

C O N T E N T S

1. Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Society, held in Knox College, Toronto, on May 16th and 17th, 1950.
2. The Presidential Address delivered by Professor F. V. Winnett, of University College, Toronto.
- "Abraham, the Friend of God".

This Bulletin is published annually by the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies. The address of the Secretary-Treasurer is 258 Donlea Drive, Toronto, Ontario.

THE EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL MEETING

The Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies was held concurrently with the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Canadian Section of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis in Knox College, May 16th and 17th, 1950.

FIRST SESSION, Tuesday Evening, May 16th.

The President, Professor F. V. Winnett of University College was in the Chair and the meeting was opened with prayer by the Honorary President, Professor Emeritus J. H. Michael, twenty-three members and seven visitors being present. On motion of the Secretary, seconded by Professor Williams, and carried, the publication of the proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Meeting, held on May 31st and June 1st, 1949, as printed in the Fourteenth Annual Bulletin, was taken as the reading of the Minutes of the last Annual Meeting.

CORRESPONDENCE:

1. Letters expressing regrets for absence were reported as having been received from Rev. J. R. Harris, Canon R. A. Hiltz, Dr. N. Gore, Principal W. R. Taylor.
2. Notices of resignation from the Society's membership were received during the year from the following: Dr. J. G. Berry, on account of poor health; the Rev. H. A. Mellow and Professor L. Bristol on account of removal to other fields.

MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL REPORT:

The Secretary-Treasurer reported that the membership of the Society numbers 69, of whom 42 paid the fee for the current year; that the Bulletin for 1949 had been mailed to all members; that there was a credit balance of \$27.83 in the treasury, with all accounts paid.

MID-WINTER MEETING:

The Secretary was instructed to have the following printed in full:

"A special Mid-Winter meeting of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies was held on Friday, January 13th, 1950, in Trinity College, Toronto. The members of the Society met for tea at 4 p.m. and then adjourned to the Library for the meeting proper, which was presided over by Professor F. V. Winnett. A public lecture, illustrated by lantern slides, was given by Principal W. R. Taylor on "The Newly Discovered Biblical Manuscripts". The meeting had been advertised in the Toronto newspapers and was attended in large numbers."

OTHER BUSINESS:

1. Professors Parke-Taylor and Williams were elected auditors.
2. The following were elected as a Nominating Committee:
Professors Gilmour, McCullough and Andrews.
3. Nominations to membership: the Reverend Norman Gore, Professor R. E. Wolfe, Dr. Louis Shein, the Reverend A. H. McKenzie, the Reverend R. H. Armstrong.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:

Professor F. V. Winnett delivered the Annual Presidential Address under the title "Abraham - the Friend of God."

Professor D. K. Andrews, representing Knox College, welcomed the members to the College. Refreshments were served.

SECOND SESSION, Wednesday morning, May 17th.

Twenty-six members and several visitors were present.

The Auditors Report was received, showing the Treasurer's accounts to be in proper order.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Honorary President:	Dr. F. H. Cosgrave
President:	Professor T. J. Meek
Vice-President:	Professor D. W. Hay
Secretary-Treasurer:	Dr. G. H. Johnson
Other members of the Executive:	Professor John Dow Professor R.B.Y. Scott Professor McPherson

Secretary's Note: Several weeks after the meeting, Professor Meek declined election. The Executive was consulted and it was unanimous that Professor D. K. Andrews, Vice-President of 1949-1950, should be asked to fill the office of President for 1950-1951. Professor Andrews consented to this action of the Executive and will therefore be President for the current year.

NOMINATIONS TO MEMBERSHIP:

The Reverend J. A. Ross, Mr. D. C. Wotherspoon, Mr. D. M. Warne, the Reverend Jaroslav Zeman, Dr. W. T. McCree.

These, together with those nominated on Tuesday were elected to membership.

OTHER BUSINESS:

It was moved by Professor McCullough, seconded by Professor R.B.Y. Scott, that the Society sponsor local meetings of a public nature, as are arranged by members, and that the Treasurer be authorized to meet the expenses incurred out of the funds of the Society within reasonable and proper limits. CARRIED.

PAPERS READ BY MEMBERS:

Professor R.B.Y. Scott - "A Kingdom of Priests - Exodus 19:6 and Parallels"

Professor D. W. Hay - "An Exposition of John 3:16"

Professor W. E. Staples - "Some Aspects of the Old Testament Prophets"

Professor J. S. MacPherson - "Some Observations on the Diaspora

Terminology in Jeremiah and Ezekiel."

Congratulations and best wishes were offered to the President on his appointment as Director of the American Schools of Oriental Research at Jerusalem for a twelve-month period.

With a motion of thanks for the accommodation and hospitality provided by Knox College, adjournment of the meeting was made at 12:30 o'clock.

ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

Presidential Address delivered by Professor F. V. Winnett, University College, Toronto, at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, held in Knox College, Toronto, on May 16th and 17th, 1950.

ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

In the background of three great religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, stands the shadowy figure of Abraham. Muhammad called him the first monotheist and regarded his own mission as a summoning of the Arabs to return to the religion of Abraham. Even before Muhammad's time the Arabs had believed that the temple at Mekka, known as the Ka'bah, had been founded by Abraham and his son Ishmael and in proof thereof pointed to a stone near the door of the Ka'bah which bore the imprint of his foot (Qur'an 3:91). Tradition said that this stone had served Abraham as a footstool when he was building the temple. Today the little structure covering the sacred stone is called Maqam Ibrahim, "the Place of Abraham". Muhammad claimed that the Ka'bah was the first temple that was founded for mankind (3:90) and declared that, although it was filled with idols in his day, it had originally been dedicated to the worship of the one true God. "When Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the temple, they said, O our Lord, accept it from us, for Thou art the hearer, the knower. O our Lord, make us also Muslims and our posterity a Muslim people; and teach us our holy rites, and be turned towards us, for Thou art He who turneth, the merciful. O our Lord, raise up among them an apostle who may rehearse thy signs unto them and teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them, for Thou art the mighty, the wise" (2:121f.). On the completion of the temple, God revealed to Abraham the nature of the rites to be observed in making pilgrimage to it. To this day the great feast which concludes the annual hajj to Mekka is said to be in commemoration of Abraham's sacrifice on Mt. Moriah. It is thus evident that in Islam the figure of Abraham plays a very important role.

In Christianity also Abraham is more of a key figure than is sometimes realized. It was by an appeal to Abraham that Paul disproved the orthodox Jewish claim that observance of the Mosaic Law was an essential part of true religion. Abraham came 430 years before the Law of Moses, he points out in Galatians 3; he knew nothing of it, he never observed it, yet the promises were made to him. His faith took the place of obedience to the Law. The true heirs of the promises, the true sons of Abraham, are the men of faith (cf. also Romans 4). Thus the great Christian doctrine of justification by faith rather than by observance of the Mosaic Law rests on the example of Abraham. Christianity can only justify its breach with Judaism and its existence as a separate religion by going back behind Moses to the saintly figure of Abraham.

In Judaism Abraham fills the role of progenitor of the Hebrew race, in the widest sense of that term, that is, embracing Arabs as well as Jews. Even more important he was the recipient of the divine promises that the land of Canaan should be the eternal possession of himself and his descendants, who in number would be as the stars in the sky and as the sands which are upon the shore of the sea. Abraham thus sums up in himself all that the Jews believed regarding their own destiny and special relationship to God. The evidences of the divine favour for their ancestor had been very marked. On more than one occasion the Deity had taken him into His confidence and discussed His

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plans with him. If Enoch walked with God, then it might almost be said that God walked with Abraham. It was perhaps natural, therefore, that in Jewish tradition Abraham should come to be known as "the friend of God". The earliest use of the expression is found in Second Isaiah (41:8):

"But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
The offspring of Abraham, my friend."

The expression recurs again in a prayer put into the mouth of King Jehoshaphat of Judah by the Chronicler (2 Ch. 20:7):

"Didst no thou, O our God, dispossess the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and give it to the descendants of Abraham, thy friend, forever?"

The Hebrew word used for "friend" in both passages is 'oheb. The expression passed over into Islam as Khalil Allah, "the friend of God", by which title Abraham is still best known. Hebron, his home town, is today called el-Khalil, "the friend", an abbreviation of "the town of the friend of God."

It is clear from this survey that Abraham is one of the most important figures in three world religions. The question naturally arises, who was this figure who has left such a mark on the religious thought and practice of a large section of mankind? Was he an historical person or a purely legendary figure? There have been advocates of both points of view. Some regard him as nothing more than an eponym, the mythical ancestor of the Hebrew race; others believe that he was a figure taken over from Canaanite legend and suggest that he was the Canaanite god of Hebron; still others hold to the view that he was an historical individual who came to be invested with the qualities of an eponym. The most recent theory is that of Mr. H. St. John B. Philby, the noted Arabian scholar and explorer, who in his book, The Background of Islam (Alexandria, 1947), identifies Abraham with Damqi-ilishu, the third member of the Sealand Dynasty in southern Babylonia, whom he dates to the 19th century B.C. Philby gives two arguments in support of this identification. First, the name Damqi-ilishu means "His God is friendly" or more simply, "the friend of God", recalling Abraham's title. Secondly, the first member of the Sealand Dynasty bears the name Ilum-ilum, meaning "God is indeed God", which suggests that he was a monotheist. Thus Philby finds an historical basis for the widespread tradition which makes Abraham the first protagonist of monotheism, although, according to his theory, it was really Abraham's grandfather who initiated the movement. The present paper is a study of the Abraham Legend to see if it is possible to clear away the mists and discern what lies at the heart of the legend.

The first task facing the historian is that of subjecting his sources to critical examination. He must test them for literary unity and, if they prove to be composite, he must seek to determine the authorship, date, and tendency of the various strands disclosed. Unless this preliminary task is undertaken and carried through to completion, any proposed reconstruction of events can have but little value.

In dealing with the life of Abraham, the only sources which we possess are to be found in Gen. 11-25. It is exceedingly important, therefore, that the critical examination of these sources be conducted with care in order that we may discover their true character.

The accepted theory regarding the composition of the Abraham story, as of other parts of Genesis, is that the narrative in its present form is the result of an interweaving of three separate documents which are denoted by the symbols J, E, and P. The J and E strands were woven together about 650 B.C. by a redactor (Rje), and the P strand added by another redactor (Rp) about 400 B.C. It has long been recognized, however, that the theory, stated in these simple terms, gives a very imperfect picture of the true situation. In particular, it fails to bring out the fact that these three strands or documents are themselves composite in character. Gunkel, in his great commentary on Genesis published in 1901, showed that the so-called J Document is really composed of a number of originally independent elements so that it is better, in his opinion, to speak of a J school of writers than of a J Document. A reaction against Gunkel's theory of fragments appeared in Smend's Die Erzählung des Hexateuch, published in 1912. Smend claimed that the J "fragments" could be arranged in two series to form two continuous documents, which he labelled J1 and J2. He believed it possible to trace these two documents through the entire Hexateuch. Ten years later Eissfeldt, in his Hexateuch-Synopse, proposed that one of these documents be called L (because of its seemingly Lay origin) and the other J. He went Smend one better by claiming to be able to trace these documents beyond the Hexateuch into Judges and Samuel. The Theory of a double J strand (whether called J1 and J2 or L and J) was cast in doubt, however, by the fact that the documents isolated by Eissfeldt differed considerably from those isolated by Smend.

