

## PART ONE

### PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

[p.15]

#### 1. ANCIENT ORIENT AND OLD TESTAMENT: THE BACKGROUND

##### I. AN AGE OF CHANGE

We live in times of sweeping change. Through all the millennia of human history, never have the changes effected by man's efforts been so rapid and so revolutionary; and the pace does not slacken.

Taken positively, the advances in human knowledge and discovery are breathtaking. Less than a lifetime separates the pioneer flight of Orville and Wilbur Wright made in 1903 from the orbits of the globe along which rockets have carried astronauts and cosmonauts in our own day. In this time we have also passed decisively from the old theory of an atom as the smallest indivisible unit of matter to the stark fact of the fission and fusion of atomic particles whose possible misuse threatens the very existence of civilization. In medicine, new classes of drugs and surgical techniques, hitherto undreamt-of, have turned former impossibilities into normal practice.

Negatively speaking, the torrents of change have swept away much that was once held to be axiomatic, both in secluded branches of learning and *in* popular beliefs. In the natural sciences, successive new discoveries and resultant theories chase one another, often far ahead of the standard textbooks. In this world of searching analysis, the things of lasting validity and unchallengeable worth are few indeed.

But these powerful tides of change are not limited in their effect to the natural or medical sciences, or to certain obvious aspects of daily life. Welling up from vast new knowledge in every sphere, their power is visible in every field of human endeavour. This is true even in disciplines which outwardly may seem to be remote from modern metamorphoses - even in such

[p.16]

subjects as Ancient Oriental history and literature and study of the Old Testament, the matters with which this book is concerned.

In various spheres,<sup>1</sup> the nineteenth century witnessed a veritable outburst of new activity in human discovery and invention, and in the world of thought. Among other things, the latter realm was marked by reaction against the traditional beliefs and knowledge inherited from

---

<sup>1</sup> In industry, the effects of the 'industrial revolution': steel largely replacing iron; mechanical traction; emerging exploitation of gas and electricity; rise of telecommunications. In medicine, the first major advances since antiquity (*e.g.*, the work of Pasteur, Lister, *etc.*). In zoology, the theories of Darwin; the founding of modern geology. Not unconnected with these, there emerged evolutionary philosophy. The first great advances in astronomy and physics came earlier, of course (Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo; Newton).

earlier epochs and henceforth considered to be ‘uncritical’ and ‘inadequate’. However, the remarkable achievements in discovery and thought which reached a first climax with the end of the nineteenth century have proved not to be definitive. Many of the scientific theories and practical processes of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are being pushed into obsolescence by the events and discoveries of the present century, especially in these last few decades. And who now would naïvely subscribe to the evolutionary philosophy of an infallible, ever-upward progress of mankind, unfaltering and inevitable? Much of what was accepted sixty or more years ago as almost definitive seems just as painfully inadequate or mistaken to us now as did the views of earlier ages to the inquiring minds of the nineteenth century.

All this is relevant to our theme. Ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament studies alike can in no way be exempted from these inexorable tides of change any more than the rest of human activity, and for the same reasons. In our time vast new realms of fact, hitherto undisclosed, have come to light, and new methods of study are now becoming necessary and must replace those that are obsolete.

[p.17]

## II. THE BASIS OF THE MAIN PROBLEMS

Thus, in relation to the Old Testament, the nineteenth century<sup>2</sup> saw the emergence of two major fields of scholarship which both stood in contrast over against earlier ages: Old Testament studies and Ancient Near Eastern studies.

### (a) *Old Testament Studies*

Following on the period of ‘Deist’ speculation in the eighteenth century, Old Testament studies during the nineteenth century carried the mark of reaction against older beliefs about the Bible and its constituent writings, a mark still perceptible today. In contrast to earlier epochs in which the main concern of biblical study was the exposition of the sacred text and the formulation of doctrine, Old Testament studies of the nineteenth century were more concerned with literary and historical criticism, especially in connection with philosophical treatment of early Hebrew religion. Certain dominant tendencies became apparent. Beside the desire to break with the weight of inherited later tradition (often of dubious value), there was an eagerness to experiment with literary and history-of-religion theories like those then current in Homeric<sup>3</sup> and other

---

<sup>2</sup> The tentative beginnings long precede the nineteenth century, of course. For some precursors of nineteenth-century Old Testament scholarship, see the brief summaries (on Introduction and Pentateuchal study) in E. J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testaments*, 1964, pp. 16-21, 107-122, and O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction*, 1965, pp. 1-3, 158-163. Since the Reformation, cf. also Kraus and Kraeling, works cited in note 7, below.

For Ancient Oriental studies before the nineteenth century, compare E. Iversen, *The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs*, 1961 (on pre-scientific study of the Egyptian hieroglyphs); S. A. Pallis, *Early Exploration in Mesopotamia*, 1954 (*Kon. Dan. Vidensk. Selskab, Hist.-fil. Medd.*, 33, No. 6), or Pallis, *The Antiquity of Iraq*, 1956, pp. 19-70, 94ff., or A. Parrot, *Archéologie Mésopotamienne*, I, 1946, pp. 13-35 (early travellers in Mesopotamia). For early exploration in Palestine, see W. F. Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine* 4, 1960, pp. 23-25, and now esp. the Palestine Exploration Fund’s Centenary publication, *The World of the Bible*, 1965.

