

JOSHUA—II KINGS:  
DEUTERONOMISTIC? PRIESTLY? OR PROPHETIC WRITING?

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This paper deals with an aspect of the history of "Israel" as it is recorded in the O.T. books—Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel and I & II Kings. It will not be our intent to review the history or discuss certain specific events as such. Rather, our intent is to deal with some aspects of theological writing of this history and the importance of this for us today. The subject has many facets. Many problems are encountered. No attempt will be made to be inclusive or dogmatic. However, it is our view that we should come to some definite conclusions on some of the vital matters involved in our subject. One such conclusion that the author of this paper has come to accept as the proper one is that the historical books dealt with here are not deuteronomistic (historical) writings, nor priestly (theological) writings but prophetic revelation.

I.

Before we commence the discussion of some selected aspects of the "greater historiographical problem," it may be useful to review some reasons why we consider it of importance to deal with the historical books of the Old Testament, i.e., the former prophets.

The material presented in the books: Joshua—II Kings covers a very important period in the life of Israel as a nation.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it can be said that these books cover only that period in which Israel was a nation in its own right in its country, independent, developing its national character and heritage. It is well known that Joshua presents Israel's conquest of Palestine and the subsequent settlement in it. Judges recounts the experiences in the period of adjustment and establishment of the Monarchy. I & II Kings deal with Israel as a united nation under Solomon and as divided until their respective downfalls.

This period of Israel's history is presented as a partial fulfillment of

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1. D. N. Freedman discusses the historical period in a very specific manner in his essay "Old Testament Chronology" in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Bib. A.N.E.) Edited by G. E. Wright, pp. 203 ff. Double Day Pub., New York, 1961. E. R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1951, discusses the chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah. Thiele has shown that the figures given do not present insoluble problems. He states that chronology is the backbone of history p. 3, i.e., if no exact chronology is discernible, no exact history is available. (It is well to remember that "exact" does not mean complete). Freedman does not show the same concern for the Biblical figures as Thiele does. He speaks of artificial and actual figures (40 years is both depending on contexts, p. 207) urges man not to undervalue the fidelity and care of Israelite scribes, but "there are nevertheless numerous inconsistencies in the recorded figures, no system has yet been devised to accommodate all of them." p. 208.

God's promises to the Patriarchs. It provides the setting for prophetic activities and introduces the context from which later events (exile and exilic prophets, post exilic events and prophets) take their cue and from which they receive their rationale. The Psalms and wisdom literature were also produced within this historical period or later during the immediately subsequent times.

The question is: do we have a reliable historical account of this important period of national life? Are the various selected events, some of which are presented in detail, truly historical events? Are the accounts concerning Joshua, the Judges, the priests, the kings, the prophets, the people, the ark and the temple authentic?<sup>2</sup> Do they provide the proper factual basis for the Christian faith that is rooted in events?

In the second place, this historical material in Joshua—II Kings is important from a Biblical literary point of view. All readers and students of the Bible realize that these books present the material link between the literature referred to as the Mosaic writings, the Pentateuch, and the wisdom, prophetic and later historical literature. The Bible, as it is before us, reflects a definite literary plan. The Mosaic writings introduce the nation, its forebears and their antecedents; the Pentateuch records the promises of the salvation in a covenantal framework and the worship and service expected of the people. It also records the actual salvation of the patriarchs, e.g., Abraham, Gen. 15:6. The historical writings are intended to record how God's program was worked out. Subsequent literature deals with prophetic utterances against that background, with men's response of faith in song, prayer and meditation. Indeed, there is a clearly defined literary plan in the Old Testament. The historical books present the "backbone" of this plan. Again the question comes up—is this literary plan a clever device in which fact and truth were not always regarded as important or is it a reliable and proper vehicle to present Divine and salvation *Truth* to us?

The literary material link introduces us to a consideration of the actual material content and its character. All books of the Bible are considered to be God's Word, i.e., Divine revelation. How has this Word been presented to us? In a series of ideas which can be catalogued and discussed as N. Snaith has done?<sup>3</sup> Or is Vos<sup>4</sup> correct in his insistence that there is a progressive organic development in the presentation of the Word? Vos' position is definitely based on the presentation of the material in the Old Testament Bible as it is before us. Snaith's presen-

2. R. de Vaux, "Method in the Study of Early Hebrew History" in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* (Bib. M.S.). Edited by J. P. Hyatt, Abingdon, Nashville, 1965, stresses that the historical faith of Israel must be founded in *history* if faith is to be true and "command my assent." The term historical faith of Israel may be confusing in this context, the emphasis on the necessity of actual factual history is clear and definite. pp. 16, 17.
3. Cf. N. Snaith, *Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, Epworth Press, London, 1944. J. Bright, *The Kingdom of God*, Abingdon, Nashville, 1953, refers to H. E. Fosdick who presented a development of ideas in the Old and New Testament as an example of atomizing Scripture, cf. p. 9, fn. 1.
4. G. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1948

tation seems to indicate his uncertainty regarding the actual mode and character of God's revealing work, hence he singles out dominant themes without much regard to their historic, progressive, organic presentation within the matrix of unfolding history. Indeed, it must be clearly seen that one's conception of the actual development of Israel as a nation and the proper recording of that history has a profound effect upon one's conception of the actual deed and plan of God's "self revealing act" throughout Old Testament times.<sup>5</sup>

In the fourth place we find that the historical writings have a very important bearing upon the message of the Old Testament. If, for example, the historical books present only an account and that incomplete as well as not reliable in parts of how a particular nation lived, how it fared politically, economically, socially and religiously, and/or if these books are taken to present the emerging and developing religious ideas of a people who were psychologically endowed with religious propensities, and who learned to express these in the midst of its contemporary world,<sup>6</sup> then what message does the Old Testament contain for preachers, evangelists and teachers to proclaim to men today? Various attendant questions arise here: Since Christianity is so inseparably related to redemptive events, what basis is there for the Christian faith if the historic events of the Old Testament are not authentic and reliably recorded?<sup>7</sup> And further what authority does the Old Testament Scriptures have if the history that is recorded is questioned? Or if it is buried under layers and stratas of various editorial pens who has the proper insight and ability to extract truth from opinion and comment? Prof. J. Bright admits that this problem of message and authority have been a source of much thought and work for him.<sup>8</sup> He has presented his solution, which is referred to by Prof. H. H. Rowley as an enthusiastic exposition, the result of a "brave effort to reach an acceptable solution." However

5. H. Bultmann in "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith" *The Old Testament and Christian Faith* (O.T. C.F.) edited by B. W. Anderson, SCM Press Ltd., London, 1964, denies that there is a close relationship between Israel's history and the history of revelation. "The events which meant something for Israel, which were God's word, means nothing more to us" p. 31. J. Bright, rejects this position which Bultmann has propounded for years. *Ibid* p. 10.
6. Or if the "historical material" is mainly that which the "traditions" of Israel present, then we have no history, not even a witness to history, R. de Vaux rightly states. *Ibid* p. 23.
7. Writing in a semi-popular manner, J. Boice, "The Reliability of the New Testament Documents," *Christianity Today*, Nov. 10, 1967, presents the case in this way: If there is no reliable history, there is no factual basis for faith, all there is finally and ultimately is subjectivity, there is no theology, at best, there is anthropology. Nor is there a need for personal salvation. H. O. Brown, in "The Bizarre Courage of the Modern Theologian," *Christianity Today*, July 5, 1968, speaks of the "discovery of the humanity of the Bible" and the emphasis on this has led to of all unexpected things, a withdrawal from real history. He calls for a rejection of the historical critical methods employed today if facts are to be retained—necessary historical facts for salvation. Boice wrote in regard to the New Testament; this applies to the Old Testament as well.
8. J. Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament*, Abingdon, Nashville, 1967, pp. 7-8.

