

appeared in 1876, soon won a place of leadership for the new approach.

This may be called the developmental approach. It rests upon the Hegelian interpretation of history, a theory, by the way, which is no longer widely applied to history, since it evidently does not work out consistently in those histories where we have enough facts to check it properly. However, in those days this approach to history was becoming very popular. The documents were modified along the line of Hupfeld's suggestions, and then their order was turned upside down, so that P (the main document using the term Elohim for God) was no longer considered to be the earliest document, but was instead placed at the very end. It was then claimed that one could trace the evolution of the ideas and institutions of Israel, from crude and primitive beginnings, to the refined monotheism and complicated system of worship represented in the P document.

The development theory, or the Wellhausen theory, as it came to be known, won its way rapidly. A few die-hards held to earlier views of the sources, but as they died off they left no successors, and soon it became evident that there was a very wide consensus of scholarship, with savants in many countries, all agreeing on the principal conclusions of Wellhausenism. This consensus of scholarship came to be proclaimed as an outstanding evidence of the truth of the theory.

The theory rested on the assumption that monotheism did not exist as early as the beginnings of the Israelitish, and that so complex a system of laws as is found in the Pentateuch could not have been promulgated until a very late period. A long period of development, in accordance with Hegelian principles, must lie back of each of them.