seems to justify a brief summary is given such summary. Actually, the majority of the articles are given at least a few lines of description. Naturally the usefulness of this Review will depend to some extent on the time-lag between the appearance of the periodicals and the appearance of the Review. This first number while not professing to be absolutely comprehensive is on the other hand up-to-date, i.e. up to the end of 1951. The Review may well come to be an indispensable part of the Biblical student's library.

Also recently published is the 'Theology Digest' from St Mary's College, Kansas, the Divinity School of St Louis University. Though somewhat different in scope and plan from the above German periodical, nevertheless its appearance is once more due to the need to present the enormous amount of material published in a handy and easily available form. In this Digest of course we have summaries consisting of two or three pages each. But they are not merely summaries ; they are often made from articles in other languages. The selection of articles is judiciously made, not only with a view to publishing what is more important but also aiming at a central theme in each issue. The Digest is still in the experimental stage but this first issue is certainly promising.

Reprint. In response to requests we reprint in this issue an article 'The Approach to the Old Testament' by Fr Hugh McKay, O.F.M. This originally appeared in the occasional leaflet we published before we started the quarterly SCRIPTURE in January 1946.

Obituary. We record with regret the death of Sir Frederic Kenyon, the well-known Biblical scholar. An appreciation will be published in the next issue of SCRIPTURE.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

WHEN we inquire into the origin and meaning of the ark we find that it plays a two-fold role : it is the place where Yahweh is in a special way present among the Israelites ; and it is the box in which are kept the two tables of the law. The connection between these two ideas is not obvious ; in fact one might wonder whether there is any connection, apart from the name. Have we here an example of two completely separate traditions, linked together later by the compilers of the Pentateuch in its present form ? There are solid grounds for this suspicion when we find that the first idea is derived from the sources E and J, while the latter is found in the sources D and P. Even the name is not identical in each of these traditions ; as the place where

Yahweh dwells, the ark is called 'ark of Yahweh'; as the resting place for the tables of the law it is known as 'the ark of the covenant'. In the P source it is given a third name: 'the ark of the testimony'. The compilers of the Pentateuch attempted to link up these two traditions, by changing the first name into the second. This they did by inserting *berith* (covenant) between the words 'ark' and 'Yahweh'. It is clearly the work of later editors: there is frequent discrepancy between the Massoretic Text and the Septuagint. In the Books of Samuel for instance, there is only one example: II Sam. xv, 24, where the M.T. and LXX are in agreement; and in the Massoretic Text, the result of the insertion frequently gives us the grammatically intolerable phenomenon of a noun in the construct case carrying the article.[1] The question to be solved, therefore, is whether there were originally two quite different traditions concerning the ark, or whether it was always regarded in the same light throughout the history of Israel.

The ark plays a most important part in the early history of the chosen people. It goes ahead of them as they make their way through the desert: it leads them like a general at the head of his army: 'And they departed from the mount of Yahweh, three days' journey; and the ark of the covenant of Yahweh went before them in the three days' journey, to search out a resting place for them . . . And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said: Rise up, Yahweh, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested he said: Return, Yahweh, unto the many thousands of Israel' (Num. x, 33-6). The ark continues to play its part as their leader, and in a wonderful manner, when they reach the confines of Canaan (Jos. iii, 3). It is the ark which provides a passage for them across the Jordan: 'As they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water . . . the waters which came down from above stood . . . and those that came down towards the sea of the plain, the salt sea, failed and were cut off; and the people passed over. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of Yahweh stood firm on dry land in the midst of the Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground' (Jos. iii, 15-17). The dividing of the waters is attributed to the ark: the author is at pains to

[1] Some have tried to explain the phenomenon as an elliptical expression (c.f. Hummelauer: Comm. in Jos., C.S.S., 1903, and Steuernagel: Josue: Goettingen 1923: both ad Jos. iii, 11), but examples of ellipsis are not certainly found. In other cases where the construct case would appear to have the article, we find that the word which it governs is the name of a place, and these examples are better explained as a noun in the absolute, followed by an 'accusativus loci'. Cf. BURNEY: *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Kings*: Oxford 1903 ad II Kings xxiii, 17; DRIVER: *Notes on the Hebrew Text and the Topography of the Books of Samuel*: 2nd edit. Oxford 1913: ad II Sam. ii, 32; SANDA: *Die Bücher der Könige*: Münster 1912 ad II Kings xxiii, 17.

