

## Oral Tradition

should make use of the surest indication for the distinction of sources, the designations of the deity, and by this criterion a distinction can at once be successfully made between 6.5-7.5 and 8.15-9.17. In the central section where the name of the Deity does not appear in organic connections, it is necessary on the basis of the certain sections at the beginning and end of the pericope to establish a distinction and at the same time make use of other criteria. If one compares all the J passages it will be evident that the redactor has not included the whole J account (for instance we lack a J section relating the building of the Ark), but what remains is enough to characterize J as 'old, popular, naïve legends'. Whereas P, which is preserved somewhat better by the Redactor, is characterized by the sober spirit of erudition, by classifications and chronology. His Noah is not a living person, but only the pale type of a pious man.<sup>1</sup> And then one is surprised—oddly enough—to note that it is the 'sober erudition' that sets the whole mythological apparatus in action when the outbreak of the waters of Chaos is to be described (7.11-P), whereas the popular naïve story-teller narrates much more 'simply' that forty days of heavy rain caused the catastrophe. And as to the representation of Noah, it is in fact so little different in the P sections and the J sections that Gunkel can characterize J's Noah as an 'ideal of a pious hero, here especially a hero of faith'. And further Gunkel admits that J's 'appearance of Yahweh' in 7.1 is quite unsubstantial (i.e. neither popular, naïve, nor anthropomorphic), and that J's description of the destruction of everything living is colourless, and that an older tradition had described the Deluge mythologically (7.11 P). However, J also has very ancient traits: 7.16b, 8.21 f, as well as the sending forth of the birds.<sup>2</sup>

If one admits that a written source, the literary age of which is three or four hundred years younger<sup>3</sup> than that of another, contains features that are considerably older than the recension of the oldest written source, then one presupposes—as Gunkel does, too—that these written sources are the reduction to writing of century-old traditions, where the time of the reduction to writing in reality says nothing as to the age of the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 138<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gunkel, *op. cit.*, pp. xci, xcvi

## Examples of Traditio-historical Method

material, but at most something about its last revision. This is a very fruitful point of view, but at the same time it deprives literary criticism of one of its favourite criteria. For according to this view it is impossible as a matter of course to divide the material into three age groups and to distribute the three groups among J, E and P. For here indeed the youngest source has an element which is older than the present form of the oldest source. External criteria, such as the criterion of the name of the Deity and the stylistic criteria, remain, but in that case source criticism indisputably loses its charm, the charm which it possessed when literary critics were fully convinced that source distinction clarified the development of the Israelite religion in the times of the monarchy and the exile.

It has been customary to consider the analysis of sources in the account of the Deluge an object lesson<sup>1</sup> to show how easily and naturally the source hypothesis was able to solve the literary difficulties in a text from Genesis, so easily and naturally that it might seem the only expedient; and so one is again surprised to discover, (1) that the hypothesis is only tenable when it occasionally comes into conflict with its own pre-suppositions, and (2) that solutions arrived at in a different manner account for the composition of the pericope in at least as convincing a manner.<sup>2</sup>

As for (1), we say that the point of departure in Gunkel's expositions (as quoted above) was the change in the names of the Deity. This criterion contributed to the establishment of the distinction in the first and last sections of the pericope. In the central section the reasoning was based on the data obtained in this manner and use was also made of the criterion of contradiction and that of reduplication. But what then are we

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gunkel, *op. cit.*, p. 137<sup>2</sup> In what follows I partly follow a work which, in my opinion, has not yet been accorded that place in Old Testament studies that a sensible, serious, scientific contribution to this century-old discussion deserves, viz. U. Cassuto's *La Questione della Genesi*, 1934. In Scandinavia it has been noticed by Engnell in his *Genesis Testamentet*, 1945, pp. 187 and 191 f and *passim*. The story of the Deluge is treated there in its entirety from an anti-source-critical standpoint in ch. V, § 3: 'Il diluvio', pp. 335-353, the criticism of the criterion of the name of the Deity for this text in ch. I, § 5, pp. 40-45, the criticism of other criteria is distributed through chapters II and III. He maintains that our present Genesis is the work of one man, p. 395.