

Old Testament Survey

The Pentateuch

Summary of the Graf-Wellhausen Documentary Theory

The Pentateuch is the result of the compilation of at least four documents, **J, E, P, D** representing the Jehovah, Elohim, Priestly, and Deuteronomic documents respectively.

1. **J** - written about 850 B.C. by an unknown writer in the Southern Kingdom (Judah). Little interest in ceremony or ritual but greatly interested in personal biography. Speaks of God in anthropocentric terms.
2. **E** - written about 750 B.C. by an unknown writer in the Northern Kingdom. More objective than **J** and less theologically or morally biased. Sees Elohim as interested in ritual and worship, and sees God as communicating through visions and dreams. Exalts Moses as a unique miracle-worker.
3. **D** - composed by Hilkiyah and presumably "found" by the priests when repairing the Temple under Josiah's reform of 621 B.C. It was written to centralize worship in Israel in Jerusalem. Later authors in this same school reworked the historical accounts in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.
4. **P** - written in several stages from Ezekiel's Holiness Code (Leviticus 17-26) ca. 570 (known as **H**) to Ezra. It shows particular interest in genealogical lists, origins, and details of the sacrifices.

Summary of the development of the G-W Documentary Hypothesis.

1. Astruc said that different names for God point to different authors.
2. De Wette defined **D** as a product of Josiah's reform (621 B.C.).
3. Hupfeld divided **E** into an earlier **E** (which he called **P**) and a later **E**. He ordered the documents **PEJD**.
4. Graf postulated that the legal portions of **P** were of exilic origin. His order was **P¹EJDP²** where **P¹** was the historical portion and **P²** was the legal portion.
5. Kuenen disagreed and said all portions of **P** were of the same time. He ordered the documents as **JEDP**.
6. Wellhausen gave the documentary hypothesis its classical definition ordering the documents **JEDP**.

The Authorship of the Pentateuch

Weaknesses of the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis

1. The Graf-Wellhausen Theory suffers from circular reasoning. It postulates its conclusion (the Bible is not of supernatural origin) as its underlying premise (there is no such thing as supernatural revelation). In other words, the Bible is not of supernatural origin since there is no such thing as supernatural revelation.
2. The Graf-Wellhausen Theory says that it depends on evidence derived solely from the text of the Pentateuch, and yet it ignores the text when the text contradicts the theory.

Whenever the theory tends to be disproved by the text, proponents of the Graf-Wellhausen Theory say that the apparent contradiction is caused by later insertions or emendations of the text. For example, the historical books allude to a lot of material contained in the **P** document, hundreds of years before the **P** documents supposed writing. When confronted with this, proponents of the Graf-Wellhausen Theory say that these allusions are later additions to the text.

3. The Graf-Wellhausen Theory insist that the Hebrew writers could not have more than one name for God. This is an absurd assumption.
4. The Graf-Wellhausen Theory assumes up-front that the Old Testament text is untrustworthy and unreliable in spite of overwhelming archaeological evidence to the contrary. When given a pagan source and the Old Testament, the assumption is that the pagan source is correct and the Old Testament is inaccurate.
5. The Graf-Wellhausen Theory began with an assumption that the Israelite religion was of human origin and evolved over a period of hundreds of years. It assumes an evolutionary approach to the development of all religions.
6. Whenever a manipulation of the text can be twisted to create a discrepancy, no reconciling explanation is accepted. It is as though the proponents of the Graf-Wellhausen Theory want to force textual interpretations to support their theory, even though plausible explanations to the contrary can be readily offered by critics of the Graf-Wellhausen Theory. An example is the supposed two accounts of the slaying of Sisera in Judges 4, 5.
7. The Graf-Wellhausen Theory will not allow the Old Testament to have repetitious or duplicate statements by its authors although it allows it for all other ancient documents.
8. The Graf-Wellhausen Theory assumes it can accurately date the various documents of the hypothesis with great accuracy even though it lacks other ancient Hebrew documents as a reference.
9. The Graf-Wellhausen Theory assumes that its scholars, living 3,400 years after the writing of the Old Testament, can more accurately reconstruct the events surrounding the Old Testament better than ancient writers living less than a few hundred years from the same events.