emphasize it: 'And it came to pass, when the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of Yahweh were come up out of the midst of Jordan . . . that the waters of Jordan returned to their place, and flowed over all its banks as before' (Jos. iv, 18). But the ark is more than a mere path-finder; it is their general, that brings about the capture of the strong city of Jericho. It is the ark which plays the chief part: the procession of priests and soldiers is only its entourage: 'Seven priests bearing the seven trumpets of rams' horn, passed on before Yahweh, and blew with the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of Yahweh followed them. And the armed men went before the priests that blew the trumpets, and the rearward came after the ark' (Jos. vi, 8-9). The ark is clearly the thing that matters most: 'So the ark of Yahweh compassed the city, going about it once' (Jos. vi, 11). On the seventh day the walls fell and the city was captured: Josue had already told the people: 'Yahweh hath given you the city' (Jos. vi, 16). Israel's troubles were by no means over, when they had gained a foothold in Canaan. The Philistines were their bitter enemies, and in I Sam. chaps iv—vi we have an account of the battles against them. Here again, we see what an important part the ark played in Israel's war-like activities. When the Israelites venture forth against them without the ark, they are defeated, and they quickly suspect the reason why: the ark was absent: 'And when the people were come into the camp the elders of Israel said: Wherefore hath Yahweh smitten us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of Yahweh out of Silo unto us, that when He cometh among us, He may save us out of the hand of our enemies.' (I Sam. vi, 3.)[2] The capture of the ark by the Philistines was the greatest of calamities; Eli died at hearing the news (I Sam. vi, 18).

The ark therefore, was intimately concerned in the wanderings and wars of Israel: in some way or other it seemed to play the part of a general, at the head of his army; when Israel went to war, the ark went with them; its presence was the essential condition for success. What, then did the ark mean to the Israelites? How could they think of the ark as their leader and general, as the thing which made all the difference between victory and defeat? Obviously it must have meant more to them than the mere material thing they had made. From the texts quoted it is clear that where the ark is, there is Yahweh also; Yahweh is in some special way connected with the ark. He is as it were localized in or on or around the ark. If we re-read, for instance, Moses' utterance as the Israelites set forth from Sinai (Num. x, 35-36) we see that Yahweh and the ark are in some way identified: when the ark is raised up, it is Yahweh who rises up; when the ark is set down in the camp, it is Yahweh who returns to take His place among them. We have seen how the miraculous

[2] *HE*, not 'it', for 'ark' is feminine cf. SMITH: *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel:* I.C.C. 1904 ad h.v.

crossing of the Jordan was attributed to the presence of the ark ; it is alternatively attributed to the presence of Yahweh (Jos. iii, 5 ; iii, 10-11). The ark was held in the middle of the Jordan, and the people crossed in the sight of the ark. Is not the same thing meant when we are told quite simply that 'About four thousand warriors crossed in the sight of Yahweh'? (Jos. iv, 13). 'Before the ark of Yahweh' and 'Before Yahweh' are likewise synonymous expressions in the account of the capture of Jericho (Jos. vi, 6 ; vi, 18). Neglecting the ark, the Israelites are defeated by the Philistines, for they are neglecting Yahweh Himself (I Sam. vi, 3). Even the pagan and hostile Philistines understand the significance of the ark to the Israelites ; its arrival causes consternation : 'God is come into the camp. Woe unto us ! Who shall deliver us from the hand of this mighty God ? This is the God that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness' (I Sam. vi, 7-8). When the ark was kept twenty years at Kirjath-jearim 'All the house of Israel lamented after Yahweh' (I Sam. vii, 2), for when the ark was absent, was not Yahweh absent ? Finally, this association of Yahweh and the ark is sanctioned by God Himself. When David, disturbed because the ark is not housed as becomes its dignity says : 'See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains' (II Sam. vii, 2), the prophet Nathan brings him the message of Yahweh : 'Shalt thou build ME a house for me to dwell in ? Whereas I have not dwelt in a house since the time I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have journeyed in a tent and in a tabernacle' (II Sam. vii, 5-8). The ark, therefore, stands in so close an association with Yahweh that it is wellnigh identified with Him. Yahweh is their leader ; Yahweh is their general bringing them victory in war ; and He is brought into their midst by means of the ark.

