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Albert E. Glock

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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The Influence of Archaeological Evidence on the Reconstruction of Religion in Monarchical Israel

HORACE D. HUMMEL

The author was formerly associate professor of Old Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and is now visiting assistant professor in the department of theology at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind.

EARLY COVENANT TRADITIONS SHAPED MUCH OF ISRAEL'S THEOLOGICAL expression even after the wilderness wandering and settlement. The author examines kingship, cult, and prophecy in monarchical Israel and cites archaeological evidence to support his contentions.

I

Monarchical Israel" covers slightly over four centuries of time, roughly from 1000, the approximate date of David's accession (if we exclude the preceding abortive attempt under Saul), to the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar in 587.

Vast changes occurred in that nearly half a millenium, but the one constant feature distinguishing that era from both the earlier and later periods of Israel's history is the monarchy. Fortunately, most of the archaeological evidence during that period relates in one way or another to the institution of the monarchy by which that period is often named, and it is that situation which gives unity to the various aspects of our study here.

It is very noteworthy that the Bible itself preserves a clear memory of the introduction of the monarchy at a midway point in Israel's history and of the ambivalent impact it had on Israel's life. This is significant for at least two reasons: (1) It illustrates classically Israel's historical

rather than mythological orientation (precisely the issue that was joined when kingship ideology was grafted onto Israel's earlier traditions); "events" did not happen for Israel *in eo tempore*, in the primordial "time" of paganism whither everything necessarily and perpetually returned, but at specific places and datable times;¹ and (2) it shows that the gulf between

¹ Because of the ambiguity of words like *history* and *myth*, it is always necessary at points like this to stress that although classical Israelite thought was indeed the very antithesis of "mythology" in the sense of classical paganism, Israel nevertheless did have a "myth" of history in another sense of that term. That is, her concept of "history" (to use the modern term for which there simply is no Biblical equivalent—itsself very significant) was certainly not the naturalistic or immanentistic (historicistic or positivistic) one that often informs modern "historical" investigations. Rather, Israel's "myth," that is, her faith and confession (which could and can be neither proved nor disproved, but only confessed and proclaimed as a datum of revelation) was that Yahweh had elected her history and so guided and controlled it as to serve His overarching and universal redemptive intent.

modern thought, on the one hand, with its keen sense of change (and common tendency to exaggerate it), and the Biblical awareness, on the other hand, is not as great as some make it out to be, and certainly not as great as some of the traditional "orthodox" systems suggested when they often virtually equated change with error.²

One initial question must be faced here, although we shall also return to it often in the body of the essay: To what extent was Israel influenced by Canaan already *before* the conquest and settlement? The general tendency of modern criticism has been to assume a quite sharp, if not nearly total, discontinuity between these two phases of Israel's existence. That sharp contraposition was undoubtedly encouraged originally by Hegelian thesis-antithesis-synthesis presuppositions. However, even with the demise of those philosophical underpinnings, the same general assumption has tended to continue (in recent times probably most classically in Martin Noth's his-

² Many have pointed out that just as the journalist inevitably tends to accent the spectacular and unusual because that alone makes "news," so the historian has a certain inevitable bias toward change, because lack of change scarcely produces "history." The very competition of the academic world encourages the historian to hypothesize such change even more, and very easily various metaphysical philosophies of change or evolution are embraced in order to justify the reconstruction even further (thus especially the Hegelianism of the 19th century and various versions of "process" thought today). In contrast, no doubt, many traditional versions of inspiration and inerrancy all but assumed that to attribute change and development to God's revelatory work was to impugn His veracity (so classically in the treatment of resurrection-faith in the Old Testament, Messianic prophecy, and so forth). Solid and faithful Biblical exegesis must surely modify both of these extremes.

tory of Israel, which—in a way not at all totally dissimilar from Wellhausen—assumes that "Israel" and its institutions can scarcely even be thought of until well after the settlement).

We can only observe here that the picture has changed drastically with the realization that the Israelite nomads were not camel-nomads like many modern bedouin (camels had not yet been effectively domesticated), but they were ass-nomads. Being thus prevented from wandering too far from the fringes of civilization, it is not at all unlikely that there was considerable Canaanite influence on the tribes already long before they became fully sedentary. There is no reason to suppose that the Biblical writers did not sometimes telescope complicated and protracted developments. Nevertheless, very often much depends on the *time* at which certain features, at least in essence, first appeared under Israelite auspices.

At any rate, there is no doubt whatever that the institution of *kingship* was a post-settlement innovation in Israel. We see the first intimations of the new developments in the proposal to crown Gideon and in Abimelech's abortive attempt to make himself king (Judg. 8—9). Even later when the Philistine pressures made it apparent that unified leadership under a king was virtually a *sine qua non* of survival, the opposition spearheaded by Samuel makes it clear how deep the feeling ran that the institution of kingship was absolutely incompatible with Israel's self-understanding.³ Later events were to prove

³ Of course, it has long been recognized that Samuel appears to talk out of both sides of his mouth on the subject of kingship. The literature on the subject is immense. The general solution has been to posit various sources,

many times over how well grounded many of those fears were.

