

Robert Vannoy, Old Testament History, Lecture 1

Wellhausen [Source Criticism], Gunkel [Form Criticism]

Review: Wellhausen's Documentary Source Hypothesis [JEDP]

We were discussing Julius Wellhausen, his theories and the impact of those theories on historical material of the Old Testament. I tried to briefly outline his documentary source hypothesis for you, the JEDP theory as it's called. It pretty much goes along the line that J or the source favoring the divine name Jehovah is earliest (ca. 850 B.C.), the E or Elohim source (ca. 750 B.C.) P or the Priestly document is latest (ca. 450 B.C.), and D or the Deuteronomy source is written around 621 B.C. which was the time of Josiah and the finding of the book of the law.

Some other significant dates, 721 B.C. is the fall of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria, 586 B. C. is the fall of the Southern Kingdom to Babylon, two key dates in the history of Israel. Of course, there is the Exodus about 1400 B.C. and the time of David 1000 B.C.

So along that kind of a time line, according to Wellhausen, the material that makes up the Pentateuch was developed over a long period of time, starting with J, then followed by E, then D, and finally P with a series of redactors who combined the materials. So that the end result was a mosaic of materials. His claim was that many of the concepts and ideas that are attributed to early times really are not legitimate as having existed then, but rather, they reflect the later times in which these sources were written. Ideas like circumcision, covenant, election, attributed to the Patriarchs, were really later ideas that were inserted from the time of the Babylonian exile. They existed in P's writing and were projected back into the earlier time, completely distorting the earlier history. I gave a couple other illustrations.

Polytheism to Henotheism to Monotheism

I think at the end of the hour, someone asked a question about monotheism and I mentioned that he viewed religion as developing from polytheism (many gods) to

henotheism (our god is better) to monotheism (one God). That's also in line with this evolutionary development of religions, generally.

Natural to Prophetic to Priestly Religion

Let me give you another pattern that he spoke about. He discerned what he termed "natural religion" which was primitive worship reflected in the J E sources. Then prophetic religion which developed ethical consciousness which he found reflected in the D source. Then the priestly religion with external ceremonial rites which he attributed to the post-exilic P source. So you see there's another developmental kind of scheme, natural religion, prophetic religion, and priestly religion, which he aligns to the progression of his JEDP sources which he claims sit behind the text of the Pentateuch.

Impact on Historicity

Now remember, these sources are imaginary. There has never been any documentary evidence of the existence of these sources that he labels J, E D, and P. So it's a hypothesis, but it's a hypothesis that many people feel he pretty well established so it's been accepted by many people in the mainstream contemporary scholarship or since the time of Wellhausen. I am not going to take the time in this class, it's not the purpose of this class to go into his theory and try to argue the points and refute them. You are going to do that in Old Testament Introduction. Our purpose here is to see the impact of the theory on the history right here in the Old Testament. What it does is result in a very low view of the historical material of the Old Testament because it alleges there are a lot of distortions, if not outright fabrications involved in the historical material because of his theory.

Wellhausen's Resignation

Now, the earliest material, after the time of David (1000 B.C.) and Moses (ca. 1400 B.C.). Wellhausen's sources are at least 600 years after the time of Moses and the final compilation of the Pentateuch is post-exilic which is about 1000 years after Moses.

Let's go just a little bit further with this before we move onto something else. For Wellhausen and his followers, their interest was not in the message of the Old Testament. Their major concern was to reconstruct by their historical critical method what they considered to be the history of Israel's religious development. That was done on this evolutionary scheme. Now it's interesting that Wellhausen was teaching in the theological faculty at a university in Germany at a place called Greifswald. He came to the conclusion that he really should resign from that position because he did not feel that what he was teaching was the kind of thing that would prepare men for the ministry. In this little book, which is mentioned under bibliography, page 2, fourth entry, Walter Zimmerli, *The Law and the Prophets*. He speaks of Wellhausen on page 22. He says this "In 1872 he was called as a professor to the theological faculty in Greifswald. In the ten years spent at Greifswald, he wrote his decisive studies on the literary criticism of the Old Testament. In 1882, he resigned from his professorship in the theological faculty. The letter to the ministerium in which he tendered his resignation is an impressive testimony to the integrity of this great man. He writes in this letter 'I became a theologian because I was interested in the scientific treatment of the Bible. Yet it only slowly dawned upon me that a professor of theology has, at the same time, the task of preparing students for service in the Protestant church and that I am not adequate to perform this practical task. Since then, my theological professorship has weighed heavily on my conscience.'" That is from the letter of his resignation. So Zimmerli says "Thus Wellhausen retired on grounds of conscience from his theological professorship and accepted the appointment of extraordinary professor for Semitic languages in Halle, at another university. But while he was there he was forbidden to teach Old Testament because of his awesome reputation as literary critic."

The point I want to make about this is that I think Wellhausen saw the issue and I would agree with Zimmerli that he showed some integrity in resigning. The problem is, the people who accepted his ideas continue to take positions in theological schools and, specifically in this country, many professors in seminaries and graduate schools of religion went to Germany, studied under Wellhausen's students, accepted the ideas and

went back and perpetuated the ideas in the context of the theological schools. What that has led to is the liberal position in lot of the main line denominations and seminaries in this country. If they would have followed Wellhausen in his resignation as well as in adopting his ideas, the American church scene would be way ahead, but that didn't happen. He resigned, they didn't.

History of Religious Evolutionary Result

But the end result is, the message of the Old Testament was lost and it was replaced with an attempt to reconstruct the history of Israel's religion on an evolutionary basis. Really what you are interested in from the Wellhausen perspective is the history of religions kind of approach to the Old Testament.

B. The Rise of Form Criticism

General Comments on Form Criticism

Let's go back to your outlines. There's a brief survey of critical views A. "Julius Wellhausen," and B. "The rise of form criticism." I have two subheadings there, 1. is "From Hermann Gunkel" and 2. is "Gerhard von Rad." First, just a general comment on form criticism. Since Wellhausen's time, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, there has been many modifications and refinements of his documentary or source hypothesis to Old Testament literature. But the basic thesis he developed, that sequence of JEDP, has remained intact. You may hear people today say, "Wellhausen is outdated now, we've gone way beyond Wellhausen now." There's a sense in which that is true, but a lot of the developments have been piled on top of Wellhausen's theoretical base. So, that basic sequence remains intact, as has the acceptance of the division of the Pentateuch specifically, into sources that are labeled J, E, D and P. You don't have to read very far in contemporary literature to find that that's true. That's the way things are.

Probably the most significant change since Wellhausen in critical studies of the Old Testament is the development of form criticism. Form criticism gives an added dimension to the documentary hypothesis. I have to explain what I mean by that. With

form criticism, or at least with most practitioners of it, the source analysis of Wellhausen's JEDP theory is accepted. Form criticism doesn't reverse any of that or reject any of that. It accepted that source analysis.

Oral Traditions Behind Source Document

But the idea of form criticism is to penetrate behind the documents to the oral tradition which was thought to be crystallized in the documents. In other words, here's the idea: here's the J or Jehovah document, we isolated it, we accept that, but what we want to do is get back behind J to the antecedents of it in the oral tradition that finally became crystallized in written form in that J document. Now, I'll come back to that in a minute.

Hermann Gunkel (1862-1932)

Hermann Gunkel was the key figure in the development of this approach to the analysis of the literature of the Old Testament. Now he's 1. on your sheet under "Form Criticism." Hermann Gunkel lived 1862 to 1932. Now compare that to Wellhausen, 1844 to 1918, they overlapped a lot but you might say Gunkel is a younger contemporary of Wellhausen and he brings us up to 1932. William Foxwell Albright who is an American ancient Near Eastern scholar, I don't know if that name means much to you, he taught for years, he's now dead, at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. He was a very influential rather conservative American scholar and archaeologist. He says of Gunkel, "He's one of the most remarkable scholars of modern times." Albright says, "his approach to biblical materials, his methodology in delineating their character and purpose has been appropriated in one fashion or another by all who live in the mainstream of contemporary biblical studies." So, that's just one prominent person's assessment of the influence of Gunkel. His methodologies have been accepted by all who are in the mainstream of contemporary biblical studies.

Gunkel's Terms: Gattung/Genre, Sitz im Leben, Formgeschichte

Gunkel introduced several terms to biblical studies which have become commonplace. Let me give them to you. They are German terms, but if you read any technical literature you will probably come across them. The first one is "*gattung*" which means "literary type" in German. The French term for literary type is "genre", because when you read in technical studies, sometimes the term is "*gattung*," and sometimes it is "genre," but usually one of the two is used. What it means is a particular literary type, such as poetry, narrative, prophetic texts, etc. The second term that is very important in Gunkel's system, and we'll see how in a minute, is the German expression *sitz im leben*, translated literally, "situation in life." The final term is *formgeschichte*. Now that's one word, "*form*" is "form" just like in English, and "*geschichte*" is "history." In German it's one word. German often concatenates words together and makes longer words. So it's the "History of forms."

Now as I mentioned, just a minute ago, the idea of form criticism was not to discard literary documents J, E, D, and P, but try to penetrate behind them to the antecedent oral tradition. What Gunkel felt was that what you needed to do was within each of these documents, J, E, D and P, to isolate individual story units. You needed to categorize them according to their *gattung*. In other words, with each little story unit, you had to decide what literary type it represented. Then you had to decide what *sitz im leben*, situation in life, would produce that literary type. What *sitz im leben* would give rise to this literary type? This process was *formgeschichte*, the history of forms, literary forms. So what Gunkel wanted to do was to get behind the documents, to isolate what he felt were the influences and settings which were the sources of those source documents (JEDP).

Form Criticism Methodology

Now a couple things about Gunkel's methodology, one is there is something more positive about what Gunkel does than Wellhausen. He recognizes the antiquity of much of these JEDP documents that Wellhausen didn't. In other words, Wellhausen accepted

these documents as the written creation of the authors, the J author, the E author, the D author, etc., and then projected it back into antiquity, whereas Gunkel felt that J was the final result of a long process of passing down a tradition originally in oral form until it came into a final written form. So that what you have with Gunkel is at least the recognition that some of the components of these documents are much older than what we see in their final written form in the document itself.

Gunkel and Chronology

If you try to diagram it, you get something like this. Wellhausen has that timeline and the J writer was 950 to 850 and the E writer, 850 to 750, and so on. I said, with Gunkel you get an added dimension to the documentary hypothesis. What I meant by it is this, here you have the same timeline, Exodus, David (1000), 721, 586, Ezra, as you see down there in the bottom. Before the time of David, he didn't feel there were any written traditions, they were all oral. The various people that made up Israel, he didn't feel that it was a homogenous unit but that they came from various backgrounds, each group bringing oral traditions with them. Then they all collapsed eventually about the time of David into this nation of Israel. Then out of those oral traditions, you had a process of molding certain ones of them into what became the J document over a period of time. Similarly, you had a process of molding others into what became the E document. You had a separate line of tradition running into D, and a separate track running into P. See, he extends this out over a period of time and so gradually you have the J document being formed, the E, and after that you again get a redactor combining J, E, around 621 B.C. In the meantime, the D document was being formulated and the P document and finally all three JE, D and P are assembled together. So instead of a simple timeline sort of thing you get a more complex situation where each of these documents has its own history, before it is fused with the other documents.

Orality to Written Composition

Some of these stories that were oral may have been put into writing and they may

have existed then in written form as a separate story unit. So there were a bunch of separate story units and gradually, this is part of his theory, you have these units strung together in some sort of sequence but that took a period of time to complete. In doing that, the idea was, a lot of these story units, were strung together into a sequence of story units as, for example, the story sequence for the Abraham narrative. You may have had stories, according to this kind of a theory that had quite different antecedents originally, but gradually they got related to each other. They got subsumed under the same name of Abraham and got arranged into a written document or source. There was a lot of reconstruction of the stories, a lot of modification of the stories, fitting them together in that process. It was a long process. But say here with P, you don't have a P writer at 450 B.C. sitting down with no antecedent material to work with. The professor that I had in Amsterdam had a Dutch expression which I translate here, "just sucking it out of his thumb." You don't have a writer just sitting down and doing that. You have a writer that's working with antecedent traditions and each of those traditions themselves have long history.

Gattung to Sitz im Leben

But to get back to Gunkel's theory, he felt that if you could isolate the story units and label them as a certain literary type, *gattung* or genre, you could then theorize what kind of situation life produced that kind of story type. That was the methodology he used to analyze these stories, and we'll see how he went about it in a few minutes. One thing, there's more antiquity to the material with Gunkel than it was with Wellhausen.

Benefits

The other thing is, as far as this matter of literary type and situations that produce a particular literary type. There's certain legitimacy to that as an idea, at least in the abstract. You can think in modern literature, there are all kinds of different styles to writing, if you compare a telegram to a textbook, there's quite a different literary style. If you compare that with a love letter and compare that with an advertisement and you

compare that with say, a diplomatic communiqué, the literary style is quite different in all those forms of writing. There's a particular situation that produces a love letter, an advertising brochure or whatever. So you can look at a piece of writing and say, "Oh, that's this genre of writing and it must have been created in this kind of a context." So there's a certain legitimacy to that as an idea and in literary analysis, of course, it can play a role. With Gunkel and particularly with a lot of his followers, the way in which he used this idea was something else because he goes into so much hypothetical and imaginary kind of reconstruction of situations in life that produce literature that it becomes very arbitrary.

Higher to Lower Criticism Distinction

In contrast to higher criticism, lower criticism is concerned with the text. In other words, you get a copy of the Greek New Testament or Hebrew Old Testament in which if you have a good copy, a critical edition, it will have footnotes that will compare manuscripts highlighting where there are slight differences between one manuscript to another manuscript. You compare them with certain methods that are used to try to establish what the original text was in the process of transmission that caused certain divergences found in the various different manuscripts. That's lower criticism; working back to establish the original text from specific extant manuscripts. Higher criticism, on the other hand, is concerned with authorship and date of authorship kinds of analysis. This is higher criticism. Two streams of criticism: higher and lower. Higher criticism in itself has come to have a pejorative sense, because its practice and influence has been largely negative. But there is a very real place for higher criticism, to look into biblical literature and try to ascertain the place, time, author, and setting. That is higher criticism; it can be done in a right way or a wrong way.

Gunkel's Myths & Legends Story Units & Sitz im Leben

The entry is by H. F. Hahn, *The Old Testament in Modern Research*. I want to quote from H. F. Hahn, from chapter 4. It's in this little book, a very useful book, *The*

Old Testament in Modern Research, it summarizes the last century of research in the Old Testament and chapter 4 is on form criticism. But Hahn says, “Gunkel believed that the literary genius of a primitive people first expressed itself in myths about the origins of things. In myths, gods are the primary actors while in legends the exploits are about human folk heroes. In legends, men are the primary actors.” So Gunkel felt that you have myths and legends. “He turned to the narratives of Genesis for the earliest examples of this sort of popular tradition among the Hebrews. He assumed, furthermore, that popular legend, by its very nature, takes the form of the individual story rather than the extended narration and thus he reduced the narratives of Genesis to separate literary units. These, he argued, had existed independently in recitation and song long before they were written down in their present form. Even the grouping of the stories into story cycles, such as Genesis contains, was in Gunkel’s view, first done in the pre-literary stage.” So I’ve already indicated something of the breaking down the story units, then identify what kind they are and what situation in life (*sitz im leben*) could have produced them.

Relation of Legend & History

Now, for Gunkel, the narratives of Genesis were legend, not history. He wrote a book, entitled *The Legends of Genesis*. Now, when you hear someone say, Genesis is legend it’s not history, it probably provokes a negative reaction. Rightly so. Gunkel tries to argue against it being actual history. This is what he says on page 2 of *The Legends of Genesis*, “The senseless confusion of legend with lying has caused good people to hesitate to concede that there are legends in the Old Testament. But legends are not lies. On the contrary, they are a particular form of poetry. Why should not the lofty spirit of Old Testament religion, which employed so many varieties of poetry, indulge in this form also? For religion everywhere, Israelite religion included, has especially cherished poetry and poetic narratives since poetic narratives are much better qualified than prose to be the medium of religious thought. Genesis is a more intensely religious book than the book of Kings.” Now what he is saying is the narratives of Genesis are legends which he labels as poetry and says that is a better medium for transmitting religious thought than are prose

or history. He says for that reason, Genesis is a more religious book than the book of Kings which he would classify as history.

Christ & Apostles no Bearing in History of Genesis Narratives

A little later on page 3, he says, “The objection is raised that Jesus and the apostles clearly considered these accounts to be fact and not poetry.” You know what his response is? “Suppose they did. The men of the New Testament are not presumed to have been exceptional men in such matters, but shared the point of view of their time. Hence, we are not warranted in looking to the New Testament for the solution of questions about the literary history of the Old Testament.” So the testimony of Christ and the apostles that has no bearing on the character of the narrative of Genesis. He says that’s irrelevant. They are just children of their time. They thought at that time that this was history and they accepted that view; he dismisses it that quickly. He then goes on to enumerate a number of criteria for distinguishing legend from history. I’ll come back to this a bit later.

A Priori Deleting the Miraculous Elements

I won’t go through all those criteria, but the most important one is on page 7. He says, “The clearest criterion of legend is that it frequently reports things that are quite incredible.” As he develops that, in respect to Genesis, he says, “However cautious the modern historian may be in declaring anything impossible, he may declare with all confidence that animals, serpents and she asses, for instance, do not speak and never have spoken. That there’s no tree whose fruit confers immortality or knowledge. That angels and men do not have carnal connection, and a world-conquering army cannot be defeated, as Genesis 14 declares, with 318 men.” Now, he uses a number of illustrations there, both of which are straw men, dismissing the miraculous and attempting to establish incredibility as criteria for separating the material of Genesis as legends from history.

Certainly, in evaluating historical material, credibility is not to be dismissed. We do that all the time: if we read a newspaper account; we apply the criteria of credibility.

We want to look at credibility; we just don't want to dismiss it. It is important. But when you come to biblical narrative, you certainly cannot determine whether it's legend or history, by assuming in advance, the impossibility of the miraculous and that's at the heart of Gunkel's methodology. See that's an *a priori*, that's something he assumes. Miracles don't happen. Why don't they happen? Well, we haven't experienced it, therefore they don't happen. If miracles don't happen, then any story that contains one is not history. See, that's his line of reasoning and his starting point is where he's wrong. The starting point rests on a principle of analogy, the principle of historical analogy, that is, anything you haven't experienced in your own history is something that doesn't happen. We will come back to this later. It's certainly improper when dealing with biblical materials which set itself out to represent itself as a record of God's intervention in human history to bring about redemption. If that's what it is, you can't do justice to that material if you rule out the possibility of divine intervention from the start. See, the two are in total conflict.

He would feel there were elements of history that probably were there but layered over and intermixed with much that wasn't. His point was not so much that. He gets back to this question of how important is history? How important is it that these things actually happened? To him it wasn't so important. What he was interested in was the religious message or lessons we could learn from these stories. It's sort of like Aesop's Fables; nobody would say they happened but you can moralize it.

Legend as Poetry

Let me go a little bit further. He talks further about legend being poetry. He says "the important point is and will remain the poetic tone of the narratives. History, which claims to inform us of what has actually happened, is in its very nature prose, while legend is by nature poetry. Its aim being to please, elevate, to inspire, and to move. He who wishes to do justice to such narratives must have some aesthetic faculty to catch in the telling of a story what it is and what it purports to be and in doing so is not expressing a hostile or even skeptical judgment but simply studying, lovingly, the nature of his

material. Whoever possesses heart and feeling must perceive, for instance in the case of the sacrifice of Isaac, that the important matter is not to establish certain historical facts.” In Gunkel’s opinion, that’s not the purpose of the story, to tell you what happened, “but to impart to the hearer the heart rending grief of the father who was commanded to sacrifice his child with his own hand and then his boundless gratitude and joy when God’s mercy releases him from this grievous trial. And everyone who perceives the peculiar poetic charm from these old legends must feel irritated by the barbarian-- for there are pious barbarians-- who thinks he is putting the true value on these narratives only when he treats them as prose in history.” Did you catch that? If you treat Genesis as prose history, telling you what actually happened, according to Gunkel here, you are a barbarian. In other words, you don’t have the aesthetic quality necessary to see the poetry of these things.

Genesis as Etiological Legends

The second chapter of this book is on the varieties of legends in Genesis. I’m not going to spend a lot of time on this, just a few more illustrations. I already have this terminology here that maybe you were wondering what it was all about. Gunkel considers most of the legends in Genesis to be etiological legends. Now, what does that mean? Etiology is the study of cause. It’s a term often used in connection with disease. What’s the etiology of a disease? It is the study of what brings a certain disease about. As applied to the legends of Genesis, it means that the legends explain why something is as it is presently observed. Now, we will illustrate that and I think that will become clearer.

There are a number of different types of etiological legends, according to Gunkel. Remember I said he wanted to isolate the story units and then label them according to literary types. These are some of the types of etiological legends. The first is ethnological. He says “there is a desire to know the reasons for the relations of the tribes. Why is Canaan the servant of his brethren? Why has Japhet such an extended territory? Why do the children of Lot dwell in the inhospitable East?” You can easily observe that

these things exist. That children of Lot dwelled here, Japheth had an extended territory, etc. Why is that as it is? How is it that Reuben has lost his birthright? Why must Cain wander about a restless fugitive? Why does Beersheba belong to us and not to the people of Gerar? Why did Ishmael become a Bedouin people with just this territory? Well, he says the stories were evolved to explain things, to answer these questions and such stories are ethnological legends. They answer why some ethnic group is as it appears to be. But they are fictitious. He says “such ethnological legends which tell a fictitious story in order to explain tribal relations are of course difficult to distinguish from historical legends which contain the remnant of a tradition of some actual event.” But for the most part, his ethnological stories were fictitious stories to explain the relationship of peoples and why they lived where they did and why they were who they were. He says “childish as these explanations now seem to us, and as impossible as it was for men of old to find out the true reasons for such things, yet we must not overlook the profundity of these poetic legends.”

Examples of Etymological Legends

Etymological legends. They had to do with the origin and meanings of names, races, mountains, wells, sanctuaries and cities. He illustrates this with a couple of popular etymologies. Remember he wrote this in German. It has been translated and he uses some German illustrations but then he uses a couple English ones. He says, “We too have our popular etymologies. How many believe that the Noble river that runs down between New Hampshire and Vermont and across Massachusetts and Connecticut is so named because it ‘connects’ the first two and ‘cuts’ the latter two states.” Is that why the Connecticut River is called what it is? It’s a fictitious story to explain the meaning of the names. And he feels that some of the stories that explain the meanings of names found in the Pentateuch are, by analogy, the same kind of fictitious folk explanation. Here’s another one: “Manhattan Island, it is said, was named from the exclamation of a savage who was struck by the size of a Dutch hat worn by an early burger, ‘Man hat on!’ Similar legends are numerous in Genesis.” The city of Babel is named from the fact that God

there confused human tongues, Babel, Genesis 11:9. Jacob is interpreted as ‘heelholder’ because at birth he held his brother, whom he robbed of his birthright, by the heel. And so forth and so on. So what he is saying is that a lot of those stories that explain the meaning of names are every bit as fictitious as “Manhattan.” But again, you see what this does to historicity. It completely destroys it. But see then he comes back and says if you read it as history, you’re a barbarian; you don’t have the aesthetic poetic insight to understand it.

Ceremonial Legends

Ceremonial Legends. There are a lot of these, he says, that explain regulations of religious ceremonials. “When children see their father perform all sorts of curious customs during the Feast of the Passover, they will ask Exodus 12:26, ‘What does this mean’ and then the story of the Passover will be told them. A similar direction is given with relation to the twelve stones in the Jordan, Joshua 4:6, which the father is to explain to the children as memorials of the passage through the Jordan River. In these examples, then, we see clearly how such a legend is the answer to a question.” Why do we do this at the Passover? Well, then the story of the Passover is told and can explain a contemporary ritual. He says the same with regard to circumcision, the Sabbath, and so forth. He says “No Israelite could have given the real reason for all these things, for they were too old. But to relieve this embarrassment, myth and legend step in. They tell a story and explain the sacred custom: long ago an event occurred from which this ceremony very naturally sprang.” Then we get the story of the origin of the Passover or whatever. Those are what he calls, ceremonial legends.

Geological Legends

Geological Legends. We will stop with that. It explains the origin of locality. “Whence comes the Dead Sea with its dreadful desert? The region was cursed by God on account of the terrible sin of its inhabitants. Whence comes the pillar of salt yonder with its resemblance to a woman? That is a woman, Lot’s wife, turned into a pillar of salt in

punishment for attempting to spy out the mystery of God.” These are geological legends.

Magnificent Stories but Dismissing of Actual History

Now, as you can see from all this, according to Gunkel, what actually happened is not the important thing in the biblical stories. What he’s interested in is the message that is conveyed by the story. He says in the volume that’s listed on your bibliography, which is the only other volume which has been translated into English of Gunkel, an interesting title: *What Remains of the Old Testament?* That’s a good question with this message. But he says in that volume, page 20, “Think of the force, with which in the Cain story, murder is set forth as the basal crime, the charm of the Jacob story, eloquent of fraternal envy and fraternal love, full of faith and an overruling providence, the attractiveness of the Ruth idyll exhibiting a widow’s love lasting beyond death in the grave, the magnificent solemnity of the creation narrative, the wondrous story of paradise, naive, yet profound.” He says, “The creation story, valuable as its religious thoughts still are, is for us, not actual history.”

What he got from these stories were the magnificent religious concepts that he felt were imbedded in these stories: the power of God, divine rule and providence, divine retribution of good and evil, religious emotion, that sort of thing. That is the value of the Old Testament. Those religious concepts and emotions conveyed in the stories, not what actually happened. He really is not interested in what happened. His methodology all but precludes you from ever determining what happened in actual history.

I want to say just a little more about Gunkel beginning in the next hour. Then we’ll go on to the next fellow, Von Rad.

Transcribed by Sarah Emmons
Edited by Ted Hildebrandt
Final edit by Rachel Ashley
Re-narrated by Ted Hildebrandt