

Page 29

What is meant is that archaeological evidence is brought in as a support to the biblical narrative, while evidence that adds to the complexity of the problem tends to be ignored.<sup>1</sup> In other words, archaeological evidence is not allowed play as an effective control on the biblical tradition, but is used rather as an apologetic tool to bolster up its historical accuracy.

<sup>1</sup> As an example, cf. the handling of the problems of Jericho and Ai in Heinisch, op. cit., 83, 129f; cf. also my review of Heinisch in JBL, LXXII (1953) 265f. It must be stressed that this tendency is by no means confined to Roman Catholic works, but is equally observable in Protestant works of fundamentalist character; cf. my review of Free, op. cit. in Interpretation, IV (1950), 496.

But history and theology must be kept separate lest both historical event and theological interpretation of that event be placed on the same plane. If these two are confused, the historian will begin to write history, as it were, from the side of God, and God himself will tend to become a datum of history.

This confusion is at all costs to be avoided. Abraham is a datum of history, and the theology of the Yahwist is likewise a datum of history: both are to be evaluated as such at the proper place. Furthermore, the historian as a believing man may concur with the Yahwist that God did indeed act to call the people Israel into being; and, if so, it is not against the rules for him to say as much. Faith may affirm that God is the prime actor in Old Testament history; but he is not a datum of that history within the control of the historian as Abraham, or Moses, or the Yahwist are. The actual course of the events, the Old Testament's theological interpretation of those events, and the historian's own faith in God, must be kept sharply separate lest confusion result. Failure to do this can only be accounted a weakness of method.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. R. H. Pfeiffer, 'Facts and Faith in Biblical History', JBL, LXX (1951), 1-14. One need not agree with all of Pfeiffer's observations in order to sense that he has put his finger on a most important point of method.