Our increased knowledge of Canaanite civilization in the Late Bronze Age (just before and during the conquest) helps us understand some of the subtle overtones of the clash that do not meet the eye. It seems most unlikely to this writer that Israel's conception of deity was primarily horizontal and historical until Canaanite influences brought accents on God's creatorhood, as many have argued. (There are theories that attempt to explain the development of patriarchal religion in similar fashion. While that development is perhaps more likely at such an early date—to the extent that it is even possible to study such matters historically—that is another question. Even in that earlier period there is no lack of alternatives.) It is plain that early Israel was loathe to style Yahweh as "king" (*melek*); the apparent reason is that that term had come to be so closely associated with the petty, quarreling rulers of the Canaanite city-states that it was felt to be inappropriate for Yahweh.⁴

Beyond this, of course, it is now clear beyond cavil that in some form or another

each of which, allegedly, depicted Samuel as a champion of its own opinions. Much more satisfactory, both historically and theologically, is W. F. Albright's attempt to demonstrate that each of the reports represents one aspect of Samuel's nonsimplistic attempts to deal with the problem. See his *Archaeology, Historical Analogy and Early Biblical Tradition* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1966), pp. 42 ff.

⁴ See, for example, G. Ernest Wright's brief discussion in his essay "Biblical Archaeology Today," especially p. 156, in *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology*, ed. D. N. Freedman and J. C. Greenfield (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969).

in most of the surrounding states the king was the kingpin in a total mythological and cosmological conception that lay at the very heart of the contemporary paganism. In the flush of excitement over the archaeological and anthropological studies that made this plain, various far-reaching theories on "sacred kingship in the Near East" were developed. The furor concerning these hypotheses is only now abating.⁵ This assumption was abetted, undoubtedly, both by the general tendency of *Religionsgeschichte* to exaggerate the strangeness of the Biblical world (in overreaction to classical liberalism's tendency to modernize by selecting whatever was considered "relevant")⁶ and by the remnants of the classical evolutionism that assumed that none of the later "Biblical theology" could have appeared that early.

Today it is generally recognized that one common pattern cannot be assumed for the entire Near East. On these grounds alone, more attention would have to be paid to Israel's "uniqueness" than many of the earlier studies allowed.⁷ If we then,

⁵ It is not easy to suggest one handy summary of this debate, but at least as good as any (representing a modified and chastened Uppsala viewpoint) is Helmer Ringgren's chapter on kingship in his *Israelite Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), pp. 220—38.

⁶ This is one of the main points made by Krister Stendahl in his celebrated article, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick (New York: Abingdon, 1962), I, 418 ff. (hereafter IDB).

⁷ Perhaps the definitive and mortal attack was by a recognized authority: Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948). See Brevard Childs' remarks in his recent *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970), pp. 75 ff.,

in addition, assume the basic truth of Israel's own premonarchical covenant traditions, the nature of the clash and the difficulty of any symbiosis will soon become clear. Nevertheless, one abiding result of much of that earlier speculation is that it has indubitably demonstrated that Israel *did* adapt, or "baptize," many of the pagan kingship symbols in order to illustrate certain transcendent aspects of its monarch, especially the belief that he had been elected by God, was the head of God's people, and the like. Many aspects of the traditional "court style" of the times are clearly traceable, although usually toned down and presumably at least intended to be understood differently. Some major examples will include the "You are my son, today I have begotten you" of Ps. 2:7; the references to the mythical monsters (in Ps. 89:10; 74:14; Job 26:12; Is. 30:7; 27:1; 51:9; and many other places); the description of Mount Zion in Ps. 48:2 as "in the far north," an epithet adapted from the description of the pagan mountain of the gods; and almost countless others.

Anyone who knows the pagan background of these and other images will have little difficulty understanding how, as the Book of Kings reports in considerable detail, these symbols could easily regain their original pagan import within Israel — that is, again become the primary, favored symbols rather than secondarily serving to illustrate the transcendence and universality of Israel's proper theology. Some of the "parallelomaniac"⁸ reconstructions of

on the lessened accent on "uniqueness" in the newer studies of Frank Cross, which seem to represent a rapprochement of certain "Albright school" and *religionsgeschichtliche* emphases.

⁸ The term is the title of Samuel Sandmel's presidential address to the Society of Biblical

Israel's religion under the monarchy in the light of the surrounding patterns undoubtedly *do* approximate much of what actually occurred in Israel in the times of apostasy described by the Biblical writers. A material counterpart to the verbal evidences cited above may be seen in the "high-places" and *masseboth* (sacred pillars or stelae), both of which can now be amply illustrated from archaeology. It appears that before the monarchy, adaptations (or demythologizations) of these pagan institutions had come to be accepted in Israel. However, later, when syncretistic pressures were great, it is plain that these two installations were magnets in that direction, and hence they figure prominently in the prophets' denunciations. Something similar is undoubtedly evidenced by the declining number of Israelite names formed with a "Baal" compound. Originally, it appears, "Baal" was easily understood as another epithet for Yahweh (meaning "lord"), but again, as the battle thickened, the dangers of misunderstanding increased greatly.⁹

Hence, the issue of kingship serves virtually as a parade example of the necessity to distinguish between Israel's "religion" and its "theology." The former can

Literature in St. Louis in 1961, printed in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXXI (March 1962), 1—13.

⁹ On theophoric elements of names, see W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1942), p. 160. Carl Graesser's doctoral dissertation at the Harvard Divinity School (1970) is a definitive study of the *massebah* problem. On "high-places," Albright's study, "The High Place in Ancient Palestine," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum*, IV (Leiden: Brill, 1957), 242—58, is still a point of departure, although the recent uncovering again of the Gezer high-place may force a reconsideration of certain points.

only proceed descriptively and attempt as objectively as possible to report any and all religious practices, official or popular, "orthodox" or not. "Theology," rather, must proceed with some sense of what is normative or of abiding validity.

