

14 11. Conclusion

We have briefly examined the history of the application of literary criticism to the Pentateuch. In the course of the past 200 years various conflicting views have been held regarding the number, extent, age and stylistic characteristics of the documents alleged to make up the Pentateuch. Following the publication of Wellhausen's work, many felt "assured results" had been obtained. The last fifty years have raised serious doubts about this, and the diversity of present views should cause one to ask whether the criteria used to isolate documents are as objective as popularly claimed.

The sterility of results produced by similarly excessive methods in general literature have now been recognized. The problem of dividing a literary work into documents when it is known to be of multiple authorship is almost impossibly difficult unless known examples of the authors' individual writings are available. Without definite external evidence for multiple authorship, the practice of dividing documents becomes extremely uncertain. Perhaps the proponents of the JEDP documentary hypothesis should abandon ship.