Positive Evidences for Mosaic Authorship

1. The Pentateuch itself testifies to Moses as its author. See Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Deuteronomy 31:9; 34:11.
2. Other places in the Old Testament testify to the author of the Pentateuch as being Moses. See Joshua 1:7-9; 8:31; 2 Kings 21:8; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:11-13; Malachi 4:4.
3. The New Testament affirms the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. See Matthew 19:8; John 7:19; Acts 3:22; and Romans 10:5.
4. Eyewitness details appear in the account of the Exodus which would be beyond the knowledge of a writer living centuries after the event.
5. The author of Exodus and Genesis shows a deep understanding of the culture of Egypt, something a writer in 750 B.C. would not. Some evidences are the proper names for Egyptian cities and names, as well as a greater number of Egyptian words than the rest of the Old Testament.

6. The writer of the Pentateuch shows a “foreigners” view of Palestine and Canaan. This would not fit the description of a writer in 850-750 B.C. Flora and fauna are distinctively Egyptian or Siniatic in character, not Palestinian. Geographical reference points in the Pentateuch in Egypt and Sinai have been affirmed, but very few such geographical references in Palestine can be found in the Pentateuch.
7. The atmosphere of Exodus through Numbers is that of a desert, not that of an agricultural people who are settled in their land.
8. There are archaic customs mentioned in Genesis that would be unknown to someone living in Palestine in 850-750 B.C. Two such examples are the begetting of an heir by a handmaiden (found in the Nuzi tablets), and the importance of the possession of the teraphim for the family inheritance.
9. There are many archaisms in reference to language. This is seen in the Hebrew spellings of many of the words.
10. There is a remarkable unity to the Pentateuch, thus pointing to a single author as opposed to multiple authors and multiple source documents separated by many years.

Archaeological Evidence for the Antiquity of the Pentateuch

Allegation #1:

Writing was unknown in Israel prior to David therefore there could be no written records going back to Moses.

Refutation #1:

1. The Gezer calendar dating to 925 B.C. shows that even schoolboys were learning to write.
2. The Ugaritic or Ras Shamra tablets date from 1400 B.C. They consist of a 33-character alphabet and conform closely to a Hebrew dialect. Words found in these tablets show usages common in 1400 B.C. that the Graf-Wellhausen Theory asserts were invented much later.
3. Alphabetic inscriptions found in the turquoise mines of Serabit date back to 1500 B.C., thus showing written language at least back that far.

Allegation #2:

The Genesis account of Abraham is mostly fictitious and unhistorical.

Refutation #2:

1. The city of Ur was excavated by Leonard Wooley and shown to be a large, flourishing metropolis around 2000 B.C.
2. The name Abram has been found on several Akkadian tablets dating to the sixteenth century B.C.
3. Excavations at Shechem and Bethel show them to have been populated during the time of Abraham.
4. Many sites in the Jordan valley have been shown to have been inhabited as ancient as 3000 B.C., much earlier than postulated by many critics of Genesis.

5. Genesis 14 was rejected but later proven accurate. For example, a wagon contract showed that wagons were driven to Palestine from Ur in the days of Abraham.
6. The Mari tables, unearthed by Parrot in 1933, show common usages of Nahor, Arioch, and Habiru (Hebrew).
7. The Nuzi or Nuzu tablets confirm the historicity of many customs mentioned in Genesis, specifically the selling of one's birthright, the fact that one's servant would inherit the master's possessions if the master had no heir, and the binding character of a deathbed will.
8. The Hittite legal code, dating from 1300 B.C., sheds light on the reluctance of Abraham to buy the entire field surrounding the cave of Machpelah. If he did, then he would be required to provide services to the Hittite king which would include pagan practices.
9. Camels were shown to be common beasts of burden in Abraham's time, contrary to assertions by many archaeologists prior to later proofs unearthed by the archaeologist's spade.

Allegation #3:

The laws as found in the Pentateuch are too complex to have been written in Moses' time.

Refutation #3:

1. The Code of Hammurabi shows many similarities to Moses' law.
2. The fifteenth century Ras Shamra tablets use many technical terms for sacrifices used by the P document, thus showing these terms as being of ancient origin.

Allegation #4:

The Hebrew conquest of Palestine as recorded in Numbers and Joshua is historically inaccurate.

Refutation #4:

1. The Egyptian Execration texts of the Twelfth Dynasty confirm the political situation in Palestine in 2000 B.C.
2. The Tell El-Amarna tablets dating from 1400-1370 B.C. tell of division and chaos in Palestine, and even tell of a fierce people who were invading the land. In fact, some of the cities being spoken of in the tablets as having fallen were conquered early by Joshua.
3. The "Israel" stele of Merneptah, dating from 1229 B.C., mentions Israel by name.