

Albright's "From the Stone Age to Christianity"

I. Albright's philosophy of history (pp. 75-87)

"An inductive organismic philosophy is the only proper way in which to approach the problem of the relation of historical contexts to one another. ... A culture represents an empirico-adaptive system, in which elements have been brought together as a result of many quite dissimilar causes, but where they are adapted to one another by a process which reminds one of the unconscious ability of any man to make the products of his ... genes work together in tolerable harmony." (pp. 84-6)

Any organismic pattern may show "oscillatory" rather than cyclical behavior, with (1.) abrupt mutations, often producing new organismic patterns, (2.) long periods of stagnation, or (3.) puritanical reforms striving to recapture an earlier stage of the pattern. (pp. 85-6)

Albright states his "conviction that the Graeco-Roman civilization of the time of Christ represented the closest approach to a rational unified culture that the world has yet seen", and that "the history of Israelite and Jewish religion from Moses to Jesus thus appears to stand on the pinnacle of biological evolution as represented in Homo Sapiens, and recent progress in discovery and invention really reflects a cultural lag of over two millennia." (p. 83)

II. Albright's appreciation of pre-Mosaic religion (pp. 123-49)

Primitive religion is pre-logical, impersonal, and fluid. It has its own type of pre-logical abstraction, recognizing qualities and laying a foundation for ethics. Many religious concepts are vastly old (e.g., myths) and even show impoverization at the dawn of history. Characteristic of primitive religion is the worship of "high" gods (cosmic, creative), which is a preliminary to monotheism. (pp. 123-30)

Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Canaanite-Phoenician religions of 3000-1600 contained the germs of the essential factors in Mosaic religion, already visible and needing only new emphasis for continued vitality. (pp. 130-49)