

THE GROWTH OF THE HEXATEUCH

had been fitted, was chronologically the first of the series.

V. The Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis

In 1865-66 Karl H. Graf published the results of his critical work on the historical books of the Old Testament.⁹ He approached the problem of the Hexateuch not by way of Genesis, but through a comparative study of the laws. He maintained that the Book of the Law "found" in the temple in the reign of Josiah (II Kings 22:8) was the Deuteronomistic Code, D; that the laws in Exod. 13-23 and 34 were earlier than D, as was the "prophetic" narrative, JE, in which they were embedded; that the laws of the P Code—Hupfeld's E¹—were of post-exilic origin, but that the narrative of P was the oldest part of the Hexateuch. With it the Deuteronomist had combined JE and his own work. To this Ezra had added the P legal code, together with some supplementary narrative material.

The great Dutch scholar Abraham Kuenen immediately discerned both the strength and the weakness of Graf's hypothesis, and pointed out to him in a private letter that the narrative and the laws of P were so obviously interdependent that it was impossible to suppose that they had originated some centuries apart. Graf accepted this criticism and modified his theory accordingly, which at once received the public support of Kuenen,¹⁰ and, a few years later, of Julius Wellhausen.¹¹ The theory, which has come to be known as the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis, may in its broad outlines be stated as follows:

The Hexateuch is composed of four originally separate documents, of which the earliest is that known as J, so called because of its use of the name Yahweh in the narratives of Genesis. The second is E, so called because of its use of Elohim prior to the specific revelation of the name Yahweh to Moses, recorded in Exod. 3:14-15. These two documents were combined, with the necessary harmonization, to form a single narrative, JE, by a redactor, R^{JE}. The third document in point of time is Deuteronomy, D, which is identical in whole or in part with the lawbook found in the temple in the reign of Josiah. The combination of JE with D to form JED was effected by a redactor, R^D, who in the process added a considerable amount

of material to the older narratives. While his additions to the account of the patriarchal and Mosaic periods are severely limited in scope, and are for the most part of a theological character, those to the narrative of the Conquest are of such a nature as to alter radically the representations of JE. For this and other reasons it is probable that the Deuteronomistic redaction was carried through by different hands, possibly at different times. The fourth document is P, so symbolized because of the great amount of priestly legislation it contains. It is postexilic in origin, and was conflated with JED by a redactor, R^P, to form JEDP. This, allowing for the insertion of some supplementary legislative material, an occasional narrative, and possibly for some minor Deuteronomistic additions, was substantially the present Hexateuch.

The evidence upon which this hypothesis rests can be only briefly summarized here. Some of the textual phenomena which led to its formulation have already been indicated, but it is in Exod. 6:2-3 that the key to the composition of the Hexateuch is found. There it is stated that God had appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as El Shaddai, but had not been known to them by his name Yahweh. Gen. 17:1 and 35:11, recording God's revelation of himself as El Shaddai to Abraham and Jacob respectively—the analogous revelation to Isaac is missing, presumably dropped in the process of conflating the documents because of redactional exigencies—obviously belong to the same source as Exod. 6:2-3; and those stories in Genesis in which the name Yahweh is known to the actors must come from another source.

Gen. 17:1; 35:11; and Exod. 6:2-3 thus provide a point of departure. Gen. 17:1, with which the rest of that chapter is continuous, states explicitly that Abraham was at the time ninety-nine years old. Now we have already seen how the recorded ages of the patriarchs give rise to serious chronological difficulties in the narrative of Genesis, a fact which suggests that the passages in which their ages are given come from another hand than the stories thus rendered incredible. This points to the conclusion that the age verses, and the material inseparable from them, are from the same source as Gen. 17.¹² This material is sufficiently extensive to make it possible to discern something of the style of its author, to note many of his characteristic expressions, and to detect certain of his preconceptions, theological and other. Working with these criteria we are able to isolate from Genesis a body of material informed by a peculiar theory of revelation. In this material it is

¹² Gen. 12:4b-5; 16:15-16; 23; 25:7-10, 17, 19-20, 26b; 26:34-35; 35:28-29; 37:2a; 41:46a; 47:7-11, 28; 49:29-32; 50:12-13, 22b; Exod. 7:7; etc.

⁹ *Die geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig: T. O. Weigel, 1866).

¹⁰ In *The Religion of Israel*, tr. Alfred H. May (London: Williams & Norgate, 1874-75). The original, entitled *Godsdienst van Israels*, appeared in 1869-70.

¹¹ In a series of articles in *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, XXI and XXII (1876-77), published in book form as *Die Composition des Hexateuchs* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1885).