Damascus will cease to be a city and become a heap of ruins. The context of Isaiah's prophecies concerning Damascus and Israel is the expansion of
the Assyrian empire, which Isaiah repeatedly prophesies will destroy both Syria and Israel. While the Assyrians did give Damascus a good shaking, the city is still thriving today, some 27 centuries after Isaiah predicted it would be reduced to rubble. The prophecy is clearly false. Finally, as an example of (3), the Gog and Magog prophecy of Ezekiel 39 is an example of a prophecy too vague to be interpreted. Gog has been interpreted as Gyges, king of Lydia, the Goths, and even a modern or future leader of Russia. Magog has been interpreted as the Scythians, the Chaldeans, the Huns and modern-day Russia, among others.

If a prophecy is true, it could be divinely inspired, but only if it was actually made before, rather than after, the fact. As an example, consider a prophecy made by an unnamed prophet who predicts to King Jeroboam that a descendant of the house of David named Josiah would burn the bones of Jeroboam's pagan cultic priests on Jeroboam's altar. The prophecy is in 1 Kings 13:2, and the fulfillment is in 2 Kings 23:15-18, about 300 years later. However, as the notes in the Oxford Annotated Bible point out, a verse in the same chapter as the prophecy (1 Kings 13:32) refers to the northern kingdom as Samaria. Yet, Israel was not referred to by the name of its capital until after it had fallen to the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E. In any case the Book of Kings—originally 1 and 2 Kings were a single book—was not finally edited until well into the Babylonian Exile (after 586 B.C.E.). Thus, the prophet laying out against Jeroboam's idolatry, which took place around 900 B.C.E., was inserted into the text hundreds of years after the fact and the supposedly fulfilled prophecy was not a prophecy at all.

If we can establish that a prophecy was not truly fulfilled, but was made before the fact, then there are a number of possible explanations: the prophet could have been dialogue or deliberately fulfilled by someone attempting to claim a supernatural role; it could be a reasonable guess based on a logical interpretation of current events; it could be an actual divinely inspired prophecy. An example of a directive consider how Michal, daughter of Saul, became barren after David became angry with her (2 Samuel 20:23). There is an implication here that God made Michal barren because she was contemptuous of David. However, no supernatural agency is required to explain Michal's barrenness, David could insure that she remained childless simply by refusing to have sexual relations with her. Another example of a directive is the prophecy given by Samuel to Saul in 1 Samuel 10:5,6 that Saul would meet a
band of prophets in a state of prophetic frenzy and that the spirit of God
would possess him, causing him to fall into the same frenzy. It is hardly
surprising that in 1 Sam. 10:10 things turn out exactly as the prophet said they
would. Any Pentecostal minister could probably duplicate Samuel's feat
amongst his gullible flock, suggesting at the outset of a prayer meeting that
many of them will be "slain in the spirit" that very night. An example of delib-
erate fulfillment of a prophecy could easily be found in Jesus's entry into
Jerusalem on an ass on Palm Sunday (Mt. 21:1-9, Mk. 11:1-10, Lk. 19:28-38,
Jn. 12:12-18). As Matthew puts it (Mt. 21:4): "This took place to fulfill what
was spoken by the prophet..." The prophecy in question is Zechariah 9:9
where the Messiah comes to Jerusalem riding on an ass. Since Jesus was aware
of the prophecy, it is quite possible that he deliberately chose to enter
Jerusalem in the manner that would fulfill the prophecy as opposed to doing
it in ignorance and fulfilling the prophecy supernaturally.

An example of a prophecy being a logical inference from current events
would be Isaiah's prophecies concerning the conquest of Israel and Syria.
Given the alliance the two nations were making against Assyria and the latter's
increasing might and westward expansion, the logical inference was that
Assyria would soon conquer them.