In 1930 a new suggestion regarding the composition of Genesis was made by Professor Pfeiffer of Harvard University. Pfeiffer claimed to have isolated a document of Edomite or South Palestinian origin which he labelled S. To S he assigned all the material in Genesis which might, with some show of probability, be regarded as of non-Hebraic origin, for example, the stories in chapters 2-11 regarding the creation and early history of mankind, the curious legend in C. 14, and the story of Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in C. 19. To bolster his theory of an Edomite origin for S, he had it end with the digest of early Edomite history found in C. 36. It may well be doubted, however, whether Pfeiffer has given sufficient grounds for lumping all this material together and calling it a document. His theory is rejected by the most recent analyst of Genesis, C. A. Simpson (The Early Traditions of Israel, 1948).

Since the time at my disposal is limited, I shall not attempt to review all the theories which have been advanced in recent years regarding the composition of the book of Genesis or parts thereof. The interested student will find convenient summaries of these in the Introduction to the Old Testament, published by Pfeiffer in 1941 and in that of Bentzen of Copenhagen published in 1949. The more important theories will receive some mention in the course of my paper.

The first subject I should like to deal with is the division of the Abraham Story into J and E strands. Is this division well founded? the question is pertinent inasmuch as two German scholars, Volz and Rudolph, and one Norwegian, Mowinckel, have denied that there ever was such a thing as an E Document. I myself have denied the existence of an E Document in the books of Exodus and Numbers. Is there an E Document in Genesis? The criterion normally used for the identification of E material (after the easily recognizable P material has been removed) is the occurrence of the divine name Elohim. Now if one reads through the Abraham Story and notes all the occurrences of the divine names, he will find that the name Yahweh is used almost exclusively up to the beginning of C. 20 when there is a sudden switch to Elohim. The use Elohim continues to predominate to the end of C. 22 when there is a sudden switch back to Yahweh (cf. 24:23 is P material). The sudden appearance of the name Elohim in Cc. 20-22 and its equally sudden disappearance thereafter is strong evidence that these chapters constitute a separate literary source. The transition from Yahweh to Elohim cannot be accounted for, as it can in the case of the Exodus tradition, by the dramatic demands of the narrative; hence it is necessary to admit that an E Document is present in the book of Genesis. This conclusion is supported by the additional fact that C. 20-22 consist largely of variants of stories appearing elsewhere in Genesis. The question as to how far this E Document extends is too large a problem to be entered upon here since it would involve us in a study of the whole book of Genesis.

But was this E "Document" really a document, a primary written source parallel to the J Document, or was it, as Mowinckel has maintained, merely an oral tradition on J which was not incorporated with the latter until the exilic period? An argument for believing that it existed in written form is that when the compiler of Genesis brought the J and E versions together, he found it necessary to insert certain harmonizing material in the J version. Thus, in the J story of the expulsion of Hagar in C. 16, he inserted two verses (9 and 10) in which Hagar is ordered to return to her mistress, thereby paving the way for the insertion of the E version of the same incident in C. 21. If the E version had had only oral existence, it is extremely doubtful if the compiler of Genesis would have preserved two versions when the simplest procedure would have been to recast the J story, adding whatever elements were desired from the oral version.

While there are reasons, therefore, for believing that two written versions of the Life of Abraham once existed, a J version and an E version, it is fairly certain that the E version is dependent upon the J version and consequently of later origin. Thus E's account of Sarah being taken into the harem of a foreign monarch (c. 20), with its attempt to explain away Abraham's untruthfulness, clearly presupposes a knowledge of the J version of this incident in c. 12, in which the patriarch appears in a rather unfavourable light. At the same time E manifests a measure of independence of J in that it contains two stories not found in the J version, viz., the story of the treaty which Abraham made with Abimelech of Gerar (21:22-32) and the story of the trial of Abraham's faith (22).

The E Document is ordinarily regarded as a northern, Israelite, product. But the E story of the Trial of Abraham's Faith in C. 22 is probably of southern, Judaeen, origin for it seems to identify the mountain on which Abraham attempted to offer up Isaac with the temple mount at Jerusalem. The proof of this is to be found in the statement in 22:14 that Abraham called the mountain Yahweh-yir'eh (Yahweh will see", or more probably, "Yahweh he will see"), a name which was still to be detected in the author's day in the expression behar Yahweh yera'eh ("in the mountain of Yahweh he will show (present) himself"). The change from yir'eh to yera'eh must have some connection with the change in the wording of the law requiring all Hebrew males to appear three times a year at the sanctuary, where the same change from yir'eh to yera'eh has been made. Thus, in Dt. 16:16 and Ex. 34:23 the sign of the definite accusative before the object shows that the active form yir'eh must have been once employed, but in all three places where the law appears the verb is now vocalized as yera'eh, a passive or reflexive form. Originally the law ran, "Three times in the year all thy males shall see (yir'eh) the face of the lord Yahweh," but due to later theological scruples about seeing the face of God this was altered to "Three times in the year all thy males shall present themselves (yera'eh) unto the face of the lord Yahweh". In Ex. 23:17, the law refers to any local sanctuary, but in Ex. 34:23 and Dt. 16:16 it refers to the central sanctuary, at Jerusalem. This makes it probable that the particular holy site referred to in Gen. 22 is the temple mount at Jerusalem. As is well known, the Chronicler (2 Chron. 3:1) and Josephus (*Antiq. i. 13.1-2*) explicitly make this identification, although their testimony is of relatively late date. There is still the problem posed by the fact that Abraham is not elsewhere represented as actually entering Jerusalem, but if the Chronicler and Josephus were able to ignore this difficulty, the author of the E version can have been able to do the same. If the story of the Trial of Abraham's Faith be of Jerusalem origin, then the whole E version of the Life of Abraham must be of similar origin.