With regard to kingship, there can be no doubt that all sorts of syncretistic practices clustered around kingship; some of these were "baptized" and served a transformed function in the Israelite context, but many others were simply pagan — and it took a long time to distinguish the two satisfactorily. Theologically, however, we have to say that the kingship motifs were understood as grafted onto Israel's earlier traditions as a sort of *extension of the covenant* (so classically 2 Sam. 7, but also Ps. 89 and elsewhere). He who had once made a covenant with His elect people now made a special one with the king as the "head of the body" or "Israel reduced to one" in a sense. This extension certainly did not nullify the older one but was viewed as a specialized implementation of it, as another instance of God's gracious condescension in meeting His people's needs. The promises of the royal covenant, like those of the patriarchal era, were couched in much more absolute and unconditional terms than those to Moses. However, it became increasingly plain at the hand of the prophets that such apparent unconditionality could easily be misunderstood in essentially pagan terms of magic, divorced from ethical responsibility. Their solution was to stress that the ultimate fulfillment of the inviolable divine promise could come only eschatologically — after the empirical judgments on faithless Israel. Of course, it was in terms of this structure that the New Testament

understood itself as the "end of the ages," the fulfillment of the promise that came 430 years before the conditional one to Moses.¹⁰ It should also be noted, then, that, humanly speaking, the strictly "Messianic" hope, which centered on a *royal* figure and heir to the promises to the Davidic dynasty, would never have come into existence except through the symbiosis of the teleology implicit in the earlier election and covenant traditions and of the monarchical form, troublesome latecomer though it initially was.

The role of the prophets vis-à-vis the monarchy can be expanded much further. Some of the anterior roots of the phenomenon of prophecy in Israel have been profitably traced to the ecstaticism well attested at many points in the ancient Levant and even more recently to "prophets" in the Mari texts.¹¹ However, unlike the monarchy, priesthood, and wise men, Israelite prophecy is still lacking in any really close parallels. Although this uniqueness appears true enough even from a purely phenomenological viewpoint, we surely have to look to religious or theological factors for the basic cause. This is probably

¹⁰ Delbert Hillers, *Covenant, The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1969), is a popular but peerless exposition of the significance of this concept in the light of modern research.

¹¹ One of the better, although now slightly dated, discussions of these and related issues is B. D. Napier's article on "Prophet, Prophetism," *IDB*, III, 896 ff. (it appears also in revised form in his *Prophets in Perspective* [New York: Abingdon, 1962]). The literature on Mari's relevance to the subject is beginning to multiply. See W. Moran, "New Evidence from Mari on the History of Prophecy," *Biblica*, I (1969), 15—56; F. Ellermeier, *Prophetie in Mari und Israel* (Herzberg: Jungfer, 1968); and H. Huffman, "Prophecy in the Mari Letters," *The Biblical Archaeologist*, XXXI (1968), 101—24.

another way of saying that what emerges from careful study of the Biblical sources is that the term *prophet* as used Biblically is not first defined sociologically or psychologically, but *theologically*. Prophets are mouthpieces or spokesmen for God, those who had heard the decisions of the heavenly council.¹²

Furthermore, it can scarcely be accidental that the time span of Israelite prophecy corresponds almost precisely with that of the monarchy. This is especially clear if we understand Samuel as essentially the first of the prophetic reformers, if we view Elijah as, to a large extent, an archetypal "Mr. Prophecy," and if we recall that postexilic prophecy was, by almost common consent, rather epigonic. The in-depth knowledge we now have of Canaanite religion and especially its influence on the paganization of Israelite kingship helps us understand both the general vehemence and many of the specific targets of the prophetic denunciations. Something similar can be said of many accents in Deuteronomy and even of law codes as early as the "Book of the Covenant" (for example, the proscription of altars with steps and hewn stones [Ex. 20:24-25]¹³ or the tantalizing prohibition of

boiling a kid in its mother's milk [Ex. 23:19], the latter long since recognized as a pagan fertility rite).

Especially the latter examples, seen in archaeological light, underscore the traditional understanding of the prophets as basically *reformers*, not pioneers or innovators of an "ethical monotheism."¹⁴ Early Israel, far from being virtually indistinguishable from the surrounding paganism, had traditions that were set in opposition to the environment from the outset, and it is plain that the prophets have such antecedent norms to which they constantly appeal and on the basis of which they indict Israel as unfaithful. A similar stance is at least defensible, not only with Israel's basic theologoumena and ethics, but with many of its cultic forms such as circumcision and Sabbath.¹⁵ Finally, we must note that in spite of the collapse of the philosophical underpinnings of Wellhausen's reconstruction of the history of Israel's religion, the basic pattern still remains quite intact in most contemporary nonarchaeological reconstructions: Israel's formative and creative era is assumed to be not in the wilderness but in the early settlement.

is by D. Conrad, *Studien zum Altargesetz: Ex. 20:24-26* (Marburg, 1968).

¹² The importance of this theologoumenon (demythologized from its polytheistic context) was first emphasized by H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Council of Yahweh," *Journal of Theological Studies*, XLV (1944), 151 ff. See also F. Cross, "The Council of Yahweh in Second Isaiah," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, XII (1953), 275 ff; and Raymond E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament*, No. 21 in the Biblical Series of Facet Books (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), especially p. 2.

¹³ A recent study of these verses, although with some questionable interpretations in detail,

¹⁴ This slogan usually conceals an immanentistic and monistic view of the deity that is scarcely compatible with the main Biblical assumptions. Originally Hegelian in inspiration, the emphasis has again become strong recently with assists from process thought and the "theology of hope."

