

sanctuary in the Negeb.¹ Indeed his views regarding the preservation and transmission of the patriarchal traditions are still of importance for European form-critics: namely, that the stories were attached to various cultic places where they survived until gathered together to form the unified tradition we now have. This is a historical judgment of capital importance, for which, however, there is unfortunately no proof whatever. That the stories regarding Bethel in chs. 28 and 35 are written in their present form with the later Israelite sanctuary in view is quite clear. Nevertheless, the close philological investigation of the sources to prove the point does not reveal whether authentic old traditions were told and refracted in the light of the later sanctuary or whether the stories were constructed as pure aetiologies on a minimum of historical tradition. By what objective criteria can it be presumed to be more probable that the later cultic tradition which now holds the various items of the epic together is the more or less artificial construction of the cultus out of disparate themes from different cultic centres, but that it is less probable that there was always one central confessional story connected, not so much with a cult place as with a particular group of people who found in it the explanation of their existence? To reason for the first against the second on the basis of the presence of this or that theme in the cultic confessions is dangerous when the liturgical history of the cult is not well known.

The purpose of these all too brief remarks is not to decry the methods of study being pursued by the students of Form-Criticism and the history of tradition, but instead to suggest that historical judgments are constantly being made, and must be made, by any scholar involved in this type of study. Hence von Rad's description of the new form critical era may be a bit one-sided, for the form critic does indeed attempt to step from his forms and traditions into historical backgrounds and origins. And because his eye has been fixed on fragments he is inclined to argue that the fragmentary is primary, while that which unifies the fragments is liturgical, late, secondary. But this is the type of historical conclusion which Form-Criticism and tradition-history are ill-equipped to make by themselves alone. Consequently, in my judgment it is not on a par with the data gained from archaeological investigations. Even the latter, however, cannot be used alone in historical reconstruction, but only as one means of gathering primary data for the hypotheses whereby the details of ancient life are given order and meaning.

¹ H. Gunkel, *Genesis* [HAT; Göttingen; 5th ed. 1922], 236-242.

With regard to the Genesis narratives, however, archaeology cannot contribute as much to the direct solution of issues posed by the form-critics as it can for the thirteenth century and the Mosaic era. Archaeologically-minded students claim only that sufficient evidence has now been accumulated to fix the era in which the bulk of the patriarchal narratives, and indeed the patriarchs themselves, must have originated. That is in the 'Amorite age of the first half of the second millennium B.C.' In other words, the oral tradition behind the present written narratives has preserved sufficient background to make possible the assertion that the patriarchal tradition is at least authentic in the sense that it can be fitted into an actual historical era of ancient history.

We now have available two excellent histories of Israel which indicate the radically different approaches to the subject that the differing opinions and methods described above have brought forth. The one is by Martin Noth (*The History of Israel* [Eng. tr. of the 2nd German edition by Stanley Godman, London and New York, 1958]); the other by John Bright (*A History of Israel* [Philadelphia, 1959]). The first is a product of the form-critical approach as developed by Gunkel and Albrecht Alt. The second was written in America by one trained in the historical methods of W. F. Albright. Let us review briefly the manner in which each book treats our subject.

* There is not space here to treat the minority position that the patriarchal narratives and Amarna period of the fourteenth century are related: see especially C. H. Gordon, *Introduction to Old Testament Times* [Ventnor, N.J., 1953], 75, 102-104; *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, xiii. [1954], 56-59; and H. H. Rowley, *From Joseph to Joshua* [London, 1950], 109-130—the latter holding that the end of the Patriarchal Age is to be placed this late. There could be no objection to this view, if only isolated fragments of the epic were derived from this later period; but in so far as the argument is based on the genealogies which record only three generations between Abraham and Moses, it is proper to cite the convincing thesis of D. N. Freedman in an unpublished paper. This is the effect that Hebrew tradition preserved certain genealogies back to the Mosaic era but beyond that there was none preserved, except the names of clan and tribe. For example, Nu 16¹: 'Korah, the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi', simply means 'Korah ben Izhar of the Kohath clan of the tribe of Levi'. The parallels to the fifteenth century Nuzi texts are hardly pertinent except in a very general way for chronology, because the social customs and customary law in question surely did not originate with the Hurrians, but instead portray the life of a certain type of second millennium society (cf. also the much earlier Capadocian texts, see note 1 on next page).