According to the second tradition, which is equally clearly witnessed in the Old Testament, the ark is the box in which are kept the two tables of the law, and it is to this tradition that the common name 'ark of the covenant' more directly applies. 'At that time Yahweh said unto me : Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto Me to the mountain ; and make thee an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest ; and thou shalt put them in the ark . . . And I made an ark of sittim wood . . . and put the tables in the ark which I had made ; and there they are, as Yahweh commanded me' (Deut. x, 1, 3, 5). The ark was made by Moses, at Yahweh's command, to serve as a container for the two stone tablets which Yahweh gave to him. That purpose is still served when Solomon installed the ark in his magnificent temple : we are told that : 'There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone ' (I Kings viii, 9). But what were these two tables of stone ? Since the ark was made for their sake, we must investigate their significance. When the Israelites

left Egypt, they came to Mount Sinai; and there Yahweh manifested Himself to them, and offered to take the Israelites under His special protection: 'Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all peoples' (Ex. xix, 5.) Yahweh is proposing to make a covenant, a pact with Israel: He will be their God, they shall be His people in a special manner. It is almost, as the prophets were later to describe it, a proposal of marriage. Yahweh offers the Israelites a contract; will they sign it? 'And all the people answered together and said: All that Yahweh hath spoken we will do' (Ex. xix, 8). What were they undertaking? What was their part in the contract? 'If you will obey my voice', Yahweh had said; this contract, on the part of the Israelites, was to consist in keeping the law of Yahweh. This law, Yahweh communicated to Moses; and to make it a more forceful reminder he epitomises it in the decalogue which he engraves upon two tablets of stone. These represent Israel's part of that bi-lateral agreement they had entered upon with Yahweh. The tables of stone are the receipt, testifying that Israel had made a pact, a covenant with Yahweh. The ark becomes the sacred guardian of the pledge which Israel gave to Yahweh; it is the box which contains the covenant, the covenant which shapes the destiny of Israel. In the ancient East, where no pact was considered valid unless it were put in writing,[3] a covenant without a document testifying to it, was impossible. Moreover, such documents were kept in caskets of wood or clay; the archives of the king of Ta'annak, for instance, were found preserved on clay tablets, in a clay casket.[4]

The historicity of this tradition, whereby the placing of the tables of the law in the ark is attributed to Moses, has been denied by many. Preserved as it is in the later sources D and P it is considered to be a retrojection of the later 'covenant idea' into more primitive times, in order that it might seem to have its roots in the ancient history of Israel. But one of the master-ideas of Israel's faith, not only in mosaic times, but even in the patriarchal period, is the 'election-motif': Israel is the chosen people of God. The whole history of Israel is shaped by this idea. From the very day when Abram left Harran at the command of God, Yahweh promised him a posterity as numerous as the stars of heaven (Gen. xv, 5), and in answer to Abram's question: 'Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?' 'Yahweh made a covenant with Abram' (Gen. xv, 18). In other words, the covenant is

[3] The importance of the bond or written document witnessing to a contract is seen from the Code of Hammurapi; cf. for instance, the necessity of bonds for a legal marriage: 'If a man has married a wife and has not laid down her bonds, that woman is no wife', no. 128.

[4] SELLIN: *Tell Ta'annak* (Denkschriften der Kais. Akad. d. Wiss. in Wien; phil-hist. Kl. Bd. L.) 4 Wien 1904 s.41.

the direct outcome of the election of Israel by Yahweh. If this election by God is at the heart of the Israelite religion, if the promise of a land and numerous posterity is founded on patriarchal tradition, then the covenant idea must be equally primitive in its origin, for it is directly connected as the guarantee is to the promise. There is, therefore, every reason for accepting the historicity of a written covenant in the time of Moses. Considering the insistence, among ancient peoples of the east, upon the value of written documents in witness to all pacts, it is hardly conceivable that such a pact as this, between Yahweh and Israel, a pact which shaped the whole course of their history, should not be set down in writing. Nor is it difficult to understand why this should take place at the moment when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt. On the eve of their entering into that promised land, which was a part of their election (Gen. xv, 18) Yahweh, as it were, hands to them the title-deeds. Hence there is no valid reason, for rejecting the historicity of those texts quoted above, wherein the placing of the tables of the law in the ark is attributed to Moses.