Rowley very correctly observes that Bright's brave effort and its result is not "any less exposed to the charge of subjectivity than the so-called liberal attempts..."<sup>9</sup> In other words, a critical scholar who himself questions the authenticity of the Old Testament writings (including and in some ways particularly the historical materials) kindly informs Bright that a brave effort does not produce a road to or a basis for an authoritative message. The sad fact seems to be that when Old Testament materials are seen as a record of men's lives and religious ideas, which have not always been reliably recorded, that it is impossible to make this "product of man" the authoritative Word of God.<sup>10</sup> And without an authoritative Word of God, there is no authoritative message for man today.<sup>11</sup>

In the above discussion of the four points questions arise which have to be faced when we deal with the material of the historical books. A basic and most important question is: What is the Bible? Is it a fragmentary collection of religious documents mingled with various historical records of varied and questioned value? Or is it a monument of empirical logic based on the cumulative experience of men?<sup>12</sup> Or is A. R. Taylor correct? He writes, "Caught between the two worlds, (the biological world with its sensual nature and the 'world beyond' which lifts them out of themselves, draws men into a search for identity and purpose and inspires creativity that reaffirms that which is unique in human experience), the Hebrews were constantly involved in a struggle between the demands of life in a competitive world and the need to identify on a higher plane, symbolized by their dialogue with Jahweh and their rejection of alien values. The creative endeavour to resolve this dilemma resulted in the Bible, one of the world's most profoundly humanistic documents."<sup>13</sup> Or is the Bible a whole message? Is there a plan within it—literarily and materially which reveals God's redemptive plan for His Kingdom? There is also the question of authorship. Is it important to stress authorship? It can be considered a formal academic venture, of little real importance or value for us today, as to who authored which sections of the Bible if it is a fragmentary collection. But the case may well be very different if the Bible is a unit which contains the self revelation of God within the context of His plan of redemption for His Kingdom and which (plan) He has unfolded within the history of a specific

9. H. H. Rowley, "Notes of Recent Exposition," *The Expository Times*, July, 1968.
10. Prof. J. Stek wrote a review article on Bright's book in the *Calvin Theological Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, and cogently presented this fact in a review article entitled "Modern Protestantism in the Light of the Reformation."
11. It follows that if there is no authoritative message there is no demand to obey and accept the message in faith. Cf. W. Visscher, "Everywhere the Scripture is about Christ Alone" *O.T.C.F.* p. 95. Nor is there any basis for expecting a commitment. Cf. J. C. Beker "Biblical Theology Today," *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Vol. LXI, No. 2 p. 13 ff.
12. Cf. W. F. Albright, *Yahweh and the God of Canaan*, Athlone Press, Univ. of London, 1968, p. 154. Albright states that there is no evidence of Mesopotamian or Hurrian backgrounds to the myths of the Baal Epic. p. 103. One wonders why men insist on finding backgrounds to the Hebrew material.
13. A. R. Taylor "Zionism and Jewish Humanism," *Christian Century*, Sept. 18, 1968, p. 1164.

people. If then authorship is vitally important, how can we arrive at the truth concerning this authorship?<sup>14</sup> This is indeed a very involved, complex and difficult problem. Suffice it to say here that the difficulties and complexities may never be allowed to detract from the *content*, from the *clarity* of the presentation of the divine revelation, nor from its authority. It is the writer's opinion that much of the scholarly and academic work done on Old Testament authorship, particularly in regard to Old Testament historiography, is guilty in various degrees of the detracting from the content, of blurring the clear presentation<sup>15</sup> and of stripping the Word of God of its authority.

## II.

The Old Testament scholars who have consistently attempted to take their starting point from Scripture in their attempts to understand the origin, formation and interpretation of the Old Testament have considered the books Joshua—II Kings to be prophetic, historical literature. Prof. Young wrote under the title of "The Former Prophets" that the title Prophets was given to the material, not primarily because of the prophetic content of the books but because the anonymous authors occupied the prophetic office. He states that the Former Prophets comprise the interpretative history of God's dealings with the theocratic nation. This history is interpreted in agreement with Israel's foundational law, i.e., its constitutional foundation. Directly related to this prophetic approach is Young's view that the four books—Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel and I & II Kings were written and completed by prophetic authors who lived during at least part of the time span each book covers.<sup>16</sup> This does not mean nor does it imply that each author was an eye-witness of all events discussed, nor does it preclude the use of sources for some of the material.

Other scholars, supporting this prophetic view that stressed various aspects related to this view. Prof. M. Woudstra, seeking to uncover the historical environment of the Ark of the Covenant, briefly reviews the opinions regarding the character of Joshua and Judges. He speaks of the programmatic character which is referred to in Joshua 1:3, 4 and reiterated at later points, God's divine program is set forth; however, God's people do not fully realize, i.e., work out this program. Thus there is a type of dogmatic history writing which does not do violence to the actual

14. J. Bright, *Early Israel of Recent History Writing*, S.C.M. Press, 1956, deals with the problem of method. Reference will be made to this work later. Here we point out that Bright accepts the legitimacy of Noth's method to call upon tradition to bridge the gap between event and the supposed time of writing. It is this tradition that really removes authority from the Scriptures.

15. When men insist that the Biblical materials contain many stratas or wrappings of editorial commentators' specific times as may well have a case of covering up and blurring of the truth. Cf. G. E. Mendenhall, "Biblical History in Transition," *Bib. A.N.E.*, p. 48.

16. E. J. Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1953, p. 156. Also cf. the discussion of the books under the heading "authorship."

facts but looks at these facts from the ideal point of view of a complete obedience to Jahweh. Woudstra sums up writing: "This history writing is therefore truly 'prophetic' as already the earlier conservative works recognized."<sup>17</sup> Vos states the case as follows: "The true principle of history writing, that which makes history more than a chronicling of events, because it discovers a plan and posits a goal, was thus grasped, not first by the Greek historians, but by the prophets of Israel. Hence we find also that the activity among these circles includes sacred historiography, the production of books like the Books of Samuel and Kings in which the course of events is placed in the light of an unfolding divine plan."<sup>18</sup>

Critical scholars have found it very difficult to read and interpret Joshua—II Kings as historical documents in this manner. Not all deny the specific "phophetic" source of these writings, they do find it very difficult to accept the fact that there was a prior foundational law, that there was a divine program and plan that was recorded as it was revealed in word and deed/before the actual historical events recorded in Joshua—II Kings took place. They find it so difficult, yes, impossible to accept that Israel had in its possession, i.e., in writing, God's revealed will for them as a nation living, worshipping in its own land. Particularly Deuteronomy is seen as having been written after the events of the conquest, settlement, rise of the monarchy and its divisions. The conservative view has been rejected, and the voices continuing to uphold the conservative view have been ignored by and large says Rowley because the "positions . . . were dogmatically reached. (Rowley of course refers to a wider range than only the historical books.) Their work had little influence, therefore amongst scientific scholars who were concerned only with the evidence, and the conclusions to which it might naturally lead."<sup>19</sup> Bright suggests that the conservatives do not employ a sound historical method.<sup>20</sup> He also suggests, as do many other men, that conservatives do not employ the proper literary critical tools. Y. Kaufman, e.g., who does accept some aspects of historical and "tradition" criticism, but who does not employ the "orthodox" literary critical method, rather a novel literary criticism, is scratched as a legitimate voice to be heard.<sup>21</sup> It is of interest to note that the attitude of modern critical scholars to the conservative approach and interpretation of the Former Prophets is not of recent origin. S. R. Driver, dealing with the "Priestly Narrative

17. M. H. Woudstra, *The Ark of the Covenant from Conquest to Kingship*, Presby. and Ref. Pub. House, Phil., Pa., 1965, pp. 108-109.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

