

until eventually it was held that there were as many as twenty or thirty different sources from which portions had been taken and strung together by a so-called redactor.

At first it was claimed that the Pentateuch was the work of two main writers who were called J and E, and this theory was developed in different ways by various scholars over the course of many decades. The E document was supposed to be the first, and the J document to have been written at a later period. Eventually, a scholar named Graf suggested a complete reversal whereby J became the earliest instead of the latest, and E was broken up into two parts, one of which (now called P) was considered to be the latest of all, with the bulk of the book of Deuteronomy being placed third. This is the so-called Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis which makes such extensive use of the letters J, E, D, and P. Today, most of the arguments upon which this division is based have been disproved, and yet most critical scholars still insist that the main positions of the theory are true.

The destructive criticism of the Old Testament began with its attempt to deny the authenticity and dependability of the Pentateuch. It next attacked the unity of the book of Isaiah. At first it was alleged that the book had been written by two men, one of whom lived about one hundred and fifty years after the other, and that this latter author had written the last twenty-seven chapters of the book. Before long, however, sections of the first part were attributed to a third writer, and soon portions scattered all through the book were being attributed to still other sources, until today the Higher Critics generally hold that the book of Isaiah is a complicated patchwork of the writings of many different people whose work extended over a long period of time.