<sup>3</sup> For the instructive parallelism between Homeric and Pentateuchal literary criticism in the nineteenth century see W. J. Martin, *Stylistic Criteria and the Analysis of the Pentateuch*, 1955.

[p.18]

studies,<sup>4</sup> and also a wish to view the history of Old Testament religion and literature in terms of the evolutionary philosophies of the age.<sup>5</sup>

One result of all this was the emergence of a marked scepticism not only towards traditions *about* the Bible, but also towards the historical veracity of the Old Testament books and towards the integrity of their present literary form. The existing structure of Old Testament religion and literature could not, as it stood, be fitted into the prevailing philosophical schemes, so it was drastically remodelled until it did. The resultant physiognomy presented by Old Testament studies needs only the briefest summary here; the role of *theory* is preponderant. Thus, the Pentateuch and other books were split up into various supposed source-documents of different authorship of varying epochs (traditionally designated J(ahwist), E(lohist), P(riestly Code), D(euteronomist), *etc.*), and considered to have been assembled into the present books at a relatively late date. Various literary, linguistic and theological criteria were produced in order to justify these divisions and late datings. The prophetic books were also fragmented across the centuries, and the poetry and wisdom-literature assigned to a very late period.<sup>6</sup> Concepts that were held to be theologically 'advanced' (universalism,

[p.19]

personification, *etc.*) were also considered to be late developments. With innumerable variations in detail, and some modifications in view of recent developments, Old Testament studies have remained fundamentally the same up to the present day.<sup>7</sup> To this picture,

---

<sup>4</sup> For the history-of-religions and anthropological aspects, one need only recall such works as W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, or Sir James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*. Cf. chapters II and III of Hahn's work, cited in note 7, below.

<sup>5</sup> For example, the influence of such developmental philosophy upon Wellhausen; cf. Eissfeldt, *The OT: An Introduction*, p. 165, and, somewhat differently if more fully, L. Perlitt, *Vatke and Wellhausen*, 1965 (=BZAW 94). Wellhausen's famous *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, even in its sixth edition of 1905 (repr. 1927), was not marked by any acquisition or use of new, factual data (esp. from the Ancient Orient) so much as by its remoulding of history to accord with his *a priori* philosophical principles. Note the remarks of Kraus (work cited in note 7, below), p. 244 with p. 268, and on a broader basis, S. R. Külling, *zur Datierung der "Genesis-P-Stücke"*, 1964, pp. 148-165, esp. pp. 153 ff. On unilinear evolution, cf. below, pp. 113 f., 148 f., *etc.*

<sup>6</sup> For useful surveys of the more recent phases of Old Testament studies, see H. H. Rowley (ed.), *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, 1951 (paperback, 1961); cf. also J. Bright, *BANE*, pp. 13-31.

<sup>7</sup> For the last hundred years of Old Testament studies (from a conventional viewpoint), see the excellent, compact and readable work of H. F. Hahn, *The Old Testament in Modern Research*, 1956. For the whole period from the Reformation to the early 1950s, see H. J. Kraus, *Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments*, 1956, and E. G. Kraeling, *The Old Testament since the Reformation*, 1955 (whose useful work is too often coloured by its author's personal views). Briefer still are chapters VII and VIII by W. Neil and A. Richardson in S. L. Greenslade (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, 1963; these essays cover the same period as Kraus and Kraeling, are lively, but in some measure share Kraeling's failings. On OT introduction, cf. also G. L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 1964.

As for the fundamental sameness in the methodology of Old Testament studies, a random example is the use of exactly the same class of criteria (even identical) today (*e.g.*, Eissfeldt, *The OT: An Introduction*, 1965, p. 183) as were used fifty and more years ago (*e.g.*, by S. R. Driver, *Literature of the Old Testaments*, 1913, p. 119).

Gunkel and others added *Gattungsforschung* or *Formgeschichte* (form-criticism),<sup>8</sup> and the Scandinavians have laid stress on the supposed role of oral tradition,<sup>9</sup> while Alt and Noth have combined part of these methods with literary criticism and their own theories about aetiological traditions allegedly linked with specific localities.<sup>10</sup>

Contradictions are said to abound in the Old Testament, and its history is still treated with scepticism, especially the earlier periods (*e.g.*, Patriarchs, Exodus and Conquest). It is not merely that (for the historic Christian faith) these results leave a wide gulf between the vision of a dependable and authoritative Word of God, and the spectacle of a tattered miscellany of half mythical and historically unreliable literary fragments. Rather,

[p.20]

on the fundamental level of ‘What actually happened in history?’, there is above all a very considerable tension between the development of Israelite history, religion and literature as portrayed by the Old Testament and the general reconstructions so far offered by conventional Old Testament studies. An example is afforded by W. Zimmerli who brings out the vast change proposed by Wellhausen in making the ‘law of Moses’ (especially ‘P’) later than the prophets instead of preceding them.<sup>11</sup> Nowhere else in the whole of Ancient Near Eastern history has the literary, religious and historical development of a nation been subjected to such drastic and wholesale reconstructions at such variance with the existing documentary evidence. The fact that Old Testament scholars are habituated to these widely known reconstructions, even mentally conditioned by them,<sup>12</sup> does not alter the basic gravity of this situation which should not be taken for granted.

