

Early in the present century a group of learned scholars at the University of London strongly attacked the divisive theories. Professor R. W. Chambers, for instance, pointed out the inherent improbability of the divisive theories of the Beowulf epic, and said: "It should not be assumed, without evidence, that these lost lays of heathen times were of such a character that an epic could easily be made by fitting them together. Half a dozen motorcycles cannot be combined to make a Rolls-Royce."

Even a quick comparison of the discussions of Shakespeare written 40 years ago with those of today is enough to indicate the great difference of attitude in literary circles. One or two critics still cling to the older methods, but most of the present writers recognize that even Shakespeare could write poor lines, and that it is quite unscientific to select a few good things and then attribute the rest to various imaginary writers. The Higher Criticism is largely dead except as regards the Bible. Here it is tenaciously maintained.

The continued application of these methods to the Bible, despite their practical abandonment in other fields of literary study, is all the stranger since more factual material is available than ever before. This is the result of the investigations of archaeology. During the past hundred years a whole new world has risen from the dust through the work of excavators in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine and other parts of the Near East. At point after point where Biblical statements had been considered by the critics to be purely imaginary, material objects or long buried writings have come to light that fit exactly with the Biblical statements as they stand, and do not fit the history as reconstructed by the Higher Critics. Some supporters of the Wellhausen approach resolutely shut their eyes to these matters and maintain that most of the Biblical contents represent mythical developments or products of human imagination. Most, however, try to fit the archaeological discoveries. Between those documentary theorists who accept archaeological evidence at the particular points where it clearly applies, and those who try to explain it away, severe tensions develop. Note, for instance, the strong arguments that have developed between the school of Albright, Bright and Wright, and that of Alt, Noth and von Rad. Archaeology has presented the evidence that could kill the documentary theories, if properly applied, but many refuse to apply it.

In recent years there has been a very sizable reaction among liberal scholars against some of the extremes of the Wellhausen school, largely on the part of men who have been working in Old Testament archaeology. As they have uncovered point after point at which the evidence of archaeology in Palestine or elsewhere fits with statements of the Bible and does not fit with the Bible as reconstructed by the Higher Criticism, these men have tended to regard more and more sections of the Old Testament as representing historic fact. Yet most of them still