The Old Testament therefore, gives us two traditions concerning the ark: according to the first, transmitted by the sources E and J, the ark was the place of Yahweh's presence among His people; according to the second, transmitted by the sources D and P, it was the casket in which were contained the tablets of the law of the covenant. The existence of these two different traditions, is, I think, quite certain. But it is not so clear, whether the difference lies in two quite separate ideas, or whether it is merely a difference of emphasis. In other words, was the ark at all times throughout the history of Israel both the place of Yahweh's presence and the container of the tables of the law; or was it originally only the first? Many have seen in these two traditions a clear proof of the evolution of the Israelite religion from primitive nomad beliefs to the highly organized sacerdotal ritualism of post-exilic times. In the beginning, they say, the ark was merely a battle standard, something which invoked the aid of that war god Yahweh who thundered forth in fire and smoke from the summit of Mount Sinai. It was the palladium which brought good luck. Hence it was invested with a sacred character and became the centre of their worship. Possibly it contained sacred stones in which spirits and divinities were thought to dwell; they might be oracle stones or meteor stones since Yahweh would seem to have been originally the storm god. After the Israelites had settled down to a stable life, and with the appearance of the prophets, this crude conception was purified, and the sacred stones were changed into the stone tablets of the law; and with the growth of ritualism during the exile, and the increasing importance of the priestly caste, the ark is made to appear as the most important article of the temple furniture, an object of elaborate craftsmanship, the smallest details of which are regulated by law. There is

however, no evidence of such an evolution ; the whole theory depends on the assertion that primitive Israelite religion was pure Nomadism. But archæological evidence, especially the knowledge gained through the Amarna and Boghazkoi texts, makes such a theory untenable. It is too primitive even for primitive Israel.[5]

Such an evolutionary explanation is far too drastic to be borne out by facts. But it would be surprising if there were not signs of a certain measure of development in the long history of Israel. In fact this development did take place : the ark was considered in earlier times, mainly as the place of Yahweh's presence among His people, whilst later on, it was regarded mainly as the casket containing the covenant. But the change was a change of emphasis only ; the two traditions are not wholly distinct for each contains traces of the other. Thus in the first tradition, the very name 'ark' leads us to suspect that it was designed to contain something, for the word *'aron* means 'box' or 'casket',[6] and is never used in a transferred sense for anything else. It is true that we find no explicit reference in the sources on which this tradition depends, to the things which this casket contains ; but this earlier tradition also, recounts that Yahweh made a covenant with Israel, and wrote down His law on tables of stone (Ex. xix, 5 ; xxiv, 12). If we are not told that these tables were placed in the ark, neither are we told that they were kept anywhere else, nor are we told that anything else was placed in the ark. We have seen that valuable documents were regularly kept in wooden or clay caskets. It seems a reasonable inference that even in the earlier tradition the ark was also the casket for the tables of the law. It is more obvious that in the second tradition where the ark is considered chiefly as the casket for the law, it was also regarded as the place where Yahweh was present in a special manner. In Exodus chap. xxv, where the detailed description of the ark is given, we also read of Yahweh's promise to be present : 'And in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will be known to thee, and speak to thee from upon the *kapporeth*, from the midst of the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony' (Ex. xxv, 22). The tabernacle, erected to house the ark, is likewise the place where Yahweh is to be found (Ex. xxx, 31 ; Num. xvii, 9), and the same idea is expressed in the phrase, considered of late origin : 'Ark of Yahweh God, sitting between the Cherubim' (I Sam. iv, 4). The two traditions, therefore, reflect not two distinct ideas, but a change of emphasis. This change of emphasis came as a result of the religious revival of the eighth and seventh centuries which took the form of a call to Israel to be faithful once more to her agreement with Yahweh. We have seen that the election

[5] Cf. DURR : *Ursprung u. Bedeutung der Bundeslade :* Bonner Seitschrif f. Theologie u. Seelsorg : 1 (1924) s.19.

