

instance of a theory that is being widely publicized today, even though it lacks any factual support, is the claim that the first five books of the Bible, instead of being originally written as units in substantially the form in which we have them today, came into existence through a process of interweaving and combining sources that had previously circulated separately.

According to this theory the so-called J document was written many centuries after the events that it describes. A century or so later another document, more or less parallel to the J document, was written. After each had circulated separately for a time, someone combined them, inserting various portions of the newer E document into the J document at the appropriate places. More centuries passed and then the D document, purporting to contain Moses' farewell addresses, was composed. Eventually this was inserted into the latter part of the combined JE document. About the time of the exile a group of priests composed still another document, the so-called P document, paralleling much of the ground already covered by the J and E documents. Eventually this was cut into large and small sections, between which similar sections of the other documents were inserted. As a result, it is said that the Pentateuch as we know it today is composed of intertwined parts of all these documents, so that we often read a section of one document, followed by a section of another, then perhaps a verse or two of the first, then two or three of the second, then perhaps half a verse of the first again, then a portion of the third, then more of the second, and so on in a complicated patchwork arrangement. According to many critics the literary mosaic thus produced included not only the books we know today as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, but also the book of Joshua.

Such is the theory that is held and propagated today in practically the same form as when it was first presented, a century ago. In the intervening time no new facts have been discovered in its favor, and many of the theoretical grounds on which it was originally advanced have been now almost completely abandoned. Yet the theory continues to be presented as established history, and is even taught in high schools of some of our states.

Since this is the case, it is important for every churchgoer and every Bible student to know just what the facts are about this theory, which has been variously called "the Source theory," "the Multidocumentary Theory," or "the Graf-Wellhausen Theory". In