

tion is correct or not, the liturgical features of the texts put them in an entirely new light.

One of the areas in which the form-critical methodology has produced important results is Hebrew law. Most significant here is Alt's monograph on the origins of Israelite law in which he recognized two major types, the one *casuistic* which is to be compared with similar ancient Near Eastern legal formulations, the other apodictic which he believed to be peculiarly Israelite with its *Thou shalt* or *Thou shalt not*, as in the Elohist decalogue of Ex 20.¹ Alt assigned these legal formulations to their cultic contexts. Martin Noth has written extensively on Hebrew law and has recovered for us in a stimulating fashion the forces which went into its making and has sought to do justice to the various stylistic forms in which it is couched.² G. von Rad has made a somewhat preliminary investigation into the laws of Deuteronomy and has succeeded in demonstrating the formal aspects of the little collections which are embedded in that book.³ The legal codes of the Near Eastern cultures have been put to good use. Here again it is important to recognize the necessity of dealing with the individual literary unit or the small collections of units as well as their *Sitz im Leben* before proceeding to an examination of their larger contexts or their incorporation into codes. Such studies have a bearing on our understanding of the nature of Hebrew law and more especially upon the understanding and place of the law in the New Testament. In this connexion M. Noth's essay on Gal 3¹⁰, 'For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse' will prove rewarding reading.⁴

One aspect of Form Criticism to which we have referred only briefly is its emphasis upon the prehistory of the *Gattungen*, i.e. the period in which they circulated orally. The Scandinavian school, represented by such scholars as Engnell and his followers, have made much of this and have carried the period of oral transmission to a much later date than the Gunkel school. The emphasis is in itself salutary, and it is seen at its best in Gunkel's own work. The difficulty with historical criticism is that it always tended to view the literary materials too much as written products.

¹ *Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts* [1934]. The monograph appears also in *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, I, 278-332.

² *Die Gesetze im Pentateuch* re-printed in *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* [1957], 9-141.

³ *Studies in Deuteronomy* in 'Studies in Biblical Theology', No. 9 [1953].

⁴ 'Die mit des Gesetzes Werken umgehen, die sind unter dem Fluch', in *Bulmerineq Festschrift* [1938], 127-145; now re-printed in *Gesammelte Studien*, 155-171.

Gunkel sought to liberate the literary forms from the written page and to place them in the everyday life of the people, into the immediacy and concreteness of speaking. The task of the interpreter is to restore them to their original spokenness (*Gesprochenheit*), for they must be heard in order to be understood or made contemporary. The authentic interpreter is not merely a spectator looking at the Scriptural passage from the outside, although it is important to say that the work of the spectator is essential in all Biblical exegesis; the true exegete must be a participant, one who is himself involved in what is being said. This was true of Gunkel, Gressmann, and many of their followers. When the form-critical method is applied by a true master, one with imagination and sympathy and insight, and at the same time one who has subjected the literary unit to careful scrutiny and detailed analysis, then we are able to listen to the speaking of Israel. We can hear the singing of many sorts and varieties of songs; Gunkel did greater justice than most of his successors to the place of singing in Israel's life. We can listen to the telling and recounting of ancient stories as in Gunkel's commentary on Genesis or Gressmann's on Exodus.⁵ We can listen to the prophets proclaiming their invectives and threats in court, market, and Temple precinct; to the priests 'handling' the Torah, the sages giving counsel, the judge and the witnesses engaging in judicial encounters, and above all to gathered Israel participating in the solemnity and joy of worship in the presence of the Holy One enthroned, with the priests, Levites, cultic prophets, and other officials all joining in the rituals and liturgies, the hymns, laments, thanksgivings and confessions. What is more we can listen in the immediate living situation in which they were spoken, whether on days of festival or fast, or at the enthronement of the king, or in times of national danger and threat. In recent years there has been much discussion of how we may interpret a passage in such a way as to bring it into such contemporaneity that we may ourselves be addressed. Form Criticism at its best, that is when it is employed creatively and imaginatively, may suggest one solution to this vexing problem.

Another of the major gains which may properly be credited to Form Criticism is our recognition of the rôle of the cult in Israel's corporate life. Gunkel saw that the different types of psalms had their origin in cultic circles, but he averred that most of them were later liberated from their original cultic *Sitz im Leben* and became expressions of individual piety. It was left to S. Mowinkel, next

⁵ *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments im Auswaid*, I, 2⁵ [1912].

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