

THE ROLE OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE IN BIBLICAL
THOUGHT: THE TENDENCIES UNDERLYING
OLD TESTAMENT HISTORIOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION

a. Status of Current Scholarship

It seems acceptable these days to view much in biblical scholarship in terms of dichotomies and tensions. In a recent JSOT article Walter Brueggemann noted a common "dialectic" in three recently published works on OT theology, the one half of the pair emphasizing (respectively) the deliverance/ethical/teleological theme and the other half emphasizing the blessing/aesthetic/cosmic theme (1980: 2-18). Brueggemann himself a year earlier had noted two divergent "trajectories" existing in OT literature, the "liberation" and the "royal" (1979: 161-185). Paul Hanson has noted something similar in the dialectic between "visionary" and "pragmatic" aspects of post-exilic literature (1975). We suggest in this paper that a similar tension exists in the area of OT historiography, and we purpose to understand this tension better in terms of a well-known sociological model. Furthermore, it is our hope that this model can begin to address some of the concerns raised by Brueggemann about a possible new "paradigm" for biblical scholarship:

Closely related to the question of the status of the dialectic is the sociology of the dialectic. It should be apparent that the two "trajectories" ... are not socially disinterested ... But the point is that the two trajectories embody alternative world views and different epistemologies, surely reflective of social circumstance, social vision and social commitment. If these dialectics are to become a paradigm ... then decisions of a sociological kind need to be made ... Thus the articulation of the

various dialectics now invites us to be attentive to the social function of the literature in forming, maintaining and legitimating communities, in sanctioning and evoking change, in constructing and critiquing social reality (1980: 10).

We shall deal here specifically with the social function of Israelite historiography, noting that the tension in Israelite historiography has points of contact with those tensions noted by Brueggemann, Hanson and others. This study of Israelite historiography, specifically with its application of a proven sociological model, will hopefully serve to buttress further the arguments of those who maintain that a new paradigm is emerging for OT scholarship.

That such a dichotomy should exist in OT historiography is hinted at by the extreme divergence of scholarly opinion about whether the historical narratives of the OT are to be viewed primarily as history or primarily as narrative. On the one extreme we are familiar with the assertion that

salvation history did not happen; it is a literary form that has its own historical context. In fact, we can say that the faith of Israel is not an historical faith, in the sense of a faith based on historical event (Thompson, 1974: 328-9).

On the other extreme we are equally familiar with the assertion that "in biblical faith everything depends upon whether the events actually occurred" (Wright, 1952: 126) and "si la foi historique d'Israël n'est pas fondée dans l'histoire, cette foi est erronée, et la nôtre aussi" (de Vaux, 1965: 7).

In the former view it was assumed that in ancient Israel tradition (i.e., historical narrative) was created. The methodological emphasis tended to be literary-critical. The theological presupposition accompanying this methodology was that the God of Israel was a God who spoke, who revealed the divine will through an inspired (literary) word. In the latter view it was assumed that tradition in ancient Israel was primarily preserved. The methodological emphasis tended to be archaeological. The theological presupposition was that the God of Israel was a God who acted, who revealed the divine will through a real event.

These sharp differences between historiographic assumptions, scholarly methodology, and theological presuppositions led to heated debate in the 1950's (see Dever, 1977: 76ff.). In the

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

midst of this debate was heard the cry that "facts and faith do not mix" (Pfeiffer, 1951), and one solution offered to the debate was to seal off hermetically archaeological lines of inquiry from the biblical ones. To date the debate has not been satisfactorily resolved, and most scholarly and theological opinions about the role of historical narrative in biblical thought tend to fall more or less closely toward one of the two extremes.

b. Methodology

We begin with the basic question of motivation for maintaining and "remembering" accounts of the past. Although this is a complex question, a universal motive is undoubtedly meaningfulness; an axiom of psychology is that "memory" and "meaningfulness" are related (Bartlett, 1932; Bransford, 1979). Applied to biblical historiography, this suggests that a picture of Israel's past was maintained and "remembered" because it was understood to be meaningful and relevant to the ongoing concerns of Israelite society (see Childs, 1962). It would seem logical, then, that if we could demonstrate a divergence of such "ongoing concerns" in Israelite society we could reasonably conclude that there was likewise a divergence of motivation for recording and "remembering" the past. This paper purposes to do just this.

Utilizing insights not only from biblical scholars but also from (ancient Near Eastern) historians, cultural anthropologists/sociologists, and philosophers of history we intend to sketch in a cursory manner the outline of a model designed to aid a more sound and accurate understanding of the "tendencies" that shaped Israelite recording of its past. We here purposely define "tendency" as an external sociological force plus an internal ideological motivation.

Our model grows out of an established sociological model often referred to as the "folk-urban continuum" (Miner, 1952). We maintain that there are two types of divergent historiographic tendencies in the OT which correspond roughly to the two poles of this continuum - a "grass-roots tendency" and an "official tendency". The two are polar extremes of what in reality is likewise a continuum. We do not intend to suggest simplistically that one can explain a specific historical narrative in the OT solely in terms of one or the other. Social and historical reality rarely presents the scholar with such clearcut dichotomies; hence most OT narratives a priori may be

expected to contain elements of each tendency. This is why we use the somewhat imprecise term "tendency", readily admitting that we use it somewhat intuitively. We justify this on the grounds that any model is merely an "ideal type" or at best a "mental construct" - an imaginary entity deliberately created only because through it we may hope to understand reality better. A model can never substitute for reality itself, even though it may approximate reality. Its function is to suggest things which deserve further study and especially to suggest hypotheses as to what may be generally true (Redfield, 1947: 295). It must be simple in order to account for a wide range of cross-cultural and chronologically separate phenomena; the more precise the model becomes the less it corresponds to any one specific cultural or historical reality. Hence, models are unfortunately susceptible to being misunderstood and caricatured, and they must consequently be presented - and reviewed - with caution.

The legitimate question may arise: Is it fair to apply this sociological "folk-urban" model to the study of ancient Israel, especially since the demography of ancient Palestine is still poorly understood? This can be answered by pointing out that neither the concept of "folk" or "urban" can be defined solely (or even primarily) in terms of demographic units; both describe extremely different ways of living (associated with different patterns of social organization and ideology) that may appear either in that demographic unit referred to as a "city" or in that unit referred to as a "village" (Redfield, 1947: note 1; Wirth, 1938; 4-7). That people in ancient Israel were conscious of typically "urban" characteristics and ways of life now seems beyond question (Frick, 1977) /1/. That we are more and more beginning to appreciate the uniqueness of the rural ancient Near East and Levant is also indisputable (cf. Adams, 1974; Heltzer, 1976; Marfoe, 1979; Ben-Tor, 1979). It would hence not seem unfair to apply this model at this time, even though a complete picture of the city-countryside continuum in Palestine is not yet (nor ever will be) fully sketched. Certainly future investigations of the spatial arrangements and sizes of hill-country communities in terms of "central place theory" will strengthen our argument that this application is fair (see Wright, 1974: 130; Redman, 1974: 132-3). To the extent that the OT provides information with which we can accurately reconstruct Israelite social organization, and to the extent that it is a repository of Israelite ideology, then the OT is a

legitimate source to utilize when applying the "folk-urban" model.

