

SOME RESULTS AND REVERSALS OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

LARRY L. WALKER

Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Memphis, TN 38104

Peaking towards the end of the last century, the so-called higher criticism of the OT claimed "assured results" because it was allegedly based on a scientific-critical analysis of the literature. Although modified much through subsequent years, many assumptions of modern OT critics are based on the conclusions reached during the classical period (the 19th century).

Despite disclaimers to the contrary, the founders of this approach to the OT were reflecting a mindset of the age more than operating on some new "scientific" basis. Their research was done essentially in an archaeological vacuum; new information from exploration and excavation was not part of the background of their study.

When J. G. Eichhorn in 1780 and W. M. L. De Wette in 1806 (when he was 25 years old) wrote the first critical "Introductions" to the OT, the possibilities of archaeological research were unknown. At the end of the 18th century not a single script or language of the pre-Christian orient had been deciphered, and not a single scientific excavation had been undertaken.

Even later, after new insights were becoming available on the geography, history, language, and culture of the OT, such information was largely ignored. The outstanding example of this is J. Wellhausen's *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, which appeared in 1878. By that date several excavations had been started and several ancient languages had been deciphered (Egyptian, Akkadian, Phoenician, and Old South Arabic), but Wellhausen's reconstruction of Israel's history is virtually devoid of any reference to such extra-biblical resources.

The primary influence on the formulators of higher criticism and its bearing on the origin and development of the religion of Israel was the philosophy of the age, which was dominated by evolutionary thought--unilinear progress from the simple to the complex. Such evolutionary thinking was applied by C. Darwin to biology and by K. Marx to economics. Wellhausen, following the approach of J. K. W. Vatke,¹ applied this scheme to Israel and ended up with three basic periods of history of development: pre-prophetic--prophetic--ethical-monotheism. The end result of this was that we have in the Bible not God's thoughts about man but man's thoughts about God, not a revealed religion but an invented religion. K. Cauthen stated that situation precisely:

The Bible came to be thought of as a record of the progressive discovery of God in human experience, not as a static body of theological dogmas all equally inspired and all of equal religious value. This application of evolutionary ideas to the study of the Hebrew religion by the Wellhausen school of thought came to dominate Biblical studies in the latter part of the nineteenth century.²

I. Results

This new approach was adopted by many professors who then were either removed from their teaching positions or forced to resign, for example, in Europe, W. Robertson Smith from Aberdeen (1881) and Wellhausen from Greifswald (1882). "The first to suffer for the

¹ J. K. W. Vatke studied under H. F. W. Gesenius at Halle and H. Ewald at Gottingen, before moving to Berlin, where he was exposed to A. Neander, F. Schleiermacher, and G. Hegel. From 1828 on, he became increasingly interested in Hegel's philosophy, and in his *Biblical Theology (Die biblische Theologie wissenschaftlich dargestellt. I. Die Religion des Alten Testaments)*, Berlin, 1835 [there was no volume 2]), he made no secret of his own Hegelian position. The aim of this book was to secure for Vatke a full professorship, but a year before the book's appearing, Schleiermacher died, heralding the beginning of the dominant influence of the conservative E. W. Hengstenberg in the Berlin faculty. Hengstenberg was able to see to it that Vatke was never offered a full professorship, and van Altenstein, Minister of State for Universities, saw to it that Vatke's *Biblical Theology* was never completed.

The influence of Vatke on Wellhausen has been much discussed (cf. J. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century* [Fortress, 1985] 69-78) and usually recognized, although R. Clements attempts, without success, to play down this influence (*One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation* [Westminster, 1976] 3). I believe Wellhausen was greatly influenced by Vatke's reconstruction of Israel's origins.

² K. Cauthen, *The Impact of American Religious Liberalism* (2nd ed.; New York: University Press of America [1962] 1983) 23.

