

ment was called the Elohist. Subsequently H. Ewald (1851) restored Ilgen's theory of two Elohist documents. One of these (the Priestly source of later scholars) he called the First Elohist as the oldest; the Jahvist document followed, and the Second Elohist was the most recent. With the addition of Deuteronomy the lines of the four-document hypothesis were drawn.

The decisive contribution was made in 1865 by Graf, who proposed that the First Elohist was actually the most recent of the sources and was postexilic, the work of the Jerusalem priesthood. He introduced the sign "P" to designate this source. Kuenen (1869) announced that he had reached the same conclusions independently. Julius Wellhausen, in a series of works published between 1876 and 1901 and remarkable for brilliant and persuasive clarity, presented this hypothesis both to scholars and to the general public, and after 1900 it was almost universally accepted. Wellhausen's own contribution was a theory of the historical and cultural evolution of Israel and its religion, which explained the growth of Israelite belief as a rectilinear progress from the primitive polytheism of early Israel through the ethical monotheism of the prophets, the great creative thinkers of Israel, to the formal legalism and sacerdotalism of postexilic Israel. This theory of the evolution of Israel cannot now be sustained; Wellhausen worked at the beginning of the period of the great discoveries relating to the history and culture of the ancient near east, and these discoveries have rendered the theory as a whole impossible. But since in the early years of the 20th century the theory of the religious evolution of Israel was not always distinguished from the theory of the literary origins of the Pentateuch, many conservative theologians of all churches regarded Wellhausen's theory as an attack on revealed religion.

Documentary Theory.—In its classical form the documentary theory finds the Pentateuch to be a compilation of four documents; the Jahvist (German spelling; J), composed in the 9th century B.C.; the Elohist (E), composed in the 8th century B.C.; the Deuteronomist (D), composed in the 7th century B.C.; and the Priestly document (P), composed in the 5th century B.C. The Jahvist is Judahite, the Elohist Ephraimite in origin. These two versions of early Israelite tradition were fused into one document after the fall of Israel in 721 B.C. Deuteronomy was added, after the exile. These were amalgamated with the Priestly source into the present Pentateuch about 400 B.C.

This hypothesis did not explain all questions of detail. Subsequent work was devoted to further analysis of the documents, to the isolation of other sources and to a more precise dating of the documents. The analysis of the documents was pushed by some scholars to the point where it issued in a new "fragment theory," and analysis based on minutiae has been proved exaggerated; the unity of the sources in some form must be explained. It is generally accepted that the documents represent strata of material rather than single unified compositions, and that the processes of reduction and expansion are too complex to permit a definitive analysis of the entire text. For the same reasons a precise date for each of the sources is scarcely possible.

Later critics, especially those of the Scandinavian school, have affirmed that the entire documentary hypothesis is false, since it does not reflect ancient methods of composition and transmission. This school asserts the primacy of oral tradition; the "documents" they see are modern historical conceptions. While the oral traditions may be designated by the symbols J, E, etc., these actually are types of oral traditions not written until a relatively late date, not illogical in any case. Most contemporary critics believe that the Scandinavian school exaggerates the place of oral tradition; Jewish near eastern culture offers numerous examples of the collection of traditions in writing. It is altogether probable, however, that most of the traditions of the Pentateuch were orally composed and orally transmitted in their early stages of development.

Later criticism also emphasizes the importance of literary form and of the "situation of life" in which the traditions arose. Noth, von Rad and others see in these traditions not mere popular or tribal memories, but traditions which have arisen from cultic recitals. On such great feasts as Passover the ritual included a

recital of the saving deeds of Yahweh on behalf of Israel. These took variant forms in different cultic centres; the traditions of northern Israel, for instance, make Jacob prominent, while the traditions of Judah give greater prominence to Abraham. But the traditions all have in common that they are "history of salvation," a profession of the faith of Israel. Scholars agree that the source of any particular tradition must take account of its preliterary history as far as this can be traced; its local origin, its class or tribal emphasis, its cultic significance. The compilers of the Pentateuch were not creators; they found well-formed oral traditions which they arranged into a new literary unity.

Jahvist.—The literary composition of the Jahvist tradition probably may be placed in the reign of David or of Solomon as an expression of the new unity and prosperity of Israel under the monarchy. It began with the creation of man in Eden and contained the stories of the fall, primitive man, the deluge and the tower of Babel. The patriarchal stories of the Jahvist give the chief place to Abraham, who dwelt in the south, the later territory of Judah; it incorporates selected materials from the northern cycles of Jacob and Joseph, in particular the story of the marriage of Jacob and the births of the eponymous ancestors of the tribes. In the story of Joseph the Jahvist makes Judah the protagonist of the brothers. Analysis of the sources in Exodus and Numbers is more difficult; the Jahvist appears to have made Kadesh-barnea the focal point of his account of the wandering.

The Jahvist has been called the national epic of Israel. He has some of the best-known pieces of biblical narrative; they are concrete, vivid and moving. His conception of the deity is the most anthropomorphic of all the sources, and his human characters are portrayed with earthy realism. In spite of the childlike and primitive traits of his narrative, some of the most profound theological ideas of the Bible are expressed in such stories as those of the fall, the deluge, primitive man, the destruction of Sodom. Israel escapes from the curse, which he traces to human origins, by accepting the blessing granted to Abraham and to his seed; and the promises are obviously fulfilled in the peace and prosperity of the monarchy of David.

Elohist.—Compared to the Jahvist, the Elohist appears as a torso; no doubt the document was edited by the Judahite compilers when it was fused with the Jahvist. The Elohist begins with Abraham and emphasizes Covenant rather than blessing. It contains at length the stories of Jacob and Joseph, the heroes of the northern tribes. The story of the exodus is centred about the Covenant of Sinai. The Elohist lacks the vividness of the Jahvist; his conception of the deity avoids grosser anthropomorphism, and his human characters are more idealized. The literary composition of the Elohist is to be placed after the establishment of the divided kingdom; like the Jahvist, it is an expression of the traditions of the kingdom, with more emphasis upon the northern element in those traditions.

Priestly.—The Priestly source is often called a priestly history. It begins with an elaborate account of creation (Genesis 1) but elsewhere it appears as brief notices, genealogies and the narrative is prolonged only when religious institutions are concerned, many of which it retrojects to earliest times. It created an artificial chronological scheme. Its style is dry and pedestrian and easily detected. The historical sketch of the Priestly source is intended as framework for the priestly collection of law.

Law and History.—In addition to the priestly collection of laws there are other collections of laws of various date and provenance. A historical prologue usually stood at the beginning of ancient near eastern legal collections. This is in a sense a conception which governs the compilation of the Pentateuch; Israelite law arises out of the history of Israel, but not its end; history; law is incorporated into the history of the saving deity and the revelation of Yahweh, who elects Israel as his people and lays down as terms of his Covenant the laws by which Israel shall live.

In the history of Judaism the Torah, the law of Moses, the Pentateuch was designated, was the dominant influence. The Torah was the exclusive object of study and interpretation.