¹⁵ On all these topics, two of the best and handiest sources are Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, trans. John McHugh (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), and Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Worship in Israel*, trans. Geoffrey Buswell (Richmond, Va.: John Knox, 1966).

Probably another survival of older tendencies, more germane to our subject, is the still common tendency to view the earlier covenant and the kingship traditions as almost totally antithetic for a long time until in due course a synthesis was worked out (surely shades of Hegel here!). According to the usual detailed reconstruction, the new kingship emphases in Jerusalem all but totally eclipsed the more traditional covenant ones. These latter were allegedly better preserved in the Northern Kingdom by the "country clergy," the Levites, or by prophetic circles.¹⁶ This reconstruction may find some support in the apparently greater initial prophetic activity in the north, and may also be related to the instability of all the northern dynasties, although it is difficult to say just what was cause and what was effect there, and many other factors were probably also involved. Further corroboration may be seen in the strong covenant and weak monarchical accents of the northern-oriented prophets, Hosea and Jeremiah (there are certain clear affinities in both with Deuteronomy), with just the reverse situation in the Judahite prophets, Isaiah and Micah. If there is any truth in this reconstruction, it is usually assumed that the older amphictyonic accents did not really surface in the south again until after the fall of Samaria in 722, when the Levites and other traditionalist groups moved to Jerusalem. If so, we might see the firstfruits of the synthesis of those two

¹⁶ The roots of this understanding go back to Wellhausen, where the gradual differentiation of the Aaronide priests from the Levites was one of the major kingpins in his whole reconstruction. In recent times, especially Gerhard von Rad has given a version of it wide popularity.

traditions in Hezekiah's reform¹⁷ and even more so in that of Josiah roughly a century later. While there are many satisfying aspects of the hypothesis just sketched, it is very doubtful that there is enough evidence to be certain. Apart from the suspicion of the Hegel-inspired tendency to exaggerate conflicts, we must note that the Deuteronomist in Kings reports reforms also in the south (Asa, Joash, Jehoshaphat) that appear to have appealed to essentially the same earlier norms as the protesting circles in the north.

II

The second major area that we must explore is the *cult*. The term, like many others, is notoriously ambiguous,¹⁸ but perhaps we can make do with a working definition like "the external expression of religion." Instead of "external," which easily sounds like something extraneous and dispensable, "sacramental" might be better, especially in a Lutheran context. We might also note that, while considerable research has been devoted to Israel's cult from the standpoint of "religion," relatively little has been done from a theological viewpoint. Probably two main reasons may be adduced for this situation: (1) the traditional Protestant bias against rituals and "sacrifice" as "Catholic,"¹⁹ and (2) reinforcing

¹⁷ For a positive evaluation of this tradition, preserved only by the Chronicler, see John Bright, *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959), pp. 265 ff.

¹⁸ Especially G. E. Wright has often wished publicly that we could be rid of the term or at least agree on a reasonably precise definition, most recently in "Cult and History," *Interpretation*, XVI (1962), 3—20.

¹⁹ The classical expression of this prejudice still remains L. Koehler's *Old Testament Theology*, trans. A. S. Todd (Philadelphia: West-

the first, the common philosophical bias, especially in German idealism, against any allegedly non-"spiritual" "objectification."

In this area the question of the origins and development of the various rites plagues us again, together with the reticence of the relevant texts in describing how the rites were then understood. It is now generally accepted that the reason for this reticence is not that "P" was a simple ritualist (or archetypal "chancel prancer") without theological interests, but that form-critically most of the ritual texts must be understood as a sort of agenda or handbook of rubrics for the priests and dare not be judged by other than their own criteria. Some things could be deduced from the psalms, but the variety of conclusions indicates how subjective that procedure easily becomes. Nevertheless, the counsel that Leviticus and the Psalter should always be read complementarily can, in my opinion, scarcely be emphasized too much.²⁰

In scholarly attempts at reconstruction a clear bifurcation is noticeable. On the one hand, we have again the more *religionsgeschichtliche* reconstructions, heavily depen-

minster, 1957), where the chapter on cult is entitled, "Man's Expedient for His Own Redemption." However, compare even the rather uncharacteristic remarks of G. E. Wright in *The Old Testament Against Its Environment*, No. 2 in *Studies in Biblical Theology* (London: SCM, 1950), p. 77, n. 1.

²⁰ This attitude (and related ones) are well expressed in Micklem's commentary on Leviticus in *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick, II (New York: Abingdon, 1953). Especially because the exegesis and exposition are in this case by the same author, this is one of the few commentaries in that entire set that one can praise quite unreservedly. (Cf. also Brevard Childs' strictures against the set, *passim* in his *Biblical Theology in Crisis*.)

dent on the New Year celebrations in Babylon especially and often virtually eliminating any theological uniqueness in Israel. In more extreme form, magic was thought to dominate the cultic action—although it must be noted that in more moderate form some of these reconstructions led to a "high," sacramental (as opposed to magical), objective, or realistic view of Israel's cultus that would normally be quite congenial to any tradition such as the Lutheran with a more-than-symbolic view of the Christian sacraments.²¹ Easily the best known name in this connection is that of the late Sigmund Mowinckel, somewhat in his pacemaking *Psalmstudien*, but probably more so in his later and much more moderate *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*. In the latter he labored to disassociate himself from the generally much more radical position of the Uppsala School (especially Ivan Engnell).²² A somewhat similar contribution was made also by the "Myth and Ritual" School in England, led especially by S. H. Hooke.²³ We should observe again that there is little reason to doubt that some of the originally pagan symbolism

²¹ I think that even a casual reading of especially Sigmund Mowinckel's *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) and of Artur Weiser's commentary on the psalms (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) will soon lead to this conclusion.

