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An Historical Survey of Old Testament Theology since 1922

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AN HISTORICAL SURVEY OF
OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY SINCE 1922

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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June 1957

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Reader

SHORT TITLE

**HISTORY OF
OF THEOLOGY
SINCE 1922**

CHAPTER I
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since shortly after the first World War there have been a great many publications and lively interest in the field of Old Testament studies known as Old Testament Theology or Biblical Theology of the Old Testament. This surge of interest came after a period of almost complete neglect of this discipline. This paper will attempt to analyze the causes of the resurgence of Old Testament Theology, to understand the various methods or approaches of major scholars in the field, and to analyze the results of these methods.

However broadly or narrowly the scope of Old Testament Theology is defined, it is always a summary of the results of historical and exegetical scholarship, drawing together the other branches of Old Testament study. Thus the importance of an overview of Old Testament Theology lies in the fact that this provides, to a certain extent, a survey of all Old Testament scholarship and an indication of the results for theology of modern research. Furthermore, a broad view of this field is of great benefit to the student in understanding and making use of the works of individual scholars, revealing as it does the importance of approach and method in determining the character of a writer's work.

The period to be surveyed in this paper is 1922 to the present day. This is not simply an arbitrary division, but is chosen because the Theologie des Alten Testaments of Eduard Koenig, published in 1922,¹ was

¹Eduard Koenig, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart: Chr. Belser, 1922).

the first major publication in the field since Davidson's Theology of the Old Testament, published in 1904.²

The major emphasis in the paper will be on the method or approach of the scholars treated. Obviously the content of the various books cannot be presented in detailed review, but their outline, content, and quality of scholarship will be indicated, in summary fashion, as much as is necessary for an understanding of a scholar's viewpoint and an assessment of the results of his method.

The paper will discuss, for the most part, major works in the field of Old Testament Theology, that is, those that offer a full-scale treatment of this theme. This is done because it is much easier and more profitable to assess the results of a given method if it has been employed in producing a theology; it is difficult to evaluate the worth of a proposed approach which has not been tested in practice. However, smaller studies will be discussed in so far as they have contributed to the discussion of the nature of Old Testament Theology.

Much of the work in this field has been in the form of what may be called semantic analysis, that is, investigation of the precise significance and history of terms and concepts of the Old Testament. Outstanding examples are the many Old Testament articles in Gerhard Kittel's Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament.³ Many of these semantic studies are of outstanding quality and value both for the scholar and

²A. B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament (New York: Scribner's, c.1904).

³Gerhard Kittel, ed., Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933-54), 5 vols.

for the pastor. Nevertheless, they cannot be discussed within the limits of this paper, both because of their great number and because their character as objective, scientific studies of very limited scope has made them of lesser importance for an understanding of the task of Old Testament Theology.

The paper will first treat briefly the decline of interest in Old Testament Theology and its causes. The main portion of the paper, the treatment of the resurgence of Old Testament Theology, will be organized geographically and chronologically, since in general the discussion of the task of a Biblical theology has proceeded within national limits, and, roughly speaking, these follow in chronological order, Europe, led by Germany, being the first, England second, and the United States third. The complexity of the subject would make a topical arrangement very difficult and would result in an arbitrary classification. Thus the works published in the field will provide the framework, and the ideas of the writers will be discussed in connection with the works published.

The history of Old Testament Theology in the modern period has been treated by James Smart (to 1943),⁴ Norman Porteous (to 1951),⁵ Herbert Hahn (to 1954),⁶ and Emil Kraepling (to 1955).⁷ The works of these

⁴James D. Smart, "The Death and Rebirth of Old Testament Theology," Journal of Religion, XXIII (1943), 1-11, 125-36.

⁵Norman W. Porteous, "Old Testament Theology," in The Old Testament and Modern Study, edited by H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 315-45.

⁶Herbert Hahn, The Old Testament in Modern Research (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1954).

⁷Emil Kraepling, The Old Testament Since the Reformation (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955).

authors are secondary sources for the history of the period, along with reviews and summaries of the books which have appeared in the field. The theologies of the Old Testament written since 1923, and relevant articles in theological journals have been consulted as primary sources.

The method which was employed involved first summarizing the method or approach of the individual scholar and then assessing the significance of his contribution and his relation to the work of others. In this latter task the works of Porteous and Hahn were particularly helpful.

Although Hahn's definition, and the explicit recognition of the Bible, gave to a great extent out of a reaction to what was regarded as an abuse of the Bible by dogmatic theology, his early writings still considered theology as part of their responsibility. This book can be

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Tracy, P. V., "Theological Theology and the Bible of the Old Testament," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1937, 56-57, 61. Volume 56, "Biblical Theology and Biblical Hermeneutics," in *The Bible in Translation and Interpretation*, edited by Paul and Leopold Rothemann (New York: Harper & Row, 1937), 1, vol. 1937.

Friedrich Heiler, "Einsprüche zur Darstellung der Theologie des alten Testaments," *Theologische Zeitschriften*, 19. Jahrgang (1913), 206. Cf. P. V. Tracy, *Biblical Theology and Interpretation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1937), p. 27.

CHAPTER II

THE DECLINE OF INTEREST IN OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

The theological discipline known as "Biblical Theology of the Old Testament" originated in the period of Rationalism, toward the end of the eighteenth century.¹ The classic and often quoted definition of Biblical Theology was formulated by J. P. Gabler in an address titled "De justo discrimine theologiae Biblicae et dogmaticae," delivered in 1787. Biblical theology is an objective, historical discipline, he maintained, describing what the Biblical writers thought about divine matters. It is to be distinguished from dogmatic theology, which is didactic in character and sets forth what a theologian philosophically and rationally decides about divine matters in accordance with his time and situation.²

Although Gabler's definition, and the earliest criticism of the Bible, grew to a great extent out of a reaction to what was regarded as an abuse of the Bible by dogmatic theology, the early critics still considered theology as part of their responsibility. Thus such men as

¹Craig, C. T., "Biblical Theology and the Rise of Historicism," Journal of Biblical Literature, XLII (1943), 281-294. Cf. Hermann Gunkel, "Biblische Theologie und Biblische Religionsgeschichte," in Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, edited by Gunkel and Leopold Zscharnack (2nd edition; Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), I, col. 1089.

²Friedrich Baumgaertel, "Erwaegungen zur Darstellung der Theologie des Alten Testaments," Theologische Literaturzeitung, 76. Jahrgang (May, 1951), 258. Cf. G. E. Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital (London: SCM Press), p. 33.

