HARVARD THEOLOGICAL STUDIES III: EPHOD AND ARK, A STUDY IN THE RECORDS AND RELIGION OF THE ANCIENT HEBREWS

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WILLIAM R. ARNOLD

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BY GEORGE F. MOORE, JAMES H. ROPES, KIRSOPP LAKE



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BY

WILLIAM R. ARNOLD HITCHCOCE PROFESSOR OF HERENW IN ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL REMINARY



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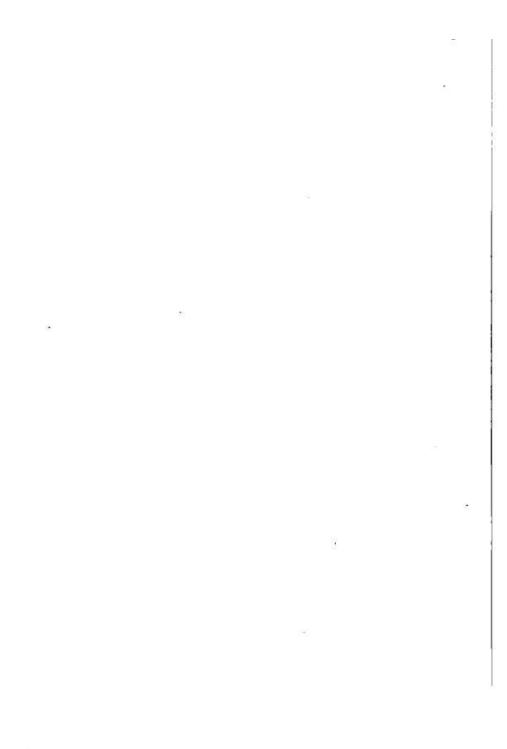
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EPHOD AND ARK

I

THE present state of knowledge and critical opinion regarding both the "ephod" and the "ark" of our Old Testament is extremely. unsatisfactory.

The so-called "ark of the Covenant" is still wrapped in mystery. What was it ? Where did it come from ? Where did it go to ? The later Deuteronomistic diaskeuasts ¹ and the Priestly source of the Pentateuch ³ do indeed pretend to tell us what it was and where it came from; but critics very properly reject their statements as unhistorical. Yet while the Priestly "tabernacle" has long since been consigned to the limbo of imaginary institutions which never in fact existed, the ark refuses to be dealt with so summarily. For the most ancient historical records in the Old Testament bear unimpeachable witness to the existence of such an object at the very beginning of the Israelitish monarchy.⁶ On the other hand, when once the postexilic statements have been discarded, the greatest divergence of opinion prevails as to what the object so designated actually was, whether in respect to its form or its function, — to say nothing of the remoter questions of its origin and ultimate fate.

The word put is plain Hebrew for box. It is used of the coffin in which the remains of Joseph were carried from Egypt to Canaan,⁴ and of the collection-box which stood in the temple at Jerusalem to

¹ Deut. 10, 1-5; I Kings 8, 9 21. The diaskeuastic character of I Kings 8, 9 21 is obtrusive. The same is true of the references to the ark in Deut. 10, 1-5; verse 1b is obviously interpolated between 18 and 2; 38 a (and with it doubtless the last two words of verse 2) before 3a^{[3}; and verse 5 before verse 10. These passages, it is needless to say, are in no way supported by Deut. 31, 26.

¹ Ex. 25, 10ff; 37, 1 ff; cf. 31, 18.

^{*} I Sam. 4-7; 2 Sam. 6; 11, 11; 15, 24 ff; 1 Kings 2, 26.

⁴ Gen. 50, 26; cf. Ex. 13, 19.