Only after we have eliminated all these possibilities can we prove that a
prophecy was supernaturally fulfilled. Therefore, as we examine prophecies in
detail, I will subject each of them to the following four questions:

1) Is it true, and, if so, to what degree?
2) Was it made before or after the fact?
3) Was it either distinctive or deliberately fulfilled by someone with knowledge
   of the prophecy?
4) Was it a logical guess?

At this point I must confess that I know of no prophecy that passes the test
by eliminating the non-supernatural alternative explanations. As such and for
the sake of intellectual honesty, I must confess my own presuppositions. First
of all, I assume a natural explanation for seemingly fulfilled prophecies until
such explanations can be eliminated as possibilities. Perhaps I am wrong to do
this. Whether Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday was a genuine ful-
fillment or a deliberately staged affair is, after all, not provable, and a decision
to see it one way or another might well be nothing more than a matter of faith,
regardless of which choice is made.
Another presupposition of mine is that I have a problem reconciling the concept of long range prophecies with the concept of free will. It is one thing to say that God will do a certain thing, such as become incarnate in a child who will be born in Bethlehem at a later date. It is quite another to say that people as yet unborn will act in a specific manner. If the history of an empire or nation is already part of a divine plan, how can God hold the leaders, and indeed the peoples themselves, accountable for their actions? Yet, the same prophecies usually include the visitation of God's wrath on these empires. If their actions are not part of a divine plan, but are predictable given the nature of the people involved, then their thoughts and actions are so preordained as to render them devoid of free will. In spite of these two presuppositions, I have attempted to make my judgments on Bible prophecies based entirely on history, scholarly Bible criticism, and logic.

Ultimately, my readers, acting as review panel of my peers, will have to judge the validity of my objectivity. Whether their judgment be gracious or harsh, I hope that they too will subject their own views to a review of their peers.
WHO WROTE THE BIBLE?
How the Bible was Written and Organized

Since the Bible is presented to most of us as a single document with two major divisions—the Old and New Testaments—and since it is often presented with a tacit understanding that it is not to be questioned, the majority of us have no concept of how it was written or edited. To the untrained and critical eye, the Old Testament appears by and large to be a linear document built up over a long history with some legendary material in Genesis and perhaps some elaborations or figments not to be taken literally, but generally a document whose writings occurred and were edited in the order they appear in the Christian editions of the Bible. But the Old Testament is, in fact, a Jewish document. Thus, it should logically be presented as it is in the Hebrew Bible or Tanakh. The word Tanakh is an anagram for the divisions of the Jewish Bible. These are the Torah or Law (literally “that which was laid down”), meaning foundational material—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; the Nevi'im or Prophets, and the Ketuvim or Writings.

The Torah and the Documentary Hypothesis
In spite of the great antiquity of much of its material, the Torah was not completely edited until about 400 B.C.E., well after the return of the exiles from Babylon, and it was not in its finalized canonical form until the Hebrew scriptures were codified in the Masoretic Text (MT) between 600 and 900 C.E. Nor was the Torah as, as it is also called, the Pentateuch (Gr. “five scrolls”) written by Moses. It must be remembered that in ancient times it was common to attribute certain kinds of literature to an author of that type of material as a
way of legitimizing it. Since Moses was the law-giver and all books pertaining to the law were attributed to him. Not only were the various books the work of different authors, each individual book was the work of numerous writers and redactors (editors). This view, held by most scholars who are not fundamentalists, is called the Documentary Hypothesis. Since our main focus in the Old Testament is on the prophets, I will treat this subject only briefly. The main importance of the hypothesis for us is the validity of modern scholarship. Accordingly, my central concern is with the fundamentalist objections to the hypothesis.

Briefly stated, the history of the compilation of the Torah, as seen in the hypothesis, is as follows. The earliest holy writing of the Jews, embedded in Genesis, Exodus and Numbers was the work referred to by Biblical scholars as the "L" or Yahwist document (the German spelling of Yahweh being Jahweh), probably written in the reign of Solomon between 960 and 920 B.C.E. or during the reign of his son Rehoboam and probably written at the court by a Judahite official with a strong bias toward the Davidic line of kings. The I document starts with the second creation story, and God is portrayed in very human, anthropomorphic terms.