19. H. H. Rowley, *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, Oxford Univ. Press, paperback, 1961, p. XV.

20. Bright, *Early Israel*, p. 28.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 56 ff.

of the Hexateuch" refers to the work of Principal S. Cave's work on "Exodus to Joshua" as "manifestly slight and incomplete."<sup>22</sup>

Some contemporary Old Testament scholars have stated other reasons for rejecting the conservative approach and understanding of the "Former Prophets" (as well as the entire Old Testament). Freedman refers to the Biblical pattern (which conservatives accept as valid) as too rigid and too simple to be correct.<sup>23</sup> Gottwald expresses an implicit disgust for the simplicity of the writers (editors) of Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets.<sup>24</sup>

Conservative students of the Old Testament have reacted variously to this criticism, to the ignoring of them as well as to the work of the critics. Some seem to avoid all works produced by critical scholars. In fairness to these, it should be stated that some of these who do that are more concerned to present the message of the Old Testament as it is before us, than to become involved in any type of formal or critical problems. Some conservative scholars have read the critical views but found them unacceptable and indicate very little concern in regard to them. Others have taken the time and energy to study and evaluate the presuppositions, methods and conclusions of the critical scholars, and adopted and/or adapted that what was homogenous with the conservative position. Furthermore, some scholars have, and are attempting a reconstruction of the conservative position which will enable them to benefit from much of the critic's work. Still others have attempted to harmonize the critical methods and conclusions with the conservative position.<sup>25</sup> One may wonder why this is done. Is it due to a reaction to critical pressure? to the pain of being ignored? Is it due to an honest belief that methods and conclusions, arising from erroneous presuppositions can in some way be harmonized or synthesized with Biblical revelation and its attendant presuppositions and methods of study? Let no one misunderstand the point of these questions. Motives are not questioned, rather an attempt is made to motivate all of us to a critical

22. S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, paperback, Meridan Library, 1956. Originally published in 1897, cf. pp. 157 ff. Note also the abrupt manner in which other writers are discarded. Concerning Prof. Bissell's book on the Pentateuch he writes that it is a failure because "the author is singularly unable to distinguish between a good argument and a bad one." Prof. Hommel's work is rated a failure because he underrates the positive evidence afforded by the Old Testament in support of the critical position, because Hommel's positive evidence is too indirect and hypothetical, and because he makes no attempt to distinguish logically between fact and imagination. Now seventy years later, it is of much interest to note that much of what these men whom Driver refused to consider seriously have been vindicated on various points by even a number of critical scholars.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

24. N. K. Gottwald, *A Light to the Nations, An Introduction to the Old Testament*, Harper & Row, London, 1959. Cf. pp. 109 ff, 152 ff, 234 ff, 334 ff.

25. No names or works are mentioned to give specific evidence for the various statements made. This is done for the obvious reason that neither space nor time would permit the reference to the works and quotations from them to substantiate the statement. It would make an interesting study to collect, compare and evaluate the various "conservative reactions" to "critical positions."

evaluation of our own presuppositions, methods and conclusions. Let it also be emphatically asserted that whereas all the facts must be recognized, this does not in any manner give any one the liberty to adopt presuppositions concerning approaches to, and methods of work which are not in harmony with the revelation of God as given in the Old Testament.

This is stated with an awareness of what some scholars have said in recent years: "It is no longer warranted, in the light of recent studies, to adhere to the conservative views which faithful Old Testament scholars believed and taught a generation ago." It is said that to adhere to these outdated views is to reveal a "fundamentalistic" attitude toward the Bible.<sup>26</sup> This Judgment raises questions. What is the really new evidence which we today must face which our immediate predecessors did not have? Driver, Gunkel, Mowinkel, Pfeiffer, etc., who wrote during the times of our fathers show an awareness of practically every major point of view that confronts us today. And then, is the understanding of Biblical theology and the message of the Old Testament Scriptures clarified by an adoption of the new views? Hardly. C. Graesser, Jr.<sup>27</sup> gives striking evidence of how difficult it is to present a clear statement of what the message is that the Lord gives us in the Former Prophets. Graesser devotes one half of his essay to a discussion of introductory problems in which he decidedly supports some critical views. The final editor of Joshua—II Kings is placed in the exile. Hence the entire historical work is to be interpreted from an exilic stance. The exilic historian is interpreted to be declaring that Jahweh is supreme in spite of the present circumstances; the covenant curses have proved to be effective, the people are exhorted to pray and repent, and there is yet hope. This hope is not spelled out, says Graesser, for the future is more vague than past history even in the prophets. It is quite evident that the programmatic character of the Former Prophets has been largely obscured; that the divine plan of redemption has become very vague due to the introduction of critical problems and this in spite of a valiant attempt or if you will, another "brave effort" to present an authoritative message to the people of God for all time. The sad fact we must face is that Graesser has been able to extricate a message only for the people in exile, for Old Testament times. Graesser's interpretation fits into a history of religion, it can hardly be said to be in harmony with a history of revelation and a history of redemption.

And finally, we are constrained to ask: is there then such a strong unified critical position to which all men must give earnest heed? At this point it may be wise to briefly state some of the various approaches of critical scholars to the Former Prophets. The first and all important

26. The term fundamentalistic is very difficult to define. A very general thrust of the term is to indicate a position to the "far right," (i.e., of literalism, of dogmatism, and possibly obcurantism). The far right however is very relative, it all depends where one considers the orientation point, the proper middle point to be on the curve between far left and far right, or liberalism and traditional conservative orthodoxy.

27. C. Graesser, Jr., "The Message of the Deuteronomic Historians," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 8.



factor on which all men are agreed, conservative as well as critical, is that the origin, authorship, formation, purpose and interpretation of the book of Deuteronomy is the key factor in understanding the history recorded in Joshua—II Kings. In fact, most men agree that Deuteronomy must be seen as written and/or available prior to the prophetic-historical works. Young referred to Deuteronomy (as well as the other four books of the Pentateuch) as the foundational constitution in terms of which its former prophets wrote. This has been the traditional and still is the conservative evangelical position. However, the presuppositions underlying the approach to, the methods of study and conclusions concerning Deuteronomy are very, very divergent. The traditional conservative evangelical position has been that Deuteronomy is essentially of Mosaic authorship, that it was written in the form that it is before us, immediately prior to the conquest or during the initial stages of it, i.e., after Trans-Jordan had been conquered and before the crossing of the Jordan to conquer the territory west of the River. In recent years M. Kline<sup>28</sup> and G. Manley<sup>29</sup> have indicated by the use of a type of form critical study (Hittite treaty patterns) and by literary analysis that the view which presents least difficulties, which preserves the unity of the Old Testament witness and which most clearly presents the divine plan of salvation is to uphold the *essential* Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy, to consider it as having been *authored* in pre or early conquest time and that it be considered the final word of guidance for a conquering and settling nation. Deuteronomy is thus to be seen as a restatement and a specific application of that what was given before (as recorded in Exodus-Numbers).

This view concerning Deuteronomy has been found unacceptable by many scholars. The alternatives which are presented have not been unanimously adopted either. Gottwald readily accepts the old view that the original Deuteronomists and subsequent ones were historians seeking to mediate between the priests and prophets and who sought to institutionalize the prophetic teachings.<sup>30</sup> Others place the original Deuteronomist prior to Hezekiah and Von Rad sees the really original Deuteronomists as local priests serving in the rural communities whose sermons and teachings were gathered, collated and edited, thus producing a priestly and theological document.<sup>31</sup> Incidentally, this view of Von Rad certainly goes completely contrary to the Biblical evidence, for the latter insists that instructors from Jerusalem were sent out in Jehoshaphat's time to the rural areas, II Chronicles 17:7, and it is specifically stated that they had the book of the law, vs. 9.