The date of the E version is difficult to determine. The representation of Abraham as a prophet in 20:7 and the relatively advanced ethical tone of the narrative might suggest a date as late as the seventh century B.C.

Let us turn now to an examination of the J version of the patriarch's life. Gunkel regarded this version as composed of two originally independent collections of traditions, one which he labelled Ja and regarded as originating at Hebron, the other Jb, originating at Beersheba. S. R. Driver does not seem to have been greatly impressed by Gunkel's elaborate analysis for he nowhere mentions it in his own commentary on Genesis, published in the Westminster series in 1904. But Skinner, who wrote the International Critical Commentary on Genesis in 1910, follows Gunkel's analysis closely, although not slavishly. Incidentally, he changes Gunkel's symbol Ja to Jh, which is more appropriate in view of its assumed Hebron origin.

Gunkel's theory of two interwoven strands is based, in the first place, on the assumption that Abraham made only one visit to the spot between Bethel and Ai, whereas according to the present form of the tradition he made two visits. Inasmuch as Abraham is nowhere else represented as paying two visits to the same spot, there do seem to be good grounds for Gunkel's suspicions. In order to reduce the number of visits from two to one, Gunkel cut out all the material (12:9-13:2) separating the notices of

the two visits and assigned it to another document (jb). Gunkel was quite right in sensing that there is something peculiar about the two references to Abraham visiting the spot between Bethel and Ai but he failed to perceive what the real difficulty is. It is not that there are two references but that there is any reference. Why is Abraham made to be the founder of a nameless sanctuary, one, moreover, which never seems to have played any part in the actual religion of Israel? And is this the sort of fact which the popular memory was apt to select for remembrance?

Our perplexity is increased when we turn to the account of Abraham's second visit to this site (13:3f). In this story the site is made the setting for the separation between Abraham and Lot. From this spot Lot is said to have raised his eyes and looked out over the whole kikkar of the Jordan and, seeing that it was well watered, to have chosen it as his place of settlement. While Sodom and Gomorrah are not explicitly mentioned as coming within Lot's range of vision, it is implied that his gaze reached beyond them to the most southerly of the "cities of the kikkar", namely, Zoar (13:10). But it is physically impossible to see to the south end of the Dead Sea from any spot between Bethel and Ai. Two solutions of this geographical problem have been suggested. One is to shift the site of Sodom and Gomorrah and Zoar to the north end of the Dead Sea; the other is to emend the text of 13:10 and read Zoan for Zoar. The objection to shifting Sodom, Gomorrah and Zoar to the north end of the Dead Sea is that tradition is unanimous in locating them at the south end. The great salt cliff, five miles long and six hundred feet high, at the south end of the sea is still called Jebel Usdum, "the mountain of Sodom", and Zoar is almost certainly to be identified with the village of Zughar which still existed in medieval times and which lay either at or near the south end of the Dead Sea (cf. G. le Strange, *Palestine under the Moslems*, pp. 286 ff. and G. A. Smith, *Hist. Geog.*, p. 506, nn. 5 and 6). The objection to emending the text to Zoan is that we have no authority for doing so apart from the Peshitta Version, where the reading may very well represent an attempt to remove the geographical problem raised by the Massoretic text.

But if the Massoretic text be retained, how can the geographical problem be solved? There is only one solution, namely, to regard 13:3f. as a later, mistaken attempt to identify the site of Lot's separation from Abraham. If these verses be cut out, the narrative has the separation take place at a spot near Hebron. Such a setting raises no geographical problem, for it is stated in 18:16 and 19:27 f, that from a spot near Hebron Sodom and Gomorrah were visible. Modern travellers also assert that from the village of Beni Na'im, three miles east of Hebron, it is possible to see the Dead Sea, eighteen miles away, through gaps in the hills. The reason that the site of the separation came to be shifted to a spot farther north was that in later times the term kikkar was used to denote the Jordan valley and especially the plain of Jericho, as Dt. 34:3 (P) clearly indicates. The "cities of the kikkar" were, therefore, now thought of as having been situated somewhere at the north end of the Dead Sea. Since this region cannot be seen from any spot near Hebron, it was assumed that Abraham must have moved farther north before the separation from Lot took place. To make this clear and to avoid the geographical problem which arose from the late use of the term kikkar, 13:3f. was inserted into the original tradition, the effect of which was to identify the scene of the separation with a spot between Bethel and Ai, perhaps Burj Beitin, from which it is possible to look down into the Jordan Valley and to see to the north end of the Dead Sea.