A rival document, the E Elohist or Ephraimitic material was written in the northern kingdom, at the court in Samaria circa 850 B.C.E. The name of God in this document was Elohim as opposed to Yahweh, and the writings have a bias favoring Israel over Judah, and particularly favoring the tribe of Ephraim. It starts with the covenant of Abraham and focuses on Jacob. Most of the stories of Joseph, ancestor of the Ephraimites, who dominated the northern kingdom, derive from this document. After the conquest of Israel by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.E., the E document was brought to Jerusalem by refugees. The material was blended by various redactors who attempted, with limited success, to harmonize the two documents.

Independent of these documents were the writings of those reformers we know of as prophets, particularly Hosea, Amos, the first Isaiah, and Jeremiah. They wrote in a time period from just prior to the Assyrian conquest of Israel to the Babylonian captivity. The prophets represent a faction urging the purification of the worship of Yahweh and the expulsion of the rival cults of Baal and Ashurn. One might wonder why such a purification would be necessary, since the children of Israel are represented in the book of Joshua as having practically exterminated the Canaanites before the origin of the
monarchy. In fact, the purification was essential to establish the monotheistic worship of the god variously referred to as Yahweh and Elohim, because the deity in question was originally one of the gods of the Canaanite pantheon. The Canaanite gods were themselves variants of Sumerian and Babylonian deities. Elohim is the plural of El, a word that can merely mean "god," or can mean the name of a specific deity. El was a sky god, creator and the gray-bearded patriarch of the Canaanite gods. Likewise, Yahweh was also originally a Canaanite deity. Variants of his name are found in inscriptions going back as far as the 15th century B.C.E. In later inscriptions, Yahweh's name in the form of Yaw is found in association with two Canaanite goddesses, Anath and Astarte (see Langdon 1931, p. 44). Astarte is the western Semitic variant of the Babylonian goddess Ishtar. A coin from 4th century B.C.E. Gaza actually depicts Yahweh, with the inscription YHW (Yahu or Yaw, three of the letters of the tetragrammaton YHWH for Yahweh), as a bearded man holding a hawk and sitting on a winged wheel, much the way Sumerian deities were portrayed. Even though this depiction of God probably did not fit the view held by the post-exilic Jews of that time, we must remember that Gaza was a Philistine city and that the Philistines had, even during the period of the Judges, accepted the Canaanite pantheon. Since they were not exposed to the pressures of the Exile, which forced the Jews to transform their view of God, the Philistines depicted Yahweh as he was originally viewed by the Canaanites and Sumerians. The Sumerian gods were essentially human-like, much like the Olympians of ancient Greece. Further, the Sumerians had a rather technological view of how the gods could do miraculous things. How did the gods fly? They could not do this by themselves. Instead, they had winged chariots. The graphic short-hand for a winged chariot was a winged wheel on which the god sat.