28. M. G. Kline, *The Treaty of the Great King*, Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1963.

29. G. T. Manley, *The Book of the Law*, Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1967.

30. Gottwald, *Ibid.*, pp. 234 ff and 334 ff.

31. G. Von Rad, *Deuteronomy*, trans. by D. Barton, S.C.M. Press, London, 1966. W. Harrison, in *Interpreting the Old Testament*, Holt, Rhinhart & Winston, London, 1964, also speaks of the Levite teachers, p. 102, and priestly modifications, p. 103, but he sums up the writings of Deut-Kings as a great work, tendentious in character, by an historian who reported things contrary to his own view, p. 273.

Space in this paper will not be devoted to a review of the various views concerning the origin and purpose of Deuteronomy. These views can be found in most works that deal with Old Testament introductory materials. Suffice it to say again that Deuteronomy plays a most significant and crucial role in the understanding of the historical materials found in the Former Prophets and in fact, all the Old Testament books.

The next question to be faced is: what is the actual relationship of the books of Joshua—II Kings to Deuteronomy? Since many men reject the position set forth by Young, they are faced with the difficulty of having to choose between three major positions all of which have their variations or produce a new one.

First of all, there is the view that the major documentary strands of the Pentateuch, J & E are discernible in Joshua—II Kings. This position has been modified particularly by Eissfeldt who has posited a substrata, an underlying source which he refers to as L.<sup>32</sup> The problems encountered and reasons that many critical scholars have for not supporting this view can be found in works such as by North,<sup>33</sup> Snaith,<sup>34</sup> and others. Snaith sums up the result of the efforts to trace the Pentateuchal sources in Joshua by writing "It is plain that these attempts . . . have led to a far from unified result."<sup>35</sup>

Then there is the Alt-Noth school which has separated Deuteronomy from the Pentateuch and considered it to be part of the Deuteronomists' historical work. The historians, writing at various times all worked on the entire block, Deuteronomy—Kings as one literary production. In one form or another, this view is dominant in many present day scholars' minds and writings.

However, Von Rad has his supporters and followers also. He speaks of the Hexateuch. This unites Joshua with the Pentateuch as part of the literary production which is basically composed of Priestly Theology (Gen. 1-11). Patriarchal, Exodus, Sinai, Wilderness and Conquest traditions, plus the priestly legislation. Key factors in Von Rad's view of the historical books as well as of the Pentateuch is that these books had the initial origin in the cultic setting, hence they are to be viewed basically as having a "priestly origin."<sup>36</sup>

32. O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament, the history of the formation of the Old Testament* trans. by P. R. Ackroyd, Oxford, Basil Blackwood, 1965, pp. 132 ff., pp. 199 ff., for reference to J & E in Joshua—II Kings cf. Bright, *Early Israel*, p. 19, Woudstra pp. 103-113 and G. W. Anderson, *A Critical Introduction to the Old Testament*, Duckworth, London, 1950, chap. 4.
33. C. R. North, *The Old Testament Interpretation of History*, Epworth Press, London, 1946, and in "Pentateuchal Criticism" in O.I.M.S., pp. 48 ff.
34. N. H. Snaith, "The Historical Books" O.T.M.S., pp. 84 ff.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
36. Von Rad's views are presented in his essay, "The Form Critical Problem of the Hexateuch," *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 1966, and are also referred to in his Old Testament Theology by D. M. G. Stalker, Oliver & Loyd, London, 1962, Vol. I, pp. 129 ff. Bewer-Kraeling in J. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament*, completely revised by E. G. Kraeling, Columbia Univ. Press, London, 1962, speaks of the original documents as authored by priests, particularly the court records. Prophetic traditions were woven into the material by the hand of hard to identify Deuteronomists who were "poor historiographers," pp. 231-256.

The conservatives have reacted in various ways to Von Rad's work. Some have carefully studied these views and rejected them as out of harmony with the Scriptural givens and message. Woudstra is an example. He briefly summarizes the various views and gives meaningful criticism of these on the basis of which he rightly refuses to accept any of the critical reconstructions.<sup>37</sup> Graesser is an example of one who has attempted a unified and harmonizing statement of various critical conclusions. His presentation is by no means convincing. He concludes his extended survey of the "introductory reconstruction" by writing: "thus a certain unity of conception and theological emphasis in the books of Joshua through Kings becomes evident. While this unity of conception and theology probably is not simply the work of one man but of a series of sacred authors—and indeed of a whole group or school—the continuities outweigh the discontinuities. It is better to consider them a unity than merely a collection of four books, dealing with successive periods in the history of Israel."<sup>38</sup> Note his uncertainty regarding the unity of the books even on the basis of *one* man or a school of writing. But surely one need not hesitate to say there is a unity in purpose and plan, if he considers this based on the foundational laws. Can this basic purpose, plan and basis not allow for successive authors also, for they, men of their time, were they not organically inspired writers of divine revelation? Does this not allow for the discontinuities?

A third major factor, aside from (1) Deuteronomy's dominant role and (2) the relationship of Deuteronomy to the Former Prophets is the question: and what internal evidence do we find in the Former Prophets that would give reason to reject the traditional conservative evangelical position? Has this not been answered in part in the quote from Graesser? He spoke of many evidences of discontinuity, also of many for continuity. He chose the latter. However, can the continuity not be explained on other grounds than that there was a series of Deuteronomist historians? And are the discontinuities not a real embarrassment to those who hold that view? Later in the essay we will take a brief review of some of the actual facts concerning each of the books and we will find that the evidence for individual successive writers is such that this view could and possibly should, be preferred to that of Deuteronomist historians who re-edited the entire block of books.

### III.

At this stage of our study a crucial question before us is: How, by what method, and according to which apriori principles have the scholars discovered and developed the various critical positions in regard to the writing of the historical books, i.e., The Former Prophets? In answer one could be quite general by saying: by taking a position outside the Scriptures and judging the Scriptural givens by external criteria and

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 103-111.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 547.

that from external vantage points.<sup>39</sup> So doing, the Scriptures are not permitted to speak for themselves first of all, but external standards are placed as valid and controlling factors in the light of which the truth of the Old Testament historical material is to be determined. Again, realizing that oversimplification is an ever present pitfall, we can state that there are four common, yet main external criteria, standards or vantage points: the literary, the historical, the cultic and the archaeological. However, in an attempt to discuss these separately it becomes very obvious how interrelated and interdependent these various criteria are.

The literary criterion is very strongly entrenched. It was the main tool of the former Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen school. The approach method and results that were produced by critical literary analysis have deeply impressed scholars. Hence, when increasing objections arose against the conclusion of the "Documentary Hypothesis School," the tool, literary criticism, was not rejected, but with the use of this tool plus other factors, such as ancient customs and mores, and encouraged by comparative religion studies, men such as Gunkel, Mowinkel, Alt and Noth sought to find the literary forms which lay behind the discernible documents. Thus form criticism came into the foreground. The original and early literary forms which men employed in communication were sought out. Eissfeldt has listed and discussed these.<sup>40</sup> W. F. Albright is seeking to give us light on this aspect of Old Testament study. In his recent book *Jahweh and the Gods of Canaan*<sup>41</sup> he works consistently with literary forms he has ferreted from Ugaritic literature and seeks to find traces of these in Old Testament writings. C. H. Gordon is also devoting much time to this aspect of Old Testament study. It is quite widely known that he is adhering to his theory that Hebrew and Greek culture have a common origin in the Aegean-cretian-Minoan setting.<sup>42</sup>

The question before us is: Are these men giving clear evidence that non-biblical literary forms present solid ground for judging and reconstructing the literature, and in our case, now, particularly, the historical literature? Does, e.g., Albright prove his point that poetry was the original form of the earliest and oldest Biblical historical material? Has Albright been able to demonstrate that because there are religious myths and legends in poetic form in Ugaritic literature, that Biblical literature has the same? I cite one example. The Song of Deborah is considered one of the oldest Old Testament historical poetic literary forms. Ugaritic litera-

39. Very few, if any, critical scholars fail in one place or another to stress the fact that the Biblical historical material must be controlled and evaluated by reliable, scientific objective standards. There is no need to document this fact extensively, suffice it to call attention to Bright's repeated references in *Early Israel* and de Vaux, p. 16.