²² This is especially clear in the footnotes to the work cited above. Of more than passing interest is Mowinckel's reply in the *Luther Theological Seminary Review* (October 1967), pp. 41—44, to a query whether his liturgical accents were rooted in his worship experience in the Lutheran churches of Norway. He replied, in effect, that they resulted rather from his study of the history of religions.

²³ See his *Myth and Ritual* (London: Oxford, 1933). Major modifications are noted in its sequel, similarly entitled, *Myth, Ritual and Kingship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958).

emphasized by the above scholars may well have been used secondarily by even the faithful in Israel, but on the whole one would judge that many of the reconstructions illustrate rather the nature of the apostasy repeatedly scored in 1 and 2 Kings.

The other major task followed by scholars working in this field accents "covenant renewal" as the *leitmotif* of Israel's worship. In a way, this approach seems to proceed more from a typical "Protestant" emphasis on verbal and subjective aspects of worship. Undeniably, it does attach to one of the foundational themes of Biblical theology. Most reconstructions of Israel's premonarchical amphictyony strongly emphasize covenant (in its political as well as its theological aspects). Generally a periodic ceremony is reconstructed, which allegedly contained basic elements such as recital or proclamation of the saving history, a challenge to the congregation to choose (cf. Josh. 24:15), a confession of sins, and a renewal of vows. Von Rad's apparent demonstration of a similar structure along those lines in both Exodus 19 to 24 and parts of Deuteronomy has found wide acceptance, though some question whether the report of such a ceremony already at Sinai is basically factual or represents merely a retrojection of later "creative liturgies."²⁴ Weiser has attempted to spell out details of the covenant ceremony in even greater detail on the basis of allusions in the psalms; while such specificity can scarcely be sustained, the accompanying

²⁴ Von Rad expressed this viewpoint classically in his celebrated essay, "The Form-Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," in a collection of essays with the same title (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966; original German in 1938). On the question of facticity, see note 18 above.

emphasis on covenant *theology* makes his commentary on the psalter one of the most attractive to appear in many a moon.²⁵

As is evident, much of this scholarly effort is highly theoretical even if theologically very stimulating, and often builds on raw materials made available by archaeology. Far more archaeological data are available for studying the Israelite temple (tabernacle), priesthood, and sacrifices. Considerable research has been devoted to these topics also, but on the whole quite independent of the theories discussed above, often either by patternists with their tendency to exaggerate distance, or by Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics whose work was suspect to Protestant scholars.²⁶ These prepossessions were clearly reflected in the rigid prophet-priest antithesis of classical Wellhausenianism (still very much alive today, albeit in modified form) and in the late dating of the Priestly Code. The latter, of course, was one of the kingpins of Wellhausen's reconstruction. Originally this was interpreted to imply the lateness of the contents as well as of the final forms and, hence, historical unreliability for the Mosaic periods it purports to describe. Today considerably more antiquity and hence credence will generally be granted much of the contents, but the relative disinclination to pursue these themes very aggressively is still with us.²⁷

The generalization would surely hold

²⁵ See note 21 above. A third major option has been offered by H.-J. Kraus; see note 15.

²⁶ See note 19 above.

²⁷ A good recent discussion of these issues from a very conservative but thoroughly informed viewpoint is that of R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969).

that most scholars usually agree that most of these institutions (temple, priesthood, sacrifices), except perhaps in a very rudimentary form, must have been Canaanite importations *after* the settlement. Certain of the hyperbolic prophetic denunciations of the unfaithful cult (Amos 5:25; Jer. 7:22 ff., and so on) could easily be read on the surface as supporting such an assumption. In general, the old Hegelian prophet-priest antithesis probably continues to operate subconsciously also here.²⁸

There is not space enough here to consider these problems in detail. There is no reason to suppose that the Biblical writers had the same concern to keep separate all the minute stages of development that modern "scientific" scholarship has, but historically as well as theologically, it is a totally different matter if the traditional portraits of presettlement circumstances are adjudged *toto caelo* divergent from actual reality. Again we must remind ourselves that the Israelites in the wilderness were only *seminomads* and thus not totally isolated from the surrounding cultural currents.

We shall deal with the issue of priesthood most briefly of all, not because the issues are simpler but because they are exceedingly complex. There probably is no more vexed and nightmarish issue in the whole of Old Testament studies than this one. A. Cody's recent *A History of Old Testament Priesthood* is about as complete and balanced a survey of this problem as we are likely to see for a long time.²⁹ It is sufficient to point out here that

²⁸ Brevard Childs (see n. 7) has pointed out in an excellent manner the unfortunate theological implications that usually accompany one-sided accents on "prophetic ministry."

²⁹ Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969.

even the amphictyonic shrines (if that reconstruction is correct) would require some priesthood (see Judges 17), and the Biblical memory of presettlement roots in this regard is unequivocal. Furthermore, hierarchies (including *high* priests) were ancient in the Near East long before Israel appeared on the scene, and there is, at very least, no *a priori* reason, even humanly speaking, why this should not have been true of earliest Israel as well. Archaeological parallels can be cited for certain of the priestly vestments, for example, the use of white linen for that purpose in Egypt, or Ugaritic parallels to the ephod.³⁰ With the rise of kingship, there is evidence that royalty could, especially on state occasions, function also as priest, and a bit of the same vocabulary is used for both royal and priestly vestments. However, the Chronicler's story of Uzziah's leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16 ff.) would indicate that there were clear limits even then—perhaps limiting the king's ministrations to the courtyard. After the Exile, as royal hopes increasingly became eschatologized, the priesthood indisputably (re-?)assumed some royal prerogatives, but there is no clear evidence that that late pattern was fundamentally different from earlier periods, as radical scholarship has often assumed it to be.³¹

The problem is similar with sacrifice, but here we have much more evidence. Wellhausen's evolutionary theory that the allegedly free and spontaneous communion-sacrifice of early times was transmuted after the Exile into the sacerdotally controlled accent on sin—and guilt—offer-

³⁰ See Albright's discussion in *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 200 ff.