Eichhorn, DeWette, Ewald, and Vatke wrote many works on strictly theological subjects.³

Later critics, however, writing toward the end of the nineteenth century, began to ignore the theology of the Old Testament. Such men as Stade, Smend, and the early Sellin treated the Old Testament as a collection of historical sources to be subjected to objective historical treatment. The result was not a theology, but a history of the religion of Israel. The idea of the Old Testament as a preparation for the New was given up. If faith wished to make its own valuation of the evidence, this was permissible, but for the scholar any consideration of faith or theological values was irrelevant.⁴

This drastic decline of interest in the theology of the Old Testament was due first of all to a reaction against the theologizing of the former generation. This reaction was not wholly unjustified, since the objectivity of the earlier critics had been impaired by various philosophical and religious biases. Younger critics justly accused them of reading meanings into the Old Testament. A second factor in the decline was the use of a rigid principle of development to explain historical changes; this was also a reaction against the static conception which many had previously held. Thirdly, this decline was part of a general trend away from theology characteristic of Protestantism in general in the nineteenth century. A final factor was the discovery of ancient cultures by archaeologists. These tremendous finds attracted philologists

³James D. Smart, "The Death and Rebirth of Old Testament Theology," Journal of Religion, XXIII (1943), 3.

⁴Herbert F. Hahn, The Old Testament in Modern Research (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, c.1954), pp. 227f.

and historians to Old Testament study; men of this bent of mind were often without any particular theological interest.⁵

Several theologies were produced in this period, but they were either histories of the religion of Israel masquerading under the title of theology, or else confused and inadequate. The victory was left with the history of religion approach.⁶ Hermann Gunkel, summing up the attitude at the end of this period, confidently predicts that there will from now on be only histories of Israel's religion, and no theologies of the Old Testament.⁷ Thus Smart is right in speaking of "The Death . . . of Old Testament Theology,"⁸ and other writers aptly described the period as "a theological ice-age"⁹ characterized by a "curious paralysis" of Old Testament theology.¹⁰

Some, like Harnack, openly called for the elimination of the Old Testament from the Christian canon, and a prominent writer in the field declares that his colleagues were restrained from doing so more by courtesy than by conviction.¹¹

⁵Hahn, loc. cit.; Smart, op. cit., pp. 4-9.

⁶Smart, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

⁷"Nach diesem allem ist zu erwarten, dass das Fach in einer schon abzusehenden Zukunft allgemein die Form der 'Geschichte der israelitischen Religion' besitzen wird." Gunkel, op. cit., col. 1090.

⁸Smart, op. cit., p. 1.

⁹C. R. North, "Old Testament Theology and the History of Hebrew Religion," Scottish Journal of Theology, II (1949), 113-26.

¹⁰Norman W. Porteous, "Old Testament Theology," in The Old Testament and Modern Study, edited by H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 313.

¹¹Walter Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1950), I, 4.

CHAPTER III

THE RESURGENCE OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY IN EUROPE

Germany

Under the impact of a purely scientific Old Testament scholarship and the optimistic, liberal Protestant spirit of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Theology of the Old Testament was abandoned as a part of Old Testament studies. However a reaction was not long in coming. The first stimulus toward the resurgence of Old Testament Theology came from the first World War and the resultant collapse of Germany's spiritual heritage. Germany bore the main brunt of defeat in the war, and the optimism of the progressive, liberal approach in theology was thoroughly discredited.¹ In the words of one observer, "With the collapse of civilization at the end of the first World War, liberal thought lost the very props on which it was constructed. The great triumvirate of theological liberalism, Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and Troeltsch, fell into profound disrepute among German-speaking theologians, especially among the younger generation."²

Closely allied with this dissatisfaction with liberal theology was a feeling that purely objective, critical study of the Old Testament was inadequate. It began to be felt that this sort of study did not result

¹ Herbert F. Hahn, The Old Testament in Modern Research (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, c.1954), p. 171.

² W. Heick and J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, c.1946), II, 171.

in an interpretation that gave significant meaning to the writings.³ Pastors were being faced with the question of the normative character of the Old Testament, and they were not being helped by purely scientific studies. Besides these men, also theologians in the fields of Comparative Religion, New Testament, and Systematic Theology felt the need of a more satisfactory interpretation of Old Testament data.⁴

Several theological movements lent impetus to the rise of Old Testament theology. Out of the disillusionment in Germany after World War I arose a current of "Neo-Lutheranism." Along with a great interest in Luther, this group of scholars devoted themselves to Bible studies, and to theological use of the Bible.⁵ Though their interest lay mainly in New Testament studies, they may well have provided some stimulus toward a revival of Old Testament Theology.

A more direct connection can be traced between the rise of Old Testament Theology and the theological movement known as "Crisis Theology," "Dialectical Theology," "Neo-orthodoxy," or, after its chief representative, "Barthianism." The sense of the tragedy of life produced by World War I, discrediting Kant and Hegel along with liberal theology, had a profound effect on Karl Barth, who up to that time had been an advocate of religious socialism and theological liberalism. "He and his friends, as Thurneysen says . . . learned to be 'ganz neu'

³Hahn, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

⁴Friedrich Baumgarten, "Erwägungen zur Darstellung der Theologie des Alten Testaments," *Theologische Literatur-Zeitung*, LXXVI (May, 1951), col. 258.

⁵Outstanding representatives of this group are Elert, Althaus, Sasse, Heim, G. Kittel, Koerberle, Sommerlath, Kuenneth, and Jeremias. Heick and Neve, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-84.

aufmerksam auf die Bibel."⁶ In 1918 Barth published his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, which with its emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the sinfulness of man, and the revelation of God in Christ and his cross and resurrection stimulated a whole new movement in theology, with Biblical studies as one of its chief emphases.⁷

This movement was a vital stimulus toward theological study of the Old Testament, whether this came from a follower of Barth like Wilhelm Vischer, or as a reaction on the part of those who disagreed with Barth.⁸

Later in this period the rise of National Socialism in Germany, with the attendant anti-Semitism, shocked Old Testament scholars into a defense, and thus a discussion, of the theology of the Old Testament. When attempts were made to revive Germany from the spiritual shock she experienced after World War I, not all of these were along Christian lines. Instead, the most radical of the new religious movements declared the country weakened by Jewish-Christian influence. Christianity was being replaced by a pagan mythology.⁹ Anti-Semitism was bound to strike the Old Testament especially hard, and scholars felt themselves obliged both as students of the Old Testament and as Christians to defend their book. For example, in 1934 three scholars noted especially for their work as historians and critics, Alt, Beggich, and von Rad, published Fuehrung zum Christentum durch das Alte Testament; directed against a virulently

⁶Ibid., p. 173.

⁷Kenneth S. Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper & Bros., c.1953), p. 1383.

⁸Emil G. Kraeling, The Old Testament Since the Reformation (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), pp. 219, 178.