40. *Ibid.*, Cf. his Table of Contents and the first 125 pages of his book.

41. *Ibid.*

42. C. H. Gordon, *Before the Bible, The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations*, Harper & Row, London, 1962, and *Ugarit and Minoan Crete*, Norton & Co., New York, 1966. The latter deals extensively with poetry from Ugarit.

ture has some similar historical poetic forms. Does this similarity in any way finally prove that there was a development from poems to prose writing in either culture? Has such development been found among the Ugaritic literature? Not to my knowledge. Rather, historical, religious material, is either in prose or poetic form. Has a case been discovered in Ugaritic literature where in the same context the material presented in extended prose form is also presented in poem or song as in the case of Deborah's song? Not to my knowledge so far. And even if there were such evidence, would this prove development from a poetic to a prose form rather than that an eyewitness wrote the historical account and included the song the poet had produced under the inspiration of the great victory achieved?

Space forbids too many detailed criticisms. However, reference to two other cases should not be omitted. I referred to C. H. Gordon's work. On the basis of literary analysis he is positing the common origin of Greek and Hebrew culture? Why is his view not finding acceptance? Is he employing a good tool in a wrong manner? This seems to be the case, for men will not accept the conclusions of his literary pursuits. And what are we to think when we read Bright's criticism of the Alt-Noth school?<sup>43</sup> Bright repeatedly lauds Noth's fine and thorough literary critical analysis of the Deuteronomists work as well of the first four books of the Pentateuch. However, he just as fervently and emphatically speaks of the results of this work of Noth as nihilistic as far as historical material and its value is concerned. De Vaux<sup>44</sup> has called attention to this fact also.

What now is to be our conclusion concerning the critics' use of literary analysis as a valid and proven fruitful method of *objective* study of the Old Testament historical materials? None other than Bright has said that the various literary critics continue to cancel out one another and there really is nothing definite. True, this is said particularly of Early Israel, but it is applied in many instances to later Israel also.<sup>45</sup>

Understand well, the point that is to be taken is *not* that all literary criticism is to be discarded and avoided. Rather, the point is to question if indeed the literary specialist is an objective and reliable voice to whom the Bible student must listen before he commences his Bible study. Is the literary critic not quite subjective in his work? Should he not be controlled also? Should the Biblical literary critic not actually be controlled by the Biblical material before him? Should men not take their starting point right in and from Scripture? Old Testament historical students can learn very much about ancient literature from literary specialists. No one will argue that point. But can a Biblical historical student *honestly* adopt the so-called objective literary specialists presuppositions and methods and conclusions before he studies the Bible itself as it is before him?

43. Bright, *Early Israel*.

44. *Ibid.*

45. J. Bright, "Modern Study of Old Testament Literature" *Bid. A.N.E.*, p. 14.

One final comment on the literary aspect. Y. Kaufman's "novel literary criticism" is rejected.<sup>46</sup> Why? Is it not because his conclusions are such that the book of Joshua on the whole must be taken as a reliable eyewitness account of the conquest? Is it not strange that when a native Semitic scholar who deplores the application of Latin modes of thought to Hebrew literature,<sup>47</sup> applies literary criticism, internally rather than externally, and thereby comes to a conclusion which contradicts the "Latin scholars" conclusions, the "Latin scholars" dismiss him as a voice which is not reliable and valid?

We turn to the historical criterion and vantage point. This subject also has many facets. We can only deal with one or two.

First of all, it should be stressed that Old Testament scholars are insisting on "history" that is factual in the sense that it can be "controlled," "proven," in agreement with modern standards for "objective history." Now, it is true that all Bible scholars are concerned to deal with factual history. Christianity is dependent on historical facts. De Vaux has rightly said, to the effect that if the Old Testament presents us with "tradition" we do not have the necessary basis for our Christian faith.<sup>47</sup> So all want factual history. It is most interesting to note here that various scholars seem annoyed because they do not find the Bible to be a factual and complete history book dealing with the history of Israel.<sup>48</sup> Of course, men are quick to point out that the Bible is not a "history" book when dealing with Genesis 1-11 and they are much relieved to be able to say so. However, do they not turn tail when it comes to the history of Israel? Why are they annoyed and why do they insist on a complete detailed history of the nation of Israel when it is clear that it is not the Biblical intent to give a complete detailed history of Israel as a people?

The main problem arises in answering the question: How do we know if the history recorded in the Bible is true? Critics say it can only be regarded as true when it is proven to be true by means of "objective, controlled, criteria." Now Noth has attempted to do this, using literary criteria and the result is historical nihilism. Others have attempted to answer the question from a starting point in history itself.

De Vaux says that the historical interpretation of the Old Testament can be done in three different historical ways, each has its own points of view, methods and results.<sup>48a</sup> We could point to many other histories that are appealed to and from which men took their point of departure, such as the history of language, the history of culture, and the history of world religions. However, De Vaux has stated the three crucial *histories*.

46. Bright, *Early Israel*.

47. de Vaux however supports the idea that traditions span the gap between event and writers. These traditions must be controlled he insists by external control to assure us of reliable history. He rejects aetiology, wonders about ethnography and archaeology and finally posits a precarious balance between all of these as the only solution, pp. 25, 26.

48. Bewer-Kraeling are an example of this complaint. Our writer here used valuable sources, though with obvious omission of most of that precise and realistic information that we so much rather have than all his moralizing, p. 236.

48a. de Vaux, pp. 15, 16.

He refers to the point of view of *just* the historian first who considers Israel as one of the ancient Near East people, who had a political, economic and social structure as a nation among other nations. For this historian "the Bible is . . . a document of history which he criticizes and controls and supplements by the information which he can obtain outside the Bible. The result is the history of Israel." It is this history that is considered basic to all study of the Old Testament materials. We repeat our question: Is this making the correct use of the Bible? Is this what the Bible is intended to be: a history source book for a national history? And is this study to be completed prior to a study of the message of the Bible? An affirmative answer is the assumption of the critical scholars.<sup>49</sup> And does it not seem as if some conservative evangelical scholars have (unwittingly?) adopted the same conclusion?

It must be strongly affirmed that the Old Testament presents certain select historical facts. It, however, never pretends to give a history as such of Israel as a nation. Historical facts are presented only when these are seen as useful and even necessary vehicles of God's self revelation to man. This history in the Bible includes the ideal, the divine patterns for Israel, as Woudstra stressed, as well as references to Israel's failure to meet the ideal. Because God revealed Himself to and through Israel as a nation, the more we can know about Israel's history, the more we will understand God's revelation. But this does not mean we take our starting point in the national history of Israel. In addition, the Old Testament itself does not pretend to be a history of Israel just for Israel's sake or for her benefit. Nor does the Old Testament intimate that "historical facts" are presented because Israelite writers attempted to express her faith in this matter, as Frost teaches in his work on Apocalypics.<sup>50</sup>

It should be quite apparent in view of what we have just written why various conservative evangelical scholars seriously question the legitimacy of speaking of the Deuteronomist historians. There need be no question if the designation is taken to refer to the prophets who related God's dealing with Israel and Israel's response to God in the light of God's revealed ideal program for Israel as it is recorded in the Pentateuch. If the designation of Deuteronomist historians is taken in that sense it is but another designation for the men in the prophetic office who wrote the book. However, it immediately becomes clear when one reads various critical works that that is not meant by the designation. Though there are variations in exact meaning, the critical scholars either consider the Deuteronomists to have been Levite-Priests, (e.g., Von Rad, etc.) or moralizing historians (e.g., Bower, Kraeling et al.) or reflecting and preaching "prophets" who sought to direct Israel into their preferred national and religious patterns. (e.g., Porteous<sup>51</sup> and North<sup>52</sup>.) In other

49. I refer the reader again to the article by Dr. Stek in which he discusses the book of Bright on the Authority of the Old Testament.