THE OFFICIAL TENDENCY

The fact that an "urban" population would tend to emphasize different aspects of a nation's history than would a "folk" population may seem prima facie obvious to many. But to appreciate better the factors behind this it is necessary to examine (a) some of the divergent social forces which shape and characterize each population group, (b) the way in which these forces relate to a divergence of "ongoing concerns" (including sense of "meaningfulness" as well as operating ideological values), and (c) the way in which these divergent concerns and values in turn shape diverging "tendencies" in maintaining and "remembering" a picture of the past. We shall first examine the "urban" pole of our model, which in the case of ancient Israel can be associated with a specific demographic unit, namely Jerusalem.

a. "Urban" Patterns of Social Organization and Ideology

When a population center reaches the size in which it is impossible for each member of the community personally to know all the other community members, the character of social relations changes profoundly; face-to-face contacts tend to increase but they are generally impersonal, superficial and transitory (Weber, 1925: 514; Wirth, 1938: 12). The unpredictability that arises from dealing regularly with strangers is magnified when one considers the differentiation and specialization (especially in labor) and the accompanying diversity of interests (especially economic interests) that result from population density. All of this is even further compounded by the innate "heterogeneous" character of "urbanism" - the fact that peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds and beliefs are drawn together in cosmopolitan centers /2/.

As a consequence, these "urban" conditions require the population to downplay their differences (note the political functions of genealogies such as Gen. 10) and norms of tolerance and secularism (= religious neutralism) inevitably arise. That such secularism occurred in Jerusalem is beyond doubt (1 Ki. 11:1-13). The norms and values peculiar to any one religious group (even those that are peculiar to Yahwism) must be de-emphasized, leaving a common core - or "lowest common

denominator" - of norms which can be comfortably shared by all (Lenski, 1961: 9). Chief among these is the ongoing concern for peaceful and predictable co-existence (especially in socio-economic activities) as well as the desire to insure some measure of general prosperity.

These in turn require certain formal social structures deliberately created and maintained through which the general populace can interact in an orderly, predictable, and profitable manner. In other words, law is instituted, the necessary political monopoly of force is created to insure compliance, and a government is thereby established - with the power, of course, to extend its control out into the surrounding countryside for the valued agricultural and pastoral commodities (see 1 Sam. 8). Once it becomes necessary to have these formal social structures it matters little whether they take the form of monarchy, oligarchy, democracy, or whatever. The ongoing concern of basic importance (= the "lowest common denominator") for the urban community in the ancient and biblical (and even modern) world was to preserve and maintain those social structures which provided the needed peace and predictability (and often the desired prosperity or "standard of living" as well). This concern was especially important to those who possessed the political monopoly of force.

b. The "Official" View of the Past

Thompson (in a theological context as opposed to a sociological one) has related an Israelite theology of the past to a social milieu which has several significant points of contact with "urbanism":

[The faith of Israel] is a faith which has its justification, not in the evidence of past events, for the traditions of the past serve only as the occasion for the expression of faith, but in the assertion of a future promise. The promise itself arises out of an understanding of the present which is attributed to the past and recreates it as meaningful. The expression of this faith finds its condensation in an historical form which sees the past as promise. But this expression is not itself a writing of history, nor is it really about the past, but it is about the present hope. Out of the experience of the present, new possibilities of the past emerge, and these new possibilities are expressed typologically in terms of promise and

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

fulfillment. Reflection on the present as fulfillment recreates the past as promise, which reflection itself becomes the promise of a future hope (1974: 329, emphases mine).

It should be obvious that this type of theologizing about the past is basically alien to the politically disenfranchised, the socially outcast, and the poor and oppressed segments of Israelite society, since for them the present could hardly be viewed as "fulfillment". It is not surprising that this theologizing - this altering of the past to make it conform to a meaningful present - emerges from that segment of society which is satisfied with the present, finds meaning in the status quo, and is willing and able to finance the activities of theologians and scribes. This observation probably applies equally well to the various ancient Near Eastern "political theologies". We here label this tendency in Israelite historiography - this desire to alter the past with respect to the present - an "official tendency" since it characteristically occurs within (and often at the behest of) the "urban" offices of royal court or temple priesthood.

As one would expect, and as literary criticism has demonstrated, it is exceedingly difficult to divorce "official" narratives of the past from the needs and interests of the institutions possessing the political monopoly of force. Note, for example, that most literary critics assign the J document to the Solomonic court, the D document to the Josianic court, and the P document to the (post-)exilic temple priesthood. Since these narratives subordinate past historical reality to the subjective concerns and theological values of the present, it is fair to say that these narratives display "mythic" characteristics. A "myth" is, after all, a conscious portrayal of the past (or of the divine) world in ways that satisfy and reflect the subjective values, interests and needs of the present mythmaker and his audience. There can be no doubt that the OT, especially the great literary documents of the Pentateuch, contains a great deal of such "myth" disguised as history. No serious scholar of the Bible considers Gen. 1-11 to be historical, the historicity of the patriarchal narrative seems increasingly in doubt, and even the historicity of the exodus and wilderness wanderings and the Israelite "conquest" are viewed with varying degrees of skepticism. All these narratives are as much, if not more, exhibitions of the subjective values, interests and needs

of their respective authors as they are attestations of historical reality. The recent studies of Thompson and Van Seters on the patriarchal narratives should serve to underscore this point. (In all fairness to the matter it should be mentioned that Thompson and Van Seters disagree greatly about the social context these narratives presuppose, and this should serve to dampen enthusiasm about trying to establish whose values, interests and needs are being expressed in these narratives.)

c. Historiography and Social Control

The audience these "official tendency" narratives address is first and foremost the privileged classes of society (including the royal court and bureaucracy, the priesthood, the nobility, the successful merchants and artisans, and the dependents of the state and temple) - all of whom would have some kind of positive ties to the city, the seat of government. Their sense of satisfaction with the present is powerfully confirmed and their hope for a better tomorrow is reinforced, as is their loyalty and devotion to the present status quo and its political, economic and religious institutions. The disenfranchised elements of society (some of whom would also dwell in or near the city, but most of whom would be rural peasants) are also addressed in these narratives, but (we can imagine) in a much less sympathetic manner. While they may share the "promise of a future hope", their present loyalty and devotion to the status quo is also advocated; they are implicitly told in narratives reflecting "official" theology that the present will not be altered simply to alleviate their burden since the present is (after all) declared by the powerful to be the actual fulfillment of God's past promises. Consequently, these narratives also contain implicit warnings directed against those who would oppose the status quo. (That the Jerusalem temple priests explicitly created liturgical threats on behalf of the king against such malcontents has already been demonstrated; see Spina, 1977: 3.)