Higher Criticism in the United States" (as C. A. Briggs described him)³ was C. H. Toy, Professor of Old Testament Interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He had studied in Berlin⁴ and came to accept critical theories about the origin of Scripture, theories which were in contradiction to the claims of Scripture itself. Of course this involved the denial of inerrancy, so Toy resigned and moved in 1880 to a post at Harvard; eventually he aligned himself with the Unitarians.⁵ Later, C. A. Briggs, Professor of Hebrew and Cognate Languages at Union Theological Seminary in New York, was convicted (1893) of denying the validity of Scripture as set forth in the Westminster Confession. His conviction led to his suspension as a minister and to the final breach between Union Seminary and the Presbyterian Church. Briggs remained at Union as an Episcopalian (he was received into the priesthood in 1899) until his death in 1913.⁶ Such conflicts were not limited to Baptists and Presbyterians; they continued throughout various denominational schools.

However, a few scholars came to recognize the philosophical nature of some critical theories inimical to the Christian faith and reliability of Scripture and changed their views. This was especially true of those who had pursued studies in biblical archaeology.

A. H. Sayce, well-known British Orientalist, was a personal friend of Gladstone, Prime Minister of England. When E. B. Pusey, Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, died (1882), Sayce anticipated the vacant chair would be his; however, at that time Sayce was regarded as one of the leaders of German critical theology, so Gladstone refused to appoint him.⁷ Sayce's interest in the Near East and archaeology⁸ later turned him toward conservative views.

³ R. A. Riesen, *Criticism and Faith in Late Victorian Scotland* (New York: University Press of America, 1985) xvi. This study has a very thorough discussion of the theological controversy involving A. B. Davidson, W. R. Smith, and G. A. Smith.

⁴ An excellent survey of the influence of German scholarship on American students abroad may be found in C. Diehl's *Americans and German Scholarship 1770-1870* (New Haven: Yale University, 1978). Especially note the chapter "Innocents Abroad: American Students in German Universities, 1815-1870," 49-69.

⁵ Riesen, *Criticism and Faith*, xvi.

⁶ *Ibid.*, xvii.

⁷ A note of irony here: Gladstone appointed S. R. Driver, who later standardized (1891) the whole critical school for the English world. (Sayce later became a leader of the orthodox party in England.)

⁸ Sayce spent the winters of 1879-1908 on his houseboat on the Nile. He became the first Professor of Assyriology in England (Oxford, 1891-1919) and a sagacious opponent of rampant higher criticism. He rightly compared Wellhausen's treatment of the Pentateuch with F. A. Wolff's treatment of Homer.

Other professors who became conservative because of the influence of archaeology on their thinking were F. Hommel (Munich) and J. Halevy (Paris).⁹ Of course the parade example of how the facts of archaeology steer away from the theories of higher criticism is that of W. F. Albright. Prior to 1919 he held generally to the critical school of thought, a view which was at odds with fellow archaeologist M. G. Kyle. Then, beginning in 1921, during his archaeological work in Palestine, his view converged more and more with Kyle, who had remained staunchly conservative.¹⁰ Although Albright never openly aligned himself much theologically, it is very clear that the facts from archaeology continually steered him towards an ever-increasing respect for the accuracy of Scripture.

One professor who switched views, not just because of archaeology but because he saw the mindset involved in higher criticism, was J. J. Reeve of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.¹¹ In a word of personal testimony,¹² he described first his experience at "one of the great universities" where he was overwhelmed with the scholarship of the critical approach and accepted it. He wrote, "This world-view is wonderfully fascinating and almost compelling." But he went on to describe two reasons for his rejection of the system: 1) the methods, and 2) the spirit of the movement. Some of his statements are worth noting verbatim:

It became more and more obvious to me that the movement was entirely intellectual, an attempt in reality to intellectualise all religious phenomena. I saw also that it was a partial and one-sided intellectualism with a strong bias against the fundamental tenets of Biblical Christianity. Such a movement is responsible for a vast amount of intellectual pride, an aristocracy of intellect with all the snobbery which usually accompanies that term.¹³

⁹ J. Orr, *The Problem of the Old Testament* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1911) 397, n. 1.

¹⁰ More detailed notes on Albright's personal testimony of change can be found in *BASOR* 51 (1935) 5-6 and *The American Scholar* 7 (1938) 170. Kyle taught at Xenia Theological Seminary and wrote in defense of Scripture. His *The Deciding Voice of the Monuments in Biblical Criticism* was published in 1912 at Oberlin by the Bibliotheca Sacra Company. (Bibliotheca Sacra, a conservative journal, was first published at Andover, then later at Oberlin, and eventually at Dallas. Such is the spread of liberalism within theological institutions.)

