

There are many scientific theories that do not last as long as fifty years. Thirty or forty years ago “everybody knew” that the reason we can transmit wireless messages was because they “went over the ether waves.” Now most scientists of any standing would laugh at you if you mentioned “ether.” The idea of ether waves, which was then the great theory of radio, is abandoned.

For fifty years practically all scholars were convinced that the Supplementary Theory provided the true explanation of the way the Pentateuch came into existence, but now nobody believes this.

De Wette had shown that Deuteronomy is a definite unit. Its style is different from either the J or the E sections. Deuteronomy is exhortation. It consists of Moses’ addresses to the people, exhorting them to obey the law. It is different. There are some comparatively small portions of Deuteronomy that the critics say come from J and some that they say come from E, but Deuteronomy as a whole is separate. They call it the D document. They said Deuteronomy was the book written at the time of Josiah. We agree that Deuteronomy was found in the temple at the time of Josiah, but we say that does not mean that it originated then, nor does it mean that only Deuteronomy was found there.

It is very important to understand the difference between the Supplementary Hypothesis and the early document theory, or the Fragmentary Hypothesis. The Supplementary Hypothesis was accepted by most critics for over fifty years. In such schools as Union Seminary in New York it was accepted, and it was taught in the theological departments of most of the German universities, and also in many universities in France and even in some in Great Britain. It was taught in very few universities in the United States and in comparatively few in Great Britain. Not all of the universities in Germany taught this, by any means. There were still many in Germany who held to the conservative view; but among those who believed that we can divide the Pentateuch into documents, the Supplementary Hypothesis was accepted for about fifty years.

Some might have said that Moses wrote Genesis, but most would