

was Friedrich August Wolf, who, in his Prolegomena to Homer (1795) presented the idea that the Illiad and the Odyssey had been formed by the combination of a number of distinct sources. The famous German poet Goethe was at first greatly attracted by Wolf's ideas. However, as Goethe reread the Illiad and the Odyssey he was more and more convinced that its grandeur could not be explained as the result of a mere patchwork, and eventually he published a formal retraction of the support that he had previously given to Wolf's theories. Wolf's ideas were worked out in more detail by Lachmann who extended them to the famous German epic, the Nibelungenlied. Mullenhoff, a student of Lachmann, applied the same method to the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf. During the 19th century such methods were commonly applied to most ancient or mediaeval writings. It was only natural to extend them to the Bible.

Books that present the documentary theories of various portions of the Old Testament often contain such a statement as this: "We must apply to the Bible the same principles of literary study that we apply to other books."

What the authors of these books fail to realize is that in non-Biblical literary study these methods of the Higher Criticism have now been almost entirely abandoned. Thus, in the introduction to his translation of the Odyssey, which was first published in 1946 and has been reprinted many times since that date, E. V. Rieu says: "Homer's Illiad and Odyssey have from time to time afforded a first-class battleground for scholars. In the nineteenth century in particular, German critics were at endless pains to show, not only that the two works are not the product of a single brain, but that each is a piece of intricate and rather ill-sewn patchwork. In this process Homer disappeared.

"By now he has been firmly re-established on his throne and his readers may feel as sure that they are in one man's hands as they do when they turn to As You Like It after reading King John."

As these remarks indicate, there are today many scholars who hold strongly to the entire unity of the Illiad and the Odyssey. Others deny this position but are themselves far nearer to it than to the views of Lachmann, which they tend to dismiss with scorn. Professor Albert Guerard, of Stanford University says, "To dissolve Homer into a myth or a committee, much stronger acid would be needed than the Wolfian school has been able to supply." He continues, "A book is a piece of work, not an accident." He remarks further: "No process of accretion could account for the grand unity of theme, development, character, spirit and style which we find in Homer. We might as well imagine that the Parthenon results from the chance conglomeration of rude cabins in the course of centuries." It is hard to see how one could feel much different about the book of Genesis.