¹¹ Reeve was part of the founding faculty of the Seminary; in fact, he spoke at the formal opening of the Seminary, October 1, 1908, and delivered "a captivating address" (R. Baker, *Tell the Generations Following* [Broadman, 1983] 142).

¹² J. J. Reeve, "My Personal Experience with the Higher Criticism," *Back to the Bible* (ed.. A. C. Dixon, W. H. Griffith Thomas; and James Orr; London: S. W. Patridge, I n.d.) 216-39.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 231.

Although such reasoning may not sound very academic, Reeve seems to have sensed an element missed by many other scholars. He continued:

I have seen the Unitarian, the Jew, the free-thinker and the Christian who has imbibed critical views, in thorough agreement on the Old Testament and its teaching. They can readily hobnob together, for the religious element becomes a lost quantity; the Bible itself becomes a plaything for the intellect, a merry-go-round for the mind partially intoxicated with its theory.¹⁴

But the change of world view of other professors was not only for such reasons as Reeve addressed, but from the ever-increasing flow of newly discovered factual data from the world of the Bible. Modern critics find it difficult to subscribe to the reconstruction of Israel's history proposed by Wellhausen, although they tenaciously cling to many points in his systems--especially the documentary hypothesis. Meanwhile, much irresponsible harm was done by the Graf-Wellhausen scheme of the evolution of Israel's religious institutions.

T. Paine and R. Ingersoll, clearly identified popular American infidels and skeptics, set forth exactly the same views of Scripture and Israel's origins as that held by the sophisticated German professors. Paine stated bluntly:

Moses is not the author of the books ascribed to him.¹⁵

All the contradictions in time, place, and circumstances that abound in the books ascribed to Moses prove to a demonstration that those books could not be written by Moses, nor in the time of Moses.¹⁶

The Book of Genesis, though it is placed first in the Bible and ascribed to Moses, has been manufactured by some unknown person, after the Book of Chronicles was written which was not until at least eight hundred and sixty years after the time of Moses.¹⁷

Not only Paine, but also Ingersoll stated exactly the same conclusions reached by the critics.

Many centuries after Moses, the leader, was dead--many centuries after all his followers had passed away--the Pentateuch was written, the work

¹⁴ Ibid., 235. The OT Department of Southwestern continued for many years to oppose higher criticism as the writings of faculty members B. A. Compass (1918-1942) and E. Leslie Carlson (1921-1964) reflect. Cf. e.g., Carlson's *Confirming the Scriptures* (Ft. Worth: Seminary Hill Bookstore, 1941).

¹⁵ T. Paine, *The Theological Words of Thomas Paine* (Boston: J. P. Mendum, 1854) 89.

¹⁶ Ibid., 87.

¹⁷ Ibid., 99.

of many writers, and to give it force and authority it was claimed that Moses was the author. We now know that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses.¹⁸

Such conclusions, stated plainly in layman's language, merely reflect the ideas of the professors of higher criticism.

Original literary and academic questions about the language and nomenclature of the writings attributed to Moses eventually evolved into isolation of various documents which were assigned to anonymous authors spanning centuries of time. This in turn led to a new and very different understanding of Israel's origins and religion. This writing of Israel's history included, in many cases, accepting a naturalistic, unilinear evolutionary development of Israel's religious institutions. All this took place essentially in an archaeological but certainly not a philosophical vacuum. The *weltanschauung* ("world view") of that century was one that confused progressive revelation with evolution of religion. Presuppositions more than facts affected the conclusions drawn by OT critics.

II. Reversals

The results of higher criticism were far more extensive and damaging than the few mentioned above would imply. Fortunately, reversals of many points held by critics have been required by new discoveries. New light on the history, geography, language, and customs of the OT support, not negate, the factual content of Scripture.¹⁹ Armchair speculation of higher criticism has been repeatedly overturned by continuing discoveries from the lands of the Bible.²⁰ (Of course the critics have been reluctant to admit the reversals caused by these discoveries.)