[6] Cf. Gen. l, 26 ; II Kings xii, 10, 11 ; II Chron. xxiv, 8, 10, 11.

of Israel was at the very heart of their religion, and the instrument of that election was the Sinaitic covenant, the alliance between God and His people. But Israel's contact with pagan Canaan ; the evils resulting from a more highly-organized social life under David and Solomon ; the schism between north and south : all were factors in the weakening of Israel's faith, in the decline of her fervour. Hence the prophets described Israel as an unfaithful spouse ; she had committed adultery with pagan gods, deserting her legitimate spouse, Yahweh. The whole concept of Israel's wickedness and of Israel's conversion, is represented in terms of that covenant with Yahweh. The emphasis placed upon the covenant, the revival of its memory, would naturally extend to the visible token of that covenant : the tables of the law kept in the ark. Here lies the explanation of why the title 'ark of the covenant' prevailed, and why, when in the sources of the earlier tradition the simple title 'ark of Yahweh' was found, the word *berith* (covenant) was deliberately inserted. It served as yet another reminder to the people, that they were bound by the laws and promises of fidelity they had accepted when they made a covenant with Yahweh.

Finally, in confirmation of our conclusion that the ark was both the throne of Yahweh and the casket containing the covenant, let us briefly consider some of the analogies to the ark, found among surrounding peoples. The Israelites during their sojourn in Egypt must have become familiar with the sight of the sacred barge, carried in procession by means of its long poles ; and certain details in the ark's construction were doubtless borrowed from it. But a closer analogy to the ark as the throne of Yahweh, is found in the empty throne of the god, described by Persian and Greek writers, first set up in permanent fashion, later carried from place to place. In later times with reference to both Cyrus and Xerxes we read that in the midst of the grand state procession, there was an empty chariot drawn by white horses, and this was sacred to Jupiter.[7] The practice of keeping documents near the throne of the god was also quite common. It is well known that important documents were always preserved in temples. They were kept, as we now know from archæological discoveries in Egypt, Babylon, Boghazkoi and Syria, in a casket at the feet of the divinity. Thus we read, for instance, in a note appended to the sixty-fourth chapter of the Book of the Dead : 'This chapter was discovered at Hermopolis, upon a slab of alabaster, nscribed in blue, under the feet of this god, at the time of King Menkara.'[8] A note to a remedy found in a papyrus of the time of Ramses II reads : 'Found among old writings in a casket with book-rolls, under the feet

[7] Cf. XENOPHON : *Cyropaedia :* VIII, 3, 9ff. HERODOTUS : VII : 40.

[8] Cf. *The Life Work of Sir Peter Le Page Renouf :* Vol. IV : The Book of the Dead : translation and commentary, continued and completed by Prof. E. Naville : 1907.

of Anubis at Leontopolis.'[9] In a Babylonian document the king invites the recipient of the inscribed cylinder he is forwarding, to 'Deposit it in the temple, the fitting place for it.'[10] The stele inscribed with the Code of Hammurapi stood in the temple. This custom of depositing documents 'at the feet of the gods' was especially strong among the Hittites. Thus we read at the end of a treaty between Subbiluliuma and the king of Mitanni: 'A copy of the tablet is to be deposited before the sun-god of the town of Arinna'.[11] and in a letter of the Egyptian pharaoh, a son of Ramses II, to the king of Mira, we are especially reminded of the Israelite covenant: 'Here is the document of the oath, which I have had prepared for the great king of Chatti, my brother; it has been deposited at the feet of the god Tesup, before the divinity. *This is to be a witness.*' (*'eduth*!).[12] In discussing the ark, we have avoided any consideration of the *kapporeth*. If, however, there are solid grounds for considering the *kapporeth* as the actual throne of Yahweh,[13] and the ark—the casket—as His footstool, then the above analogies are even closer. But in any case, we have shown that the ark was at all times both the place of Yahweh's presence: His throne, and the casket in which the two tables of the law were contained. The two traditions simply reflect a different emphasis, and the origin of the ark must be sought where these two ideas are found together: at Mount Sinai, where Yahweh promised Moses that He would go before the Israelites and be with them, and where He made His pact, His covenant with Israel, giving them the tables of the law to witness to it.

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[9] WRESZINSKI: *Der grosse medizinische Papyrus der Berliner Museum:* Leipzig: 1909: Kol. XV: 2xL. 1 u. 2.

[10] CLAY: *New-Babylonian Letters from Erech:* 1919 no. 4.

[11] *Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazkoi:* I Heft (1916) nr. 1, Rs. 35ff.

[12] JIRKU: *Altoriental Kommentar zum Alten Testament:* 1923: s.185.

[13] DIBELIUS: *Die Lade Jahves:* Eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung: Forschungen z. Religion u. Litteratur des A. u. N.T. no. 7. 1906. s. 40.