

Sandmel, Samuel, The Hebrew Scriptures (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 1963)

p. 335 (cont'd) They felt a warm sympathy, therefore, for the pre-exilic period, and, as a result, they wrote eloquently about the Hebrew religion. The Hebrew religion, they asserted, had degenerated into that mumbo-jumbo of priestly religion called Judaism. These scholars, except for a few, were not so much consciously anti-Jewish as simply limited in their outlook. But in the final analysis, their evaluation of the P code was not only wrong-hearted but also wrong-headed.

These three difficulties do not negate the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis, but rather point to notable flaws in it. From the time that the hypothesis was put forward until it gained an almost complete acceptance among scholars, some major refinements were made.

Refinements in the Graf-Wellhausen theory

p. 335 First, there arose, even in Wellhausen's own refined view, a more fluid view of the documents. As a result, a document, whether it is J, E, D, or P, came to represent not one single composition or date of composition, but various stages of composition - for example, J1, J2, E1, and E2. Stages are envisaged especially in the P document; . . . This theory brings us fairly near to the old "fragmentary hypothesis", yet with the difference that symbols such as D1, D2, and D3, point to a more or less continuous chain of traditional writing, as if from a school or sequence of directly related generations. The fragmentary hypothesis implied scattered and haphazard fragments.

The second type of refinement . . . made use of the knowledge that certain events are found in various forms in different documents, while certain types of similar traditions are associated with quite different people. . . .

p. 336 Some modern scholars who are partisans of oral tradition seem to assume that the writing stage is quite unimportant. The older scholars had assumed that the written document represented a clear and unmistakable viewpoint; the present emphasis, especially among Scandinavian scholars, would suppose that those who began to write had no viewpoint at all, but were merely recorders. Perhaps oral tradition has now been overemphasized. The significance of written documents must not be forgotten. On the ground that folk memory is retentive and dependable, supporters of oral tradition are prone to attribute a historical reliability to this tradition which exponents of written tradition would not attribute to documents. Oral traditionalists acknowledge that there are no documents in the Tanak which come from the age of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but they often consider the narratives about these figures historical, even though they were recorded centuries later. In recent decades, some archaeologists have joined hands with the oral traditionalists "confirming" the general picture of the Patriarchal age. Yet, as at least one archaeologist³ has conceded, archaeological statements have often represented enthusiasm rather than evidence. If the literary critics have been too prone to use such terms as myth and legend, some archaeologists have been too prone to speak of historical verification.

3 See G. Ernest Wright in Biblical Archaeologist, XXII, 162-3