Our first example of a reversal of viewpoint concerns the subject of writing, although space does not permit a detailed discussion of this primary topic. Skepticism about writing during the time of Moses was voiced by a number of early critics. As late as 1892, H. Schultz wrote, "The time, of which the pre-Mosaic narrative treats, is a sufficient proof of their legendary character. It was a time prior to all

¹⁸ R. Ingersoll, *About the Holy Bible* (New York: C. P. Farrell, 1894) 8, quoted in L. W. Munhall, *The Highest Critics vs. the Higher Critics* (3rd ed.; New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1896) 180.

¹⁹ An excellent summary is found in an early article by W. F. Albright, "Archaeology Confronts Biblical Criticism," *American Scholar* 7 (1938) 176-88.

²⁰ One useful archaeological commentary on the Bible with this type of presentation is Joseph P. Free's *Archaeology and Bible History* (5th ed.; Wheaton, Ill.: Scripture Press, 1956).

knowledge of writing.²¹ P. Von Bohlen scoffed at the idea of the "undisciplined horde" of Israel being literate.²² A. Dillman, E. Reuss, and others entertained various degrees of skepticism about the idea of literacy at the time of Moses.²³ Wellhausen and some early critics grudgingly admitted the possibility of early writing.

Such a low view of early Israel--and other ancient societies--has proven completely unwarranted. We are now aware of at least five different scripts used during the Mosaic, patriarchal, and earlier periods: Egyptian hieroglyphic, Akkadian cuneiform, the cuneiform alphabet of Ugarit, and linear alphabet of Sinai, the hieroglyphic syllabary of Byblos, and the Sumerian pictographic writing.

The earliest critics were informed, to various degrees, on Hebrew, Aramaic/Syriac, and Arabic. Some, like A. Dillman, also knew Ethiopic. But the founders of higher criticism were totally ignorant of such important ancient cognate languages as Ugaritic and Akkadian--not to mention such non-Semitic languages as Egyptian, Hittite, Hurrian, Sumerian, and other less significant languages. Biblical Hebrew itself was known primarily via the tradition of the Jewish scholars; German Hebraists had just begun detailed systematic analysis of biblical Hebrew.²⁴ Our present knowledge of the Hebrew language and its background now enables us to answer many of the critics' charges. Words once claimed to be "late" (and therefore betraying a "late" document) are now attested in the early Canaanite source materials from Ugarit; syntactical features of Hebrew poetry once labeled incorrect are now attested in the poetry of Ugaritic.²⁵

²¹ H. Schultz, *Old Testament Theology* (2 vols.; tr. 4th ed. J. A. Paterson; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1892) 1.25.

²² P. Von Bohlen, *Introduction to the Book of Genesis* (2 vols.; London: 1855) 1.29-41. (This was a translation and selection from *Die Genesis historisch-kritisch erlautert* [Konigsburg, 1835]). Von Bohlen studied in Halle under Gesenius and in Bonn under Freytag, world-renowned Arabic scholar; he taught at Konigsburg from 1828-1840.

²³ A. Dillman (1823-94) was famous for his studies in Ethiopic; he had studied under Ewald, as had also such notable scholars as Wellhausen, T. K. Cheyne, T. Noldeke, and B. Duhm. He taught at Kiel (1860-64), Giessen (1864-69), and Berlin (1869-94).

Reuss (1904-91) had studied under Eichhorn (Gottingen) and Gesenius (Halle). He taught H. K. Graf (Strasbourg). As early as 1834, he advocated the view that the law was later than the prophets but did not publish his views because of the outcry against Vatke's *Biblical Theology*.

²⁴ For a survey of Hebrew lexical studies, see C. Marlowe, *The Development of Hebrew Lexicography* (unpublished Th.D. dissertation; Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985).

²⁵ For a detailed discussion of this point, see the author's article, "Notes on Higher Criticism and the Dating of Biblical Hebrew," *A Tribute to Gleason Archer* (ed. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. and Ronald F. Youngblood; Chicago: Moody, 1986).