⁹Hahn, op. cit., p. 202.

anti-Semitic book by Th. Fritsch, the work tries to demonstrate the necessity of the Old Testament for Christianity.¹⁰ This church struggle with a reviving paganism was a powerful factor contributing to the resurgence of Old Testament Theology, forcing scholars to consider the question of the nature and relevance of the Old Testament.¹¹

The revival of Old Testament Theology began with a number of important preliminary discussions. The first explicit call for a revival of the discipline came in 1921 from an outstanding critical scholar. Speaking to a gathering of Old Testament scholars, Rudolf Kittel, whose own Religion of Israel was a typical product of the historical school, freely acknowledged the shortcomings of the purely critical approach. "We came very near apologizing for the very existence of our Old Testament people and its religion. . . . Thus it was no wonder that an outsider such as Harnack misunderstood us."¹² Kittel then urged the scholars

¹⁰Kraepling, op. cit., p. 202.

¹¹Norman W. Porteous, "Old Testament Theology," in The Old Testament and Modern Study, edited by H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon, c.1951), p. 317.

¹²Rudolf Kittel, "Die Zukunft der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft," Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLIX (1921), 84. Kittel refers to the suggestion of Harnack that the Old Testament should be dropped from the canon (infra, p. 7); Harnack had said, "Das Alte Testament im 2. Jahrhundert zu verwerfen, war ein Fehler; . . . es im 15. Jahrhundert beizubehalten, war ein Schicksal; . . . es aber seit dem 19. Jahrhundert als kanonische Urkunde im Protestantismus noch zu konservieren, ist die Folge einer religiösen und kirchlichen Lähmung." Ludwig Koehler, "Alttestamentliche Theologie, I: Vorfragen und Gesamtdarstellungen," Theologische Rundschau, VII (1935), 257. Hereafter cited as "Vorfragen."

present to recapture the sense of Old Testament study as a discipline in Christian theology.¹³

The first work in the modern period to bear the title Theology of the Old Testament was that of Eduard Koenig,¹⁴ which appeared in 1922. Koenig stood somewhat apart from the mainstream of Old Testament study, since he disagreed sharply with the Wellhausen school and had a strong tendency toward conservatism. Nevertheless, he acknowledges the necessity of critical and historical study of the Old Testament, even if he must construct his own history of Israel's religion.¹⁵ Wishing to combine a historical and theological approach, he prefaces his work with his own history, and then provides a systematic treatment of the religious ideas of the Old Testament. Basically his system is one adopted from traditional systematic theology, that is, Theology, Anthropology, and Soteriology.¹⁶ Recognizing the diversity of ideas in the Old Testament, Koenig operates with the selective principle of "the legitimate religion of Israel," maintaining that only one religious tradition in Israel has abiding significance.¹⁷

Koenig's work, however, was marred by defects which brought upon it rigorous criticism and prevented it from exercising any great influence

¹³Cf. James D. Smart, "The Death and Rebirth of Old Testament Theology," Journal of Religion, XXIII (1943), 129.

¹⁴Eduard Koenig, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart: Chr. Belser, 1922).

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 6-16.

¹⁶Cf. the evaluation by Walter Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1950), p. 4.

¹⁷Cf. Smart, op. cit., p. 129.

on the history of Old Testament theology. Criticism was directed especially to his systematic principle, which, adopted as it was from another branch of theology, was felt to be ill-adapted to the subject. Eichrodt commented, "One notices an unmistakable sort of hybrid character about the book, since the historical-genetic approach extends beyond the confines of the first, historical part and thus the synthesis is slighted, and on the other hand, because the adoption of a dogmatic division foreign to the subject forces the material against its will into a bed of Procrustes."¹⁸ In addition, Koenig failed to provide any new discussion of the nature of Old Testament Theology.¹⁹

Yet though Koenig's work is generally regarded as possessing little permanent value, it is not wholly without historical significance. For all his conservatism, Koenig insisted that also the Theology of the Old Testament must be concerned with critical and historical scholarship, and thus was the first of many modern scholars to recognize this principle. The fact that Koenig placed a history of Israel's religion alongside a treatment of Old Testament Theology may be considered to have posed the question which was to occupy every writer to follow him: the

¹⁸ Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments, p. 4.

¹⁹ "Le manuel d' Edouard Koenig paru en 1922 ne peut pas être considéré comme le signal de la renaissance de cette branche, mais doit plutôt être envisagé comme le dernier témoignage d'un savant qui était toujours resté réfractaire aux théories de Wellhausen." C. Jacob, Theologie de l'Ancien Testament (Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, c.1955), p. 19. Cf. the judgment of Friedrich Baumgaertel: "Uebrigens geht Ed. Koenig 1922 bereits--oder in seinem Falle besser gesagt 'noch'--diesen Weg. That is, following a dogmatic outline Seine sachfremde, weil dogmatisch bestimmte Systematik erweist ihm als Nachzuegler." Baumgaertel, op. cit., p. 266.

the question of the relation of the relative and the absolute, the immanent and the transcendent, the history of Israel's religion and Old Testament Theology.

After Koenig's unsuccessful and rather premature attempt at treating the theology of the Old Testament, discussion of the task and necessity of Old Testament Theology was carried on by Carl Steuernagel. In an article which appeared in 1925, Steuernagel first enumerated the disadvantages of the old loci method of Biblical theology, emphasizing the inability of this sort of method to show a development or history. Then, however, he demonstrates that the more recent history of religious method is also inadequate without a systematic presentation of Old Testament Theology. Religionsgeschichte, in the first place, does not provide the student of comparative religion with the materials necessary for comparison; a systematic treatment is demanded for his purpose. Then, too, the historian must omit many details which are significant and necessary for New Testament Theology; thus monographic study of Old Testament concepts is necessary. It is also a peculiar failing of Religionsgeschichte that it is unable satisfactorily to present beliefs always held by Israel, or material which cannot be fitted into any one period with any sort of certainty, such as Israelite eschatology and wisdom literature. Steuernagel closes by stressing the necessity of Old Testament Theology for the New Testament scholar and the dogmatician, and remarks, with reference to the freedom of Biblical studies from dogmatic points of view, "Independence dare not become irrelevance."²⁰ Steuernagel's remarks are cautious

²⁰Carl Steuernagel, "Alttestamentliche Theologie und alttestamentliche Religionsgeschichte," in Vom Alten Testament: Festschrift Karl Marti, edited by K. Budde (Giessen: Toepelmann, 1925), pp. 266-73.

and call for Old Testament Theology mostly as an aid to other branches of scientific theological study, without raising the question of the validity of the Old Testament for Christianity.

