THE DUAL CAUSALITY PRINCIPLE AND ITS EFFECTS ON BIBLICAL LITERATURE

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1. Introduction

A reader and researcher of literature who has decided to assess ancient biblical literature by applying the rigorous forms of analysis for the discipline of modern literature is frequently surprised by his discoveries. He is convinced that, although it is a fact that the majority of the stories are composed within a system of historical representation which is subjected to theological principles whose purpose is not only to describe and explain the past but primarily to elucidate it by way of guidance for the future, he may also find in them deep psychological penetration and a realistic chain of events which create a world which is true to life. In spite of the didactic proclivity of this historiographic literature, there are indeed many instances in which the moulding of the characters which appear in it and the plots of which it is composed do not have a stereotyped or unnatural colouring. The leading characters are not depicted in black and white and their actions do not represent absolute good against absolute evil.

Consequently the question arises: what were the concepts whose application prevented substantial sections of this religious literature from being turned into didactic stereotyped literature? Or what were the principles which gave rise to a preference for realism, suffusing the narrative with the hue of a world which is true to life? In this article I shall examine the dual causality principle and endeavour to explain it and to show through a number of examples how it operates in biblical literature.

2. The history of the problem

2.1. The question of the "secular" historical shaping of considerable sections of biblical literature has already engaged G. von
Rad, who tried in his research work carefully to examine the roots, the revelations and the influence of biblical theology.\textsuperscript{1} There is, he claims, a connection between the historical changes and changes in the spiritual world: "there is every justification for fixing as the date of the beginning of a new era in Israel's spiritual life the period of the monarchy; for the poetic and literary productions to which she gave birth in rapid succession from this time on presuppose a completely changed intellectual and spiritual temper in those who wrote them".\textsuperscript{2}

Von Rad connects the period of the united monarchy with the discovery of a new spirit which finds its expression in the literature which was written during that period. Events like the unification of the north and south and internal consolidation, concentration of military strength which enabled political expansion and the forging of external relations, the forming of a link with a new centre of cultic worship and adopting the modes of worship which were practised there, and finally the strengthening of the position of the king and his court, all these factors had an influence upon the sphere of the beliefs and doctrines of society and in particular upon spiritual people who lived in its midst. Von Rad is of the opinion that the outstanding compositions written during that period were: (1) the history of the rise of David (1 Sam. xvi 14-2 Sam. v 12), a subject which provides a direct explanation of actual historical changes; (2) the story of the inheritance of the throne (2 Sam. vi 12, 20 ff.—1 Kings ii), which is designed to give legitimacy to the monarchy of Solomon; and also (3) the composition of the Yahwistic history, this being the first attempt at creating a comprehensive historical picture from traditions concerning isolated episodes, the substantial part of which have the nature of a miracle story. In his opinion, the transition from miraculous episodes to the writing of a comprehensive historical composition explains the revelation of the activity of God in a different way, "which was much more hidden from men's view and lay rather in their daily lives" (p. 51 = p. 59).

Von Rad presumes, therefore, that the search during this period for divine activity in the day-to-day world brought about the

\textsuperscript{1} Old Testament Theology 1 (Edinburgh and London, 1962), E. tr. of Theologie des Alten Testaments 1 (Munich, 1957).
\textsuperscript{2} p. 38 (= German, p. 46). In continuation he limits the phenomenon to a small group which was concentrated around the king's court. The study of his system is found especially on pp.48-56 (= 56-65).