An attempt was made to hallow the site by claiming that Abraham had built an altar there. If 13:3f. be a later insertion into the tradition, 12:8 must be the same, for the two passages stand or fall together.

It begins to appear that the solution of the problem sensed by Gunkel in chapters 12 and 13 is to be found, not in a theory of two interwoven primary sources, Ja and Jb, but in a theory of one primary document which has been modified by a later editor.

There is another problem in chapters 12 and 13 which Gunkel failed to see. It is the problem raised by the divine promises to Abraham. In 12:2f. we read that after commanding Abraham to leave his home and kindred and depart for an unknown country, Yahweh promised to make him into a great nation and to bless him abundantly. "Those who bless thee I will bless and those who curse thee I will curse, and through thee shall all the families of the ground be blessed." One difficulty in the way of regarding this promise as an original part of the Abraham tradition is that the idea that Israel will be a blessing to mankind does not appear elsewhere in Hebrew literature until a relatively late period, in Jeremiah (4:2) and Second Isaiah (42:1-7); 49:6; 53:4ff.), i.e., until the sixth century B.C. at the earliest, and no one believes that the Abraham Story originated as late as that. A second difficulty arises from the fact that the whole spirit of the story requires that Abraham respond to the divine call uninfluenced by any hope of reward. To have Yahweh hold out a bribe at the beginning weakens the force of the story which presents Abraham as a model of unalloyed faith. If 12:2f. be omitted as a later insertion, there is no mention of a reward until after Abraham has obeyed the divine command and the goal has been reached, which is surely the proper place for it. "Then Yahweh appeared unto Abraham and said, To thy seed I will give this land" (v.7). Some later editor, dissatisfied with this brief promise, placed a longer one in Yahweh's mouth, but in true editorial fashion, he inserted it in a most inappropriate place, at the beginning of the story, before Abraham has earned a reward.

Another promise is found in 13:14-17 where, after the departure of Lot, Yahweh tells Abraham to look out over the land of Canaan, north, south, east and west, and says that it is to be all his. Yahweh also promises to make his descendants as the dust of the earth for multitude. Scholars have generally recognized that this section, with its promises, is a later expansion of the original tradition.

The promise appended to the story of the Trial of Abraham's Faith, 22:15-18, is also recognized to be a later addition.

If the three promises mentioned are compared, it will be found that they are strikingly similar in vocabulary and point of view. In fact, the similarities are so marked that there can be no reasonable doubt that they proceed from the same hand. A study of the whole book of Genesis would show that they come from the compiler of the book. The original Abraham tradition contained the single brief promise found in 12:7: "To thy seed I will give this land". This gave the compiler the idea of placing other promises in the Deity's mouth and of distributing them at strategic intervals throughout the story. Further support of this conclusion will appear as we proceed.

Let us turn now to C. 14, one of the most curious parts of the Abraham legend. The chapter relates how in the time of Abraham five petty kings in the Dead Sea area, the kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim and Bela, revolted against their overlord, Chedorlaomor, king of Elam. The result was that Chedorlaomor and his allies, one of whom was Amraphel, king of Shinar, marched down through Transjordan, apparently to the head of the Gulf of 'Aqaba, then turned west and ravaged northern Sinai, the country of the Amalekites, before striking in towards their real objective, Sodom and Gomorrah. The five petty kings of the Dead Sea area marched forth to meet the invaders and a great battle took place in the Valley of Siddim, which, according to v.3, occupied the site where the Dead Sea later stood. (The author of c. 14 evidently thought of the Dead Sea as originating at the time of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, narrated in c. 19). In the battle the four great monarchs were naturally victorious over the five Dead Sea kinglets; Sodom and Gomorrah were pillaged, and Lot was carried off a prisoner. "A fugitive came and told Abraham, the Hebrew, who was living beside the terebinth of Mamre" at Hebron. Abraham at once rounded up 318 followers and pursued the invaders. Overtaking them at Dan, he made a surprise attack upon them at night and put them to flight. He continued the pursuit as far as Hobah, north of Damascus, and managed to recover all the loot as well as Lot. On his way back home to Hebron, Abraham stopped outside the walls of Jerusalem (here called Salem) and paid his respects to its high priestly king, Melchizedek, even presenting him with a tenth of his spoils.

That there is a substratum of history in Gen. 14 is recognized by all scholars. The names of the four kings mentioned in v.1. appear to be genuine, although their identification remains uncertain. The names of the Dead Sea kings, however, seem to be fictitious. Thus the king of Sodom is called Bera, which means "the son of evil"; the king of Gomorrah is called Birsha, which means "the son of wickedness", scarcely historical names. Moreover, the fact that each king's name contains exactly as many letters as that of his city suggests that the names of all the Dead Sea kings are artificial formations.

The fictitious and fanciful character of most c. 14 is indicated by a number of features.

1. The impossible, not to say impossible, route taken by the invading army. In view of the odds involved, the outcome of a direct attack on Sodom and Gomorrah could not be in doubt. Yet such an attack is postponed until a long, roundabout, exhausting and pointless march through desert country has been accomplished.

2. The claim that Abraham with 318 men routed the combined armies of four of the leading monarchs of the day is absurd. Granted that a surprise attack at night might have created a stampede, the assertion that Abraham pursued the enemy to a point away north of Damascus, during which time the tiny size of the pursuing force must have become obvious, is fantastic and brands the whole story, as far as Abraham is concerned, as based on fancy and not on historical fact.