This question was discussed by Otto Eissfeldt in an article which appeared the following year, 1926. Eissfeldt, a Lutheran, notes at the outset the growing tendency toward a theological use of the Old Testament and that some, notably Proksch, were calling for a "pneumatic exegesis," of the Old Testament. In sharp opposition to this trend Eissfeldt insisted on a sharp separation of knowledge and faith, of history and theology. Knowledge deals with history in an objective fashion; scholars of all faiths or even of no faith can work together at the task of a history of Israel's religion. Old Testament Theology, which falls into the realm of faith, is to be scientific, and yet confessional in character. Here men of different faiths will not be able to cooperate, and the validity of a scholar's work will be limited to his brethren. Quoting Barth and Thurneysen on this point, he calls knowledge and faith "two parallel lines which meet only in infinity."²¹

Eissfeldt may be said to have clarified the problem involved in producing an Old Testament Theology, but his extreme separation of knowledge and faith soon produced a reaction. Walter Eichrodt's article of 1929 closed this period of preliminary discussion of the nature of Old Testament Theology with a reply to Eissfeldt and a presentation of the author's own position. Opposing any sort of attempt to take Old Testament Theology out of the realm of empirical science, Eichrodt points out

²¹Otto Eissfeldt, "Israelitische-juedische Religionsgeschichte und alttestamentliche Theologie," Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLIV (1926), I, 1-12.

that all history is subjective to some extent, at least in selection of material, perspective, and the author's personal affinity for his subject. Thus even if Old Testament Theology demands faith or existential commitment, it is still an empirical science.²² Most other writers have echoed Eichrodt's criticism of Eissfeldt's position, adding that this could too easily lead to a situation where each religious community makes of the Old Testament what it chooses.²³

In the same article, Eichrodt outlines the approach which was to bear fruit in his own Theology of the Old Testament. Even though Old Testament Theology as a historical discipline cannot make a pronouncement on the validity of the ideas presented, this does not mean that an Old Testament Theology can only take the form of a historical presentation. A systematic exposition or "cross-section" is necessary as part of the historian's task, to show the inner relationships which a historical presentation may omit. Even though the theologian finds the full meaning of the Old Testament only in the New, and utilizes the New Testament as a principle of selection, yet this does not render his work unscientific.²⁴

Eichrodt's principles were then employed in the production of a massive, three-volume Theologie des Alten Testaments, which began to

²²Walter Eichrodt, "Hat die alttestamentliche Theologie noch selbständige Bedeutung in der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft?" Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, XLVII (1929), 83-91. Hereafter cited as "Hat die etc."

²³Hahn, op. cit., p. 232; Smart, op. cit., p. 131; Jacob, op. cit., pp. 19f.

²⁴Eichrodt, "Hat die etc.," pp. 83-91.

appear in 1933.²⁵ His introduction resumes discussion of a specifically Christian, New Testament approach to the Old Testament. The Old Testament "looks over" into the New Testament; it has a forward movement, an unfinished character which comes to rest only in Christ. "It is the break-through and consummation of the royal rule of God in this world which inseparably binds together the externally different worlds of the Old and New Testaments because it rests on the action of the one God who in promise and demand, in Gospel and Law pursues one and the same great goal, the building of His kingdom."²⁶

Eichrodt does not contemplate abandoning the historical method, but wishes to build on it. Old Testament Theology cannot be presented without constant consideration of its connection with the religious scene of the ancient Near-East. Eichrodt's significant observation at this point, however, is that "the religion of which the Old Testament sources tell us is, despite a history full of change, an independent magnitude of enduring basic tendency and of a type constantly the same."²⁷ This insight into the unity of Israel's religion throughout the historic period underlies Eichrodt's whole presentation, and is reflected in his other works.²⁸ For example, when treating Israel's legal code in the

²⁵Volumes II and III appeared in 1935 and 1939 respectively. Porteous, op. cit., p. 324.

²⁶Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments, p. 1.

²⁷Ibid., p. 4.

²⁸Eichrodt treats Old Testament anthropology as unified in spite of historical complexity and diversity in Man in the Old Testament, translated by K. and R. Gregor Smith (London: SCM Press, c.1951). Cf. also his "Review of Fosdick's Guide to Understanding the Bible," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXV (1946), pp. 205-17.

...of his theology, which is the ...

...of the ...

(misnomer by author)

...the ...

...the ...

¹...

²...

³...

body of his theology, though he does not entirely neglect historical development, he emphasizes the basically unchanging character of the legal principles of the Mosaic covenant.²⁹

Though he thus asserts the unity of the Old Testament religion, Eichrodt expressly rejects the form of Christian dogmatics (Theology, Anthropology, Soteriology) and instead proposes operating with a dialectic taken from the Old Testament itself. This is done to avoid operating with "bloodless abstractions" like "ethical monotheism."³⁰ The central idea of the Old Testament, he asserts, is that God bears a special relation to his people designated by the word "covenant," and thus the whole first volume, titled "God and His People," is organized around the idea of the covenant. But since this God also showed himself as God of the world and of the individual, the remainder of the theology is organized under the headings "God and the World" and "God and Man."³¹

Eichrodt's treatment of Old Testament Theology is an extremely significant one and has proved to be of enduring value. It is the largest and most exhaustive of the theologies that have been published to date, and has gone through four editions. It is especially Eichrodt's idea of grouping Old Testament ideas according to a plan from within the Old Testament which has attracted the praise of most of those who have published appraisals of his work. Porteous, Wright, and Baumgaertel all laud him for having overcome the old loci method and characterize his

²⁹Hahn, op. cit., pp. 234f.

³⁰Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments, p. iii.

³¹Eichrodt acknowledges his debt to Otto Proksch for this division, which Proksch had employed in his lectures on Old Testament Theology. Ibid., pp. 5f.

work as a significant pioneering effort.³² The advantage of Eichrodt's method may be illustrated by the way in which it permits a natural and effective discussion of the meaning of the cultus, which is something of a crux for other theologians.³³

Yet even those who applaud Eichrodt acknowledge that his work cannot be regarded as final or definitive. In the first place, although he achieves a remarkable unity and coherence through his adoption of the covenant as the central and controlling idea, the unity achieved is to some extent artificial, imposed on the Old Testament rather than growing out of it.³⁴ This is probably reflected in the fact that he abandons the covenant as an organizing principle in the second and third volumes of the work. Baumgaertel criticizes the work from a different standpoint. He finds the defect in Eichrodt's book in the fact that he does not propose discussing the validity of Old Testament ideas,³⁵ his own

³²Porteous, op. cit., pp. 326f; G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 36; Baumgaertel, op. cit., col. 267.

³³Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments, pp. 39-81.

