Until 1878 this assault was largely restricted to classrooms and scholarly books. Then *Julius Wellhausen* wrote his <u>Prolegomena</u> <u>to</u> <u>the</u> <u>History</u> <u>of</u> Israel, in which he ably presented one particular view among the many that had been advanced by Higher Critical scholars during the preceding century. The book had an enormous impact and soon ideas that had formerly been taught by a few scholars were being widely disseminated throughout the Protestant world. In more recent years they have spread into the world of Jewish and Roman Catholic scholars and seem now to be firmly established also in these quarters.

The essential feature of the Wellhausen theory is the claim that the first five books of the Bible, instead of being originally written as units in substantially the form in which we have them today, came into existence through a process of interweaving and combining sources that had previously circulated separately.

According to this theory the so-called J document was written many centuries after the events that it describes. A century or so later another document, more or less parallel to the J document, was written. After each had circulated separately for a time, someone combined them, inserting various portions of the newer E document into the J document at appropriate places. More centuries *passed*, and then the D document was composed, purporting to contain Moses' farewell addresses. Eventually this was inserted into the latter part of the combined JE document. About the time of the exile a group of priests composed still another document, the so-called P document, paralleling much of the ground already covered by the J and E documents. Eventually this was cut into large and small sections, between which similar sections of the other documents were inserted. As a result, it is said that the Pentateuch as we know it today is composed of intertwined parts of all these documents, so that we often read a section of one document, followed by a section of another, then, perhaps, a verse or two of the first, then two or three verses of the second, then perhaps half a verse of the first again, then a