### **(b) Ancient Near Eastern Studies**

During the nineteenth century, Ancient Near Eastern studies first came into their own with the decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphs and Mesopotamian cuneiform, and the beginnings of scientific excavation and epigraphy.<sup>13</sup> Centuries of human history were recovered, and the life of entire civilizations restored to view. To the resurrection of Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilization, the twentieth century has added that of the Hittites and other Anatolian peoples,<sup>14</sup> the

---

<sup>8</sup> See below, pp. 130 ff., and notes 71-74.

<sup>9</sup> See below, pp. 135 ff., and notes 92-94.

<sup>10</sup> M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I*, 1943 (repr. 1957); Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch*, 1948 (repr. 1960); A. Alt, *Kleine Schriften*, I-III, 1953-59, various papers. For a brief summary of Noth’s treatment of Hebrew history, and a careful but trenchant critique of Noth’s methods, see J. Bright, *Early Israel in Recent History Writing*, 1956 (=SBT, No. 19).

<sup>11</sup> *The Law and the Prophets*, 1965, pp. 23-25. This developmental pattern has persisted in the thinking of Old Testament scholars ever since (note especially remarks of Bright, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-25 end).

<sup>12</sup> ‘The new evidence [i.e., objective Near Eastern data], far from furnishing a corrective to inherited notions of the religion of earliest Israel, tends to be subsumed under the familiar developmental pattern’, Bright, *op. cit.*, p. 25 end. And the same applies to other aspects besides history (*e.g.*, literary matters); examples abound - at random, cf. McCarthy and covenant-form, pp. 101, n. 53; 127 f., and Eissfeldt’s ‘Aramaisms’ that are early Canaanite, p. 145, below.

<sup>13</sup> For decipherment of Ancient Oriental languages, see the excellent little work of J. Friedrich, *Extinct Languages*, 1962.

<sup>14</sup> The importance of the Hittites was first enunciated by Sayce and Wright, but our modern knowledge of the life and history of early Asia Minor was made possible by the excavation of the Hittite state archives at

[p.21]

Canaanites (especially through Ugarit), Hurrians and others.

One factor that influenced many nineteenth-century investigators was the hope of making discoveries that would throw light on biblical history, a hope that persists today.<sup>15</sup> However, this factor steadily gave way to the study of the Ancient Oriental cultures for their own sake, as part of world history. For example, in the years immediately following its foundation in 1882, the English Egypt Exploration Fund (now Society) paid particular attention to Egyptian sites of biblical interest; this was reflected in its excavation memoirs on Pithom, 1885 (4th ed., 1903), Tanis, I/II, 1885-88, Goshen, 1888, Tell el Yahudiyeh, 1890, and Bubastis, 1891. Subsequent activities have always been devoted to key sites of prime Egyptological importance (Deir el Bahri, Abydos, Tell el Amaraa, Amarah West, Saqqara, *etc.*) without any further direct reference to biblical matters. The same development can be observed in other undertakings. Thus, the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft of Berlin included Babylon and Jericho in its vast initial programme, but since the 1914-18 war has concentrated on Uruk and Boghazköy.

This change was stimulated by two factors: negatively, the small proportion of discoveries that had an obvious and direct connection with the Bible;<sup>16</sup> positively, the rapid expansion and

[p.22]

fast-growing complexity of each section of Ancient Oriental studies (constantly fed by new data), accompanied by trends toward specialization. This change of emphasis in Ancient Oriental studies was partly responsible for two consequences first, that these studies could develop largely untouched by theological considerations and Old Testament controversies;<sup>17</sup> and secondly, that the impact of Ancient Oriental studies upon Old Testament studies was very small - largely limited to a handful of historical synchronisms and some obvious literary and other comparisons.

Ancient Near Eastern studies have always been fed by a constant supply of new, tangible material. One illustration of this is the steady succession of discoveries of important cuneiform archives: the library of Assurbanipal and related Assyrian finds from 1850; the El Amarna tablets, 1887; the tablet collections from Nippur, 1889-1900, whose Sumerian literary treasures are still being unlocked by S. N. Kramer and others; the Hittite archives from Boghaz-köy since 1906; more

---

Boghaz-köy from 1906. The classic synthesis is A. Goetze, *Kleinasien*<sup>2</sup>, 1957, supplemented by H. Otten in H. Schmökel (ed.), *Kulturgeschichte des Alten Orients*, 1961, pp. 311-446, and by G. Walser (ed.), *Neuere Hethiterforschung*, 1964 (= *Historia*, Einzelschriften, Heft 7). In English, a handy outline is O. R. Gurney, *The Hittites*<sup>3</sup>, 1961, plus various chapters in CAH<sup>2</sup>, I/II. Cf. also C. W. Ceram, *Narrow Pass, Black Mountain*, 1956.

<sup>15</sup> For surveys of Ancient Near Eastern discovery in relation to the Old Testament, see W. F. Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, 1955; *From the Stone Age to Christianity*<sup>2</sup>, 1957 (also paperback), esp. chapter I; *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, 1953, esp. chapter II; and *History, Archaeology and Christian Humanism*, 1964, ch. 5, a revision of *JBL* 59 (1940), pp. 85-112. Also M. Noth, *Die Welt des Alten Testaments*<sup>4</sup>, 1962 = Noth, *The Old Testament World*, 1965; and the essays in *BANE*.

<sup>16</sup> Especially in Palestine itself, where archaeological results were of little direct use for biblical studies until nearly 1930, and inscriptions were so few.

<sup>17</sup> Apart from the *Babel and Babel* and Pan-Babylonian episodes; but these had little bearing on Assyriological progress.