³⁴For example, it seems that it requires a tour de force to treat the names and essence of God under the rubrics "The Name of the Covenant God" and "The Essence of the Covenant God." It appears that Eichrodt's treatment is not basically different from that of other theologians, and that applying these headings posits a unity without demonstrating it. Although Koehler's criticism is too sharp, it is not without justification: ". . . das Schema des Bundes ist willkuerlich und von aussen her an die Texte herangetragen, statt dass eine Pruefung vorgenommen waere, die ergeben haette, dass die Bundeskategorie sich wohl findet, aber nicht grundlegend ist." Koehler, op. cit., p. 273. Cf. Porteous, op. cit., pp. 326f.

³⁵Supra, p. 16.

view of the relation of the Old to the New Testament would seem to suggest that a treatment of the question of validity is necessary for a complete theology,³⁶ and it might be recalled that the political and religious situation had asked for something more than a purely historical presentation. Whether this purely descriptive method is considered a fault or not, it must be counted as a limitation.³⁷ Despite its flaws, however, G. Ernest Wright is not without justification in dubbing the book "perhaps the greatest work on Old Testament Theology ever produced."³⁸

The year 1933 also saw the appearance of a much briefer treatment of Old Testament Theology by Ernst Sellin,³⁹ issued as a supplement and companion volume to his history.⁴⁰ Sellin admits the inadequacy of a purely historical approach,⁴¹ and differs from Eichrodt as to the unity of the Old Testament. Sellin holds that only that part of the Old Testament is significant which served as the presupposition and basis for the Gospel of Christ and the proclamation of the Apostles.⁴² The significant portion of the Old Testament is the religion of the prophets, which is in

³⁶Supra, pp. 16f.

³⁷Baumgaertel, op. cit., col. 267.

³⁸Wright, op. cit., p. 36.

³⁹Ernst Sellin, Theologie des Alten Testaments, (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1933).

⁴⁰Ernst Sellin, Geschichte der israelitischen und juedischen Religion (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1933).

⁴¹Smart, op. cit., p. 132. "It seems to me high time for Old Testament science to remember that it is not merely a historical discipline, but also a discipline in Christian theology."

⁴²Sellin, Theologie des Alten Testaments, p. 1.

sharp contrast to the national cultic religion, and eventually triumphed completely over it in the New Testament.⁴³ The Old Testament contains such contrasts and contradiction that it cannot yield a system of theology without selection of one element,⁴⁴ and thus Sellin proposes treating the national, cultic elements only as background for the prophetic religion.⁴⁵ Sellin is thus compelled to admit that the Old Testament is not unambiguous; also Pharisaism, Talmudic Judaism, Sadduceeism, Essenism, and Alexandrian religious philosophy based themselves on the Old Testament, adding something new, and also finding their ideas prefigured in the Testament.⁴⁶

Sellin's outline is in decided contrast to that of Eichrodt; basically Sellin adopts the traditional divisions of systematic theology: the doctrine of God and his relation to the world, the doctrine of man and sin, and the doctrine of divine judgment and salvation.⁴⁷ As might be expected, there is no section on the cultus in Sellin's outline. In the statement that God is holy he finds the basic idea of the Old Testament. "God is holy. Herein we touch on that which is the deepest and innermost essence of the God of the Old Testament. Here we have to do, not with

⁴³"Erst Jesus, Paulus, Johannes, usw. haben klar den tiefsten Gegensatz, den die AT Religion in sich barg, erkannt, den zwischen Gesetz und Verheissung bzw. Gnade, zwischen nationaler Kultreligion und prophetisch-sittlich-universalistischer Religion und sie haben jene abgestossen und dieser zum restlosen Durchbruch verholfen." Ibid., p. 2.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 2. Smart is apparently mistaken in saying that Sellin resembles Eichrodt in holding that the Old Testament presents a basically unified religion. Smart, op. cit., p. 134.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 1f.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 3.

one divine attribute among others, but, closely joined to 'life' and 'spirituality,' with his real being, in its inmost core."⁴⁸ The Gospel of Jesus attached itself directly to this faith in the holiness of God and built on it.⁴⁹

Aside from his avowedly Christian approach, Sellin's work reveals a thoroughly critical, historical method.⁵⁰ As foretold in his introduction, Sellin treats prophetic and priestly religion as opposites; prophecy is "ein zweiter, ganz anderer Weg" when compared to the whole "kultische Betrieb," which is "irrelevant oder gar schaedlich."⁵¹

Sellin's book is a compact presentation of Old Testament thought which has proved to have enduring value.⁵² Criticism of the work has been directed chiefly against his outline.⁵³ Baumgaertel finds it unsuited to the material (sachfremd), and that it causes Sellin's treatment to be superficial.⁵⁴ This is unquestionably true at least in this

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 18f.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 22.

⁵⁰Cf. his treatment of "Die Einzigkeit Gottes." Ibid., pp. 11-14.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 98. Cf. p. 75.

⁵²Speaking of Eichrodt, Sellin, and Koehler, Gerhard von Rad says, ". . . es handelt sich bei diesen drei Werken um Darstellungen von Rang, die gar nicht mehr wegzudenken sind, weder aus den Bibliotheken unserer Seminarien noch aus unseren Studiersimmern." Gerhard von Rad, "Grundprobleme einer biblischen Theologie des Alten Testaments," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXVIII (Sept.-Oct., 1953), col. 225. Hereafter cited as "Grundprobleme."

⁵³Infra, p. 22.

⁵⁴"Bei Sellin scheint mir die alte sachfremde Lokalmethode noch spuerbar, schon in den Untertiteln; die 'Lehre' von Gott, die 'Lehre' vom Menschen, die 'Lehre' von Gericht und Heil. Die Darstellung ist so flaechenhaft, dass das heilsgeschichtliche Moment nicht zur Entfaltung kommt." Baumgaertel, op. cit., col. 266.

that, together with his contrast of prophetic and priestly religion, it does not do justice to the significance of the worship life of Israel. Sellin's work, written in 1933, is informed by a reconstruction of the history of Israel's religion along the lines of Wellhausen and his school.⁵⁵ In the light of the most recent researches into the nature of Hebrew prophecy, it seems that this contrast, which leads Sellin to discard much of the Old Testament, must be regarded as a defect in the work.⁵⁶

A work resembling Sellin's both in size and method is that of Ludwig Koehler, which appeared in 1936.⁵⁷ In appraising Sellin's Theologie in an earlier article, Koehler expressed his admiration for his systematic plan, and added that he himself planned to treat the theology of the Old Testament in a similar way. "Wenn schon Theologie, dann auch systematisch."⁵⁸ This typically apodictic remark expresses Koehler's conviction that the Old Testament itself will not yield an outline for a theology.⁵⁹ Yet Koehler is aware of the danger of adopting an outline from another type of theology, and calls for the exercise of caution,

⁵⁵Nahn, op. cit., p. 14-15.

⁵⁶Eissfeldt, Otto, "The Prophetic Literature," in The Old Testament and Modern Study, edited by H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, c.1951), pp. 115-61.

