

Howard Cox, **The Pentateuch: History or Story?** (Lanham, MD: Univ. Press of America, 2005).

Reviewed by Craig D. Atwood

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For many years Howard Cox was Professor of Old Testament Theology at Moravian Theological Seminary. Many Moravian pastors prepare their sermons and classes with Br. Cox's voice in their minds. Few have forgotten the insights they gained from reading the Old Testament with intellectual integrity and knowledge of its historical setting. Most remember Br. Cox's deceptively simple question: "Where do your Bible come from?"

*The Pentateuch* answers that question and provides a glimpse at the manuscript traditions that conflict with the "received text." Br. Cox also examines the history of Israel as presented in the Old Testament in light of contradictory evidence from archeology. His conclusion is that the Pentateuch is "story," rather than "history,"

but he does not explore fully the meaning of this distinction. In some European languages, there is one word for both history and story. It is good to recall that historical science was invented in the 18th century. Attention to the significance of history/story for one's life and faith would also have been helpful.

Br. Cox introduces lay readers to the complexities of modern biblical criticism without overwhelming them in details and debates. But the presentation is often too brief to be illuminating for those unfamiliar with the topic. For students of Br. Cox, this book may induce nostalgia for his lectures. It is unfortunate that the written word lacks the immediacy and energy of the spoken word.