The purification of the worship of Yahweh and its separation from the Canaanite fertility cults was a long and arduous process that often pitted the prophets against both king and people. However, the prophets did constitute a powerful faction that could exert a great deal of influence over kings of the Yahwist persuasion. So it was that when, during the lifetime of Jeremiah, as repairs were being made on the Temple (621 B.C.E.), a book of laws was found mysteriously hidden in its walls and was brought to King Josiah. Once he had read it, Josiah tore his clothes and ordered the nation to beg mercy of God for having previously transgressed God's laws. This was eventually con-
considered the second giving of the law, so the document was named Deuteronomy. Just why God would allow his law to be hidden from the time of Moses to the time of Josiah is never explained, and it seems rather odd that God would allow his people to sin in ignorance all those years. While the material in Deuteronomy undoubtedly reflects traditional law and religious codes of the Yahwist cult already in existence, most biblical scholars feel the book itself (hence the codification of these laws) was written at the time of its "discovery" and was not, as its so-called discoverers claimed, from the time or from the hand of Moses. The authors of Deuteronomy, most probably members of the prophetic faction, were referred to collectively as the Deuteronomists (their material being designated D). In addition to writing Deuteronomy they also compiled what is referred to as the Deuteronomist history: Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings. After the fall of Jerusalem to the Chaldeans in 586 B.C.E., and the deportation of the Jews, another major addition and revision occurred, paralleling the already ongoing Deuteronomist work. This is the P or Priestly material. The Jewish community in the Exile was held together by leaders from the priestly class, starting with Ezekiel and ending after the return of the exiles with Ezra and Nehemiah. Much material that had previously been passed down orally was written during the Exile. Many of the Psalms date from this period as well. Along with adding to and re-editing existing material, particularly Exodus, the priests wrote virtually all of Leviticus and most of Numbers. The priestly writers placed particular stress on the strict observance of ritual purity, dietary laws and observance of the Sabbath. All of these were probably necessary to maintain the separate identity of the Jews in exile. Reflections of these concerns are seen in stories stressing the importance of Sabbath observance. The story of the six day creation, containing certain Mesopotamian motifs such as the world starting out covered with water, is also a priestly document, largely aimed at establishing the divine origin and ordination of the Sabbath. Finally, after the Exile, editors from the priestly class blended the various traditions, adding bridging material in the process. This material has been labeled R for redactor.

Fundamentalists object to this view of how the Old Testament was built up. While generally acknowledging that the Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah were the work of one post-exilic author, they claim that the other narrative books were historical, that Moses wrote the Torah, and that the books were written
as they appear, not built up by merging and re-editing of the J, E, D and P material. They point out that nobody has ever actually found the Book of J, for example. However, they are forced to acknowledge that we also lack the original autographs of any of the books of the Old Testament. Another objection raised by Fundamentalists is that the Documentary Hypothesis is arbitrary and is nothing more than an attempt on the part of "liberal theologians" to discredit the Bible. They see the higher criticism of the 19th century as being the work of intellectuals with an anti-Christian agenda. The reference to the higher criticism and modern scholars as "liberal"—a pejorative among fundamentalists—is a give-away that what is being referred to is politics and not scholarship. The number of times fundamentalist apologists refer to their opponents as "liberal theologians" indicates to me that the term is not used casually; its repeated usage is a deliberate tactic aimed at tying the views of those who differ from the infallist position to a buzz word calculated to provoke an antagonistic response among the faithful. Consider the company "liberal theologians" are keeping in the following quote from the late Dr. Walter Martin, founder of the CRI, or Christian Research Institute (1988, tape 1):

"The faith of Christ, what was necessary for our salvation, the living of the Christian life, education and evangelism already existed, complete. You didn't need Mary Baker Eddy. You didn't need Charles [and] Myrtle Fillmore. You didn't need Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. You didn't need Charles Russell and the见证者. You didn't need Madame Blavatsky and Theosophy or the Fox sisters and Spiritualism. You didn't need the Kingdom of the cults, and you didn't need liberal theologians and destructive higher critics in order for you to arrive at the truth, because the faith was 'once for all delivered to the saints.'"

Without specifically mentioning inerrancy, Martin has here implied that the canon is not to be interpreted critically and has classed anyone who disagrees with that implied position as being either a "liberal theologian" or a "destructive higher critic." said categories being as anathematised in Martin's view as Christian Scientists, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Theosophists, and Spiritualists. In short, Martin's view, and thus that of CRI, is that those who vary from the inerrist position are in the same camp with cultists and heretics.

In point of fact, the views of theologians who are not infallist vary widely, resulting in a range of biblical interpretation from quite conservative to quite radical. By casting the debate in terms of inerrancy vs. liberal theology,
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