3. The author's desire to impart an air of antiquity to his narrative is so obvious as to arouse suspicion, especially when archaisms are found interspersed with words and expressions of definitely late origin. Thus in referring to the passage of the invading host through Transjordan,

the author employs the names of the prehistoric inhabitants of that region, the Rephaim of Bashan, the Zuzim of Ammon, the Emin of Moab, the Horites of Edom. But he also employs words such as rekush, yelidhe baith, and nepesh in the sense of "person", all of which do not appear in Hebrew literature elsewhere until a relatively late period. It is worthy of note also that the name which the author gives to the king of Jerusalem, Melchizedek, has a suspicious resemblance to Adonizedek, the name of the king of Jerusalem at the time of Joshua's invasion, and is probably modelled upon it.

The only sensible deduction from all this is that c. 14 represents a late attempt to date Abraham by associating him with four famous kings of the past who figured in some legend current in the author's day. Thus, even though scholars succeed in identifying these kings, it will still be necessary to prove that Abraham's association with them rests on something more substantial than wishful thinking.

There is more to c. 14 however, than an attempt to date Abraham. It is also an attempt to bring the patriarch into relations with the Jerusalem sanctuary. In the account of Abraham's movements in ccs. 12 and 13 there is no mention of Jerusalem. But it was intolerable to the later priests of Jerusalem, especially after the hostility with the Samaritans reached an acute pitch, to have to admit that the forefather of the Hebrew race had visited Shechem and founded the sanctuary there and ignored Jerusalem. So they invented a story of such a visit. Since it was well known that Jerusalem was not in Hebrew hands until David's time, they did not represent him as actually entering the city but had him pay his respects to its priestly ruler outside the walls. Moreover, to counteract the tradition found in the Jacob story according to which Jacob had undertaken to pay tithes to Bethel, the chief sanctuary of the Northern Kingdom, they represented Abraham as paying tithes to the high priest of Jerusalem, the chief sanctuary of the Southern Kingdom.

The god of Jerusalem at this time is said to have been El Elyon, which means "God the Exalted One" or "God Most High". Melchizedek blesses Abraham in the name of El Elyon, while Abraham, in his reply identifies this god with Yahweh. "I have sworn by uplifted hand to Yahweh, El Elyon, the owner of heaven and earth". The author of Gen. 14 thus wishes to imply that even in Abraham's time the true God, Yahweh, was worshipped in Jerusalem, although under the name of El. May not P's insistence that Yahweh was not known to the patriarchs by his real name but only as El have been animated by a desire to support this claim regarding Jerusalem?

Let us turn now to c. 15, the story of the great covenant which God made with Abraham. The narrative falls into two parts. In the first part (vv. 1-6) Yahweh promises Abraham an heir born of his own body. Then he took him outside and showed him the stars and said, "So shall thy seed be". "And he believed Yahweh, who reckoned it to him as righteousness". This part of the story obviously has a night setting. Rather strangely the second part (vv. 7-21), which narrates the promise of the land of Canaan, has a somewhat earlier setting, since the scene opens before sunset. In spite of the fact that the chapter falls into two parts, the documentary analysts do not follow the natural division but assign portions of each section to J and E. The weakness of all their analyses is that no two of them agree.

C. A. Simpson rejects any attempt to separate the narrative into two threads and gives strong arguments for believing that the chapter is a late composition throughout. It is true that the story is not very skilfully composed in that the second part has a somewhat earlier setting than the first part, but slips of that kind are frequently met with in editorial additions.

Gen. 15 gives the best picture of a covenant ceremony to be found in the whole of the Old Testament. But a sacrifice of the covenant type does not seem exactly appropriate for a transaction where only one party assumes any responsibility. Yahweh reveals to Abraham the destiny in store for his descendants: they will be slaves in a foreign land for four hundred years, four generations, at the end of which time they will return to Canaan. And Yahweh undertakes to give them the land of Canaan, in the widest sense of that term, from the River of Egypt to the River Euphrates. But Abraham, on his part, does not undertake to do anything; he assumes no responsibility whatsoever.

A divine promise of the land of Canaan has already been met with in 12:7 and in 13:14-17, but the solemn and awesome setting given to the promise in c. 15 shows that the author attached some special significance to this occasion. What can it have been? I think the answer is clear as soon as we ask, Where was this particular promise made? It was made at Jerusalem, as reference to the end of c. 14 will show. I am quite aware that scholars regard c. 14 as from another hand and deny that there is any original connection between it and c. 15. But they have thereby deprived c. 15 of any definite setting and robbed the story of its real point. There are actually literary connections between the two chapters which suggest that they emanate from the same hand. Thus the word rekush (rare outside of P, the Chronicler and Daniel) occurs in both chapters (14:11f., 16:21 and 15:14) and the root mgn (miggen in 14:20, maghen in 15:1; cf. Skinner, p.278). It is only when 14 and 15 are taken as a unit that the real significance of 15 becomes clear. Having brought Abraham to Jerusalem, the author cannot let him depart without a revelation from Yahweh and he takes care to make it the most impressive of all the revelations to the patriarch. It is as though the author wished to assert that, while Yahweh may have revealed himself and made promises to Abraham at other sanctuaries, it was at Jerusalem that he made his most solemn covenant.

If time permitted, it could be shown that the remaining chapters of the J version, 16, 18 and 19, like those already studied, show evidences of having been modified or expanded by the compiler of Genesis.