History is another area where reversals of critical theories have been required. The unbridled skepticism of early Bible history must be discontinued in the light of continuing illumination from archaeology. The patriarchal era was viewed by Wellhausen, H. Gunkel, and O. Eissfeldt as a retrojection by anonymous authors of a later date. For Gunkel, the stories of the patriarchs were sagas, or legends, in contrast to history proper; the patriarchal figures were considered only something like personified tribes. Despite the flood of evidence to the contrary, even later writers like Eissfeldt have insisted that the patriarchs

have thus become representative of the post-Mosaic people Israel projected back into the pre-Mosaic age; what they do and endure. . . reveals indirectly the circumstances on an Israel settled in Canaan.²⁶

However, the wealth of background historical data for the patriarchal period has easily confirmed its general historical setting. Skepticism about the facticity of the patriarchal narratives became less and less realistic with the new light on early Bible history. Archaeological research in the lands of the Bible has exposed more and more background information which reveals the realistic setting of the patriarchs.

An example of a specific part of history questioned by critics was the matter of the Hittites. Some questioned the historicity of such a people, although they are mentioned about forty times in Scripture. As late as 1904, a "foremost archaeologist of Europe" said, "I do not believe there ever were such people as Hittites. . . ."²⁷ Two years earlier, E. A. Budge, of the British Museum, had expressed doubt about any confirmation of their existence.²⁸ But by 1906, H. Winkler of Berlin had found their ancient capital (Hattusas) at Boghaz-koy, in central Turkey; since then many tablets written in the Hittite language have been found, published, and studied. G. F. Wright, of Oberlin College, referred to a prominent English biblical critic who had declared that "an alliance between Egypt and the Hittites was as improbable as would be one at the present time between England and the Choctaws."²⁹ Wright continued, "It was pure ignorance, not superior knowledge, which led so many to discredit these representations."³⁰

²⁶ O. Eissfeldt, *The Old Testament: An Introduction* (tr. P. R. Ackroyd; New York: Harper and Row, 1965) 42.

²⁷ The unnamed archaeologist is mentioned by M. G. Kyle, *Back to the Bible* 172.

²⁸ E. A. Budge, *Egypt and Her Asiatic Empire* (New York: n.p., 1902) 136.

²⁹ G. F. Wright, *Back to the Bible*, 133.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 135. Our present knowledge of Hittites is vast. We are able now to identify at least four distinct ethnic groups in antiquity to whom the name "Hittite" has

Not only is the fact of Hittite existence thoroughly established; we now have a large corpus of Hittite texts, written in several dialects and scripts, representing virtually every genre of literature. In fact some scholars are Hittite specialists and have devoted their life to the study of this language and literature.

It seems absolutely incredible that a national culture whose very existence was once held in doubt by serious critics should now be the source of so much information on the background of the OT. A primary source of information on covenant-treaty forms is the Hittite body of literature. This in itself has bearing on the dating of the book of Deuteronomy and the attitude of higher criticism toward Deuteronomy as the book of the law emanating from the time of Josiah.

Another specific example of a historical fact once doubted concerns the Assyrian king Sargon, who is mentioned only in Isa 20:1. Since he is mentioned only once in Scripture and for a time remained unknown from extra-biblical sources, his very existence was open to doubt by some critics.³¹ But in 1843, at Khorsabad, near the site of ancient Nineveh, his great palace was found. No scholar can question the historicity of Sargon any longer.

Geography is another area where the former skepticism of critics has been reversed. Many small cities mentioned in the pages of Scripture but not mentioned elsewhere were lost for centuries. Until the spade of modern archaeology unearthed them and ancient documents identified them, skepticism about their existence was unanswerable. However, the continuing excavation of sites mentioned in the Bible has so consistently revealed geographical accuracy that no thought is given to it unless we stop to recall the distance in time the author may have been from the events described. For example, many of the towns mentioned in connection with Abraham have been excavated and identified and revealed to have been in existence at his time. Some alleged late writer of 800 B.C. or later would hardly have been in a position to know accurately the geographical details of a millennium earlier. This would be like a writer of 1986 A.D. describing with geographical precision the setting for a story of 986 A.D., or earlier, without the help of archaeology.