⁵⁷Ludwig Koehler, Theologie des Alten Testaments (3rd edition; Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1953). The first edition appeared in 1936; cf. Porteous, op. cit., p. 330.

⁵⁸Koehler, "Vorfragen," p. 266.

⁵⁹Thus Koehler criticizes Eichrodt very sharply. "Es ist unmöglich, dem Alten Testament selber den Aufriß und die Ordnung des theologischen Gehaltes des Alten Testaments zu entnehmen." Ibid., p. 272.

lest the outline do violence to the material.⁶⁰ His solution of the problem is to choose the scheme: Theology, Anthropology, Soteriology. He is satisfied that all the material can be treated effectively under these heads, except for the cultus, which does not seem to fit in anywhere. Since from his viewpoint the ritual worship of the Old Testament is not God's work⁶¹ nor a proper part of Soteriology, he finally appends it to the section on Anthropology, as a human attempt at self-redemption.⁶²

Like Eichrodt and Sellin, Koehler selects one idea as the central idea of the Old Testament, although he does not organize his material around that idea. The central idea is that God is Lord. "That God is the Lord who gives commands is the one and fundamental sentence of the theology of the Old Testament."⁶³ "Religion in the Old Testament is the relation between command and obedience."⁶⁴ God forgives as Lord, and saves as Lord of the community.⁶⁵ A noteworthy feature of Koehler's work is his inclusion of such statistical data on Old Testament words and concepts, reflecting his lexicographical labors.⁶⁶ Since Koehler believes that Christ and the New Testament are attached to late Judaism,

⁶⁰Koehler, Theologie des Alten Testaments, p. v.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 171.

⁶²Ibid., pp. v, vi.

⁶³Ibid., p. 11.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 17.

⁶⁵Cf. Porteous, op. cit., p. 330.

⁶⁶E.g., the date on the occurrence of 'adonai', Koehler, Theologie des Alten Testaments, p. 11.

and not directly to the Old Testament, he does not include any discussion of the relation of the Testaments.⁶⁷ Within the framework that he adopts, Koehler's method is that of the historian; he does not treat the question of the validity of Old Testament ideas.⁶⁸

Koehler's work is ranked with those of Eichrodt and Sellin in quality and enduring value.⁶⁹ The author is reckoned as the most independent and original thinker of the three, and his lexicographical data have been especially appreciated.⁷⁰ The most serious criticism of his work has been directed to his outline, and particularly to his treatment of the sacrificial cult.⁷¹ Since Koehler himself felt this difficulty, the criticism is especially apt.⁷² Baumgaertel also attacks the employment of a systematic outline.⁷³ While there is some truth in saying that this sort of outline produces a distortion, which is evidently true in the case of the cultus, this criticism must not be urged too insistently against Koehler. The objective, historical method which he employs within his outline divisions, giving rather complete treatment to the

⁶⁷Ludwig Koehler, "Alttestamentliche Theologie: Vorfragen und Gesamtdarstellungen, II: Geschichtliche Darstellungen und Grundfragen," Theologische Rundschau, VIII (1936), 69.

⁶⁸Koehler, Theologie, pp. 6-11. Here the author's treatment of "Gottestypen" bears this out.

⁶⁹Von Rad, loc. cit.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Porteous, op. cit., pp. 329f.; Baumgaertel, op. cit., col. 266.

⁷²"Nur einen Abschnitt, der ueber den Kult, wollte sich nirgendshin recht schicken." Koehler, Theologie des Alten Testaments, p. v.

⁷³Cf. his criticism of Sellin, infra, p. 23.

development of the ideas, should be considered as offsetting many of the dangers of a systematic presentation.⁷⁴

Whatever the differences between the theologies of Eichrodt, Sellin, and Koehler, they are of the same type: they employ a more or less systematic outline and operate with the methods and results of scientific Old Testament study. In 1934 a radically different sort of Theology began to appear when Wilhelm Vischer published the first volume of his Das Christusseugnis des Alten Testaments.⁷⁵ Vischer's work was written to meet the challenge which confronted the church in a reviving paganism and anti-Semitic rejection of the Old Testament.⁷⁶ Barth's influence had caused a trend toward a Christianising interpretation of the Old Testament, especially on "the outer fringes of German and Swiss Old Testament study."⁷⁷ Vischer, a preacher rather than a professional Old Testament scholar, became the leader of this group.⁷⁸

Since Vischer proposes in the title of his work to treat the Old Testament as a witness to Christ, he prefaces it with a discussion of the significance of Christ in binding together the two Testaments.⁷⁹

⁷⁴For example, in the section titled "Das Wesen Gottes," which in other hands might lead to an importation of foreign thought into the Old Testament, Koehler is very careful not to let his outline distort the ideas presented. Ibid., pp. 2-4.

⁷⁵Wilhelm Vischer, Das Christusseugnis des Alten Testaments (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag A. G. Zollikon, 1946). Vol. I, 1934; II, 1942. Porteous, op. cit., p. 324.

⁷⁶Supra, pp. 8-10. Cf. Kraeling, op. cit., p. 219.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid. Cf. Porteous, op. cit., p. 340.

⁷⁹Vischer, op. cit., I, 7ff. Cf. the summaries in Porteous, op. cit., pp. 219-25.

Vischer subscribes to the formula that the Old Testament tells us what the Christ is, while the New tells us who he is.⁸⁰ He praises Old Testament criticism for having emphasized the human, historical side of Scripture; this has served to remind us of what Luther had said before, that Scripture is but the swaddling clothes of Christ.⁸¹ The doctrine which to Vischer's mind imparts significance to the Old Testament is that of the pre-existent Word; Christ is both the goal and source of history.⁸² Actually both New Testament and Old Testament believers are in the same situation; both only hope for salvation, and the coming of Christ does not mean that we now see what then was only hoped for.⁸³ The mistake of the historical school lies in looking for an "original" meaning, in other words, looking backwards instead of looking forward.⁸⁴ Thus, though Vischer expressly wishes to be critical and historical, he wishes to view the Old Testament as looking forward, a view shared by Luther and Calvin.⁸⁵

Vischer's work takes a form quite different from most other Old Testament Theologies. He follows the Biblical account in the traditional historical order and attaches to it his theological comment, a treatment similar to that in Barth's Romans. Volume One covers the Pentateuch;

⁸⁰Vischer, op. cit., I, 7.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 14-22.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 22-24.

⁸³Ibid., pp. 26-29.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 35.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 36.