³¹ Cf. Roland de Vaux's discussion, pp. 398 ff.

ings has been subjected to serious, if not fatal, criticism by R. J. Thompson's *Penitence and Sacrifice in Early Israel Outside the Levitical Law*.³² At least for this writer, de Vaux's studies embody, on the whole, the most likely reconstruction.³³

In brief, de Vaux's thesis is that Israel's emphasis on *blood* is of desert origin (witness the Passover and many Arabic parallels),³⁴ while the emphasis on *fire* is of Canaanite provenance. In Canaanite sources similar cultic implements are often archaeologically attested, and we find much of the same sacrificial terminology — although apparently often used in different senses from the Bible. Again, however, we must stress that there seems to be no cogent reason why this Canaanite symbiosis could not have begun already prior to the settlement. The vexed question of the date of the conjunction of Passover and Unleavened Bread themes in the spring festival is one of the major cases in point.

In any event, it is necessary to emphasize that, even externally, the Israelite cult rep-

³² Leiden: Brill, 1963.

³³ See his work already cited and essentially the same material in a separate volume, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1964). Attention should be called also to Rolf Rendtorff, *Studien zur Geschichte des Opfers im Alten Israel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1967). Chapter IV of A. L. Oppenheim's *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964) contains an impressive description of Mesopotamian sacrificial ritual, which one cannot help but compare with Israelite practices.

³⁴ In passing, attention should be called to the general congruence of de Vaux's hypothesis on the origin of Israelite sacrifice with those that seek to explain the origin of patriarchal religion in general. Here see especially F. M. Cross, "Yahweh and the God of the Patriarchs," *Harvard Theological Review*, LV (1962), 225 ff.

resented a completely different synthesis of the various raw materials that inevitably figure in sacrificial ritual. The difference is nowhere clearer than in the theological interpretation of sacrifice in Israel (at least theoretically and in periods of faithfulness).³⁵ The basic Mesopotamian theme of alimentation of the deity has totally disappeared except for a few fossilized phrases like "sweet-smelling savor" and a radically transformed rite like the showbread (also known as the "bread of God"), which becomes, in effect, one of the firstfruits returned to God. Similarly, the "communion" sacrifice is conceived far more spiritually than in paganism,³⁶ and the strong accent on "gift" is no longer a *do ut des* bribe but an expression of gratitude and thanksgiving to the Creator and Redeemer.³⁷ Certainly also the strong accent on expiation of sin, which is without real parallel, is a sign of theological depth.³⁸

³⁵ The best *theological* discussions, I believe, are to be found in de Vaux and in von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. I, trans. D. M. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

³⁶ See Rudolf Schmid, *Das Bundesopfer in Israel* (Munich: Kösel, 1964). H. J. Frankens's *The Mystical Communion with JHWH in the Book of Psalms* (Leiden: Brill, 1954) deserved (in my judgment) a better reception than it received — mostly, one surmises, because of the offensive adjective "mystical." The general theological correspondence of the key theological term *chesedh* (love, loyalty) with its objective counterpart in the communion sacrifices should not be overlooked either.

³⁷ Similar to our comment on *chesedh* above, here it is often noted that *todah* means either "thanksgiving" or a "thankoffering" — or both at once.

³⁸ See K. Koch, *Die israelitische Sühneanschauung und ihre historischen Wandlungen* (Erlangen, 1956). The accent in this area surely has something to say to the debate about "original sin" in the Old Testament. Let me also

The third major cultic area requiring brief consideration is that of the temple/tabernacle. Theologically, we deal with a "house of God" concept, but obviously in a far more sophisticated sense than in paganism.³⁹ However, historically and archaeologically, the major issue again is whether Solomon's temple was basically a *novum* in Israel, or whether it was in essence an adaptation of the wilderness tabernacle, as tradition has it. It was a prominent part of Wellhausen's reconstruction of the history of Israel's religion that P's "tabernacle" was in part a retrojection of the second temple (the obverse, allegedly, in Ezek. 40—48 with its eschatological projection of the ideal temple) and in part a criticism and attempted correction of what were considered aberrations in the first temple. It was also commonly held that similar motives led to the suppression of certain details in the reports on Solomon's temple in 1 Kings, perhaps especially the altars.⁴⁰ Our paucity of hard information about Zerubbabel's temple hinders discussion of that topic.

Whether these temple traditions entered

observe that, in my judgment, the concept of "propitiation" is an element in Old Testament conceptuality as well as "expiation," but of course both have to be defined and qualified properly.

³⁹ This concept, as it is worked out in the various sources, is one of the best evidences of the profundity of Israel's thought on the question of the immanence vs. the transcendence of the deity. A good recent historical study is found in Ronald Clements, *God and Temple* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965).

