

not the truth of the hypothesis, but its most defensible form. The third consideration under heading V. E is:

3) *Variation of Critical positions*

Critical positions varied widely until 1878 when Wellhausen's Development Theory fixed it in a definite form. You remember that before that we had the Supplementary Theory which Ewald presented and then he presented his Crystallization Theory which others did not like. Some accepted Hupfeld's Theory and some tried to hold to the original Supplementary Theory. There was a great variety of critical theories during that period, even though the Supplementary Theory was the dominant theory for nearly fifty years. But positions varied greatly until 1878. Only then did this great argument of Consensus of Scholarship begin, in 1878, and the reason for it is not simply that the most defensible system of having distinct documents had been worked out, but that it was united with a theory of evolution – with the idea that you could show progress from one document to the other – and thus account for the origin of the idea of ethical monotheism contained in the Bible. It was its union with the development theory which fit it into a definite form. After 1878 it was held much more widely than any critical theory had been held before. It was held more widely than all previous critical theories, because there were added, not only those who were interested in trying to divide the Pentateuch into different documents, but also all of those who were interested in the evolutionary problem, in trying to account on a naturalistic basis for the coming into existence of the ideas of monotheism and of the Christian religion. Therefore there was this great number of people who knew nothing about the documentary division, but who were greatly concerned with showing that a naturalistic process could account for Christian ideas. So it was the union of this theory with the developmental idea which caused its adoption in a definitely fixed and crystallized form which, from 1878 until about 1920, was the view held by the overwhelming majority of critical scholars. Even today it is the view to which practically all of them give lip service, even though the consensus on its details is far less today than it was previously. And this leads us to point 4.