Assyrian records from Assur in 1903-14; the Nuzi tablets since the 1920s; the brilliant discoveries at Ugarit since 1929 and 1948; the huge archives from Mari since 1936, *etc.* Other documentary finds (*e.g.*, Egyptian) and other aspects of Near Eastern discovery have been equally fruitful. Thus, in these disciplines, facts have a primary value and theories are mainly subordinated to them. The constant flow of new, objective material has repeatedly enforced the modification or even the wholesale replacement of theories, as in the 'Hatshepsut problem' in Egyptology. Kurt Sethe formulated a brilliant and elaborate theory about the succession of certain monarchs of the Eighteenth Dynasty<sup>18</sup> - a theory which, in its heyday, won the assent of most Egyptologists. But a majority adhesion could not save even this 'scientific' theory from the fatal impact of a series of new facts (and

[p.23]

re-examination of older ones), mainly provided by the American excavations at Deir el Bahri. Scholars in these fields have thus established their studies upon objective, verifiable fact and sound methodology, learnt the hard way, with an emphasis on external, first-hand data; *a priori* philosophical considerations have rarely been allowed to interfere directly.

### **(c) Two Disciplines, One World**

A remarkable situation has thus come about. These two neighbouring fields of study have so far developed almost wholly independently of each other, and also along quite different lines: on the one hand, relatively objectively based disciplines of the Orientalists; on the other, idealistic theories of the Old Testament Scholars.

This contrast is not unfair. For example, even the most ardent advocate of the documentary theory must admit that we have as yet *no single scrap* of external, objective (*i.e.*, *tangible*) evidence for either the existence or the history of 'J', 'E', or any other alleged source-document. No manuscript of any part of the Old Testament is yet known from earlier than the third century BC.<sup>19</sup> But if, for example, a sufficiently well preserved copy of the supposed pentateuchal document 'J' were to be found in Judaea in an indubitable archaeological context of (for example) the ninth century BC - then we would have *real, verifiable* (genuinely objective) evidence for a documentary theory. Equally, if an archaic copy of one or more of the existing books of the Pentateuch (or even the Pentateuch) were to be discovered in an irreproachable context of the twelfth or eleventh century BC, this would be clear and final evidence against such a theory. It is the lack of *really early* manuscript-attestation which has permitted so much uncontrolled (because unverifiable) theorizing in Old Testament studies.

By contrast, we often have securely dated manuscript evidence extending over centuries for Ancient Oriental literary and other works. Thus, for the Egyptian story of Sinuhe (composed *c.* 1900 BC), we have mss of *c.* 1800 BC and slightly later, and

[p.24]

---

<sup>18</sup> In his *Untersuchungen z. Geschichte u. Altertumskunde Ägyptens*, I, 1896, pp. 1-58, 65-129, and *Das Hatshepsut-Problem*, 1932, supported by J. H. Breasted in *Untersuchungen...*, II: 2, 1900, pp. 27-55; for a thorough critical rebuttal based largely on the American results, see W. F. Edgerton, *The Thutmosid Succession*, 1933.

<sup>19</sup> Dead Sea Scroll fragment of Exodus, *cf.* F. M. Cross, *BANE*, p. 137, fig. 1:3.

a series of ostraca of the thirteenth and twelfth centuries BC.<sup>20</sup> These place the textual and literary history of this work upon a factual basis. This is but one example.

Now geographically, historically and culturally, the Ancient Near East is the world of the Old Testament, while humanly speaking the Old Testament is a part of Ancient Near Eastern literature, history and culture. Therefore, what can be known about the history, literatures, linguistics, religion, *etc.*, of the Ancient Orient will have a *direct bearing* upon these same aspects of the Old Testament. The relatively limited Old Testament material must, as appropriate, be set in the full context (in both space and time) of *all* the related Ancient Oriental material that is available.

Nevertheless, Old Testament scholarship has made only superficial use of Ancient Near Eastern data. The main reasons, of course, are fairly obvious. Ancient Oriental studies are both complex and highly specialized. To use their original material at first hand, one requires the mastery of Egyptian hieroglyphic and hieratic scripts and language phases, or of the cuneiform syllabaries and several languages of Western Asia, or else of the subtleties of archaeological stratigraphy and typology of pottery and other artefacts - not to mention a control of the essential scholarly literature in these fields. Fresh Near Eastern data, no matter how relevant for the Old Testament, can only be made generally available by those who are suitably trained Orientalists. On the other hand, because they are often more involved in theological work and are largely limited to Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and languages of early biblical versions (Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, Coptic, *etc.*), most Old Testament scholars are not in a position to utilize, unaided and at first hand, the raw materials collected by Ancient Oriental research. This is no fault of theirs, and is to be expected; we live in a world of specialization in these realms as much as in the natural sciences or any other. Many Orientalists are not interested or competent in biblical studies, and have enough work of their own to do. Furthermore, not every hieratic ostrakon or cuneiform tablet

[p.25]

(of the thousands extant) can be fully edited and annotated for non-specialists or for members of other scholarly disciplines. Thus, the Near Eastern material easily accessible to Old Testament scholarship is necessarily limited, and so between the two fields of study there has long been an inevitable gulf. Happily, this situation has begun to change somewhat. More Orientalists are beginning to contribute an increasing flow of new data to Old Testament studies, while Old Testament scholars are making more use of this material than ever before. But this flow is still too small, must be much more increased, and must ultimately achieve a far greater impact.