Geography is a science; it is of value in the study of the accuracy of the OT records. One early (1912) biblical archaeologist wrote:

at some time been applied. For a thorough discussion of this, see H. A. Hoffner's "The Hittites and Hurrians" *Peoples of Old Testament Times* (ed. D. J. Wiseman; Oxford: Clarendon, 1973) 197-221.

³¹ Cf. G. L. Robinson, *The Bearing of Archaeology on the Old Testament* (New York: American Tract Society, 1941) 96.

The place, the most important mark of trustworthy testimony, is being established for the whole Bible story. . . . In this fact we have a sub-foundation for the confirmation of Scripture. . . . It is the identifications which differentiate history from myth, geography from 'the land of nowhere,' the record of events from tales of 'never was,' Scripture from folklore and the gospel of the Savior of the world from the delusions of hope!³²

However, some critics reject this line of reasoning. G. A. Smith wrote:

Many legends are wonderful photographs of scenery. And, therefore, let us once admit that while we may have other reasons for the truth of the patriarchal narrative, we cannot prove this on the ground that their itineraries and place names are correct.³³

But the accurate geographical details of Scripture appear natural in their contexts and do not reflect the imagination of a late scribe writing long after the era described.

A similar detail of natural accuracy shows up in the personal names of Scripture, which have been greatly illuminated and demonstrated by archaeological discoveries, to be in harmony with their cultural milieu. As in our modern era, certain kinds of personal names were in vogue in certain periods and areas. Because of the excavation, discovery, and publication of ancient texts, we now possess thousands of personal names in many different languages from the world of the OT. It would have been very easy for a late writer to be in error concerning names which were in vogue in a certain earlier period. However, personal names found in the archives of Mari and Ebla match up nicely with the personal names found in the patriarchal period.³⁴

Skepticism had been raised about the Egyptian names mentioned in connection with Joseph. M. Burrows wrote (1941), "As a matter of fact, the Egyptian names given in the Joseph story do not appear in Egypt before the time of the Hebrew monarchy."³⁵ T. Eric Peet, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Liverpool, wrote (1924),

³² Cf. Kyle, *Deciding Voice of Monuments* 51.

³³ G. A. Smith, *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1894) 108.

³⁴ Ebla and Mari have provided tablets from slightly before and during the first part of the 2nd millennium B.C. Cf. K. A. Kitchen, *The Bible and Its World* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1977) 52-53, 68; also see the same author's *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1966) 48-49.

³⁵ M. Burrows, *What Mean These Stones?* (New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1941) 53.

"Names of this type [Asenath] are not absolutely wanting in the earlier periods, but they are extremely rare. . . ." ³⁶ This somewhat grudging admission was stated in a more positive way later (1937) by C. A. Barton, "The name of Joseph's wife, Asenath, occurs from the eighteenth dynasty onward [1600 B.C.] and after." ³⁷ It would be most surprising for the alleged late scribe, writing centuries after the setting of his narrative, to come up with personal names that at first appeared--according to some meager information outside the Bible--to be out of harmony with the period setting but later proved exactly appropriate. Hommel, Professor of Semitic Languages at the University of Munich, was aware of this significance when he wrote:

One of the main objects, therefore, which I have kept before me in writing this present book, has been to show that even from the time of Abraham onwards personal names of the characteristic Mosaic type were in actual use among a section of the Semites of Western Asia, and that it is useless to talk any longer of later post-exilic invention. ³⁸

Hommel optimistically envisioned a coming time when

. . . men will be able to brush aside the cobweb themes of the so-called "higher critics" of the Pentateuch, and, leaving such old-fashioned errors behind them, attain to a clear perception of the real facts. ³⁹

Several reversals concerning alleged anachronisms have been necessary due to new information. One classic example concerns Abraham's camels. Gen 12:46 mentions that, along with other animals, Abraham took camels with him into Egypt. For a time, archaeological monuments revealed the presence of sheep, oxen, and donkeys in Egypt, but not the camel; therefore, the critics had usually set this aside as an anachronistic reference. Now, archaeological evidence indicates an early presence of the camel in ancient Egypt; this evidence includes statuettes and figurines of camels, plaques bearing representations of camels, rock carvings and drawings, camel bones, a camel skull, and camel-hair rope. These items range from the 7th century B.C.