⁴⁰ See my study of "Altar Problems in the Old Testament," in the forthcoming Jacob Myers *Festschrift*. Compare also Albright's influential discussion of the altar of burnt offering in *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, pp. 150 ff.

during the wilderness era or later, there is certainly no lack of parallels. The basic "long-house" floor plan culminating in an inner sanctum is well known from temples at Hazor, Tell Tainat, and elsewhere.⁴¹ It also appears in Aharoni's phenomenal discovery of an Israelite shrine at Arad (although chronological as well as interpretative questions remain).⁴² Similarly, there seems to be a surfeit of parallels to the free-standing pillars in front of the vestibule. However, the question of their symbolism or theological interpretation is far more difficult, since the texts say nothing. The huge "bronze sea" has less clear parallels, and its interpretation is very obscure.⁴³

That these features as well as the temple and its altars themselves have some sort of (micro)cosmic meaning seems to be quite widely accepted. But we still have to inquire in what sense. If we follow the evolutionistic line, it would mean the essential paganization of Jerusalem at this time, either as total relapse from earlier insights or because "higher" ideas were allegedly not yet possible. It seems much more likely, however, that they represent the antiquity and centrality of "doctrines" of creation and of a universal God in Israel—*pace* even many *Heilsgeschichte* theories that assumed that nature and cre-

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 143. A convenient summary of the Hazor parallels appears in Yadin's article in *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, ed. D. Winton Thomas (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 251—52.

⁴² See Y. Aharoni, "The Israelite Sanctuary at Arad," in *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology* (see note 4).

⁴³ Cf. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, pp. 144 ff. Another good discussion appears in G. E. Wright's *Biblical Archaeology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1957), pp. 136 ff.

ation themes were adapted to Israel's "historical" faith only late and secondarily.⁴⁴ If so, Israel apparently adapted originally pagan architectural as well as verbal symbols in order to articulate these themes. That they easily became snares for a relapse into their original pagan context by no means implies any such original intent. Thus Albright's suggestion that the two free-standing pillars were cressets in which fires burned to recall the wilderness guidance by the cloud and pillar of fire is not altogether implausible. Similarly, the Chronicler's utilitarian explanation of the bronze sea as a giant water reservoir need not clash with a wider symbolic significance as well.

Theologically, we must try to understand the microcosmic significance of these installations somewhat along the lines of the "vertical typology" or *tabnith* of Exodus 25. This is not the place to explore that theme in any depth, but one should emphasize that it will scarcely do simply to dismiss such motifs as "pagan" or "Platonic." When they stood by themselves without a certain subordination to redemptive history or covenant, they were indeed pagan.⁴⁵ However, it must be emphasized just as much that redemptive history with-

⁴⁴ Von Rad's eminence made this understanding virtual dogma for a time, but even he has modified his earlier stand on this point. A major point where this debate applies is that of Israel's three great pilgrimage festivals. Certainly they relate to the natural seasons, but they are also related in the Bible to major redemptive events. Again the question arises whether that merger of themes could have occurred before the settlement.

⁴⁵ See my study, "The Old Testament Basis of Typological Interpretation," *Biblical Research*, IX (1964), 38—50. Many of Mircea Eliade's works also discuss Israel's similarities and dissimilarities from paganism at this point.

out such verticality easily becomes a purely subjective or immanent construct — which, however popular it may be in some academic circles, is a far cry from the faith of Israel. Any positive assessment of Israel's cult is likely to be one of the earliest casualties, and there can be little doubt that some such axioms have been at the root of much of the negative evaluation of Israel's cult in most Biblical scholarship of the past century. In this connection it is worth nothing that apparently it was this element of verticality with its implication of divine authority and commission that the author of the recently published "Temple Scroll" felt to be missing in the accounts in Kings of the temple's construction.⁴⁶

The basic issue of the essential historicity of the tabernacle traditions cannot be pursued in any depth here. We will, however, point to the recent thesis of John A. Scott,⁴⁷ demonstrating that the requisite raw materials and technical skills were at least available in the Sinai region toward

⁴⁶ See Y. Yadin, "The Temple Scroll," in *New Directions in Biblical Archaeology* (see note 4).

⁴⁷ *The Pattern of the Tabernacle*, a thesis done at the University of Pennsylvania (1965) under E. A. Speiser. Many other aspects of this debate have been bypassed here. We may call attention, however, to the common theory that the non-P traditions deal with a mere tent-covering of the ark or an *'obel mo'edh* ("tent of meeting") for communication with the deity rather than liturgical worship. See Clements' work (note 39). Especially significant, however, is von Rad's essay, "The Tent and the Ark," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966). He pits a theology of Yahweh's "presence" (temple) against one of "manifestation." While this is not, of course, impossible, it fails to carry cogency with me; at any rate, those two themes were held in paradoxical tension throughout most of the history of both Judaism and Christianity.

the end of the Late Bronze period. Egyptian parallels to the gold plating that is common in the tabernacle traditions are particularly abundant.⁴⁸ It may also be noted that the Late Bronze temple at Hazor, adduced as a parallel to that in Jerusalem, originally had only two rooms (like the tabernacle); its tower was added later. Even so, unless one presses "historicity" very literalistically, Cross and Haran may be on the right track when they interpret the present form of the tabernacle traditions as representing their fullest development in the immediate predecessor to the temple, located either at Shiloh or in Davidic Jerusalem after the ark had also been retrieved.⁴⁹ At the same time, the "thirty-eight" of the traditional forty years that tradition has the Israelites spending around the oasis of Kadesh-Barnea would also provide a somewhat similar explanation, and this writer is disposed to look more seriously in that direction.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Some good further discussion is found in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, 1, ed. G. E. Wright and D. N. Freedman (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1961), especially in the essay of Frank Cross, "The Priestly Tabernacle," pp. 201—28.