Volume Two treats the Former Prophets. Two more volumes were planned.⁸⁶ Vischer spends very little space on the results of historical scholarship, even in such a thing as the dating of the sources employed, and passes at once to his theological interpretation.⁸⁷

Vischer's book has been called "both necessary and correct."⁸⁸ It was felt to be necessary because the political situation called for a Christian witness from the Old Testament; as Kraeling remarks, "In this situation a liberal was a man with a wooden sword."⁸⁹ It was felt to be correct because both the New Testament and the Reformers agree that the Old Testament gives witness to Christ, and a purely humanistic approach will fail to find him there.⁹⁰ Vischer attracted followers and imitators.⁹¹

Despite these evidences of a favorable reception, however, the consensus of critics and Old Testament scholars was decidedly opposed to the approach adopted by Vischer. In the first place, Vischer was accused of reading the New Testament meaning back into the Old Testament.⁹² This can be demonstrated, for example, by his treatment of the Melchisedek story in Genesis, which is interpreted by citations from the book of

⁸⁶Porteous, op. cit., p. 324.

⁸⁷Vischer, op. cit., I, passim. Cf. Porteous, op. cit., p. 335.

⁸⁸The verdict of Abramowski in 1947. Kraeling, op. cit., p. 225.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 219.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 225; cf. Smart, op. cit., pp. 133f. Smart also praises Vischer for having showed the necessity for a theological interpretation in detailed exegesis.

⁹¹Porteous, op. cit., p. 346.

⁹²Ibid., p. 338; Kraeling, op. cit., p. 226.

Hebrews.⁹³ Secondly, Vischer uses types beyond the use of the New Testament, and falls often into allegory. The same Melchizedek pericope provides a good example of this. "When Melchizedek brought out bread and wine, we can see in this a clear pointing to the sacrament of the New Covenant, which Jesus instituted to fulfill and abrogate the Old."⁹⁴ In another instance, the sign of Cain is a prophecy of the cross of Christ (and probably had the same form), being both a brand and a sign for protection.⁹⁵ The allegorizing becomes elaborate when Vischer treats the passing through the Jordan into the Promised Land. This event is a prefiguration of Jesus' baptism by John:

John is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, which prepares the way for the Messiah to enter into the Promised Land. What happened at the beginning of the history of Israel and then recurred on the return from the Babylonian exile as a prefiguration is now once and for all fulfilled. . . . John stands at the Jordan, more precisely, in the Jordan, where once at Joshua's command the priests stood with the ark of the covenant of the Lord of the whole earth until all the people had passed through the river-bed. The Jordan serves as a visible boundary of the Messianic kingdom. This time no one passes through with dry feet.⁹⁶

It is this sort of thing which has prompted critics to compare Vischer to medieval allegorists.⁹⁷ Vischer's technique has the double effect of making the Old Testament a highly esoteric book, since if one lacks his

⁹³Vischer, *op. cit.*, I, 161-64.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 92-95.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 40f.

⁹⁷Th. C. Vriezen points out that Vischer's technique is "akin to Medieval theory and so, not surprisingly, is handled with sympathy by the Roman Catholic press." Quoted by Porteous, *op. cit.*, p. 346.

ability to find witness to Christ, the Old Testament is a closed book, and of minimizing the significance of the actual historical content of the Old Testament and making of it a "wax nose"⁹⁸ to be twisted to fit the theologian's taste.⁹⁹ Vischer's treatment does not reckon with the before and after of the history of salvation; the distinction between Old and New Testaments is glossed over. Porteous comments, "Vischer scarcely does justice to the fact that Christ did come."¹⁰⁰ Despite the value of Vischer's book at the time it was written, then, it has generally been felt to be a return to a position which historical criticism has made untenable, rather than a contribution to a modern approach to Old Testament Theology.

A work in many ways similar to that of Vischer is the Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments of a father and son team, Wilhelm and

⁹⁸Geiler of Kaysersberg's term for what medieval theologians made of the Bible (*naseus cereus, waechserni Nas*). Jacob, op. cit., p. 13.

⁹⁹Koehler's criticism is severe but justified: "Vischer macht aus dem ganzen Alten Testament eine fortlaufende Weissagung auf Christus hin. Das ist folgerichtig, und es ist bequem. Denn wer in ganzen Alten Testament nichts als immer wieder die Weissagung auf Christus behauptet, der braucht zur einzelnen Stelle gar nichts zu tun, um zu zeigen, dass auch hier Weissagung vorliege. Die generale Behauptung erspart alle Muehe. . . . man lese nur bei Vischer, dem es weder an Kenntnis der Literatur noch an Kunst der feinsinnigen Beziehung fehlt, nach, was dann alles Weissagung ist. Man wird leicht erkennen, dass auch da, so Vischer es nicht sagt, sich nach diesem Verfahren Weissagung finden laesst, wenn man nur so beziehungsweise gewandt ist wie er." Koehler, "Vorfragen," p. 261.

¹⁰⁰Porteous, op. cit., p. 337.

Hans Moeller.¹⁰¹ Wilhelm Moeller, the father, who is responsible for the bulk of the work,¹⁰² stands far outside the mainstream of modern Old Testament scholarship and is the author of a defense of the Mosaic authorship of the whole Pentateuch.¹⁰³ Moeller agrees with Vischer in wanting a Christo-centric interpretation, but chides Vischer for his unconcern with the objective history of the Old Testament.¹⁰⁴ Thus Moeller actually lays far more stress on the verbal inspiration of the Old Testament than on its Christocentricity.¹⁰⁵ He does not feel that it is necessary to prove again the error of the critical view of the Old Testament, "since this has been taken care of by earlier works of ours and can be considered as behind us,"¹⁰⁶ yet a large portion of the book is devoted to a polemic against the critics.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹Wilhelm and Hans Moeller, Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments in heilsgeschichtlicher Entwicklung (Zwickau: Johannes Herrmann, 1938). In the following analysis of Moeller's work, the writer was compelled to make an almost completely independent study, since the work is not mentioned in the surveys of Porteous, Smart, and Kraeling, and receives only passing notice in Hahn. Hahn, op. cit., p. 246.

¹⁰²Moeller, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁰³Moeller, Einheit und Echtheit der fuenf Buecher Moses, cited by Moeller, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 14.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 4 and passim.

¹⁰⁶"Wir brauchen im allgemeinen keine Auseinandersetzungen mit der Kritik zu geben, duerfen das alles vielmehr als durch fruehere Arbeiten von unserer Seite erledigt und hinter uns liegend ansehen." Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁰⁷Even to Th. Laetsch, who otherwise is very appreciative of Moeller's book, it seems that perhaps he lays "zu viel Gewicht auf die Widerlegung der Bibelkritiker und sonderlich ihrer Quellenscheidung." Th. Laetsch, "Review of Moeller's Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments," Concordia Theological Monthly, IX (June, 1938), 473.