The philosopher of history J.H. Plumb (1971) has noted that within centralized, governmental circles tradition tends to be created and that the "official" portrayals of the past tend to be ones that satisfy the needs for social control. George Orwell satirized this in his book 1984: in Oceania of 1984 history is completely re-written every day to suit the needs of the Party - as the present scene changes so does the portrayal of the past. One of the Party's slogans is "Who controls the past controls the future, who controls the present controls the past". Of prime

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

concern is not "truth" but "control", or as Plumb states, "Where the service of the past has been urgently needed, truth has ever been at a discount" (1971: 32). The continuing reality of this "official" historiographic tendency was illustrated a few years ago when the widow of Mao-Tse Tung was "purged" in China: photographs picturing Mao and his wife together were skillfully doctored so that the wife was erased and Mao appeared alone. When Thompson states that "new possibilities of the past emerge out of the experience of the present" (1974: 329) he is accurately describing this tendency, whether it be in ancient Israel or modern China, but at the same time he is (unwittingly, I am sure) giving theological credence to Orwell's satirical "Party slogan" and theological justification for certain propaganda practices of totalitarian regimes /3/. The disturbing implication is that a legitimate role of theology - in ancient Israel as in the modern synagogue or church - is not so much human enlightenment or seeking after truth (which is supposedly liberating) but rather social control (which is by nature enslaving).

This poses a further theological dilemma for which there are no easy answers. While there can be no doubt that "subjective" elements do shape "official" Israelite portrayals of the past, and while these mythmaking theologians in all probability believed that their narratives contained divinely-inspired theological "truths", it now seems far from probable that this "interior overmastering of the human spirit" was indeed totally the work of God (contra Eichrodt, 1961: 15). Doubt must legitimately remain because (1) such "mythmaking" is demonstrably a typical, universal human socio-political tendency "designed to control individuals, or motivate societies, or inspire classes" (Plumb, 1971: 17), and furthermore (2) this practice was in some ways typical (if not definitive) of the various "political theologies" of the ancient Near East (see Frankfort, 1948), especially of the "Baal-worship" which Israel originally saw itself set in opposition to (see Mendenhall, 1973) /4/.

THE GRASSROOTS TENDENCY

While the OT contains narratives about the past which reflect the theological values of the Jerusalem priesthood (P) and the ideological values of the Israelite monarchy (J,D), there can be no doubt that it also contains the literature of those who often condemned priestly theology and royal ideology (e.g., the

pre-exilic prophets). This second tendency we label the "grassroots tendency" because it emanates not from the offices of the temple or state (in fact, only rarely do its proponents come from Jerusalem or any other centralized, urban environment) but rather from ordinary people in various simple walks of life (shepherds, farmers, sycamore-tree tenders, carpenters) who were at home in small villages (Tekoa, Moresheth-gath, Anathoth, Nazareth).

For the sake of our model it will be generally useful to think of this "grassroots tendency" as being the polar opposite of the "official tendency". Instead of altering the past to make it conform to a meaningful present, the "grassroots tendency" is to advocate an altering of the present to make it conform to a meaningful past /5/. Consequently, this tendency is most likely to be evidenced in people who, by identifying with the disenfranchised segments of society, challenge the "mythical" sacrosanctity of the present and its status quo (which usually exists at the expense of the less-fortunate). These people refused to believe that this misery was any part of the present fulfillment of any of God's past promises; hence a paramount concern of theirs was to sever the officially-created, artificial links between Israel's God and its institutional means of social control. In decrying the temporal, institutional norms of human interaction ("law", and the social control interests of the political and religious authorities), they also drew upon their religious heritage to advocate, in the name of Israel's God, principles of human interaction (i.e., transcendent values) which were more sensitive to individual human beings and their needs.

a. "Folk" Patterns of Social Organization and Ideology

We can better appreciate this "grassroots tendency" by comparing it to the "folk" pole of our model. Again we must emphasize that we are describing here an ideal type which in reality rarely exists.

When a population group (like a rural village) is small and isolated people know one another intimately and behavior tends to be personal and traditional (Redfield, 1947: 293). There is virtually no division of labor (except along gender lines) and no specialization or diverging interests (ibid., 297). The homogeneity and strong sense of group solidarity found in the "folk" community means that individuals are not treated as objects (i.e., "thing fashion") but rather as being valuable in and of themselves ("a person is myself in another form"; ibid., 301).

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

Kinship ties, which are often fictive in nature, effectively guarantee an equitable distribution of resources and help to insure that everyone's needs are met (*ibid.*, 305). (This is most likely the context presupposed in 2 Ki. 4: 11-13, where a woman from the village of Shunem turns down a favor from Elisha by saying that her own "kinsmen" can care for her better than can the national leaders.) In short, competition between neighbors and social stratification is unheard of in the ideal "folk" community.

Members of a "folk" community share common values about what is of ultimate importance in life, and they demonstrate those values naturally in their daily course of living (*ibid.*, 298-9). As Redfield states:

The folk society exists not so much in the exchange of useful functions as in common understandings as to the ends given. The ends are not stated as matters of doctrine, but are implied by the many acts which make up the living that goes on in the society. Therefore, the morale of a folk society - its power to act consistently over periods of time and to meet crises effectively is not dependent upon discipline exerted by force or upon devotion to some single principle of action but to the concurrence and consistency of many or all of the actions and conceptions which make up the whole round of life (1947: 299).

Consequently, formal social structures such as are evidenced in "urban" communities are unnecessary: there is no such thing as legislation of behavior (*ibid.*, 300) and there is no need for any coercive monopoly of force (*ibid.*, 299). As a result, the social control interests which are basic to the concerns of urban communities - and which are particularly important to those who possess the monopoly of force - simply do not exist in the ideal "folk" community. Instead, notions of moral worth are attached to the traditional, unchanging, and highly functional "folk" way of life (*ibid.*, 297,303). Interpersonal relationships are not governed externally through formal social structures such as law but rather internally - "justified in the conceptions held of the supernatural world" (*ibid.*, 299). (We cannot help but notice the formal similarity between this "folk" ideal about the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and St Paul's theology of "justification by faith".) In short, the whole round of life is considered "sacred"; it is not religiously neutral (in this regard,

note Exod. 21-23).

Even though members of the ideal "folk" community have no historical sense such as literate, "civilized" people have (*ibid.*, 296), they are nevertheless extremely conscious of tradition; they affirm that meaning is to be found in the given way of life and they encourage one another to direct present endeavors along these same lines (*ibid.*, 300). Hence, the "official" practice of recreating the past is unheard of; in the "folk" community the present is to conform to the past, and in the unchanging countryside it usually does (*ibid.*, 297).