50. S. Frost, "Apocalyptic and History," *Bib. M.S.*, pp. 98 ff. Cf. also his older writing *Old Testament Apocalyptic*, Epworth Press, London, 1952 especially pp. 46-57.

51. N. Porteous, "The Prophets and the Problem of Continuity," *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, ed. by B. W. Anderson-W. Harrelson, Harper Brothers, New York, 1962.

52. C. North, *Old Testament Interpretation of History*, p. 87.

words, are these writers not considered as producing *primarily* a human writing dealing with a *human nation* and their life and destiny? Is it not true that the religion of that human nation, Israel, is considered an aspect, be it an important aspect, of their human nation and therefore we humans today, who are inheritors of that religion, are interested in those human religious writings? Is it not true, that the basic question before us constantly is: What is the Bible? Is it primarily a human document dealing with deep religious truths as the ancients preached, wrote and believed these or is it God's self revelation to and through Israel primarily, but also to and through others? e.g., God, Ruth, etc.

De Vaux's second point of view covers what we referred to as the third criterion, the cultic. De Vaux refers to this as the view of the historian of religions. "The Bible is for (this historian of religions) a document of religious history. The Old Testament is a collection of the sacred books of Israel. They are the expression of the faith of Israel. The faith is historical; it is founded on the conviction that God has directed all the history of the people whom He has chosen, Israel."<sup>53</sup> De Vaux adds that this historian of religion is not interested in knowing if the interpretation of facts corresponds to authentic history. Sympathetically, objectively he studies this Israelite religion as he would any other religion of antiquity. Furthermore, de Vaux emphasizes that "the theologian takes for his starting point the conclusions of the historian of religions . . ."<sup>54</sup> In a footnote de Vaux refers to Von Rad's *Theologie des Altes Testament* as a history of Israel's religion because of Von Rad's stress on the opposition between the "believed" and the "true history."<sup>55</sup> Von Rad does not believe the historian can reach the true historical facts upon which Israel's faith is founded, it is enough that we know what Israel believed. This means then that theologians, according to de Vaux can only begin after men like Von Rad have completed their work.

It is quite true that Von Rad is a good example of the "historian of religion" approach. This ties in neatly with Von Rad's emphasis on the worship of Israel, the cult, including both the ritual and the reason for it. Since priests were in charge of the cult, it is but natural that they are the basic originators of the various beliefs Israel adhered to and the expressions of these in ritual worship. In keeping with this approach, Von Rad found various "credos" in the Pentateuch, lifted these from their context and posited them as the initial, orientating and therefore cardinal points of Israel's beliefs.

A number of basic questions must be raised, particularly in view of de Vaux's insistence that a theologian must listen to the historian of religion before he deals with the Bible as the "revelation of God revealed first to Israel in history."<sup>56</sup> Though we take quite serious exception to

53. Ibid, p. 16.

54. Idem.

55. Idem, fn. 1.

56. Idem.



de Vaux's statement of the third point of view of history, we cannot discuss it now.

Is it true that the important thing in the Old Testament is: "What Israel believed?" True, Israel expressed its faith. From that we certainly can learn. But did Israel always express her faith in keeping with God's past dealing with her and in harmony with His self-revelation to her? This is a very important question. But Von Rad will not deal with it. In fact, the question to be asked is: *can he* on the basis of his approach to Scripture? He cannot for he has rightly found that the objective historian cannot provide him with assured, controlled, scientifically acceptable historical facts. So Von Rad sidesteps the issue of reliably recorded events and bases his position on the subjective beliefs of the people. But, does he have any assurance that these beliefs have been reliably recorded? Can he truly depend on the "priestly writers" to have been faithful in recording the beliefs of the priests and the people? Basically Von Rad assumes he can. But why should he assume the trustworthiness of priestly recorders of beliefs and doubt the historian's recording of facts? or the prophetic writing of God's ideal plan and its outworking? True, Von Rad appeals to other criteria, particularly the literary, but amazingly little to the archaeological.<sup>57</sup> This latter is to be understood because of his disinterest in actual history.

Von Rad's approach, or the historian of religion point of view, as a method to deal with the Old Testament, and particularly Old Testament historical material, does not satisfy. Historically it is as nihilistic as Noth's literary-tradition approach. Indeed, can we expect it to be otherwise when Von Rad adopted Noth's basic literary critical procedure but advance far along this way to the cultic-credo position? Consider also what Snaith states, "E. Jacob finds everywhere evidence of the large part played by the local priests in the preservation of the early historical material, but in the search for origins other than J and E all rivals have been outdistanced by G. Von Rad."<sup>58</sup>

Von Rad's approach does not satisfy? How can it when that what is basic to the Christian faith, that is the historical event, is said to be unreachable? How can it be when the Old Testament is considered to be basically a record of what a nation believed? Is the Christian faith based on the subjective *beliefs* of ancient peoples? Does the O.T. Bible not clearly indicate a great difference at times between what God expected from true believers and that what the priests and the people actually believed? Can we truly look to the priests as a reliable source when the Old Testament Bible clearly repudiates the priesthood by and large at certain periods? Porteous has convincingly shown that the priests were unreliable.<sup>59</sup>

We must take time for one more comment. It would be very advantageous to develop this point in detail but we must refrain from that in this paper. The point to be considered is this: If we follow Von Rad's approach, or any historian of religion, do we then not consider the Bible to be a "book of theology?" More specifically, does the Old Testament Bible not become a book of theological opinion and belief? Many may

57. Bright, *Early Israel*.

58. Snaith, O.T.M.S., p. 89.

59. *Ibid.*

be quick to answer in the affirmative. Is not the most important thing "what" "the message" that is recorded, rather than how things happened, how men developed, ruled, fought? The point intended to be stressed is: get only the beliefs, the doctrines for faith! Does this not make the Bible a "Theology Book," a specific sort of "Theology Source Book"? But is the Old Testament Bible this anymore than it is a history book? or a science book? Is it not an established truth that God revealed truth in the matrix of history? In the course of time and events God spoke and acted. Is the Old Testament Bible not a record, and that in narrative form by and large, of what has transpired as God spoke and acted? At this point it is good to be reminded of what H. N. Ridderbos wrote on this important point, namely, that a lack of *developed* theology is a mark of reliable historiography.<sup>60</sup> True, he wrote it in regard to Peter's speeches, but it is a principle that applies to the Old Testament as well. It should seem quite obvious to all that to consider the Old Testament historical sections as a history of religion, a history of beliefs, a record of priestly teachings and writings is quite contrary to the actual Biblical givens as we have them before us. Should we then not conclude that though de Vaux advises us first of all to listen to the historian of religion, to do so is to begin at a wrong point? And will it not lead us to unsatisfactory results? Indeed it does, for even Von Rad's attempt to rescue the Old Testament as something meaningful for the New Testament by means of his "typological hermeneutical principle"<sup>61</sup> does not solve the problem of Old Testament history, its writing, its reliability, etc., and its relation to the New Testament but this is another and added problem which we cannot discuss here.

In the immediately preceding discussion, it will have become quite evident, we trust, why the historical books, the Former Prophets, cannot be considered priestly writings, in spite of the fact that the worship of God and the Ark of Testimony and the Temple play a large role in the material. These factors however, were not the dominant and basic orienting points of the writings, as many scholars would present the case to be.