#### ***(d) Two Tensions***

One more point must now be briefly considered. Through the impact of the Ancient Orient upon the Old Testament and upon Old Testament studies a new tension is being set up while an older one is being reduced. For the comparative material from the Ancient Near East is tending to agree with the extant structure of Old Testament documents as actually transmitted to us, rather than with the reconstructions of nineteenth-century Old Testament scholarship - or with its twentieth-century prolongation and developments to the present day.

---

<sup>20</sup> See G. Posener, *Littérature et Politique dans l'Égypte de la XIIIe Dynastie*, 1956, pp. 87 f. and references.

Some examples may illustrate this point. The valid and close parallels to the social customs of the Patriarchs come from documents of the nineteenth to fifteenth centuries BC<sup>21</sup> (agreeing with an early-second-millennium origin for this material in Genesis), and not from Assyro-Babylonian data of the tenth to sixth centuries BC (possible period of the supposed 'J', 'E' sources).<sup>22</sup> Likewise for Genesis 23, the closest parallel comes from the Hittite Laws<sup>23</sup> which passed into oblivion with the fall of the Hittite Empire about 1200 BC. The covenant-forms which appear in Exodus, Deuteronomy and Joshua follow the model of those current in the thirteenth century BC - the period of Moses and Joshua - and *not* those of the first millennium BC.<sup>24</sup>

[p.26]

The background to Syro-Palestinian kingship in I Samuel 8 is provided by documents from Alalakh and Ugarit of not later than the thirteenth century BC;<sup>25</sup> this suggests that late in the eleventh century BC is a late enough date for the content of this passage, and would be much more realistic than a date some centuries later still. Personification of abstracts, like Wisdom in Proverbs 8 and g, finds its real origin not in Greek influences of the fourth century BC but in the wide use of precisely such personified concepts throughout the Ancient Near East in the third and second millennia BC, up to 1,500 years before even Solomon was born.<sup>26</sup> Words once thought to be a mark of post-Exilic date now turn up in Ugaritic texts of the thirteenth century BC, or in even earlier sources.<sup>27</sup>

The proper implications of these and many similar facts are that large parts of the Pentateuch really did originate in the second millennium BC, that Samuel really could (and probably did) issue the warnings recorded in I Samuel 8, and that the connection between Solomon's reign and the first few chapters of Proverbs (*cf.* Pr. 1:1-7) is something more than just the idle fancy of some late scribe; and so on. At least, this is the rational approach that would obtain if this were any part of Ancient Near Eastern literature, history and culture other than the Old Testament.

Such implications have so far found little or no response from Old Testament scholars. Within the framework of their existing theories,<sup>28</sup> they are often willing to admit that this or that detail preserved in a relatively late source (even 'P'!) may indeed go back to a more ancient origin than was hitherto supposed, but nothing more. But what will happen when more and more such details of every kind find their appropriate early analogies, almost always earlier than the inherited theories presuppose? Suppose that every detail and aspect of some given passage or literary unit can be shown by external, objective Ancient Oriental data to be completely consistent with a general date stated or clearly implied by the biblical text - in literary struc-

[p.27]

---

<sup>21</sup> See below, pp. 51, 153 f.

<sup>22</sup> Compare dates for 'J', *etc.*, given by C. R. North in H. H. Rowley (ed.), *Old Testament and Modern Study*, 1951, p. 81.

<sup>23</sup> See below, pp. 51, n. 88; 154 f.

<sup>24</sup> See below, pp. 90-102, 128.

<sup>25</sup> See below, pp. 158 f.

<sup>26</sup> *Cf.* below, p. 127 and note 57.

<sup>27</sup> See below, pp. 143-146.

<sup>28</sup> *Cf.* already the citation from Brighton p. 20, note 12, above.



ture, vocabulary and syntax, theological viewpoint and content, or social, political or legal usages, *etc.* - and that not a scrap of residue is left over from this passage or unit to be labelled 'late'. What then will become of time-honoured theory? This has not yet happened, nor does this book make any such attempt; but as time passes, it is increasingly likely that the continuous flow of new material (and fuller utilization of data) may cause this kind of thing to happen, and we must take this prospect very seriously.

There is thus a tension between the basic theories and procedures of much Old Testament scholarship and the frequent and increasing agreement of Ancient Oriental data with the existing Old Testament written traditions. As yet, this tension has barely begun to emerge, but it will inevitably do so increasingly. After all, even the most respected theories are only a means to an end, not an end in themselves. In the light of the vast new knowledge that is becoming available, old problems are amenable to new treatment; they must be dealt with afresh, from the foundations up, taking no current theory for granted or as the equivalent of fact, as is too commonly done, for instance, with the methods and general results of conventional literary criticism. Theories must be refashioned or even wholly replaced by new syntheses just as vigorously as in the natural sciences, medicine, or in the rest of Ancient Near Eastern studies, when the accumulating evidence patently requires it. No theory can be sacrosanct, and widespread acceptance of a theory does not guarantee its truth. The geocentric astronomy elaborated by Ptolemy and others was universally accepted until a closer investigation of facts showed that our planetary system revolved round the sun. Likewise, the ingenious system of Descartes commanded general assent (despite Pascal), until Newton - at first in isolation - brought forward contrary facts, and eventually the facts won. Various major theories widely current in Old Testament studies may duly end up in the same fold as those of Ptolemy, Descartes or the 'flat-earthers'.

