EPILOGUE

IDEOLOGY IN THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the introduction to this study, I discussed the difficulty of determining the historical setting of the Book of Judges. In the body of the work, I focused on a literary analysis, and on uncovering the ideology at the basis of the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah accounts. While it is not clear to what extent the actual accounts are historical, the motivation in writing accounts dealing clearly with the subject of leadership involves of necessity a concrete historical situation, and these accounts certainly constituted a way of relating to this situation. The next few pages will summarize the ideology of the accounts discussed in this book, with an attempt to make a conjecture as regards the historical reality from which the accounts derived; this reality will provide the most appropriate context for completing our understanding of the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah accounts.

The most salient historical anchor in these accounts is the anti-monarchic outlook that appears principally in Gideon’s words in chapter 8, v. 23. Scholars disagree as to the period in which this ideology existed. Wellhausen considers that Gideon indeed ruled, and that the verses expressing his opposition to the monarchy are a late addition (together with 1 Sam 8:7; 10:19; 12:12) which replaced the report of Gideon’s acceptance of the kingship. Wellhausen considers that Gideon indeed ruled, and that the verses expressing his opposition to the monarchy are a late addition (together with 1 Sam 8:7; 10:19; 12:12) which replaced the report of Gideon’s acceptance of the kingship.1 In Wellhausen’s opinion, the anti-monarchic outlook dates from the exilic period when the monarchy no longer existed. However, the pro-monarchic outlook presented for instance in 1 Sam 9:16, belongs to the monarchic period of David and Solomon, that led to the situation of “Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree”.2 Many scholars strongly oppose the opinion that the anti-monarchism dates from after the destruction of the Temple. In texts clearly related to the Second Temple Period there is no indication

1 Wellhausen, Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel, p. 239 n. 1; Die Composition des Hexateuchs, pp. 226–227.
2 Wellhausen, Die Composition des Hexateuchs, pp. 239, 254–256.
of anti-monarchism. On the contrary, in the Second Temple Period there is a yearning for the restoring of the Davidic monarchy.\(^3\)

There are two further possibilities as to the period of the anti-monarchic outlook. Either this outlook in the Book of Judges in general and in Gideon’s words in particular is from the monarchic period or from the pre-monarchic period. Several suppositions were raised in relation to the first possibility. According to Budde, the anti-monarchism is contemporaneous with the destruction of Samaria and in keeping with Hosea’s outlook (e.g.: 8:4; 13:9–11).\(^4\) A modification of this view is presented by Moore, who considers that vv. 22–23 belong to a late layer of E, and the anti-monarchism reflects the period of anarchy between the time of Jeroboam son of Nabat and the destruction of Samaria.\(^5\) One of the main arguments of this approach is the contradiction that scholars find between Gideon’s opposition to the monarchy and the assumption appearing in the Abimelech account that Gideon had some royal authority that was passed on to his descendants (9:2). However, such a conclusion cannot be drawn from this source, since we must take into account the possibility that Abimelech’s words there are a strategy to have himself made king. Moreover, in our analysis of the Abimelech account we saw that Abimelech’s character is the antithesis of that of his father Gideon, and therefore his words concerning the monarchy are simply the opposite of his father’s intention.\(^6\) Crüseman, who strongly disagrees with the opinion that the anti-monarchism dates from after the destruction of the Temple, also considers that the criticism presented in Gideon’s words could not have been made before Israel had experience of the monarchy. In his opinion, the anti-monarchism dates from the early monarchic period, in Solomon’s time.\(^7\)

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\(^4\) Budde, *Das Buch der Richter*, pp. 66–67; Budde, *Die Bücher Richter und Samuel*, pp. 184–186. However, it is doubtful whether Hosea rejects kingship, see e.g. J. L. Mays, *Hosea, A Commentary (OTL)*, London 1969, p. 117.