⁴⁹ On Cross' suggestion of Jerusalem, *ibid.* On Menahem Haran's thesis, see his "Shiloh and Jerusalem: The Origin of the Priestly Tradition in the Pentateuch," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXXI (1962), 14—24.

⁵⁰ A fascinating reconstruction of the role Kadesh-Barnea may have played in proto-Israel is found in Murray Newman's *The People of the Covenant* (New York: Abingdon, 1962). However, I find this work so hypothetical that I think it must be judged as more of a "historical novel" than anything else. On soundings and surveys there see B. Rothenberg and Y. Aharoni, *God's Wilderness*, trans. Joseph Witriol (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961).

Archaeologically derived information provides us with some illumination of temple music. It emerges that Canaan was generally renowned in antiquity for its music, and Albright has demonstrated that the names of some of the traditional musicians or musical guilds in Israel relate to comparable traditions in Canaan. By these discoveries the credibility of especially the Chronicler, who places great emphasis on the Levitical music guilds, has been much enhanced among the skeptical.⁵¹

We can only mention in passing the large amount of effort that has gone into the study of the metric patterns of Israelite poetry—something that was closely allied with liturgical cantillation. Rather than simple speculation, we now have the large amount of Ugaritic poetry as a basis of comparison, by which we apparently can begin to date many of the psalms and other Biblical poetry more objectively. In general, the upshot is that there is no longer any reason to question the pre-exilic date of many of the psalms—or, for that matter, of the Davidic or even pre-Davidic substance of many of them.⁵²

Neither can we attempt here any listing of the virtually innumerable echoes and

⁵¹ On temple music, see Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, pp. 125 ff., and Joan Rimmer, *Ancient Musical Instruments of Western Asia in the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities, the British Museum* (London, 1969).

⁵² Not all aspects of this method have been thoroughly tested as yet by the academic community. Albright, Cross, and Freedman have all devoted considerable research to the question. A good overview appears in the first chapter of Albright's *Yabweh and the Gods of Canaan* (see note 30).

adaptations of Canaanite poetry that we meet all over in especially the poetic books of the Old Testament, not to speak of the extent to which it bids fair simply to revolutionize our grammatical and lexicographical knowledge of Biblical Hebrew. Some recent volumes of the *Anchor Bible* are about the first attempts to make these new materials accessible to others besides specialists.⁵³

One of the most striking new theses about Israel's religion which results from study of these new materials is that of Mitchell Dahood, especially in his commentary on the psalter in the *Anchor Bible*. He argues that Israel had a much more developed concept of the afterlife than has generally been supposed in modern times. Instead of only a sort of mass-grave "Sheol" concept, Dahood finds evidence of a separate domain for the righteous, comparable to the "Elysian Fields" concept of the Greeks. While this is still a far cry from a belief in the resurrection of the dead, especially as this became pivotal in Christendom, it still represents a radical challenge to the prevailing opinion of most Old Testament scholars. Of course, it remains to be tested thoroughly by other scholars, and the evidence of the many tombs of the Israelite period (with ambiguous import, at best) will also have to be compared with that of the Biblical sources.⁵⁴

⁵³ Of those that have appeared at this writing, Dahood's on the psalter and Marvin Pope's on Job are most significant in this respect.

⁵⁴ Reports of tombs figure largely in many of the excavation reports, and popular summaries appear repeatedly in *The Biblical Archaeologist*. See also de Vaux, pp. 56 ff.

Finally, we must return briefly to another aspect of Israelite prophecy, specifically the issue of "cultic prophecy." The question is really a sort of adjunct to the entire emphasis on cult that we have discussed. In its more extreme forms, now generally rejected, a popular theory claimed that virtually all the prophets became little more than faceless liturgists who, especially at the autumnal festival, recited more or less fixed pieces of the ceremony. Today those who have debated the issue generally realize that there were some liturgical figures who might be called "cultic prophets" but that this designation scarcely applies to most, if any, of the great canonical figures. At the same time, the latter certainly did draw on, quote, or adapt the traditional liturgical materials to a large extent.⁵⁵ Hence, above all, the absolute prophet-priest antithesis breaks down almost entirely—all the more so when one notes that more polemic is really directed at false *prophets* than at faithless priests.

One great benefit, however, of *Religionsgeschichte's* accent on cultic prophecy was its revived interest also in topics such as "Messianic prophecy," about which classical liberalism scarcely cared a whit. At least it was emphasized that the prophets and their contemporaries *believed* in pre-

⁵⁵ The more extreme statements tended to be inspired by Uppsala. Somewhat more cautious (but still generally judged as extreme) were Henning Reventlow's many studies, beginning with *Das Amt des Propheten bei Amos* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1962). Walter Harrelson generally treats this and related issues judiciously in his *From Fertility Cult to Worship* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969).

diction, both short-range as well as long-range (of the eschatological denouement). Similarly, the accent on judgment in the prophetic corpus, if measured theologically rather than sociologically, could be understood as indeed an *opus alienum*, that is, one indispensable aspect of God's entire soteriological work, and thus relatable to

traditional dogmatic themes like "Law-Gospel."⁵⁶

Chicago, Ill.

⁵⁶ I have tried to pull some aspects of "Law-Gospel" theology (including some of its hermeneutical implications) together in my essay for a Jewish-Lutheran dialog, printed in the *Lutheran Quarterly*, XXI (November 1969), 416 ff.