Then there is an older tension that is being reduced. Not only does the evidence from the Ancient Near East suggest that the existing structure of, and picture given by, the Old Testament

[p.28]

writings are nearer to the truth than the commonly accepted reconstructions. Application of Ancient Oriental data and of soundly based principles derived therefrom to Old Testament problems can materially limit and reduce the scope of such problems, especially when their proportions have become rather inflated within Old Testament studies.

### III. SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF STUDY

As already remarked above (p. 24), the Ancient Orient is the world of the Old Testament, and humanly speaking the Old Testament is an integral part of its Ancient Oriental milieu. For example, comparison of biblical and other Ancient Oriental literature reveals very close formal analogies even when there is no linguistic relationship.<sup>29</sup> These basic facts none are likely to deny, but they have certain direct implications which likewise must be conceded, yet which are still not properly appreciated in Old Testament studies. They are that principles found to be valid in dealing with Ancient Oriental history and literature will in all likelihood prove to be directly

---

<sup>29</sup> Note, for example, the curious semantic parallel in two wholly unrelated Egyptian and Hebrew texts (below, p. 166); or parallel and independent semantic change in Babylonian, Hebrew and Egyptian (below, pp. 165 f.); or parallelism of Egyptian 'a and Semitic *yad*, cf. Svi Rin, *Biblische Zeitschrift (NF)* 7 (1963), p. 32) n. 49.

applicable to Old Testament history and literature - and conversely, that methods or principles which are demonstrably false when applied to first-hand Ancient Near Eastern data should not be imposed upon Old Testament data either.

Within Ancient Near Eastern studies, various basic principles have become so generally established, so tried in the fires of experience, that the scholars concerned hardly ever feel the need even to mention them in print. They include the following.

**(a) *The Primary Importance of Facts***

Priority must always be given to tangible, objective data, and to external evidence, over subjective theory or speculative opinions. Facts must control theory, not vice versa.<sup>30</sup> Source-material

[p.28]

must be scrutinized in this light, whether it be biblical or other Oriental.

**(b) *A Positive Attitude to Source-Material***

It is normal practice to assume the general reliability of statements in our sources, unless there is good, explicit evidence to the contrary. Unreliability, secondary origins, dishonesty of a writer, or tendentious traits - all these must be clearly proved by adduction of tangible evidence, and not merely inferred to support a theory.<sup>31</sup>

For example, in modern Egyptology, we accept Shishak's (= Shoshenq I) topographical list at Karnak as an authentic, first-hand document for his having invaded Palestine,<sup>32</sup> an event mentioned in I Kings 14:25, 26 and 2 Chronicles 12: 1-10. A stela of Shishak from Megiddo, destruction levels in certain Palestinian sites, and a war stela and blocks from Karnak temple in Egypt<sup>33</sup> afford further tangible evidence of Shishak's campaign. Decades ago, in the arrogant manner of Old Testament scholarship of that day, Wellhausen dismissed the list of Shishak as historically worthless, saying, 'He could simply have reproduced an older list of one of his predecessors.'<sup>34</sup> Unlike Old Testament studies, hypercriticism of this kind will not do in Egyptology. In actual fact, Shishak's list uses an orthography different from all earlier lists, because of linguistic changes in

[p.30]

---

<sup>30</sup> An example of this was the Hatshepsut problem, in which new facts displaced a reigning theory (see p. 22 and note 18, above). In quite another field (study of John's Gospel), H. M. Teeple has also insisted that 'the approach should be objective' and that 'the starting point should be the evidence and not the theory' (*JBL* 81 (1962), p. 279).

<sup>31</sup> As is done by Noth, for example, in dismissing the role of Moses as secondary in the Desert and Exodus traditions of Israel; see J. Bright, *Early Israel in Recent History Writing*, 1956, pp. 106-109, for a cogent and well-deserved criticism of Noth's unrealistic position by analogy from more recent and better-controlled history.

<sup>32</sup> See *NBD*, p. 1181, 'Shishak' and references; Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt* (forthcoming). The list was published in Chicago Epigraphic Survey, *Reliefs and Inscriptions at Karnak*, III, 1954. Handy part-picture, Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, 1958, fig. 94 (=ANEP, fig. 349).

<sup>33</sup> See also below, p. 159.

<sup>34</sup> *Israelitische and jüdische Geschichte*<sup>7</sup>, 1914, p. 68, n. 4: 'Er kann einfach eine ältere Liste eines seiner Vorgänger reproduziert haben.'

Egyptian before his time and since the known earlier lists.<sup>35</sup> It also contains many names never yet found in earlier lists. The old-style headings of the list (mention of long-defunct Mitanni, etc.) were merely intended to put Shishak on the same official plane of achievement as his great Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasty predecessors, and have no bearing on the historicity of the list proper or of the campaign, independently attested from other evidence as noted above.

On the other hand, objective evidence suggests that a supposed Libyan campaign of Pepi II (c. 2300 BC) is an idealistic fiction. For the sculptures of this 'war' in his funerary temple can be seen to have been copied directly in style and subject from corresponding reliefs of the earlier King Sahurē - even to the proper names of the family of the Libyan chief! Disbelief in Pepi's record is founded not on *a priori* theory but on evidence physically visible to all who care to look.<sup>36</sup>

### **(c) The Inconclusive Nature of Negative Evidence**

Negative evidence is commonly not evidence at all, and is thus usually irrelevant. If some person, event, *etc.* is mentioned only in documents of a later age, the absence of any directly contemporary document referring to such a person or event is *not in itself* a valid or sufficient ground for doubting the historicity of the person, event, *etc.* concerned.