³⁶ T. Eric Peet, *Egypt and the Old Testament* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 1924) 101.

³⁷ G. A. Barton, *Archaeology and the Bible* (7th ed.; Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1937) 24.

³⁸ F. Hommel, *The Ancient Hebrew Traditions as Illustrated by the Monuments: A Protest Against the Modern School of Old Testament Criticism* (tr. Edward McClure and Leonard Crossbe; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1897), quoted from J. W. McGarney's *Biblical Criticism* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1956) 214.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 214.

to 3000 B.C.⁴⁰ The early use of the camel had been doubted by Peet⁴¹ and R. H. Pfeiffer.⁴² Even Albright was reluctant to concede this biblical fact; he did acknowledge that "partial sporadic domestication may go back" several centuries before 1000 B.C.⁴³ Skepticism has continued on this issue⁴⁴ despite continuing evidence to the contrary.⁴⁵

Other alleged anachronisms raised by early critics--and still continued by some--include Philistines and Hittites in the patriarchal period. The reference to Abraham's contact with Philistines (Gen 21:32, 34) was considered an anachronistic error because Philistines apparently did not appear in Canaan until long after the patriarchal period. M. Burrows wrote:

We have seen that the Philistines came into Palestine at the beginning of the Early Iron Age, not far from 1200 B.C. it is quite impossible to date Abraham and Isaac as late as this, yet the book of Genesis represents both as having dealings with the Philistines and their king, Abimelek (Gen. 21:22-32; 26:1-33).⁴⁶

Burrows, who was a professor at Yale, went on to explain this as "a convenient and harmless anachronism" and concluded "at any rate, however, the mistake may have come about, it is undoubtedly a mistake."⁴⁷ J. Bright⁴⁸ and G. E. Wright⁴⁹ also questioned these references to Philistines as early as the patriarchal period. But as K. Kitchen so properly pointed out, this is an argument from silence; we know little about the Aegean peoples as compared to those of the rest of the ancient Near East during the 2nd millennium.⁵⁰ Kitchen, and others, have suggested the term "Philistine" may have also been used of

⁴⁰ For a summary of the evidence, cf. J. P. Free, "Abraham's Camels," *JNES* (1944) 144-93.

⁴¹ Peet, *Egypt and the Old Testament*, 60.

⁴² R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (rev. ed.; New York: Harper and Row, 1948) 154.

⁴³ W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1940) 120. He continued to hold a skeptical view in later years. Cf. *JBL* 64 (1945) 287-88; *The Archaeology of Palestine* (4th ed.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1900) 206-7.

⁴⁴ J. Bright, *A History of Israel* (London: S. C. M., 1960) 72-73.

⁴⁵ Old Babylonian and Sumerian texts now support early use of the camel. Camel bones have been found in house ruins at Mari and in various Palestinian sites from 2000 B.C. to 1200 B.C. For documentation, cf. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 79-80. For the most recent discussion of the camel in the Bible, see J. J. Davis, "The Camel in Biblical Narratives," *Tribute to Archer*, 141-49.

⁴⁶ Burrows, *These Stones*, 277.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Bright, *History of Israel*, 73.

⁴⁹ G. E. Wright, *Biblical Archaeology* (n.p.: Gerald Duckworth, 1957) 40.

⁵⁰ Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and the Old Testament*, 80.

earlier Aegean immigrants into Palestine. Amos 9:7 and Jer 47:4 state that the Philistines came from Caphtor (Crete); if these are the same people as the Caphtorim mentioned in Deut 2:33, the alleged anachronism is removed.⁵¹

We conclude our survey of reversals of higher criticism with some observations on Genesis 14, a difficult passage which has received scorn and ridicule from unbelieving critics.