To sum up, the J version, in so far as it has been preserved, consisted of 12:1, 4a, 6f., 9-20; 13:1f., 5,7a, 8-13, 18; 16:1f., 4-8, 11f.; 18:1-16, 20-22a; 19:1-28, 30-38. This material represents the earliest recoverable form of the legend. Just how early it assumed this particular form is rather difficult to determine, but the fact that it depicts Abraham as founding only two sanctuaries, Shechem and Hebron, suggests that it comes from a period when these two were the leading sanctuaries of the Hebrews, i.e., the pre-Davidic period. I would suggest a date about 1100 B.C. Some modern scholars are claiming that the social customs mentioned in the tradition indicate that it dates from a period several centuries earlier and in proof of this assertion point to the close parallels between patriarchal customs and Nuzi customs of the 15th and 14th centuries B.C. (Cf. H.H. Rowley, "Recent Discovery and the Patriarchal Age", Bulletin of the John Rylands .../

Library, Manchester, Vol. 32, 1949, pp. 44ff.). But in view of our ignorance of Palestinian customs around 1100 B.C., is it necessary to go back to Nuzu for parallels? And how is it that the closest supposed parallel between Nuzi custom and patriarchal custom happens to be found in c. 15 which, as we have seen, is one of the later accretions to the Abraham legend?

The J version of the Life of Abraham probably originated in Judaea in view of the fact that the patriarch is represented as much more closely associated with Hebron than with Shechem. We have seen evidence that the E version also originated in the South. Thus there were two versions of the life of the patriarch circulating in Judaea.

The literary history of the Abraham Legend may now be summarized as follows: The J version took shape, in all probability, at Hebron in southern Judah about 1100 B.C. Much later, about the 7th century, the E version developed, probably at Jerusalem. Early in the post-exilic period the two versions were brought together by the compiler of Genesis who appended part of the E version to the J version and discarded the rest. To this combined account he added a considerable amount of material of his own, consisting of cc. 14 and 15, designed to bring the patriarch into relations with Jerusalem, a number of divine promises predicting great blessings on Abraham's descendants, and genealogies which illustrated the racial connections of the Hebrews. The genealogy which he added in 11:28-31 is particularly interesting because in it we find the first reference to Abraham coming from Ur of the Chaldees. The only other reference appears in c. 15 which is also the compiler's work, as we have seen. Scholars have long been suspicious of this assertion both because the Chaldeans were, in all probability, not known to the Jews until the 8th century, B.C. and because the bulk of the Abraham story implies that Abraham's birthplace was Harran. I believe that the idea that Abraham came originally from Ur arose out of Jewish researches in the Harran area. There is abundant evidence in the books of Exodus and Numbers that the post-exilic priests were greatly interested in the identification of the sites mentioned in the national traditions. What more natural, then, than that they should make inquiries in Harran, the home of their ancestors? After all, it was not so far away - about 500 miles. There they would learn from the local priests of the close cultural connection of Harran with Ur in the land of Sumer, known in their day as "the land of the Chaldees". Ur was the great centre of moon worship in Sumer, Harran the great centre of moon worship in northern Mesopotamia. The Jewish scholars might very naturally assume that their ancestors had followed the cultural flow from Ur to Harran. To what extent early Mesopotamian Yahwism was influenced by the cult of the moon-god, Sin, at Harran is unknown. The name of Abraham's father, Terah, seems to have some connection with moon worship, but this name was probably picked up by Jews during their researches in the Harran area and is not valid evidence for the type of religion practised by the Hebrews before their emigration to Palestine.

The merger and amplification of the J and E versions of the Abraham Legend by the author of Genesis did not put an end to the growth of the legend. Not long afterward it received further expansion (12:4b, 5; 13:6; 16:3, 15f.; 17; 19:29; 21:3-5; 23; 25:7-18) at the hands of P who integrated the book of Genesis into the larger work known as the Torah or Pentateuch. Even then the legend did not crystallize but continued to grow, as may be seen from the Book of Jubilees, numerous Rabbinical and Christian stories, and finally the traditions of Islam.

What lies behind this tremendous development? Has our analysis of the legend placed us in any better position for distinguishing the wheat from the chaff? I think it has. For one thing, it has revealed to us what was the earliest and, therefore, presumably the most trustworthy, form of the legend. If we examine this, it will soon become obvious that the heart of the legend is found in cc. 12 and 13. Chapter 16 merely expresses the Hebrew consciousness of a close relationship to the Arabs of North Arabia; c. 18, the story of the visit paid to Abraham by three celestial beings, has a polytheistic background but faintly concealed in the Hebrew version and clearly belongs to the class of mythological literature; C. 19, the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, is manifestly an old Canaanite legend which has no necessary connection with Abraham and could throw no light on him even if it had. Thus, whatever historical "meat" the Abraham legend contains must be looked for in cc. 12 and 13 which relate the movements of Abraham and his nephew Lot from the time they leave Harran until they finally settle down.

Now it seems obvious that whether Abraham and Lot be historical characters or not, they are used as eponyms in these chapters; that is, their movements reflect the movements of groups, not individuals. The story of their migration from Harran is the story of the movement of the Hebrew people from their original stamping-grounds in the neighbourhood of Harran in upper Mesopotamia to Canaan. This movement involved the Ammonites and Moabites as well as the Hebrews, in the narrow sense of that term. The Jacob legend, which is the Israelite parallel to the Judaeian Abraham legend, tells a similar tale of the origin of the Hebrew people; in it Esau takes the place of Lot. The statement that Abraham stopped first at Shechem on reaching Canaan and built an altar there (just as Jacob is represented as doing) is probably a recognition of the fact that the sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim at Shechem was the first Hebrew sanctuary established in Canaan. The story of Abraham going down into Egypt is thought by some scholars to be based on a tradition of a pre-Jacob movement of Hebrews into Egypt. This idea seems to me far-fetched and improbable. The story may have arisen merely out of a desire to have the fore-father of the race anticipate the experience of his descendants and hallow the path which they later trod. The story of Sarah being taken into the harem of Pharaoh doubtless arose out of a desire to add a romantic touch to the tale and to emphasize the beauty of the mother of the Hebrew race. The famine which drove Abraham to take refuge in Egypt and the plagues which caused Pharaoh to speed his departure are mere mechanisms introduced to get Abraham into Egypt and out again and almost certainly correspond to no historical happenings.