For example, the Egyptian Fourteenth Dynasty consisted of about seventy-six kings (Manetho's figure) mostly listed in the Turin Papyrus of Kings which dates from about 500 years after that period (Nineteenth Dynasty). So far, hardly a single definitely contemporary monument of any of these Delta kings

[p.31]

has been recovered (unlike the Memphite/Theban Thirteenth Dynasty), but Egyptologists are not so naïve as to make this a reason for denying the existence of this line of kings.<sup>37</sup> So, although we have no contemporary record of the Abraham of Genesis, this likewise is not a sufficient reason for doubting his real existence. The absolute realism of his social activities as shown by cuneiform documents of the early to middle second millennium BC (see below, pp. 153 ff.) is a warning that any such doubt must be founded on more tangible evidence if it is to be worth any consideration at all. We must have more positive, *tangible* reasons for doubt.<sup>38</sup> Most Egyptologists had too

---

<sup>35</sup> Cf. the changes elucidated by Sethe, *ZDMG* 77 (1923), pp. 145-207 and Albright, *RT* 40 (1923), pp. 64-70, and his *Vocalization of the Egyptian Syllabic Orthography*, 1934, pp. 13-16. Some of their results (*e.g.*, on vowel-length, *etc.*) have been modified by J. Vergote, *BIFAO* 58 (1959), pp. 1-19, and G. Fecht, *Wortakzent and Silbenstruktur*, 1960 (= *Münchener Ägyptologische Forschungen*, 21).

<sup>36</sup> See W. Hölscher, *Libyer and Ägypter*, 1937 (*Mün. Äg. Forsch.*, 4), p. 13 and n. 5; the scenes are published in G. Jéquier, *Monument funéraire de Pépi II*, II, 1938, p. 14, plate 9, and L. Borchardt, *Grabdenkmal des Königs Sa'hurē*, II: 2, 1913, plate 1.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. J. von Beckerath, *Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte der zweiten Zwischenzeit in Ägypten*, 1965, pp. 1-11 (on sources and methods), and contrast material for the Thirteenth Dynasty (pp. 226-262) with that for the Fourteenth (pp. 262-269).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. my paper, 'Historical Method and Early Hebrew Tradition', *THB* 17 (1966), pp. 63-97; and R. de Vaux, 'Method in the Study of Early Hebrew History' in J. P. Hyatt (ed.), *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, 1965, pp. 15-29. G. Björkman, 'Egyptology and Historical Method', *Orientalia Suecana* 13 (1964), pp. 9-33, is interesting and salutary, but errs fatally in hypercriticism of sources (pp. 11, 32-33). He is incapable of positively 'faulting' Merikarē, his chosen text, and fails to realize the sheer inadequacy of 'negative evidence'. See also examples of 'negative evidence', p. 44, note 47, below.

hastily dismissed Manetho's Nephcheres in the Twenty-first Dynasty as fiction - until Montet's excavations at Tanis suddenly revealed the existence of King Neferkarē 'Amenemnisu';<sup>39</sup> Manetho's Osochor of the same dynasty has now also been restored to history.<sup>40</sup> However, the King Ramesses of the 'Bentresh Stela' is known never to have existed: three parts of his titulary are those of Tuthmosis IV, and both his cartouches and the story of the stela are based on those of Ramesses II and on events in his reign.<sup>41</sup>

It must always be remembered that such absence of evidence

[p.32]

in these fields of study too often merely reflects the large gaps in our present-day knowledge. How great are the gaps in our knowledge even of the relatively well documented culture of Ancient Egypt, and how negative evidence can distort our perspective, has been vividly demonstrated by Professor G. Posener.<sup>42</sup> The relevant evidence still awaits discovery or decipherment,<sup>43</sup> or else it has all too often perished long ago. In the late twelfth century AD, the famous Arab physician 'Abd el-Latif remarked on the huge wilderness of ruins that constituted ancient Memphis; now, only a few temple ruins and remains of mounds among the palms mark the spot, near Mitrahineh village. In 1778 forty or fifty Greek papyri were burned by natives at Giza because they liked the smell of burning papyrus.<sup>44</sup> And countless inscribed limestone monuments have found their way into native lime-kilns. Who can estimate how much priceless historical information has thus been lost? In Palestine, unknown quantities of papyrus documents have perished, their loss often marked by nothing more substantial than the impression of the papyrus-fibres on the back of clay sealings like that of Gedaliah from Lachish.<sup>45</sup>

#### ***(d) A Proper Approach to Apparent Discrepancies***

The basic harmony that ultimately underlies extant records should be sought out, even despite apparent discrepancy.

[p.33]

---

<sup>39</sup> See B. Grdseloff, *ASAE* 47 (1947), pp. 207-211; P. Montet, *Psousennès*, 1951, p. 185.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. E. Young, *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 2 (1963), pp. 99-101; Kitchen, *Chronique d'Égypte* 40/Fasc. 80 (1965), pp. 320-321, and *Third Intermediate Period in Egypt* (forthcoming).

<sup>41</sup> See W. Spiegelberg, *RT* 28 (1906), p. 181; G. Lefebvre, *Romans et Contes Égyptiens*, 1949, pp. 221-232 (introduction, references, translation).