Of course, this ideal "folk" community probably never existed in ancient Israel or anywhere else in the ancient Near East because rural villages were never truly isolated as they must be in the ideal. Contacts with nearby urban centers made the development of pure "folk" communities impossible. Nevertheless, a noticeable gulf continued to exist between urban centers (usually political centers of social control) and rural villages, not only in terms of social organization ("tribal confederation" vs. "city-state") but also in terms of ideology. The ideological gulf is clearly demonstrated on the one hand by the antipathy villagers expressed towards such mechanisms of urban social control as the census (Speiser, 1958) and the royal corvée (cf. *ARMT* III: 38); on the other hand it is demonstrated by the prejudices urban people had about the rustic, unsophisticated, tribalistic "barbarians" of the hinterland (Matthews, 1978: 2; in this regard note John 1:45-46). It should come as no surprise then that many rural proponents of these "folk-like" values in ancient Israel - from Elijah of Tishbe to Jeremiah of Anathoth to Jesus of Nazareth - met considerable opposition from the "official" leaders whose dominant interest was social control. The ideological gulf could indeed be wide, and the divergence of "ongoing concerns" in ancient Israel tended to polarize between the felt need for operating ethical values and the felt need for operating social control interests (see Mendenhall, 1975).

b. The "Grassroots" View of the Past

How could comparatively unsophisticated rural people even begin to sever the officially-created artificial links between Israel's God and its institutional means of social control? We maintain that the answer is to be found in the alternative way these people used the past. Since the past tends to be maintained and "remembered" because it is meaningful and relevant to the "ongoing concerns" in society, and since we have

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

sound biblical and sociological evidence suggesting an ideal polar dichotomy of such "ongoing concerns" in Israelite society, then it does not seem too radical to maintain that an alternative way of using the past existed for non-urbanized Israelites. It seems clear that in urban centers of social control the tendency was to alter the past so as to confer legitimacy upon a meaningful present. The converse could be true for another segment of society: the tendency to advocate an altering of the present to make it conform to a meaningful (and "legitimate") past.

1. Folktales and the Past. In the ideal "folk" community described above we noted the absence of "historical sense". The question now becomes: How could non-urbanized Israelites (whom, up to this point, we have been studying in terms of this ideal "folk" model) preserve a picture of the past? Can we demonstrate that, unlike ideal "folk" communities, they did have a sense of "history"?

One vehicle that "folk" communities have for transmitting and maintaining cultural values and for encouraging present conformity to the given (= past) way of life is the folktale (Bascom, 1965: 298; Propp, 1968). But folktales themselves do not tend or intend to transmit and maintain accurate memory of the past; what is important is the "structure of exemplary behavior" which is communicated and usually intended by folktales (Eliade, 1963: 196-7). On the one hand a folktale can communicate values opposed to urban social control interests (cf. Judg. 9:1-21?). Many of the stories in the book of Judges suggest that rural villagers could tell stories of the past which had relevance to the position of the non-urbanized peasant (cf. Boling, 1969: 31ff.). But on the other hand a folktale can also promulgate secular social control interests by bestowing legitimacy upon the political monopoly of force (cf. conclusions regarding the book of Ruth in Sasson, 1979: 232, 239-40, 250-1). It would hence seem that if we are to demonstrate that non-urban Israelites had a sense of "history" we cannot do so through an examination of the folktale.

2. Covenant Ideology and the Past. We maintain that the crucial influence leading to the rise of "historical sense" in ancient Israel is to be found in the pre-monarchic (hence pre-urban as well) structure of Hebrew covenant ideology. In this regard, any discussion must rely heavily upon the insights and observations offered by George Mendenhall. The well-known formal similarities between the structure of covenant

thought in early Israel and that of the Hittite political treaties consequently push our search for the origins of "historical sense" out of Palestine and back into the Late Bronze Age /6/.

In the Hittite political treaties, a vassal's current political obligations to his Hittite suzerain were understood to result from a past favor he received from that suzerain; the prologues to these treaties detail those respective past favors. It is extremely unlikely that these prologues were exclusively literary creations designed to enhance the prestige of the Hittite political force (although the prologues undoubtedly did this). The prologues were designed for a very specific purpose: to compel the grateful obedience of particular vassals. The question confronting the Hittite suzerain was: What is to prevent a particular vassal from rebelling once he feels he has sufficient military strength? The answer: The vassal's internalized sense of obligation and loyalty ("common cause") to the suzerain. A mere narrative about the suzerain's past favor cannot generate such an internal state of obligation since no one would be less convinced by such a manipulation of words than would the vassal. A vassal would not remain loyal to his suzerain simply because the suzerain was the subject of a good story! Rather, only a genuine (i.e., historical) experience of the suzerain's past favor could even hope to instill in the vassal a compelling sense of gratitude, obligation, and loyalty. Hence, the prologues to Hittite treaties tend to contain real accounts of "history" - interpreted history to be sure (all history is this), but not fabricated history. The events recorded in a covenant prologue were consequently treated very conservatively by those who composed the accounts, and these prologues have since become a significant source for reconstructing Hittite political history.

This same covenantal structure of thought - this same connection between past favor and present obligation - existed in early Israel. The question of how Israel came to exist in Palestine need not concern us here; suffice it to say that during the 12th cent. BC there existed in the hill-country of Palestine a confederation of village-based "tribes" calling itself "Israel" and that at this same time the power and influence of urbanized Palestinian city-states was severely restricted. This widespread unity of peasant villagers can best be understood in terms of "covenant" - in terms of "solemn promises made binding by oath". In other words, in the absence of external instruments of social control, Israel adopted internalized values and principles

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

which effectively governed behavior. Predictability and fulfillment in human interaction was guaranteed in early Israel almost exclusively on the basis of covenant promises reliably made and reliably kept (i.e., on the basis of trust and on the demonstrated integrity of individuals; see Mendenhall, 1973).

For almost two centuries legislation and formal institutions of social control were largely unnecessary. This pattern of social organization was far more "folk-like" than it was "urban", despite the probability that early Israel was a relatively large group of heterogeneous peoples and tribes (*ibid.*). As is typical of "folk" communities, these interpersonal relations were "justified in the conceptions held of the supernatural world": the early Israelites understood their obligations to be obligations to a divine suzerain, namely Yahweh. Consequently, early Israel was as much a religious phenomenon as it was a sociological one, although we are here concerned primarily with the latter.

