



The Hermeneutic Canon "Interpret Historically" in the Light of Modern Research:
Presidential Address at the Annual Meeting, Dec. 29, 1913

Author(s): George A. Barton

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Mar., 1914), pp. 56-77

Published by: [The Society of Biblical Literature](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3259060>

Accessed: 09/04/2012 16:49

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Society of Biblical Literature is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to
Journal of Biblical Literature.

<http://www.jstor.org>

The Hermeneutic Canon "Interpret Historically" in the Light of Modern Research

Presidential Address at the Annual Meeting, Dec. 29, 1913

GEORGE A. BARTON

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

AMONG the simple rules of hermeneutics which, I suppose, we were all taught at the beginning of our exegetical studies, such as "interpret lexically", "interpret grammatically", "interpret contextually", "interpret the obscure by the clear", "interpret according to the analogy of Scripture", was also the canon: "interpret historically". The purpose of this maxim was to lead the interpreter, when appeals to lexicon, grammar, context, and parallel passages had left him in doubt, to look up the history of the age in which his author lived, in the hope that this might direct him to the true meaning of the words to be interpreted.

This maxim was adopted before the era of modern historical research began, or, at least, before it had invaded the fields of Biblical interpretation in our country. It then seemed a comparatively simple matter to turn up a hand-book of history, discover from it the course of events in the era in question, and make an inference from these events that would illuminate the obscurities of the passage. Since then conditions have entirely changed. Historical investigation has invaded the precincts of our science and has appropriated to itself the land. If it has not revolutionized exegesis, it has revolutionized the interest of our hearers and readers. Our age often seems to care less for the meaning of the words of a Biblical book than to know the place in the evolution of history in which a passage stands. In the endeavor to ascertain historical facts

and genetic relations all the methods known to historical science are employed, and some of them, because of the abundance of the material, can be employed in the Biblical field with a scientific precision that is elsewhere impossible. The historical critic, applying the historical canons for source analysis, has dissected many books of the Bible into *disjecta membra*. The textual critic, having developed his science on the New Testament material to a perfection unknown elsewhere in the world's literature, now seeks to raise his branch of historical research to a wider field of influence, and is endeavoring sometimes to make it a means of ascertaining the existence of sources, sometimes, a means of proving that no sources can be discovered. Archaeology is a branch of historical research. The spade has brought from the dust many documents which are historical sources of the first rank. The archaeologist would exalt this science to the supreme place, and claim for it the deciding voice in historical research. The discovery of the existence of different sources within many Biblical books makes possible a comparison of religious ideas within the Biblical material and the construction of new theories of the evolution of Biblical thought. The opportunity is eagerly seized by many investigators, and the analyser of Biblical ideas stands beside the analyser of Biblical documents and claims a hearing as an historical authority. Lastly the investigator of other religious systems has entered our field, and to the comparative sciences already enumerated, he adds the science of comparing religions. The Hebrew religion, the religion of Jesus, and that of Paul are brought into comparison with the religions and mythologies of Egypt, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Asia Minor and Rome, and we are told that as exegetes our judgment of the meaning of the sacred text should be determined by the results of such comparisons.

In view of this medley of voices which to-day deafen the ears of the exegete, it may not be out of place to briefly review these branches of historical research, and to inquire what rights they have established to be respectfully heard, and under what condition they should influence our judgment in interpreting Scripture.

The science of criticism as applied to source analysis has

been occupied with the text of the Bible for a hundred and sixty years. In many parts of the Bible it has achieved results which command the assent of all but a negligible fraction of the experts. In such cases no one can claim to be a scientific exegete and ignore these results. Thus the analysis of the Pentateuch into the four great documents or cycles of material, designated by the symbols J, E, D, and P, receives the almost unanimous support of scholars. The partition which formerly separated the school of Ewald from the school of Graf and Wellhausen has been well nigh broken down. A recent publication of Kittel¹, one of the influential living members of the school of Ewald, reveals so close an approximation to the position of Wellhausen that little difference is left over which to divide. Even König², Sellin³ and Beecher⁴ grant the existence of the documents, though they seek to approximate the older views by dating the composition of the documents earlier than other scholars are accustomed to do. Eerdmans⁵, it is true, has made an assault upon the critical citadel, though not in the interest of orthodoxy. While in some details he has pointed out weaknesses in the generally accepted critical positions,—weaknesses for the most part of which the critics themselves were well aware,—he is himself the advocate of a documentary theory. It is a theory, too, which, after a candid examination, does not commend itself. One of his criteria for opposing the prevailing views, viz:—the contention that אלהים represents a polytheistic point of view until a late time, is proven unfounded by the fact that, as was pointed out more than twenty years ago⁶, we have proof in the El-Amarna letters that the Canaanites already employed אלהים as a singular in the fourteenth century B. C. Our E document but perpetuates a pre-Israelitish Canaanite usage. No doubt there are preexilic laws and prac-

¹ *The Scientific Study of the Old Testament*, 1910.

² *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 1893 and *Geschichte der alttestamentlichen Religion*, 1912.

³ *Einleitung in das alte Testament*, 1910 and *Zur Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 1912.

⁴ *Reasonable Biblical Criticism*, 1911.

⁵ *Alttestamentliche Studien*, I—IV, 1908—1912.

⁶ Barton, *PAOS*, 1892, p. xevi f.

tices in Leviticus, but that does not prove Eerdmans' contention that their setting dates from before the Exile.