#### IV.

We have questioned the propriety of waiting for the literary critic, the scientific historian and the cultic-historian of religions to present their conclusions and to make their conclusions the starting point for a study of the Old Testament itself, its content and its message.

A fourth possibility is before us. It has been presented as the basic and orienting point for the three criteria discussed above. Listen to the archaeologist, specifically, the Biblical Archaeologist. Bright clearly intimates that this is the correct way to proceed to solve the problem of historiography.<sup>62</sup> No, he does not specifically say so, except that he does

60. H. N. Ridderbos, "The Speeches of Peter in the Acts of the Apostle," Tyndale, London, 1962.

61. Cf. "Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament" trans. by J. Bright, *Essays on Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. by C. Westermann, S.C.M. 1963.

say he approves of Albright's method.<sup>63</sup> However in his Biblical Theology study he criticizes Noth, not because Noth employed the literary tradition critical method with ruthless logic, but because his conclusions are nihilistic. Had Noth but listened to the archaeologist he would have produced acceptable conclusions. Y. Kaufman, who employs his own novel literary critical method as he deals with the internal evidence of the Old Testament, and concludes Joshua written by an eyewitness is, on the whole, a correct record of what transpired, is even more severely dealt with than Noth. Bright's advice to Kaufman is: As an Israel scholar, forget about your personal Semitic background, listen to us "Latin scholars" when you deal with the Hebrew text, and by all means, pay attention first of all to the archaeologists.

R. de Vaux, speaking to the Society of Biblical Literature while its members were celebrating the Society's 100th meeting, as an astute Biblical scholar, undoubtedly had in mind the individual writings and symposiums of the Society's members, produced in the previous twenty years,<sup>64</sup> is far more cautious. He agrees that the Alt-Noth school have produced unacceptable conclusions. But he is not prepared to enthusiastically endorse Bright's implied suggestion that the archaeologist is as important as Bright suggests. Listen to de Vaux: "But it is above all from archaeology than an external confirmation is demanded of the value of traditions, and it is on its use that the challengers of the opposed tendencies, which we have pointed out, dispute. It is unjust to reproach Martin Noth for a 'complete refusal to make use of archaeological data' (quote from G. E. Wright in J.B.L., LXX VII, 1958). Only Martin Noth sees the limits of the evidence which archaeology can bring and he protests against a somewhat abusive use of archaeology. This reaction is exaggerated, but it is salutary."<sup>65</sup>

Understand well, de Vaux is not saying that archaeologists have not made wonderful contributions to the study and understanding of the Old Testament. He knows well enough that archaeology has produced illuminating, clarifying, supplementary, etc., items that have been of much value. Noth, and some others like him, are not so ready however to attribute as much value to the archaeological contributions. In his *The History of Israel*, Noth has a section (in his introductory chapter) entitled "The sources of the History of Israel."<sup>66</sup> In it Noth discusses, e.g., ancient oriental historical documents, inscriptions and official records which "are indirectly or even directly relevant to the history of

62. Bright, *Early Israel*.

63. Idem.

64. E.g., O.T.M.S., Bibl. A.N.E., *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, etc.

65. Ibid., p. 26.

66. M. Noth, *The History of Israel*, 2nd edition, A. C. Black, London, 1960, pp. 42 ff. In the study of Noth's history works it is important to remember what Mendenhall writes about Noth's dependence upon the Greek political structure in working out the Israelite tribal structure, p. 43. Here again we have a case of a foreign system superimposed upon the Biblical account. This Greek political system is crucial to the entire system Noth develops.

Israel."<sup>67</sup> When he refers to the results of archaeological work, he says one has to be very clear what they "can prove and what they cannot prove."<sup>68</sup> He points out that modern knowledge gained from archaeological work is largely based on the innumerable written documents that have come to light as a direct or indirect result of the excavations. Then he points out that since "the hilly and heterogeneous land of Syria-Palestine did not develop great political organizations there was therefore little occasion for inscribed stone memorials or large buildings with inscriptions. Furthermore, the climate of that region was such (not completely dry as parts of Egypt where papyrus was preserved) that only clay tablets of the late Bronze age inscribed with cuneiform characters were able to survive."<sup>69</sup> There are no written documents from the Iron age that have survived. This means that Syrian-Palestinian archaeology is "therefore wholly silent" on the Israelite period. Noth adds that in view of this, historical interpretation of archaeological discoveries in Syria-Palestine is particularly difficult. (And who could argue that point?) Further, Noth reacts against the understandable enthusiasm... which has led in many cases to the drawing of over-hasty parallels "between discoveries and known events of history, which have turned out to be untenable." And though methods of work and study have been improved, Noth insists, "it still has not entirely overcome the improper search for direct Biblical connections."<sup>69</sup> One more quote from Noth, "It is true that in the nature of things it is only rarely that archaeological evidence is forthcoming to prove that a particular event took place and that it happened as described in the written records. The fact that an event can be shown to have been possible is no proof that it actually occurred."<sup>70</sup>

As de Vaux has said, Noth exaggerates, but his general emphasis is salutary. As conservative-evangelical students of the Old Testament Bible, much as we disagree with Noth's literary traditions approach and methods and the results produced because of these, we do well to heed Noth's warning. For archaeologists may well have been given too much credence in the past. Their voices have been considered quite authoritative, so much so it seems that, as a result, Biblical evidence is too quickly doubted, reinterpreted or recast. As an example, we can refer to J. Garstang's work, as it is recorded e.g., in his volume *Joshua-Judges*.<sup>71</sup> At first his work and conclusions were accepted well nigh universally. W. F. Albright agreed also. But when the Kenyon expedition had reworked the Jericho site, another conclusion was produced—i.e., that Jericho was destroyed about 1325-1300 and not 1400+ as Garstang has said. Now, the point to be made here is that the Kenyon conclusions are not based on written documents, records or inscriptions, but on indirect evidence, as Noth would say. It is not our intention at all to argue at

67. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 48, Rowley, *ibid.*, also speaks of the overexaggerated influence of archaeology, p. 20.

71. J. Garstang, *Joshua, Judges*, Constable & Co., London, 1931.

this point for the correctness of either Garstang's or Kenyon's conclusions. The fact that must be clearly seen is that the archaeologists' conclusions, because of the nature of the materials found, can be only tentative, and not finally conclusive. Winton Thomas says, "Concerning material which needs to be interpreted there must always and inevitably be differences of opinion. It should cause no surprise, therefore, that there can be, and frequently is, as much disagreement amongst archaeologists concerning the material they study—concerning the character of an object, its value as evidence, its relationships to other archaeological material, its purpose, and date—as there is among specialists in other fields of study. It is accordingly as fallacious to affirm that 'archaeology says' as if archaeologists always speak with one voice."<sup>72</sup> Thomas also says, "Few final conclusions must be looked for" and "It calls for constant reinterpretation, particularly in the light of the new material that is constantly being unearthed. Views that have previously been held, sometimes held for a long time, may later be seen to be erroneous, and may have to be modified, even abandoned."<sup>73</sup>

Surely, these points have to be considered seriously. Any student who consults the various works on archaeology, whether it be the massive and beautiful work "*Illustrated World of the Bible Library*"<sup>74</sup>, or the National Geographic Society's work *Everyday Life in Bible Times*,<sup>75</sup> or G. E. Wright's *Biblical Archaeology*,<sup>76</sup> or Grollenberg's beautiful and well developed *Atlas*<sup>77</sup> or if one consults any of the scholars as Burrows, Albright, Glueck, etc., he must keep in mind the tentative nature of what the archaeologists' say. And this must be remembered whether it is concerning world empires, or the development of a language, or the transmission of culture, or the character of religion, or any other subject that is spoken about.