What could compel these early Israelites to maintain a "folk-like" society based upon nothing more than promises, trust and integrity? An answer is probably provided by the pattern of "covenant" which Israel adopted: past experience. Sociologically stated, the experience of witnessing the (Mediterranean-wide) collapse of social control systems led many in Palestine (and probably elsewhere in the Near East) to devalue altogether the political monopoly of force as the legitimate instrument of social control and to adopt (out of necessity) more "folk-like", internalized standards of self-control. Religiously stated, the experience interpreted as the beneficent acts of the god Yahweh - the "liberation from bondage to Egypt", which could signify a number of different historical experiences /7/ - led many Israelites to recognize subjectively that god as their Suzerain, as the source of their "folk-like", internalized standards of self-control. While rational and scientific minds may doubt the validity of the subjective religious interpretation given to the experience (the book of Judges records that even some in early Israel themselves had such doubts), no one, particularly the rationally and scientifically-minded, can doubt the reality of the original experience itself (even though we may not be able to understand it fully). In other words, the Hebrew covenant prologue, like its Hittite counterpart, was history, interpreted but not fabricated, a fact reinforced by the archaeological record of the end of the late Bronze Age.

It has recently been concluded on the grounds of stylistic analysis that Israelite and Hittite historical narrative belong in

the same category, in contrast to the annalistic technique of the Assyrian royal inscriptions (Cancik, 1976). This has been explained in terms of a similar dependence upon covenant prologues - whether it be those prologues of Hittite political treaties or that of the Israelite religious covenant (Mendenhall, 1978). Hence, it seems more and more likely that at the core of the Israelite covenant prologue was a genuine historical event - an experience which was meaningful to the earliest Israelites.

c. Historiography and Internalized Values

But once the account of this experience began to be transmitted to subsequent generations who had not witnessed these constitutive events, the potential for literary embellishment and fabrication arose. The degree to which such potential was in fact realized would depend upon the adoption of new and different "ongoing concerns" in Israelite society. In other words, since narratives about the past tend to change as do present realities (Plumb, 1971), then the temptation to alter significantly the given traditions about pre-monarchic Israel must have been extremely great precisely at those times and places where Israelite society was undergoing significant change. Jerusalem of the 10th cent. BC was one such time and place: an Israelite régime replaced a Jebusite one, won an empire and then lost it. The chief "ongoing concern" was suddenly quite different: the social control interests of the Israelite monopoly of force. The picture of Israel's pre-monarchic past was bound to be altered to address this new concern /8/.

Conversely, since change is far more gradual and far less noticeable in the rural countryside (Redfield, 1947: 297) the "ongoing concern" in Israelite villages would for the most part still remain unchanged (despite the situation in Jerusalem), continuing to be primarily a concern for the "folk-like" maintenance of the community (i.e., social control based upon internalized values, tacit understandings, trust and integrity instead of upon institutionalized force). In such an environment there would be much less temptation to tamper with the picture of the past. (In the next section we intend to offer some evidence suggesting that "grassroots" traditions could sometimes even maintain a more historically accurate memory of the past than could "official" traditions.)

This divergence of "ongoing concerns" in "urban" and "folk" segments of Israelite society would result in different motives for using the past. We may compare here two biblical texts, one

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

which is blatantly "official" (in this case a product of the temple cult) and one which is blatantly "grassroots" (the product of a rural villager). Our first text is Psalm 105, which recounts the Hebrew patriarchs, the sojourn in Egypt, the exodus and wilderness wanderings, culminating with a reference to the "conquest". For what reason does the psalmist make the appeal to "Remember the wonderful works that (Yahweh) has done" (verse 5)? The answer is found in the final climactic verses:

(Yahweh) gave (Israel) the lands of the nations,
and they took possession of the fruit of the peoples' toil,
ba^Cābūr they might keep his statutes
and observe his laws (vv.44-45).

The word ba^Cābūr is crucial; as a preposition of purpose it underscores the psalmist's theology about why the past is significant - Yahweh did all these "wonderful works" so that/in order that (ba^Cābūr) his people might keep his huqqōt and his tōrōt. In the context of this psalm, which elsewhere directly advocates participation in the cultic ritual (vv.1-3,45c), these terms can hardly designate internalized ethical values but instead refer to a complex of formal religious and civil norms supervised by the cult which worshippers were encouraged to conform to. In short, the past is here recorded to legitimize the Israelite state (which governed "the lands of the nations") and to heighten the prestige of the temple cult (wherein one could "keep [Yahweh's] statutes and observe his laws"). There is virtually no continuity of thought here with pre-monarchic covenant concepts; in fact, there are no references to the covenants of Sinai or Shechem! The "ongoing concerns" here are predominantly those of social control.

The second text is Micah 6:1-8, which also recounts the past history of Israel, primarily the exodus and the (early stages of?) "conquest". Why does Micah make the appeal to "remember... and know the saving acts of Yahweh" (v.5)? Again the answer is found in the final climactic verse of the oracle:

He has showed you, O man, what is good;
and what does Yahweh require of you
but to do justice, to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? (v.8).

There is obviously no attempt here to heighten the prestige of the temple cult (which is ridiculed in verses 6-7). In fact, the

universalistic address of this oracle ("O man") combined with phrases which have no meaning in a social control context (Cašōt mišpāṭ w^eah^abat ḥesed w^ehašnē^{ac} leket Cim-J^elōheykā) indicate Micah's theology about why the past is significant - Yahweh's past "saving acts" obligate one to adopt internalized yet functional values about human conduct. The structure of thought here has clear points of contact with pre-monarchic covenant thought (Hillers, 1969: 125ff.), which demonstrates the continuity and relative lack of change (despite a gap of almost half a millennium!) in the Palestinian countryside. The norms here advocated for human interaction are "folk-like" in form; there are no social control interests implied whatsoever.

THE TENDENCIES IN CONFLICT

a. Ancient Israel

Generally speaking, it would seem that the "grassroots tendency" was to use the past in ways that in the first place criticized and undermined the sacrosanctity of the "official" institutions of social control (see further below). In the second place this tendency was to use the past in order to propound certain internalized principles such as "love", "mercy", and "justice" as the (formally "folk-like") basis for governing human interaction. However, one could argue that a blatant misuse or distortion of the past (or even a "fictitious" folktale) could achieve these same ends - in other words, that people seeking to alter society can themselves often propagandize, resorting to fictions and myths in attempts to win sympathy and support for their cause (cf. this thesis applied to the pre-exilic prophets in Cohen, 1979). Evidence of this practice of altering or fabricating the past seems to be lacking in the pre-exilic prophets (our major OT source for the "grassroots tendency" in its purest form), and this fact tends to underscore the thesis that the prophets were ultimately less concerned with "social reform" than they were with moral and spiritual integrity (contra Cohen). In fact, we do have evidence that some proponents of this "grassroots tendency" actually objected to the practice of revising the past, and in these objections we see some evidence of a very early and rudimentary form of historical criticism. ("Historical criticism" is here defined as an attempt to understand the past in its own terms as a time distinctively different from the present; Plumb, 1971: 21.)

