

In field after field theories of composite authorship, earlier versions, different strata have been discarded. The kind of analysis which was once thought to be the particular duty of literary criticism is now markedly out of fashion. The assumption today is more and more in favour of single authorship, unless there is clear external evidence to the contrary, and of taking works as they stand and not postulating earlier versions to account for inconsistencies. Even where the inconsistencies in the work as published are as glaring as they are in The Faerie Queene, most people would agree with Professor C.S. Lewis that it is "quite impossible to reconstruct historically the phases in Spenser's invention of which particular inconsistencies are, so to speak, the fossils;" and would applaud him for taking the poem as it exists and not speculating on its growth...

"Schoolsof influence" are ~~now~~ out of fashion. Old disintegrating theories which assumed that Shakespeare spent much of his career revising other men's plays, and later attempts to show him as almost continuously engaged in revising his own, theories of Beowulf being based on heroic lays, and later theories of a pre-Christian Beowulf were all in the air, or at least being debated, thirty years ago, although they were then being increasingly challenged. The modern undergraduate is not troubled with these discussions. Occam's razor has been applied to the critical postulates beloved by nineteenth-century scholars. The modern scholar or critic concentrates in the first place on making what he can of his text as it has come down to him. There has been a strong reaction against the study of even extant and known sources, much more against the discussion of hypothetical ones ~~(speculation)~~!

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← Even in the case of a work generally recognized to be of multiple authorship, ^{Such as} the Indian epic Mahabharata, division into component documents is uncertain. Charles Drekmeier ~~Stanford: Stanford University Press~~ (Kinship and Community in Early India, 1962) says:

Hopkins many years ago concluded that the original narrative core of the epic is impossible to isolate from the later mythical and moralistic accretions, and few present-day students of the Mahabharata would question this judgment ~~(p. 132)~~ 2

In conclusion, it appears that many of the methods and assumptions of "higher criticism" have been discredited in general literature, ^{while being retained in Bible studies.} ~~Let us now examine the particular application of these to the Bible, in particular the Pentateuch.~~