

We noticed at the end of the hour that it is extremely difficult on varieties of style to divide up a document this way. So difficult that it is not now done regarding ancient documents in the way in which it used to be. Only in very rare instances is it done regarding the writers of the classical times. It has been found that when we think we can do it, the evidence proves us often to have been very much at fault.

It's very interesting to notice in ancient documents how very easy it is when you have a place that is broken to think you can fill it in, and to make conjectural guesses as to what you think may go in these places, and then when a new copy of the document is discovered which has the breaks filled in, perhaps it is broken in another place, it is rare indeed that we find that our fillings in have been correct.

I noticed that just this year in some Babylonian documents, where we had an ancient Babylonian document and scholars had guessed what went in the places where it was broken--sometimes only a word or two missing, sometimes a whole line. Now we've discovered a new copy and perhaps in 1/5 of the cases have the guesses been correct as to what goes in.

Well, if it was as hard as that to guess what belongs in the broken places of an ancient document, how much more knowledge it would take and how much more intelligent application of principles with too little data.

To take an ancient document this way and divide it up into separate documents from which it was made with a few words from this and a few from this, a page here and a line here, etc. It is a process which assumes almost an omniscience which is largely given up except in relation to the Bible.

It was 20 yrs. ago I picked up the Cambridge Ancient History and I was interested to see in the Introduction to the first volume a statement which went something like this: the people picking up this book will be much interested to see that the theories which held the field so long about Homer, that the ancient Greek Iliad and Odessey were composed of the writings of many different writers all fitted together gradually until you finally got this production are largely given up, and in this book it is assumed that there was at sometime a great mind which was at work in the greater part of the Iliad and Odessey in framing it together even though ancient materials were to some extent used in the formation of it. And these theories are largely given up in the Cambridge Ancient History as far as Homer is concerned.

On the other hand, he said, many English readers will also be greatly surprised to find that the Cambridge Ancient History showed that the old ideas that the one man Moses wrote the Pentateuch are completely out of date, and that the Pentateuch is made up of a number of different documents which come from periods many centuries apart. Thus the conservative attitude in England kept people from adopting the higher criticisms of the Bible to any wide extent when it was simply accepted in all these other books.