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

On at least three noteworthy occasions Jeremiah practiced some form of historical criticism:

1. Living during the days of the Deuteronomistic reform, when a great deal of literary activity was going on (sponsored by the royal court of Josiah), Jeremiah had the following comment about the literary activity of his day;

How can you say, "We are wise and the law of Yahweh is with us"? But behold, the false pen of the scribes has made it into a lie (8:8).

If the "law" referred to is Deuteronomy (or the D narrative in general), then it seems possible that Jeremiah considers its historiography to be a "false lie". A similar denunciation of "official" narrative may perhaps be found in Malachi's scathing attack on the "biased instruction" of the post-exilic priests (Mal. 2:1-9, referring to the P narrative?).

2. Even though P was probably not yet written in Jeremiah's day, the portrayal of the exodus and wilderness wanderings as a cultic event characterized by elaborate ritual (cf. Numbers) was undoubtedly already popular. The present fulfillment that some segments of Israelite society derived from ritual and from the cultic establishment was giving rise to a literary re-creation of this past in ritualistic terms. Jeremiah, employing an historical-critical insight, declared this to be false:

Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel: "Add your burnt offerings to your sacrifices and eat the flesh. For in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this commandment I gave them, 'Obey my voice, and I will be your God and you will be my people, and walk in all the ways that I command you, that it may be well with you' " (7:21-23).

Jeremiah was using an historical observation (that the exodus and wilderness wanderings were not characterized by divinely-ordained cultic ritual) to bring under judgement the "official" portrayal, whose "myth" about Moses' time functioned primarily to legitimize the authority of the existing cult. (Compare Amos 5:25, a rhetorical question whose answer is understood to be "no".)

3. If the "official" literary narrative of D could, for whatever theological reasons, focus on the centrality and inviolability of the temple (1 Ki. 8:15ff.; 9:3; cf. Deut. 12) and gloss over the

fact (as 1 Samuel does) that Shiloh, Yahweh's initial "place of residence", had been destroyed, Jeremiah could not (7:1-15) /9/. In essence, Jeremiah declared that through a genuine human experience (a past event) God had demonstrated the foolishness of the sort of subjective faith that the temple was under God's special, protective care. Jeremiah here could not be using the past for the purposes of social control (since he had no power to force his views upon others); rather he was using the past to enlighten his audience - he was presenting an historical fact which he thought ought to influence and shape their values. For Jeremiah, an experience in History demonstrated the vanity of that which the non-historical Literary Word affirmed.

Other possibly disparaging remarks about "official" literary creativity are found in Amos 2:4 and Isa. 10:1. The general practice of basing theology upon present "fulfillment" is roundly criticized by all the pre-exilic prophets ("Woe to those who are at ease..."); they lament the fact that Yahweh's will (and perhaps Israel's past as well?) becomes twisted to accommodate the self-centered concerns of the comfortable (Mic. 2:11; 3:5,11; Isa. 30:9-11).

b. Ancient Near East

The same sociological forces and ideological motivations underlying the "official"- "grassroots" dichotomy undoubtedly existed in ancient Mesopotamia, even though we have yet to see this manifested in Mesopotamian literature (Adams, 1974: esp. 8-9). Part of the reason for this is certainly the (chance) fact that most of the written records from ancient Mesopotamia come to us from "official" archives and libraries; we have virtually no records at all emanating from the experiences of the Mesopotamian peasant which attest to his outlook on the world, on the institutions which governed his affairs, or on his people's past. Another factor is not related to chance, and that is the complex nature of the Mesopotamian writing system (syllabic cuneiform), which prohibited all but the best-educated élite from preserving their thoughts in writing. But that "official" theologians in Mesopotamia could fabricate a past in order to enhance their prestige and further advance their social control interests is beyond doubt (see Gelb, 1949: 346-8).

"Official" and "grassroots" tendencies do appear in Egypt, however, but they are couched in documents which are notoriously difficult to date and which do not fit into the literary genre of "historiography". For example, the Memphite

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

Theology of the Old Kingdom period (ca. 2700-2180 BC) attributes ultimate authority to the inspired and creative hu ("word"), and demonstrates that in the official Old Kingdom world view "the incidents of history lacked ultimate reality" (Frankfort, 1948: 35). In fact, Frankfort has shown (1948: chapter 2) that the Memphite Theology, arising from the "fulfilled" segment of Egyptian society (the royal bureaucracy and cult of Ptah at Memphis), provided the ideological foundation for the highly centralized (and undoubtedly totalitarian) institution of kingship. By creating a myth about a parallel, divine "shadow" world, the Memphite Theology bestowed a sense of sacrosanct legitimacy upon the Egyptian institutions of court and cult - even to the extreme of Pharaonic deification.

But this theology was by no means accepted by all segments of Egyptian society, or even perhaps by a majority (Posener, 1960: 20-21; Wildung, 1977). A viable "grassroots tendency" - almost certainly having its ideological and sociological roots in the decentralized tribal society of the predynastic period (late 4th to early 3rd millennium BC) - enabled many Egyptians to observe from the objective realities of their own experience that this "official" theology was false. The First Intermediate Period of Egypt (ca. 2180-2040 BC), when the "official" institutions of court and cult languished, provides us with a rare and valuable glimpse into the thought of common people. The "official" theology of the Old Kingdom Period was subjected to much criticism and ridicule. In the first place, there appeared to be widespread disrespect for the hu ("word"): there is some oblique evidence that most literary material, whether sacred or secular in nature, was regarded by the masses at this time with the utmost contempt (Posner, 1972: 85) /10/. In the second place, the image of the "divine Pharaoh" was irreverently tarnished. In fact, historically(?)-critical portrayals of the Pharaoh appeared during the First Intermediate Period, especially in the Instruction of Meri-ka-Re and in the Admonitions of Ipuwer /11/. Apparently, even in ancient Egypt History (i.e., experience) could demonstrate the vanity of that which the Literary Word affirmed.

THE TENDENCIES IN CONTINUUM

In constructing our model of Israelite historiography, and in basing it upon the well-known sociological models of the "folk" and "urban" ideal types, we have purposely heightened the

dichotomy between "grassroots" and "official" historiographic tendencies. Perhaps we have done so to the point of distortion, of inviting misunderstanding instead of stimulating productive reflection and response. It has not been our intention to suggest that everything "grassroots" is automatically "good" (theologically valid) and everything "official" is automatically "bad" (theologically invalid). Social and historical realities present us with plenty of exceptions: rural villagers can be ruthlessly "tribalistic" and prejudiced, demonstrating on occasion remarkable insensitivity to matters of justice and morality (cf. Judg. 20:12-13); conversely, government officials can sometimes demonstrate a genuine concern for egalitarianism and great sensitivity to ethical concerns (cf. 2 Sam. 12). But it has been our intention to use the model to illustrate a tension in our OT sources that cannot easily be dismissed, glossed over, or harmonized, to seek to trace this tension to characteristic ways that social organization and ideology inter-relate, and (more generally) to sensitize biblical scholars to the presence - as well as to the impact - of non-urban populations in ancient Israel.