One more question should be dealt with here because of its vital importance for the historical material of the Old Testament. Should the Old Testament be constantly interpreted and reinterpreted in the light of the most recent archaeologists' conclusions? This is indeed a most debated question. W. Thomas says outrightly, "The Old Testament itself must be interpreted and reinterpreted on the basis of the most recent research into it...two kinds of evidence, internal evidence of the Old

72. *Archaeology and Old Testament Study*, Jubilee Volume for the Society for Old Testament Study, ed. by D. W. Thomas, Oxford at Clarendon Press, 1967, pp. XXIII & XXIV. Gordon in his *Intro. to O.T.* suggests how archaeology is to be used to derive at a proper knowledge of history, p. 9. Many scholars however, are hesitant to follow Gordon.

73. *Idem.*

74. Edited by a Board under chairman Prof. B. Mazar, first published in Jerusalem, 1960, publisher McGraw-Hill Book Co., London.

75. National Geographic Society, President, M. Payne, *Everyday Life in Bible Times*, 1967.

76. G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology*, G. Duckworth, London, 1957.

77. L. H. Grollenberg, *Atlas of the Bible*, trans. and edited by J. M. H. Ried, Nelson, Melbourne-Johannesburg, 1957.

Testament and the external evidence of archaeology... thus both need to be interpreted and reinterpreted."<sup>78</sup> The question arises: should we indeed do as Winston takes for granted? Should the Old Testament be placed on a par, dealt with in the same manner as archaeological evidence? It would hardly seem possible that anyone would answer affirmatively. The Old Testament, as a unique and authoritative book, as conservative evangelical scholars take it to be, is not to be dealt with according to the latest opinions and possible caprices of men, are they? Surely this question becomes all the more penetrating when we read from Winston's pen: "It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often, however, that very few archaeological discoveries bear directly upon the Old Testament narrative."<sup>79</sup> Indeed, let us all take this last statement to heart. And if we do, will we not consider the Old Testament's voice concerning itself to stand unchallenged? And will we then not seek to understand this unchanged Old Testament better as it is illumined and illustrated by archaeological evidences?

At this point, it may be well to refer again to Woudstra's discussion on the historical setting of the ark during the time span covered by the books Joshua and Judges. His discussion of literary analysis versus archaeological evidences, the sociological and aiteological emphases and the prior questions concerning the relation between historical facts, revelation and inspiration, are brief but clarifying and helpful.<sup>80</sup>

We must conclude our all too brief discussion of the four criteria by saying, that the literary critic, the scientific historian, the cultic theologian historian of religion, and the archaeologists are not to be considered as authorities who must be consulted before we can delve into a study of the Old Testament, whether that be concerning its message, its historic times, its documents or even its authorship. The Old Testament witness must be sought first, and this witness can and should be studied with the aid of the various disciplines, but the latter should never be placed prior to, above or foundational to the Biblical text or message.

## V.

The time has come then, dealing as we are with the historiographical aspect of the Former Prophets, to inquire what these books reveal about their original authors, their motives, their aim, goal and purpose and their environment. Again, this is a major study by itself. In this paper, we cannot begin to do justice to the material involved. The most we can do is make a few remarks.

In regard to the book of Joshua, no reference is made to the author. The book comprises three main sections, the narrative of the conquest, the description of the settlement and Joshua's last acts. Joshua is the main character. Now some of the main questions before us are: (1) Was this book (on the whole, essentially) written by an eyewitness, as Kauf-

78. *Ibid.*, p. XXIV.

79. *Ibid.*, p. XXV.

80. *Ibid.* pp. 103-113.

man teaches, as many Old Testament scholars in the past have taught, or is there a gap of several or more centuries between the events recorded and the actual final writing of the events? (2) If there is a long period of time between the actual time of the event and time of writing about the event, how was the event kept, remembered? (3) If that long period of time exists, how are we to know that what is written is true to fact, true to the event?

It has been assumed, others have attempted to prove in various ways, that the book of Joshua was written in its final form by the Deuteronomist historians because of the "theological" or the "moralizing of history" framework in which the events are recorded. This view is basic to Noth's Deuteronomist construction of the books Deuteronomy—II Kings. Suffice it to say here and now, that many, many scholars have *not* found this Deuteronomist framework. Such a "framework" may become evident in II Kings. It is not present in Joshua. Woudstra's presentation of the "programmatically character of Joshua"<sup>81</sup> is the most satisfying for it best explains the material and it gives the "three sections" of Joshua a proper literary and historical setting.

The book of Judges is of quite a different nature than the book of Joshua. Its author is not mentioned, nor is the time of writing. The first two chapters are variously considered. Are they a supplement to Joshua, indicating that though the initial conquest was completed, the small pockets of inhabitants permitted to remain in the land became strong, confident, influential and aggressive? Or are they contradictory in content to Joshua, as various critical scholars maintain? If they are contradictory, why did the so-called "editors" not remove this?

The main part of Judges is in narrative form, recording Israel's experiences as a consolidating nation from a league of tribes to a unified nation. There are very few editorial comments in Judges, and those that are present, as the reference to doing evil, doing what was good in their own eyes, can best be explained from the point of view of establishing the monarchy rather than from the "temple, and the centrality of worship of Jahweh" point of view. Hence, various scholars have been emphatic in denying "Deuteronomist theological" evidences in Judges. The actual Deuteronomic influence that is evident is that of Deuteronomy (plus Exodus—Numbers) as the foundational law in the light of which events were selected for writing and the manner in which they were written.

In the books that deal with the monarchy, I & II Samuel, and I & II Kings we do not find one strictly adhered to type of history writing. All scholars agree, e.g., that the historical narrative of II Samuel (David's court) is quite different from that in II Kings in which a scheme is followed in the discussions of various kings. Space and time forbid us to

81. *Idem.*

review how W. Hertzberg<sup>82</sup> had dealt with I & II Samuel and how J. Gray has dealt with I & II Kings.<sup>83</sup> They have both taken as their basic assumption that the book of Deuteronomy, written in the 8th-7th century, presents the theological motives and controls the selection and manner of writing by various Deuteronomist editors. They have both placed this framework upon the books. It is regrettable that space forbids a detailed explanation of this fact. However a careful reading of the books I & II Samuel will reveal to any reader that its author wrote in a different manner, he arranged his material more chronologically than did the writer of Judges, he is more detailed than the writer of II Kings, and above all, the so-called Deuteronomistic "historical" or "theological" *comments* or *framework* is virtually non-existent, (in I & II Samuel) and to the extent it seems present, it is quite different from that in II Kings.

We have quoted from Graesser before who readily admitted that there were many discontinuities. These can best be explained on the basis of individual prophetic authors. The continuity in these books, the programmatic character that extends through the books can best be explained by the fact that the prophetic writers were made aware of God's ideal plan and goal in which the developing nation (Judges—II Samuel) and the apostasizing nation (I & II Kings) played such a vital role.

82. W. H. Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel*, trans. by J. S. Bowden, S.C.M. Press Ltd., London, 1964, Harrelson, however, grants that I & II Samuel are from one hand if we eliminate certain materials by the Deuteronomist historian and later redactors. This *if* clause of course is the debatable statement, p. 157. However, Harrelson before had given unqualified support to Noth's position, that Judean theologians (Levites-priests) wrote after the fall of Jerusalem and were greatly influenced by the recently produced Deuteronomy, p. 107.
83. J. Gray, *I & II Kings*, S.C.M. Press, London, 1964. Both Hertzberg and Gray try to exhibit the truth of the statement which Freedman dogmatically posited. The force of traditions superseded the actual court records which were to hand as sources. *Ibid.*, *Ibid.* A.N.E., p. 204. It is also interesting to note the disagreement concerning the framework writing, "awkward" says Bewer, *ibid.*, p. 237, "artfully" says Harrelson, *ibid.*, p. 187.