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Posener, *Collège de France (Chaire de Philologie et Archéologie Égyptiennes), Leçon Inaugurale*, 6. Déc. 1961, Paris, 1962, especially pp. 7-12 (written documents) and 13-16 (types of site); this also appeared (abridged) in *Annales (Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations)* 17: No. 4 (1962), pp. 631-646. For Mesopotamia, note the remarks by A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 1964, pp. 11, 24-25, 334 and *passim*.

<sup>43</sup> Although cuneiform tablets and fragments in the world's museums are numbered in the hundred-thousands (cf. D. J. Wiseman, *The Expansion of Assyrian Studies*, 1962, p. 8 and n. 16), they are but a fraction of all that were written - perhaps 99 per cent are still in the ground (E. Chiera, *They Wrote on Clay*, 1938 (repr. 1956, paperback), p. 233), while in the words of C. H. Gordon (*Adventures in the Nearest East*, 1957, p. 13) 'for every mound excavated in the Near East, a hundred remain untouched'.

<sup>44</sup> See J. Černý, *Paper and Books in Ancient Egypt*, 1952, p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> See G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, 1957, p. 178 and fig. 128. For Byblos, see below, p. 137 and note 103.

Throughout ancient history, our existing sources are incomplete and elliptical. Apparent discrepancies even in first-hand sources can be caused by (and thus indicate) the presence of error in one or more sources. Thus, errors in the Assyrian King Lists concerning the family relationships between successive kings can be detected by comparison with independent original documents.<sup>46</sup> Note also the differing order of early Sumerian kings in two versions of the Tummal building chronicle, one agreeing with the Sumerian King List and one not,<sup>47</sup> and the difficulties in using this chronicle, the Sumerian King List and other data to establish the chronological relationships of these kings.<sup>48</sup> Yet not infrequently, such 'discrepancies' imply nothing of the kind. Thus the succession of kings at the end of the Egyptian Nineteenth Dynasty has long been complicated by first-hand data that seemed mutually contradictory. Ramesses-Siptah and Merenptah-Siptah are certainly only variant names of one king. Yet Ostrakon Cairo 25515 clearly announces the death of Sethos II and accession of Ramesses-Siptah, while the titles of Sethos II have equally clearly been subsequently carved in palimpsest over those of Merenptah-Siptah on a slab from Memphis and in the tomb of Queen Tewosret at Thebes. Total contradiction! The solution is in principle simple: later rulers recognized Sethos II as having been a legitimate king, but not Siptah; thus, the latter's titles were replaced post mortem with those of his 'legitimate' predecessor, Sethos II.<sup>49</sup> Again, it is difficult to bring together agreeably the evidence of thirty-three year-dates for King Zimri-lim of Mari and the synchronism of Hammurapi of Babylon with Shamshi-Adad I of Assyria (all in first-hand sources) into a clear chronological and historical relationship.<sup>50</sup>

[p.34]

Instead, such 'discrepancies' can serve to warn us that, in order to obtain a full picture, we must weigh and take into account *all* relevant sources, and make allowance for missing or ill-interpreted factors. At first sight, various inscriptions of Sargon II of Assyria appear to give irreconcilable accounts of events (and especially their dates) in his reign; but a full study of all the relevant texts by H. Tadmor<sup>51</sup> has suggested principles of composition and reckoning which would underlie and explain the apparent differences.

Or, again, the apparent anomaly of a vizier Nesipeqashuty (serving under Shoshenq III) whose father was a contemporary of Shoshenq I (biblical Shishak) eighty to a hundred years earlier caused Kees to doubt the validity of a genealogy attested by half a dozen monuments.<sup>52</sup> Here, a reconsideration of the family history would eliminate Kees' doubts completely, and would allow as alternative a simple scribal slip in just one badly written stela (Liverpool City Museum M.13916).<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Examples in A. Parrot, *Archéologie Mésopotamienne*, II, 1953, p. 361, after A. Poebel, *JNES* 1 (1942), p. 481.

<sup>47</sup> E. Sollberger, *JCS* 16 (1962), pp. 40-41; M. E. L. Mallowan, *Iraq* 26 (1964), pp. 67-68, nn. 16, 19.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. S. N. Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 1963, pp. 46-50; M. B. Rowton, *CAH*<sup>2</sup>, I:6 (*Chronology*), 1962, pp. 30-32, 53-56, 65-67.

<sup>49</sup> See Sir A. H. Gardiner, *JEA* 44 (1958), pp. 12-22.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. references given by Rowton, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41, and H. B. Huffmon, *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts*, 1965, pp. 8-9.

<sup>51</sup> *JCS* 12 (1958), pp. 22-40, 77-100.

<sup>52</sup> *Das Priestertum im Ägyptischen Staat*, 1953, pp. 237-238.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt* (forthcoming), Part III, on Nesper-Amun/Nebneteru families.

Finally, in speaking of error, one must distinguish clearly between primary errors (mistakes committed by the original author of a work) and secondary errors (not in the original, but resulting from faulty textual transmission or the like).

Such principles are implicit throughout Ancient Near Eastern studies. It should be emphasized that a positive approach does not exclude searching, critical scrutiny of material, but it does seek to avoid the grave distortions produced by hypercriticism. If positive principles of this kind had been properly applied in Old Testament studies (in line with other Ancient Oriental studies), such studies would have followed a pattern quite different from their present one, and many problems would be reduced to more natural proportions. We now turn to a brief, positive treatment of a necessarily limited but varied handful of problems.