Up to this point we have been describing in idealized terms the two polar extremes of what in reality was a continuum. The complex and daily interactions in ancient Israel between city and countryside, between "urban" and "folk" characteristics, between governors and governed, and between those who found "fulfillment" in the present and those who felt victimized by it resulted in the cross-fertilization of "grassroots" and "official" ideologies and the consequent fading of any ideal, polar extremes. (Two possible demographic manifestations of this might be the presence of poor and oppressed people inside the city and the presence of government representatives with "official" loyalties stationed in outlying villages.) In reality, there was probably a full spectrum of ideological concerns in ancient Israel and innumerable strands of tradition reflecting these concerns in varying degrees. Note, for example, how Micah readily accepts the concept of "Messiah", which probably had its immediate origins in royal propaganda (Psalm 2?) with antecedents in Late Bronze Age paganism. It is virtually impossible to examine any historical narrative in the OT exclusively in terms of one tendency or the other.

One example of this cross-fertilization of tendencies is evidenced by the form which Israelite official theologians used in order to legitimize existing political and religious institutions. We find in the OT no systematic discourses about God's

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

heavenly kingdom which on formal grounds could compare with the blatantly mythic traditions of Egypt (Osiris-Horus myths), Canaan (Baal cycle), or Mesopotamia (Enuma elish myth). Instead we find a purportedly historical narrative about Yahweh's past involvement with Israelite "patriarchs". The "official" theologians themselves never made the typical Near Eastern assertion that (Hebrew) "kingship was lowered from heaven"; instead they depict that kingship as the result of cause-and-effect processes (i.e., "history"). This is not to say that these "official" theologians did not often radically re-write or fabricate these narratives to make them more satisfying to current needs and concerns (note the Chronicler's re-writing of the Deuteronomistic version of Israelite history). This is to say that when selecting a form for propagandizing, Israelite officials adapted an historiographic form which had its roots (in Israel) in the non-urban, pre-monarchic concept of covenant (Cancik, 1976; Mendenhall, 1978).

Another example of how this cross-fertilization affected OT historiography is the D document. Although undoubtedly a product of "official" Jerusalem circles (probably the court of Josiah), it is at the same time our most reliable source for pre-exilic Israelite history and, at least in its account of the monarchic period, it seems to demonstrate very little of the "official tendency" of altering the past to make it conform to a meaningful present. Its seemingly objective narration of royal despotism, the self-interest of governmental officials, and cultic corruption is not what we would expect, and this demands explanation. The D document stands out because of its reliance upon the theology (among other things) of the book of Deuteronomy, a theology which can fairly be designated "hybrid" since it bestows legitimacy upon king and cult (an official concern) conditional upon their faithfulness vis-à-vis the ethical norms of the pre-monarchic Mosaic covenant (a grassroots concern). Nicholson (1967: 58-82) has demonstrated that this theology, particularly in its critical attitude towards the monarchy, appears to have originated among the non-official prophetic party in northern Israel which maintained its allegiance to pre-monarchic, non-urban social structure ("amphictyony") and ideology (Mosaic covenant) /12/. He has also noted that "in order to have [their theology] accepted and put into operation by Judaeen authorities [this "prophetic party"] had to make certain concessions to the Jerusalem traditions notably in demanding the centralization of the cult"

(1967: 102). In essence, this "prophetic party" surrendered the integrity of its original theology in order to satisfy the official authority's social control interest. As a result, the historiography of the "Deuteronomistic school" evidences a blend of "grassroots" and "official" tendencies.

Another example of the cross-fertilization of ideologies is found in the person of Isaiah. Despite being a Jerusalem resident - and perhaps a member of one of the more affluent, aristocratic families - Isaiah was nevertheless one of the most eloquent spokesmen for "grassroots" notions about the priority of ethic over social control. In this regard we may compare him with the NT Paul, who likewise had a privileged, "official" upbringing (Acts 22:3ff.) and yet became the leading advocate in the early Church for the priority of internalized faith over externalized law. But lest we be tempted to emphasize unduly the sociological factors involved in such "cross-fertilization" of ideology and too readily assume that this phenomenon was an ordinary part of Israelite society, we must recognize a fact of no small importance, namely that both Isaiah and Paul attribute their respective "grassroots" sensitivities to a theophany, that is, to an extraordinary, extra-social experience (Isa. 6:1-13; Gal. 1:11-17).

The anthropologist Robert Redfield has demonstrated that in peasant societies, despite continuous interaction between city and countryside, distinctions between "official" traditions and "grassroots" traditions are never completely eliminated. Redfield observes that "the content of knowledge comes to be double, one content for the layman, another for the hierarchy" (1955:28-29). Borrowing the terminology von Grunebaum used to characterize Islamic religion, Redfield labels the one type of knowledge "the little tradition of the largely unreflective many" and the other "the great tradition of the largely reflective few" (1955: 26ff.). The term "great tradition" is used (even though numerically speaking it is a minority tradition) because, as it is associated with the comparatively more prestigious and elite "official" institutions, in time it becomes the normative or orthodox tradition. Important for our purposes is von Grunebaum's observation that each of these traditions "develops a historiography representative of its aspirations" (1955: 31-32).

CONCLUSIONS

When describing the interaction between the "great tradition" and the "little tradition" twenty-five years ago, Redfield suggested that cultural anthropologists improve their working communications with historians - including epigraphers and archaeologists (1955: 29). A decade later the noted Assyriologist A.L. Oppenheim suggested basically the same thing (1964: 29-30). As early as 1951 the famous Egyptologist John Wilson employed Redfield's model of the "folk society" to describe pre-dynastic Egypt (1951: 34 ff.). More recently, some Assyriologists have begun utilizing anthropological and sociological data and have begun to understand better the "social dimorphism" of the ancient Near East. Similarly, biblical scholars and even OT theologians have begun to recognize dimorphisms, tensions, trajectories, dichotomies, and dialectics in the OT, and are speculating that a new "paradigm" might be needed to help clarify and explain these phenomena from a sociological perspective. For the record, we have listed here a selection of some of the more significant dichotomies that, in our opinion, will help elucidate many aspects of Israelite history and OT theology:

social organization

Tönnies (1955): "community"/"association"

(Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft)

Miner (1952): "folk"/"urban"

Miner (1968): "community"/"society"

ideology

Mendenhall (1973: 200): "covenant"/"law"

Mendenhall (1975): "values"/"social control"

Hanson (1975): "visionary"/"pragmatic"

Brueggemann (1979: 180): "liberation"/"royal"

theology

Westermann (1978): "deliverance"/"blessing"

Terrien (1978): "ethical"/"aesthetic"

Hanson (1978): "teleological"/"cosmic"

tradition/historiography

Redfield (1955): "Great Tradition"/"Little Tradition"

this study: "grassroots tendency"/"official tendency"

miscellaneous

Hanson (1978: 31): "experience"/"tradition"

Hanson (1978: 37) "new event"/"heritage"

nature of OT debate: "history"/"narrative"

nature of divine revelation debate: "God who acts"/"God who speaks"

The fact that there are several significant and demonstrable similarities between what biblical scholars, Near Eastern historians, philosophers of history, cultural anthropologists, and sociologists have independently observed about the nature and role of historiography - namely, that the intentions (theological and ideological presuppositions) and the products (historical narratives and traditions) of urban specialists such as priests and scribes differ radically from those of non-urban laity - should suggest that a new paradigm for biblical scholarship is indeed possible.