G. A. Barton believed the chapter to have been

composed by a late midrashic writer who had, it is true, access to some Babylonian data, partly late and partly early, but did not know how to use them. He lived so far from the times that he had lost in part the correct historical perspective. Archaeology thus confirms the critical results reached by Kuenen, Wellhausen, Cornill Budde. . . .⁵²

T. Noldeke suggested in 1869 that this chapter was a "fantastic grouping together of names, which either belonged to some remote period or were expressly invented for the occasion."⁵³

Again, Noldeke was very skeptical of this chapter when he wrote: . . . the alliterative pairing also of the names speaks more for their fictitious than for their historical origin. . . this whole expedition is historically improbable to the same extent that it is adapted to the production of a striking effect; the usual sign that it is fictitious. . . .⁵⁴

Wellhausen wrote in 1889 that "all these incidents [Gen. 14] are sheer impossibilities which gain nothing in credibility from the fact that they are placed in a world which had passed away."⁵⁵

Admittedly, Genesis 14 is an unusual chapter as it sits in this place in the story of Abraham. At one time the events narrated in this passage would indeed have seemed unnatural and unrealistic, but not so now. Reversals of attitude are again required of the critics who once heaped scorn upon this unusual chapter. Skepticism of the historical and geographical background of Genesis 14 is unwarranted and only reflects ignorance on the part of the one making it. It seems we need to be constantly reminded of the danger of the argument from silence,

⁵¹ For more detailed discussion on this point, see Kitchen, *Ancient Orient*, 80-81. See also his discussion of "patriarchal Philistines" in "The Philistines," *Peoples of Old Testament Times* (ed. D. J. Wiseman; Oxford: Clarendon, 1973) 56-57.

⁵² G. A. Barton, "Abraham and Archaeology," *JBL* 28 (1909) 159-00.

⁵³ Quoted by McGarvey, *Biblical Criticism*, 216.

⁵⁴ T. Noldeke, *Untersuchungen zur kritik des Alten Testaments* (Kiel: Schwerts, 1869), quoted by Kyle, *Deciding Voice of the Monuments*, 129.

⁵⁵ Quoted by Hommel, *The Ancient Hebrew Tradition as Illustrated by the Monuments*, 159. This same quote from Wellhausen is also found in Wright, "The Testimony of the Monuments," *Back to the Bible*, 146.

especially in view of our still very uneven and incomplete knowledge of the total history of the Ancient Near East.

Until 1975, Ebla was nothing more than a shadowy name, along with many other place names from that part of the world. Suddenly, we learn from archaeology that Ebla had been the center of a vast economic empire under a dynasty of six kings. The names of the four Eastern kings of Genesis 14 fit the period 2000-1700 B.C. Arioch can be compared to Arriyuk or Arriwuk found in the Mari tablets or perhaps Ariukki of the Nuzi onomasticon. Tid'al has been compared to Tudkhalia, a Hittite name used by several kings. Chedorlaomer is probably Elamite.⁵⁶ Although we cannot yet identify these specific kings, the names fit what we know of name patterns for that general time and area. Some late, unknown, uninformed writer could easily have slipped in his story-telling; he could have used wrong name types or missed on some other point of background. But the more we learn of the background of this strange, often-criticized chapter, the more it all fits together. We now are aware that between 2000 and 1750 B.C., coalitions of kings, like those described in our chapter, were an outstanding feature of the politics of the day. One famous Mari letter mentions alliances of ten, fifteen, and even twenty kings, and western expeditions by eastern kings are known from at least Sargon of Akkad onwards.⁵⁷ This highly unusual chapter even caused Albright to be overly-cautious in his assessment of it, but the setting is coming more into focus with continuing new light from ancient Near Eastern studies. Again, reversals of former critical attitudes are required; earlier skepticism of the chapter is fading in the light of new data.

Although the examples of reversals used in this article are from the Pentateuch, the remainder of the OT would yield many more examples. Daniel, for example, is another cause where former criticism has had to yield to new light on Belshazzar, Nabonidus, and Nebuchadnezzar

Unfortunately, the results of higher criticism still linger on in many ways. Although continually discredited by the results of archaeological studies, the general attitude of skepticism toward Scripture remains unyielding. Although admission of certain points of error is to be found among the critics, the general acceptance of higher criticism is still found also. Newer forms of literary analysis too often assume certain "assured results" from the classical era of higher criticism.

⁵⁶ For bibliography on discussions about these names, cf. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, 43-44.

⁵⁷ For documentation, cf. Kitchen, *The Bible in Its World*, 73.

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The Criswell College

4010 Gaston Ave.

Dallas, TX 75246

www.criswell.edu

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu