

The Bible in Modern Scholarship, edited by J. Philip Hyatt (Abingdon Press: Nashville) 1965. Papers read at the 100th meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 28-30, 1964

"Method in the Study of Early Hebrew History," by Roland de Vaux, C.P.

p. 29 The biblical scholars will always, according to their temperament, emphasize, either more the extent of the knowledge acquired or more the limits of our possible knowledge, but they must accept the same principles of method: the rigorous use of the internal criticism of the biblical traditions combined with the criticism of the external evidence to the Bible.³⁰

30. This conflict between archaeologists and literary critics on the historical value of tradition is not restricted to our field of biblical studies. I cannot resist quoting from a discussion on The Trojan War by M. I. Finley, J. L. Caskey, G. S. Kirk, D. L. Page, published in The Journal of Hellenic Studies, LXXXIV(1964), 1-20, which reached me after this paper had been written. M. I. Finley: "The Iliad and Odyssey . . . tell us much about the society in the centuries after the fall of Troy and scattered bits about the society earlier (and also later, in the time of the monumental composers), but nothing of any value about the war itself in the narrative sense, its causes, conduct, or even the peoples who took part in it," p.9. J. L. Caskey: "Material evidence from the site of Troy has indeed not proven that the place was captured by Mycenaean Greeks. Proofs, of the kind Mr. Finley demands and that we all should like to have rarely come to light in any archaeological excavation," p.9. G. S. Kirk: "I am quite prepared to agree with Finley that the total picture of life given in the Iliad and Odyssey owes almost as much to the circumstances of the early Iron Age as to those of the real Achaean world of the later Bronze Age . . . But can we believe that the interruption of the tradition, whether poetical or non-poetical, caused by the upheavals at the end of the Bronze Age can have been so severe as to destroy not merely the details but the very outlines of the whole substance of events belonging to the last heroic period of the Achaean civilization?", pp.15 and 16. D. L. Page: "The evidence of Homer, that Greeks from the mainland sacked Troy . . . cannot be proved to the exclusion of other possibilities. That is frankly admitted," but "the Homeric account has been confirmed since 1870 to an extent unimaginable before that time. It is very likely the true account; at least it is the only one which claims the support of various and abundant evidence in both literary and archaeological records," pp.17 and 19. The parallel is striking with our own problems, and the same different answers are given. ||