There is no need in this presence to refute Eerdmans' work in detail, since the searching examination which Holzinger⁷ has given his Genesis is doubtless known to all.

The method of investigation in this field illustrated in Jastrow's article on "Wine in the Pentateuchal Codes"⁸ approves itself as of greater scientific value than that of Eerdmans. More profitable, also, than the work of Eerdmans are the attempts of Procksch⁹, Mitchell¹⁰, and Gressmann¹¹, who assume the main lines of the analysis and seek an exegesis that will focus historical truth and ethical teaching, as these are illuminated by the analysis. This may be said without endorsing all the positions defended by these scholars. As to the books of Judges, Samuel, Kings, Ezra and Nehemiah, there is also similar agreement that their authors employed previously existing sources, though considerable difference of opinion exists as to whether any of these can be identified with sources employed in the Pentateuch. There is similar agreement that the Chronicler employed the earlier books as sources, though opinions still differ as to whether he employed other sources which are not now extant.¹²

A very general agreement has also been reached that the book of Isaiah contains the work of at least two prophets. A strong consensus of opinion also exists that Isa. 24-27 are from about the time of Alexander the Great, and that Isa. 56-66 are not by the author of Isa. 40-55, but are a later appendix to that prophecy and contain diverse elements.

There is also a general agreement that the prologue and epilogue of Job are by an author different from the author of the poem, and that the speeches of Elihu (ch. 32-37) are a later interpolation in the book. Budde is the only eminent inter-

⁷ "Nachprüfung von B. D. Eerdmans, Die Komposition der Genesis" in *ZAW*, XXX, 245-258 and XXXI, 44-68.

⁸ *JAOS*, XXXIII, 180 f.

⁹ *Das Nordisraelitische Sagenbuch*, 1906.

¹⁰ *Ethics of the Old Testament*, Chicago, 1911.

¹¹ *Mose und seine Zeit*, 1912.

¹² For a recent discussion see Steuernagel, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, Tübingen, 1912.

preter who still protests against the last mentioned point. The book of Ecclesiastes has been until recently a fruitful source for divergent theories, but criticism now is tending to agree that three hands have contributed to the book: the bulk of it was written by an out-spoken sceptic; an orthodox Jew and a devotee of wisdom each afterward interpolated it.¹³

In the case of the Synoptic Gospels the opinion of antiquity has been reversed, and the Gospel of Mark is now almost universally regarded as older than Matthew and Luke, and is believed to have been one of the sources employed by their authors. While it is true that scholars so diverse as Zahn¹⁴ and Nathaniel Schmidt¹⁵ hold that an Aramaic form of Matthew is the oldest Gospel, the other view has such general approval that it is fairly regarded as one of the assured results of Biblical criticism. That Matthew and Luke also employed at least one other written source which is common to them both, may be regarded as another assured result of Gospel criticism.

The results of source analysis in the case of the books mentioned command, in their general outline, the adherence of such a large majority of scholars, that no exegete can claim to work by scientific processes who does not take them into account. Of course there are many differences of opinion as regards details, and such differences will probably always exist, for the data are at many points insufficient for the formation of final judgments. Such differences do not, however, affect or invalidate the general result.

In the case of many other books the question of analysis is still *sub judice*. This is true in the Old Testament of the book of Daniel;¹⁶ in the New, of the Gospels of Mark¹⁷

¹³ Cf. Barton, *Ecclesiastes in Inter. Crit. Com.*, 1908; Pöschel, *L'Éclésiaste*, 1912; Steuernagel, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 1912; Gray, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1913.

¹⁴ *Einleitung in das Neue Testament*, II, 1899, 260 f. and 300 f.

¹⁵ *The Prophet of Nazareth*, 1905, 223.

¹⁶ Cf. *JBL*, XVII, 62 ff., Wildeboer, *De Letterkunde des ouden Verbonds*, 1903, 415 f., and Torrey, "Notes on the Aramaic Portion of Daniel" in the *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, XV, July, 1909.

¹⁷ See Bacon, *The Beginnings of Gospel Story*, 1909; Loisy, *Évangiles synoptiques*, ch. III; and the literature cited by Moulton in *Harvard*

and John,¹⁸ the Book of Acts,¹⁹ and the Book of Revelation.²⁰

The analysis of the book of Daniel proposed more than a hundred years ago by J. D. Michaelis, Eichhorn and Bertholdt found few followers. In more recent times those of Lagarde and Meinhold have not commanded general assent.

My own analysis convinced, so far as I know, only Wildeboer, among Old Testament Scholars, of its correctness, and, so far as I have observed, Professor Torrey's analysis has not been more fortunate in making converts. The effort to analyse the Gospel of Mark into sources has not as yet gone beyond the tentative stage. The detailed analyses of Wendling and Bacon are strikingly different, and, though Loisy has frequently reached independently the same conclusions as Bacon, none of these analyses are really convincing.²¹

Bacon's supplementary theories of the origin of the Gospel of John are not altogether satisfactory, but the documentary theories of Wendt and Spitta are less so. Of the analyses of the Book of Acts into documents, that of Spitta seemed most

Theol. Review, III, 403—436; also Burkitt, *The Gospel History and its Transmission*, 1907, E. Wendling, *Urmarcus*, 1908, and Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, I, 1909.