Thus, in all these constituent parts of the legend which I have mentioned, there is nothing we can put our finger on and say, This is history rather than legend. But there is one element in the story which has a historical ring, that is the association of Abraham with Hebron. This association is found already firmly fixed in the earliest form of the legend and suggests that Abraham was a historical Hebronite figure. The story of Abraham's death and burial in the tomb of Machpelah at Hebron comes from the late P source but in view of the close association of Abraham with Hebron in J, it is highly probable that P's account is, in this instance, based on something that once stood in J. We seem justified in assuming that even in J's time there was at Hebron a tomb associated with the name of one called Abraham (in the original tradition, Abram). If Abraham had been a Canaanite god, it is doubtful if his tomb would have figured so largely in tradition. Abraham must have been a man, but whether king or prophet or nomad sheikh we cannot tell. That he was a man of note is shown by the fact that his name was remembered and that around it a legend developed.

There is absolutely nothing in the earliest form of the legend by which to date Abraham. The earliest attempt to date him is found in the E version, where he is made a contemporary of a certain Abimelech, king of Gerar. The only other early Abimelech that I have been able to discover is Abi-Milki, prince of Tyre, who was flourishing at the time of the Habiru invasion about 1400 B.C. and who is mentioned in several of the Tell el-Amarna letters. Is it possible that the two Abimelechs are identical and that later Hebrew tradition shifted him to a spot more accessible to Abraham? We cannot say. The Isaac story in C. 26 calls Abimelech of Gerar a Philistine king. Since the Philistines did not settle in Canaan until about 1190 B.C., this tradition, if accurate, would compel us to assign Abraham to a fairly late date. But the Isaac story is, in my opinion, of much later origin than the Abraham story and its interpretation of Abimelech as a Philistine king merely reflects late opinion. As for the date suggested for Abraham in C. 14, I have already tried to show that it is of no value whatsoever.

Would it be rash to assume that Abraham was an early Hebrew chief who settled at Hebron at the time of the Habiru invasion about 1400 B.C. and was buried there? Perhaps he was the first Hebrew king of Hebron, and the founder of the first Yahweh temple there, as tradition asserts. When the Hebrews returned to Canaan under Joshua, the name of the occupant of this tomb was still a living memory. His name was one of the few surviving from the period of the first settlement. As the earliest Hebrew in the Judaeen area whose name was preserved by tradition, Abraham came in the course of time to be thought of by the Judaeans as the first Hebrew, the forefather of the race.

It was perhaps natural that Hebrew imagination should tend to cast the forefather of the race in a somewhat idealistic mould, with the result that the legend about him came more and more to take on a religious rather than a historical character. Two aspects of the life of the patriarch were seized upon and stressed. First, his departure from Harran was represented as in response to a divine call. The Three Wise Men from the East were guided by a star; Abraham was guided to his goal by divine providence. Thus the settlement of the Hebrews in Canaan was represented as in accordance with a divine plan. Secondly, stress was laid on the simple, unquestioning faith with which Abraham responded to the divine call. As the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews expressed it, "He went forth, not knowing whither he was going." His departure was a great act of faith in God. The compiler of Genesis developed the idea of Abraham's marvellous faith still further when he told in c. 15 of how Abraham never doubted the divine promise that he should have a son, although at the time he was an old man and his wife long past the age of child-bearing. But the greatest story that was developed to illustrate the patriarch's faith is found in the E version, in c. 22, the story of how God commanded him to sacrifice his only son. The scene portrayed is one of the most moving in all Hebrew literature - the innocent child walking along beside his father, never suspecting that he is the intended victim, his innocent inquiry, "Father, here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for a burnt-offering?" "God will provide himself with the sheep for a burnt-offering, my son," said Abraham. So the two of them proceeded on their way. When they arrived at the place which God had designated, Abraham built an altar, arranged the wood, and binding his son, laid him on top of the wood. We are horrorstruck as the grim father raises his knife to slay his only son. Suddenly the divine voice rings out and stays his hand. Abraham's faith has been put to the ultimate test. Greater faith could no man have than this. Later when Christians tried to express the ultimate in love, they resorted to a somewhat

similar symbol.

It may be that neither historical criticism nor archaeology will ever be able to recapture the real Abraham - and perhaps it is just as well, for he was doubtless a man of his time - but the Abraham of legend will always remain the supreme example of the man of religious faith. His figure is a standing challenge to all those, Christians, Jews, or Muslims, who cherish pet schemes of salvation and who declare that it is only by belief in such and such a name or adherence to such and such a law or creed that men may be saved. The ideal man of God is the man of humble faith - such is the message of the legend of Abraham. If Judaism, Christianity and Islam are ever to heal their differences and realize their essential oneness, it can only be by a going back to the spirit of him who is known in history as "the friend of God".