This is not to say that our paradigm, based upon the "folk-urban continuum", is the only possible paradigm and does not need greater refinement. Seasoned professionals in biblical studies, history, anthropology, sociology, and even theology will undoubtedly be able to criticize some of the specifics contained herein as well as offer additional evidence in support of this general paradigm. But one benefit of the model presented herein is that it enables us to utilize the continued studies of both literary critics and archaeologists, but from an historically-sensitive perspective that appreciates the limitations of each. The cry that the debate between rival "schools" can only be resolved by having biblical studies separate itself from archaeology - a cry that (often not without good reason) has become increasingly popular in the past decade - is seen to be extremely premature. We agree with those who say that biblical studies needs a sociologically sound paradigm of Israelite society, ideology, and historiography that enables the historian to synthesize responsibly and meaningfully the data gleaned by literary critics and archaeologists. More fundamentally, however, we believe that biblical studies in general needs a greater sensitivity to the impact that village populations had both in ancient Israel and upon the formation of the OT.

NOTES

1 The ambiguity of the Hebrew word qir, "city" should reinforce the nature of the "folk-urban" model as a continuum, not as a polar dicotomy (note also the similar ambiguity of the Akkadian alum). This ambiguity also cautions us against trying to establish rigid, demographic definitions for the phenomena we are here labelling "folk" and "urban".

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

2 The relatively large and dense population of Jerusalem throughout the biblical period (with the obvious exception of the Babylonian exile of 586-538 BC) cannot be questioned. Throughout the monarchic period the heterogeneous character of that city is well attested by the continuous presence of Jebusites, Pelethites and Cherethites. Since it was a major capital especially in the 10th cent. BC, we also have good reason to suspect the presence of Philistines, Canaanites, Amorites, Perizzites and Hivites as well as Syrians, Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites. Many non-Israelites held official positions of responsibility under the Israelite regime, since the Israelites themselves had no experience in statecraft or in running the urban machinery of government. On the diversity of labor, see the articles in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1962), vol.1, pp.724-5; and vol.3, p.589.

3 As Mendenhall has pointed out (1978), other recent examples of the past being re-created to serve on-going social control interests include the "aryanization" of Jesus affected by German theologians half a century ago.

4 The contemporary theologian can remove doubts about the divine inspiration of this "official tendency" only by accusing God himself of distorting historical truth, implying that God is more interested in issues of social control than in truth. It furthermore implies that God cannot live comfortably with historical reality, much less have any impact upon it, his only recourse being to falsify it! There is of course another alternative, and that is to exempt the ancient Israelite priests and scribes from allowing their own secular interests to masquerade as God's, but this alternative would require us to believe that normal sociological and historical processes played no role in shaping ancient Israelite society or history (and that the Bible was "lowered from heaven"); it would force us into the uncomfortable equation of scientific history with Heilsgeschichte.

5 As we shall see, this was not a simple exercise in nostalgia, for those things which were valued about the past were not the sorts of things which typically are the object of nostalgia. What was advocated was the operating values of the past and the manner in which these values found expression in the past way of life; it was not a desire to return to the past "lifestyle" or culture per se.

6 This same structure of covenant thought is reportedly also

attested in the Early Bronze Age tablet "d" from Byblos, which Mendenhall plans to publish in the coming year.

7 On the one hand it could refer immediately to the experience of that group that escaped across Yam Suph with Moses, on the other hand it could refer to the total collapse of Egyptian imperial control of Palestine in the late 13th cent. BC viewed from the perspective of the Palestinian peasant.

8 If, for example, the historical origins of Israel are to be found in a 12th cent. BC "peasant revolt/withdrawal" from the Late Bronze Age urban "monopolies of force" (cf. the theses of Mendenhall and Gottwald) then we should not be surprised that our "official" accounts would be hesitant to depict it as such since those accounts themselves are products of a similar urban "monopoly of force" opposed to peasant autonomy: Iron Age Jerusalem.

9 Cf. also Ps. 78:56-64. It seems possible that in the "grassroots" villages of ancient Israel poetry was originally the medium for transmitting accounts of the past (cf. Exod. 15, Judg. 5, Deut. 32). The focus of such poems is understandably not on the event per se but rather on the meaning of the event; consequently the more-specific historical details were likely transmitted orally and prosaically. Such a suggestion is tentative however and merits further study.

10 "Why really, the writings of the august enclosure are taken away. The place of secrets which was (so formerly) is (now) laid bare ... Why really, public offices are open, and their writings are taken away ... Why really, the writings of the scribes of the mat have been removed ... Why really, the laws of the enclosures are put out-of-doors. Men actually walk on them in the highways. Poor men tear them up in the street" (from the Admonitions of Ipuwer, ANET, 3rd ed., 442).

11 In the Instruction of Meri-ka-Re the Pharaoh is portrayed confessing his own mortal shortcomings: "Behold, a misfortune happened in my time: the Thinite regions were hacked up. It really happened through what I had done, but I knew of it (only) after (it) was done" (ANET, 3rd ed., 417). The prophet Ipuwer, in extreme irreverence, is portrayed blaming the Pharaoh of his day with the existing anarchy: "Authority, perception, and justice are with thee, (but) it is confusion which thou wouldst set throughout the land, together with the noise of contention ... This really means that thou hast acted (?) to bring such (a situation) into being, and thou hast spoken lies" (ANET, 3rd ed., 443).

Herion: Tendencies in Old Testament Historiography

12 The question of how demographic difference between north and south may have affected "urbanization" can neither be adequately understood at present nor explored in this paper. Suffice it to say that Judah, comparatively smaller than Israel, had a much closer relationship (more symbiotic?) to a particular urban center than did Israel. Judah apparently enjoyed a number of special privileges during the united monarchy, such as tax exemption (1 Ki. 4:19). We only note here in passing that rural Judaeans seemed to have viewed their "capital city" far more favorably than rural Israelites viewed theirs, even though on some occasions there seem to have been noticeable divergences of concerns between the urban residents of Jerusalem and the Judaeans Cam hā'āreš (2 Ki. 11:20).

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