¹⁸ Cf. Wendt, *Das Johannes-Evangelium*, 1900, and *Die Schichten im vierten Evangelium*, 1911, Bacon, *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate*, 1910, Holtzmann, *Evangelium, Briefe, und Offenbarung Johannis*, 1908, Spitta, *Das Johannes-Evangelium*, 1910, Wellhausen, *Erweiterungen und Änderungen im vierten Evangelium*, 1907, and *Das Evangelium Johannes*, 1908.

¹⁹ Cf. Sorof, *Entstehung der Apostelgeschichte*, 1890; Spitta, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 1891; Feine, *Eine vorkanonische Überlieferung des Lukas*, 1891; Clemen, *Die Chronologie der paulinischen Briefe*, 1893; Jungst, *Die Quellen der Apostelgeschichte*, 1895; Hilgenfeld, *Acta Apostolorum* 1899; Harnack, *Lukas der Arzt*, 1906, *Luke the Physician*, 1907, *Die Apostel-Geschichte*, 1908, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 1909, *Neue Untersuchungen zur Apostelgeschichte*, 1911, *The Date of Acts and the Synoptic Gospels*, 1911.

²⁰ See the literature cited in "The Apocalypse and Recent Criticism" in the *American Journal of Theology*, II (1898), 802—827, also Völter, *Offenbarung Johannis*, 1903, Wellhausen, *Analyse der Offenbarung Johannis*, 1907, and R. H. Charles, *Studies in the Apocalypse*, 1913.

²¹ Cf. Moffatt, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 227 f.

sane, and the best explanation of the phenomena, but the work of Harnack, one-sided and forced as some of its later developments are, makes Spitta's analysis for the major part of the book unnecessary. That there are both Jewish and Christian elements in Revelation is generally conceded, but in spite of the large literature which the book has called forth in the last thirty years, there is no general agreement as to how these should be separated into sources. In all these cases there is no consensus of scientific opinion to guide the interpreter.

Of late an old discipline, not content with fields which have long been its own, has lifted up its voice and demanded not only a vote in the field of source analysis, but the deciding vote. Textual criticism, developed to a science by means of the abundant material of the New Testament is thought by some of its devotees to be capable in the Old Testament of higher things. According to Wiener and Dahse²² it is capable of proving the documentary analysis of the Pentateuch wrong, while according to Olmstead²³ it is capable of proving the peculiarly characteristic Deuteronomic frame-work of the books of Kings to be later than the translation of the Septuagint! Wiener's "hastily improvised scholarship" and bad manners would sufficiently condemn his work, were it not that he has enunciated four principles of textual criticism, with reference to the use and value of the Septuagint, which meet with Dahse's approval.²⁴ That it may be said of these four principles that what in them is true is not new and what is new is not true, has been ably demonstrated by Principal Skinner.²⁵

Dahse's own contribution to the subject is much more deserving of attention. He endeavors to show, by means of textual criticism based on the Septuagint, that the divine names in Genesis furnish no clue to the documentary analysis, but that their alternation is due to scribal revision. He seeks to prove

²² Cf. Wiener, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, LXVI, 139 f., and *Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism*, 1909, 24 f.; Dahse, *Textkritische Materialien zur Hexateuchfrage*, 1912.

²³ "Source Study and the Biblical Text", *AJSL*, XXX, 1-35.

²⁴ Cf. Dahse, *op. cit.*, p. 30 f.

²⁵ Cf. *Expositor*, 8. Ser., Vol. VI, p. 269 f.

that some Rabbinical revisers permitted Yahweh to occur a few times near the beginning or end of a Seder and that they sometimes changed Elohim to Yahweh in the middle of a Parasha.

Dahse seems entirely unconscious of the fact that, even if the clue of the divine names were now to vanish like a will-of-the-wisp, by following it scholars were led to other criteria that cannot be explained away and that are decisive; so that, had he demonstrated his case, the present analysis of the Hexateuch would be in no way affected. It is, however, not necessary to answer him here. That has been done by Principal Skinner in a series of articles in the *Expositor*²⁶, in which the inaccuracy of many of Dahse's observations and the inadequacy of his material to prove his conclusions is pointed out with adequate learning and admirable temper. Principal Skinner has shown that as an opponent of the documentary analysis of the Hexateuch textual criticism as expounded by Dahse is weighed in the balance and found wanting.

The work of Olmstead must be pronounced equally faulty in this regard. He seeks to establish certain principles of procedure by comparing renderings of the Septuagint and Theodotion in certain parts of Kings, Isaiah and Jeremiah and then the similar accounts in Chronicles. His radical conclusion as to the date of Deuteronomic material in Kings is based on the fact of its omission from the Septuagint of Chronicles. The fact that the phenomena in question are capable of several explanations is apparently overlooked. One such explanation might be found in the possibility of differing recensions of the Hebrew long anterior to the Septuagint. He infers that the critical canon, by which Westcott and Hort proved that the conflate text, called Syrian,²⁷ was late, is applicable to this literary material. A careful study of the criticism of the New Testament, however, shows that the canon which may be true of a scribal

²⁶ Series 8, Vols. V and VI.

²⁷ See Westcott and Hort, *New Testament in the Original Greek*, II, 93—107. Von Soden in his great work on the text of the New Testament (*Schriften des Neuen Testaments*), although he does not explain again the process of conflation, recognizes it in his K text, which he calls a bastard text; cf. pp. 707—710.

period when a text has become sacred, may be the reverse of the truth in a period of literary activity before the text has become venerable. The Gospel of Mark, when compared with Matthew and Luke, exhibits often all the phenomena of a conflated text, and yet it is demonstrably not a compilation from these Gospels, but their source. The spirit of the period of Gospel composition was, in comparison with the third and fourth centuries, one of creative power. In it men dared to omit. In the scribal period, when the Syrian text took shape, men dared to omit nothing. When the earliest text of Chronicles was composed, the books of Kings were not yet so sacred that no word of theirs could be omitted. Large sections were purposely omitted as unedifying. It is more probable that we have here a case analogous to the relation between Mark and the other Synoptics than to that between the Syrian and the other types of text. One is compelled, therefore, to regard Olmstead's inferences as unfounded. Again textual criticism fails to make good her claim to be an historical discipline.

Textual criticism is not, however, always so unfortunate. In the hands of Professor Torrey it has, in conjunction with the higher criticism, actually added eighteen verses to the canonical text of the Old Testament.²⁸ These verses are found in the so-called apocryphal I Esdras, 4 47b-56 and 4 62-5 6. The argument that these verses once formed a part of the canonical book of Ezra is so strong that it has convinced Professor Batten, the latest commentator on Ezra and Nehemiah.²⁹ Professor Batten would make the verses an introduction to Ezra ch. 3 and not, as Professor Torrey would do, a part of chapter 1, but he recognizes, as we all should do, that some lost verses of the book have been restored. That after the lapse of so many centuries these verses should once more be accorded their rightful place in the Biblical text, is eloquent testimony to the contribution to historical exegesis which textual criticism is capable of rendering, when in competent hands.

Another branch of historical research which claims the right to speak the last word in matters of Biblical criticism is the so-

²⁸ Cf. Torrey, *Ezra Studies*, 25—28 and 115—139.

²⁹ Cf. *Ezra and Nehemiah* in *Inter. Crit. Com.*, pp. 103—106.

called science of archaeology. There is a science of archaeology, which is a real science. That type of archaeology excavates mounds, studies and classifies the pottery, discovers the evolution of the utensils used, until it can coordinate the details it has gathered, and project the curve of the evolution of civilizations. Here, too, must be classed those excavations which bring to light lost cities. Such was the work of Macalister at Gezer,³⁰ and the work which Koldewey³¹ has been carrying on so persistently at Babylon for the last thirteen years. Such also is the work of Petrie, Reisner and others in Egypt.³²

The archaeology, however, that has for twenty years or more made itself heard in the halls of Biblical study is in no sense a science. Its strongest arguments are usually based upon supposed facts which turn out upon investigation to be mistakes, and the inferences from its facts are usually as baseless as the foundation upon which they rest. From this type of archaeology historical science can only pray to be delivered. There is no science of archaeology apart from criticism. The spade brings to light documents, but it is the function of the critical historian to interpret them. Such documents must be subjected to a comparative criticism quite as severe as that applied to those which have long been known. They become a part of historical science, only when they have been so treated and their material has been combined with material previously known, and is interpreted in accordance with the general development of ancient life.

To say that all this is true is, of course, not to say that archaeology has not furnished us with much most welcome historical material,—material, too, which has corrected erroneous theories and cleared up doubts. Thus the discovery of the palace of Sargon with its abundant historical inscriptions cleared away the doubts that some minds had entertained of the correctness of the reference to him in Isa. 20 1; the inscriptions from Thessa-

³⁰ See *Excavation at Gezer*, London 1912.

³¹ See *Das wieder entstehende Babylon*, 1913.

³² Cf. Reisner, *The Early Dynastic Cemeteries of Naga-ed-Der*, Leipzig 1908—9 and the numerous publications of Petrie for the Egypt Exploration Fund and for the British School of Archaeology in Egypt.

lonica³³ have similarly confirmed the correctness of Acts 17 6, 8 in calling the rulers of Thessalonica "Politarchs"; the papyri from Egypt, which have afforded evidence of the systematic taking of census in the Roman Empire, while they have not yet cleared away all doubts as to the correctness of the date assigned to a census of Augustus in Luke 21, have increased the probability of its correctness.

It is, however, unscientific to infer that every discovery of archaeology will dispel doubts. The dictum that such must be the result has led to many unfounded and grotesque announcements. Sayce once found in the El Amarna letters a confirmation of the statement in Hebrews 7 3 that Melchizedek was "without father, without mother, having neither beginning of days nor end of life",³⁴ but it turned out to rest upon a misinterpretation. A recent exponent³⁵ of this type of archaeology has found in the fact that the Sumerians were in Babylonia at the dawn of history a confirmation of the statement in Gen. 10 8 that Cush begat Nimrod! The fallacies of such reasoning are too numerous to enumerate here.

Archaeological research has as often confirmed criticism as dispelled doubts. Such confirmation is, for example, afforded by the discovery of two Babylonian accounts of the creation, which correspond in general character to the two accounts which criticism finds in Genesis. The excavations at the sites of Gezer and Taanach, cities which are said by the P document to be Levitical cities, confirm the supposition that the P document is late, since the ruins prove that the institutions which existed in those cities down to the Babylonian exile were such as the P document abhorred. Part of the correspondence relating to the Passover found at Elephantine is intelligible only on the supposition that the P document is late. The abundant proof from the documents which archaeology has brought to light that Cyrus immediately succeeded Nabonidus, that Belshazzar was not king, and that no Darius the Mede intervened between Nabonidus

³³ Cf. Burton in *American Journal of Theol.*, II, 588—632.

³⁴ Cf. *Sunday School Times* for 1890.

³⁵ Kyle, *Deciding Voice of the Monuments in Biblical Criticism*, p. 196.

and Cyrus confirms the critical date and estimate of the book of Daniel.³⁶

The unscientific character of the work of some archaeologists should not, however, blind the exegete to the great debt which historical exegesis owes to archaeology. Priceless treasures have come from Palestine itself, such as the Moabite Stone, the Siloam inscription, and the Samarian ostraka. From Babylonia and Assyria the texts, chronological, historical, mythological, and hymnological, have afforded material for correcting Biblical chronology, for tracing the origins of its earlier traditions, for filling in gaps in its historical records, and for comparison of its poetical forms and religious ideas, which are of inestimable value. From Egypt, too, have come abundant data for testing the traditions in Exodus, and for measuring the value of important Biblical ideas. The tale of the Eloquent Peasant³⁷ witnesses to the birth of a social conscience in Egypt at least 1200 years before it found a voice in the Hebrew prophets. Similarly the admonitions of Ipuwer³⁸ in their picture of political and social distress and their portrayal of the rule of an ideal king form illuminative parallels to the Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament. Egypt's prophet king, Amenophis IV, and his premature, though brave attempt at monotheism, help one to appreciate more highly the monotheism of Israel, while the Psalms composed in praise of his god Aten are, like many Babylonian hymns, illuminative parallels to the Old Testament Psalter.³⁹

The Old Testament exegete, when he ceases to make archaeology the apologist for tradition, and comes with open mind in search of historical truth, finds in the texts exhumed by the spade some of his most valuable aids.

Another department of historical research is Biblical theology, a discipline created by modern methods of study. In

³⁶ See this JOURNAL, XXXII, p. 253 f.

³⁷ Cf. Vogelsang and Gardiner, *Die Klagen des Bauern*, Leipzig, 1908.

³⁸ Gardiner, *The Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage*, Leipzig, 1909; cf. Breasted, *Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, New York, 1912, 204—214.

³⁹ Cf. Breasted in *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, New York, 1909, p. 324—331.

theory Biblical theology is dependent upon exegesis, by which its material is furnished; but it often happens that, in the hands of modern scholars, exegesis is determined by theories of the development of the various phases of Biblical theology.

That an effort should have been made, after criticism had arranged the historical order of the sources, to group the religious ideas and to trace evolution and development, was inevitable and right. Some of the results of this effort are so assured that every interpreter is bound to take them into account. For example it is now proven that the prophets, broadly speaking, preceded the law, and had an important part in shaping it. It is also proven that the Fourth Gospel represents a post-Pauline development of Christian thought. These are well established historical positions, which the future is not likely to overthrow.

With reference to the historical development of some other phases of Biblical thought there is not so much certainty. Strong currents of opinion may be traced, but it is a question whether they are always well founded. As an example one may take recent theories of the development of the Messianic expectations in Israel. Stade, in a series of articles in *ZAW*, 1881—84, began to relegate Messianic prophecies in Isaiah and Micah to the time after the exile, and this work has been carried forward since by Soerensen, Guthe, Giesebrecht, Duhm, Hackmann, Brückner, Volz and Marti.⁴⁰ In the commentaries of the last mentioned scholar⁴¹ the tendency reaches its climax. It is held that every Messianic prophecy must be post-exilic, that the circumstances of the last centuries before the exile afforded no ground for hope, that in that period there was no moral basis for such hopes, that, in short, Messianic hopes were only possible after the exile, when the nation's affairs were so hopelessly overthrown that there was no ground for anything but hope. Few interpreters would carry this to the extreme that Marti does. He dates many of these passages in the Maccabean period—a time that to many appears to be ex-

⁴⁰ See Fullerton's excellent sketch in the *Harvard Theological Review*, VI, 478—520, where the literature as regards Isaiah is cited.

⁴¹ *Jesaja*, 1900, and *Dodekapropheten*, 1903—1904.

cluded by the simple fact that the prophecies had before that time been translated into Greek.⁴² The fascination of this view is nevertheless so great, that those who do not follow Marti entirely find it hard to detect definite periods before the exile, when Messianic prophecies were possible.⁴³

One can readily understand that a passage like Amos 9¹¹⁻¹⁵ is necessarily a post-exilic addition, for Amos in his short ministry at Bethel had been solely a prophet of doom. He had said, Repent or you will be destroyed. They did not repent, but ran him out of town instead. It is hardly possible that, under such circumstances, a man who held that Yahweh's favor could be obtained only by an ethical life, should suddenly portray an earthly paradise as the destiny of a people who were not moral and who had not repented. It is difficult, however, to understand why similar sentiments may not have stood in Hosea 14, for Hosea had in his teaching of the love of Yahweh supplied motives for repentance, and his Messianic prophecies as they stand are conditioned upon repentance.

Similarly in Isaiah's doctrine of the remnant there is a moral basis for hope. The fact that the prophet often had to chide for sin, and the political situation was often dark, is no ground for supposing that the prophet was a confirmed pessimist. He must have had hopes, or he could not have continued his arduous work for more than forty years. Indeed it is impossible to account for the careers of either Hosea or Isaiah apart from the supposition that they held out hopes kindred to those we call Messianic. They were not transient evangelists like Amos. Isaiah at least was the leader of his nation through a long life. Had he simply reproved and denounced he would have been run out of town as Amos was in much less than forty years. One cannot explain the psychology of his success apart from a Messianic message.

There were, moreover, occasions in the life of Isaiah which justified hope. The successful campaign of Tiglath-pileser IV in 733—732 by which the powers of Damascus and Israel were broken justified great hopes and afforded ground for great re-

⁴² Cf. e. g. Gray, *Isaiah, Inter. Crit. Com.*, p. xli.

⁴³ Cf. G. F. Moore, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 149.

joicings. Similarly, we hold, in spite of Meinhold's doubts, that there was a signal deliverance of Jerusalem in the time of Sennacherib. One must hold, it seems, with Winckler⁴⁴, Prašek,⁴⁵ Fullerton⁴⁶ and Rogers,⁴⁷ that Sennacherib made two expeditions, and that the plague that decimated his army, to which Herodotus (II, 141) as well as 2 Kgs. 19³⁶ bear witness, occurred on the second of these, and that its date was after the accession of Tarhakah of Egypt, but, whenever it occurred, such an event would be an occasion for Messianic hopes.

Such general considerations are not, however, sufficient. One must grapple in detail with the exegesis. It is difficult to do this, many interpreters believe, and still find rational grounds in the age of Hosea or Isaiah for a Messianic expectation, or in their utterances a moral mediation for such a hope. Consequently Gressmann has approached the problem from another side. His teacher Gunkel⁴⁸ had brilliantly shown that the apocalyptists had a traditional body of material, derived from the Babylonian creation myth, which none of them attempted to relate in all its details to the time in which he lived, so, following in Gunkel's footsteps, Gressmann⁴⁹ sought to show that the prophets had a traditional eschatology, derived from some primitive myths, that they were not always able to relate this eschatology to their fundamental convictions, so that Messianic expectations were really there in spite of the difficulties which interpreters have found.

Gressmann, however, had not, like Gunkel, a definite and well known myth to cite. There was no external evidence for his view. Everything in support of his theory had to be inferred from internal evidence, and much of his evidence was equivocal.

A somewhat similar attempt was made by Oesterley in his *Evolution of the Messianic Idea*⁵⁰. He assumed three myths,

⁴⁴ *Alttestamentliche Untersuchungen*, 1892, 27—50.

⁴⁵ *Sanheribs Feldzüge gegen Juda*, 1903.

⁴⁶ *Bibliotheca Sacra*, LXIII, 577—634.

⁴⁷ *Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament*, 1912, 332—340.

⁴⁸ *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 1894.

⁴⁹ *Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie*, 1905.

⁵⁰ New York, Dutton, 1908.

a Tehom-myth, a Yahweh myth, and a Paradise myth. His Tehom-myth is the same as the Tiamat-myth, his Yahweh-myth is a form of the myth of Bel or Marduk who overcame Tiamat, while his Paradise myth, also emphasized by Gressmann, is based wholly on Biblical material, the earliest example of which is Gen. 2 8-13, and a later instance of which is Ezekiel 28 13-15. In Oesterley's view the Messianic figure in Isa. 2 2-4 a, 4 2-6, 9 5, 6, and 11 1-5 is a transformation of the *Heilbringer* myth or Yahweh myth, a conspicuous example of which is the Babylonian Marduk of the Creation epic.

That Israel had myths cannot be successfully denied. The Paradise myth is one of these⁵¹, and was clearly based on vague recollections of the oasis life of the early Semites,⁵² but how this was transformed by the prophets into hope for the future is not satisfactorily explained either by Gressmann or Oesterley. It is easy to see that sometimes in the Old Testament the myths of Marduk are applied to Yahweh, but this does not explain the figure of the Messiah, who is in the Biblical material always distinct from Yahweh.

Another possible source for a traditional expectation has been found in the admonitions of Ipuwer, an Egyptian sage, whose utterances H. O. Lange⁵³ and Breasted⁵⁴ have brought into comparison with Hebrew Messianic hopes. The document in question is found in a papyrus of the eighteenth dynasty, but from the language and contents Breasted dates it before the year 2000 B.C. Its author sets forth in striking terms the disorganization and distress of Egypt consequent upon the weakness of the king. He then portrays the kind of a king that is needed to restore order. He believes this king once existed on the earth as the god Re. He is to be a king who brings cooling to the flame, who is the shepherd of all men; there is no evil in his heart; he smites evil, stretching out his hand against it.⁵⁵ Gardiner, who has published the best edition of the utterances

⁵¹ That of Gen. 6 2-4 is another.

⁵² Cf. Barton, *Semitic Origins*, p. 90—100.

⁵³ *Sitzungsberichte der kgl. preuss. Akad.* 1903, I, 601 ff.

⁵⁴ *Devel. of Rel. and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, 212.

⁵⁵ Cf. Breasted, *op. cit.*, 211.

of Ipuwer,⁵⁶ contends that the passage can have had no Messianic significance, because it is not at all eschatological. Breasted has, however, shown that Ipuwer's king is a purely ideal figure, and such an ideal figure is all that is really needed. The belief that such a king was to come would, if it became traditional, form a sufficient traditional nucleus to account for the phenomena. It should also be noted that the reference to the god Rē introduces a mythological element into the portrayal.

If the tale of two brothers found its way into Hebrew tradition and parts of it became incorporated with the story of Joseph, as we believe to be the case,⁵⁷ it is quite possible that the ideal picture of Ipuwer found its way into Israelitish tradition also, and constituted the kernel of a tradition of hope, which the prophets used without ever fully correlating it with their fundamental convictions. Such a figure, with its mythological associations with the god Re, would, if it became a part of Hebrew tradition, account for the expression "god of a warrior (אֱלֹהֵי גִבּוֹר)" in Isa. 95. Such a supposition affords a better basis of opposition to the prevailing tendency in prophetic criticism than that originally suggested by Gressmann, for it is not speculative, but rests upon documentary evidence. Gressmann now recognizes this, and, while not committing himself to an Egyptian origin, admits that it is more probable than a Babylonian.⁵⁸ Personally I am not fully persuaded that mythology need be called to our aid. Every man cherishes hopes; he could not live if he did not, far less could he become a prophet. These hopes cannot always be related either to facts or to one's theory of life. Such considerations go far to nullify the reasons for the present tendency in the interpretation of the prophets. But it must be admitted that the influence of the ideal of the Egyptian sage is possible, and it affords the external evidence, which Gressmann did not at first find, for an argument kindred to his.

In the latest commentary on Isaiah, that of Gray in the *Inter. Crit. Com.*, neither the dictum of Marti nor that of Gressmann is commended, and yet the treatment which Gray

⁵⁶ *Admonitions of an Egyptian Sage*, Leipzig, 1909.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Proceedings of the Amer. Philosophical Soc.*, LII, 190 ff.

⁵⁸ *Am. Jour. Theol.* XVII, 173—194.

accords to the greatest Messianic passages which occur in the twenty seven chapters of Isaiah covered by his volume, reaches the same result in a different way. Gray regards all the criteria for dating Isa. 9 1-6 as inconclusive. He thinks that neither the historical presuppositions of the passage nor its language make a decision between the eighth century and the sixth or fifth century certain. Gray thinks it has literary connections with Isa. 11 1-8, so that, in his view, if we can date this last passage, it will carry with it the date of 9 1-6. Gray makes Isa. 11 1-8 exilic or postexilic because of the opening line,

"There shall come forth a shoot from the stump (𐤒𐤓) of Jesse."

This figure, he thinks, implies the fall of the Davidic dynasty. For this reason both passages are made exilic or later. The word 𐤒𐤓 means 'cutting' and may, as in Job 14 8, where the context fixes the meaning, denote the stump of a tree that has been cut down, but it would equally describe a tree from which many limbs had been lopped off.

One may still see through extensive tracts of the trans-Jordanic country, around Ain Yajuz, north of Amman, trees from which all the larger branches have been cut for fire-wood, still living and putting forth new branches at the top and here and there at the sides.⁵⁹ The only non fruit-bearing trees in this region which are not so mutilated are the sacred trees, such as those at the springs of Ain Yajuz. This is apparently the survival of an old Palestinian custom. Such a defaced tree would be a 𐤒𐤓 just as truly as a stump, and would be a much more suitable figure for a dynasty of kings, many of whom were dead, but from whom scions were still sprouting, than the stump of a tree in the ordinary sense.

That 𐤒𐤓 is to be so interpreted here is made probable by its only other occurrence in the Old Testament, Isa. 40 24.

Scarcely have they been planted,
 Scarcely have they been sown,
 Scarcely is their stock (𐤒𐤓) taking root in the earth.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ See Barton, *A Year's Wandering in Bible Lands*, 156.

⁶⁰ Cf. Duhm, *Jesaja*, 273; Cheyne, *Isaiah* in *SBOT*, 66, and Box, *Book of Isaiah*, 186.

Certainly in this passage **עץ** is not the stump of a tree that has been cut down.

It is, then, probable that **עץ** in Isa. 11 1 is to be interpreted as the trunk of a living tree, and, if so, on Gray's method of dealing with these passages, serious objection to their pre-exilic date would be removed.

At all events the last word as to the possibility of pre-exilic Messianic prophecy has not been spoken, and present tendencies are more radical than the whole evidence will warrant.

We come finally to the results of that branch of historical research known as comparative religion. Many boastful claims, put forth in the name of this young science, challenge the attention of the exegete. Yahweh has been derived from Babylonia,⁶¹ as has been all the culture, and even the personalities of Biblical history from Abraham to Paul.⁶² According to one group of scholars Judaism and early Christianity were profoundly influenced by Zoroastrianism,⁶³ according to another, primitive Christianity is greatly indebted to Buddhism,⁶⁴ according to a third, early Christianity, and especially Paul, borrowed much from the mystery cults of Mithra, Isis, and Cybele,⁶⁵ while according to a fourth,⁶⁶ Jesus never lived, but is a congeries of myths borrowed from various quarters.

Naturally the work of those who hold these views differs greatly in scientific sanity and value.⁶⁷

⁶¹ Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel*, 1903.

⁶² Jensen, *Das Gilgamesepos in der Weltliteratur*, 1906 and *Moses, Jesus, Paulus*, 1909.

⁶³ Cf. e. g., Böklen, *Die Verwandtschaft der jüdisch-christlichen mit der persischen Eschatologie*, 1902.

⁶⁴ Seydel, *Das Evangelium Jesu in seinen Verhältnissen zur Buddha-Sage und Buddha-Lehre mit fortlaufender Rücksicht auf andere Religionskreise untersucht*, 1882; *Die Buddha-Legende und das Leben Jesu nach den Evangelien*, 1884; Edmunds, *Buddhistic and Christian Gospels*, 1902—1909.

⁶⁵ Butler, *Nineteenth Century*, 1905, LVII, 490 f.; Jacoby, *Die antiken Mysterienreligionen u. das Christentum*, 1910; Loisy, *Hibbert Journal*, 1912, X, 45 f.

⁶⁶ Drews, *Die Christusmythe*, 1909; W. B. Smith, *Ecce Deus*, 111.

⁶⁷ For example, it would be very unjust to class the work of Edmunds with that of Seydel. That of the former lacks scientific care in its reasoning; that of the latter is much more sober, as any one must

There is *a priori* no reason why Judaism and Christianity may not have been in some degree influenced by the customs or myths of surrounding peoples, and that here and there traces of such influence can be found, no fair minded interpreter can doubt.⁶⁸ The varied claims that are made cannot, however, all be true. Indeed it is probable that but a small percentage of them are true, but how is the busy interpreter to sift the wheat from the chaff?

Fortunately some of the books that are appearing are laying the foundations for real scientific investigation in this field. Time will permit the mention of but two of these. The first is Clemen's *Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung des Neuen Testaments*, 1908, translated into English under the title, *Primitive Christianity and its non-Jewish Sources*, 1912. In this work Clemen has not only sifted the theories as regards the New Testament, but he has laid down the following sane principles by which to test all such theories.⁶⁹

1. An explanation, which derives a whole or a part of early Christianity from another religion or religions, is impossible, if it proceeds from premises, or reaches conclusions, which violate the canons of sober historical research or of sound common

admit who reads his articles in the *Monist*, vol. XXII, 129—138; 633—635, and vol. XXIII, 517—522. He shows in these articles that recent discoveries in Turkestan of Buddhistic documents translated into Sogdianian, a dialect of the kingdom of Parthia, from which country men were present at the day of Pentecost (Acts 29), prove that a channel through which Buddhism might influence Christianity may plausibly be assumed, and postulates from the likeness of Luke's account of Jesus' temptation to that of Buddha, that Luke was influenced by a version of the temptation of the Indian Sage. As no religious teacher becomes such without struggle and temptation, and, as all typical temptations take certain general forms of psychological necessity, it must remain in many minds a question whether Buddhistic influence is actually present, even were the open channel for it much more clearly proved. This does not affect, however, Edmund's praiseworthy effort after proof that shall really be scientific.

⁶⁸ See the writer's article "Tiamat", in *JAOS*, XV (1890), 1 ff., and his *Commentary on Job*, New York, 1911, pp. 71, 111, and 219.

⁶⁹ As Clemen's statement of these seems to me often ineffective and obscure, I have freely recast them in my own words.

sense. This principle sweeps away at once the works of Bruno Bauer, Jensen, Seydel, Drews and W. B. Smith.

2. The sense of a New Testament passage as well as the contents of a non-Jewish idea must be fully ascertained before they are brought into comparison. Many current results are secured by those who violate this canon.

3. Borrowing should not be called in as an explanation of religious ideas, if the phenomena can legitimately be explained from germs native to Hebrew or Christian soil.

4. The non-Jewish idea, which is brought in as an explanation, must in some degree really correspond to the Christian one.

5. The non-Jewish element must have been already in existence. It is impossible to explain a Christian institution from phases of a mystery religion, which did not come into being until after the Christian institution was in existence.

6. It must be shown in regard to any foreign idea that it was really in a position to influence early Christianity or Judaism, and how it could do so. Ideas that were in distant India or China cannot be adduced as explanation unless an avenue of influence can be demonstrated for them.

7. If the claims of several sources of influence have to be considered, the interpreter should ask which one was in a position actually to exert an influence, and not assume that the one most closely connected with his own studies must necessarily offer the real explanation.

A reader of Clemen's book will probably think that Clemen himself has not applied these canons with unerring judgment, but it greatly clears the atmosphere to have them laid down.

The other book referred to is Hehn's *Die biblische und babylonische Gottesidee*, 1913. This clarifies the atmosphere of the student of the Old Testament, as Clemen does that of the student of the New Testament. With a full knowledge of Assyriology and the training of an Old Testament exegete, Hehn shows by a detailed examination, that whatever Israel may have borrowed from Babylonia, the Canaanites, or Egypt, her idea of Yahweh, so intolerant in his monotheistic claims, so unpicturable, can have been borrowed from none of the surrounding nations, for there is no evidence that they ever

had a god of such characteristics. While Hehn assumes some positions from which many interpreters must dissent, he has conclusively proved his main contention, and rendered thereby every Old Testament exegete an important service.

In view of the vast fields of research at which we have cast hurried glances, it is clear that it is no light task to "interpret historically" today. The burden of applying this canon is far greater than that of applying all the other five canons of hermeneutics. Nevertheless it is labor that is worth while, for, if we can but discern the historical situation, and set a text in its proper genetic relations, we shall catch its spirit far more surely than in any other way; and, having caught its spirit and the principles which that spirit kindled into life, we can then apply with far greater power the principles and spirit to the problems of our own time. Difficult though the work may be, the Bible cannot take its rightful place in modern life, until this is faithfully and thoroughly done.