In the body of the book, Moeller follows the history and makes it the point of departure for his theological comment, as Vischer had done. At the end he supplies an outline with references back to the historical section, for those who wish to construct a systematic treatment.¹⁰⁸

Though Moeller's plan for a theology is interesting and in some ways anticipates the ideas of G. E. Wright,¹⁰⁹ he cannot be said to have made a substantial contribution to modern Old Testament Theology. Moeller's refutation of criticism does not hold up,¹¹⁰ and the attempt at it leads him into immoderate language¹¹¹ and a lamentable anti-Semitism.¹¹² No attempt is made to understand the concerns and results

¹⁰⁸ Moeller, op. cit., p. 521-27.

¹⁰⁹ Infra, p. 56.

¹¹⁰ For example, his use of scattered quotations from scientists with some appreciation for Genesis can hardly be considered a refutation of the evolutionary hypothesis. Moeller, op. cit., pp. 37-40.

¹¹¹ ". . . der Quellentheorie, die von Anfang bis zu Ende ein grosser wissenschaftlich-unwissenschaftlicher Unfug ist, der grosssten Schaden nach jeder Seite hin gestiftet hat, von uns aber als Phantasie entlarvt ist." Ibid., p. 43. Gunkel's theories are a "Wust," Ibid., p. 30.

¹¹² "Hier moechte ich aber nun auch noch auf die Vermutung hinweisen, dass die ganze alttestamentliche Kritik vom Judentum her, wie ich glaube, tiefste Impulse empfangen hat." Ibid., p. 514. "Astruc war nicht nur ein hoechst unzuverlaessiger Charakter, sondern er hatte juedisches Blut in seinen Adern." Ibid., p. 515. "Wo zersetzende Bibelkritik auch gerade auf dem Gebiete des Alten Testaments sich findet, pruefe man also einmal nach, ob nicht bewusst oder unbewusst juedische Einfluesse und Interessen und juedische Eigenart im Hintergrund oder im Ausgangspunkt standen, und ob also auch diese zerstoeerende Arbeit an der Bibel nicht allenthalben im Geist und in der Richtung gerade des alles zersetzenden juedischen Geistes liegt, und ob nicht das der allergroeszte Schade waere, wenn der juedische Einfluss, nachdem er sonst in unserem Volk zum Glueck gebrochen ist, sich auf diesem Gebiet noch unheilvoll auswirken duerfte." Ibid., p. 517. It is to be recalled that these words were written in Germany in 1938.

of Old Testament scholarship; speaking of the investigation of the sources of Genesis chapter one, Moeller says, "Every critical word and every doubting investigation of it would be blasphemy, unbelief, and betrayal of oneself and of holy things."¹¹³ Despite his plan, dogmatic categories crowd into the work.¹¹⁴ and his tendency always to find the New Testament meaning in the Old Testament, at times leading to a preponderance of New Testament citations over Old,¹¹⁵ obscures the difference between the Testaments,¹¹⁶ and it is not without justification that Moeller has been called "Hengstenberg redivivus."¹¹⁷ The work seems to have had no discernible influence on any other writer in the field of Old Testament Theology.¹¹⁸

In 1925 Otto Proksch had outlined a program for an Old Testament Theology,¹¹⁹ and throughout his career as a professor, he lectured on

¹¹³"Jedes kritische Wort und jeder zweifelnde Erörterung darüber wäre Blasphemie, Unglaube, und Verrat der eigenen Sache und des Heiligtums." Ibid., p. 41.

¹¹⁴Ibid., pp. 44-45 and passim.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 69. Thirteen New Testament verses about the Fall are cited; six Old Testament references.

¹¹⁶Cf. his treatment of the hope of the patriarchs. Ibid., p. 154.

¹¹⁷Hengstenberg was a nineteenth century author of a Christology of the Old Testament, and a defender of orthodoxy. Moeller enjoys the title. Ibid., p. 483.

¹¹⁸The writer was unable to discover any reference to it in any of the Theologies surveyed. Moeller seems to have anticipated this: "Aber weil die Alttestamentler nicht hinhoeren und auch nicht wissen wollen, was man sagt, erachte ich jedes Wort an diese Wissenschaft gesprochen als in den Wind geredet." Ibid.

¹¹⁹Otto Proksch, "Ziele und Grenzen der Exegese," Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, XXXVI (1925), 715-30.

the subject.¹²⁰ From the beginning, his emphasis was on a Christo-centric approach; the exegete must believe in order to be equal to his task.¹²¹

In 1942 he submitted his theology for publication; due to the war, it was not published until 1950, after the author's death.¹²² In his introduction, Proksch stresses again the necessity of a Christo-centric approach; for him "All theology is Christology."¹²³ Christ stands in the center of the system of coordinates of history.¹²⁴ Yet despite the all-importance of Christ for theology, the Old Testament does not decrease in importance. Christ is inseparable from the Old Testament; ". . . er atmet in alttestamentlicher Luft."¹²⁵ The Old Testament is both revelation (apokalypsis) and manifestation (phanerosis), or history, something capable of being grasped objectively.¹²⁶ A purely historical approach is incapable of apprehending the Old Testament as revelation; to do that the theologian must have a personal faith as part

¹²⁰Cf. Gerhard von Rad's preface to Otto Proksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, c.1950), p. v.

¹²¹"Denn Christus ist der Brennpunkt, in dem die Strahlen aus dem Alten Testament zusammenlaufen, von dem die aus dem Neuen ausgehen. . . . Der Exeget selbst muss glauben, damit Christi Gestalt durch ihn lebendig werden kann." Otto Proksch, "Ziele und Grenzen der Exegese," p. 722.

¹²²Von Rad, op. cit., p. v.

¹²³Otto Proksch, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Guetersloh: C. Bertelsmann, c. 1950), p. 1.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 4.

¹²⁵Ibid., p. 7.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 15.

of his equipment.¹²⁷ Yet the theologian is not indifferent to the history, since God tied himself to history in the Incarnation,¹²⁸ the history is "the form, in which the content for faith can be apprehended."¹²⁹

Proksch chooses his outline to fit this approach. Since the revelation came through the history, an account of the history of Israel's religion is the first portion of the book.¹³⁰ This is followed by a systematic presentation of the Old Testament thought-world; a cross-section divided like Eichrodt's work, but with a different order: God and the world, God and his people, God and man.¹³¹ Within this outline Proksch adopts the method familiar from the works of Eichrodt, Sellin, and Koehler: a historical, scientific mode of presentation.

Criticism of Proksch is not to be directed so much to his proposed method as to his mode of carrying out his proposals, or rather, his failure to do so.¹³² Although Proksch had professed a Christian approach, he did not carry this out in the body of the work, or mention it in his conclusion.¹³³ The gap between history and revelation is still felt, and

¹²⁷Ibid., pp. 15f.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 16.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 17.

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 18. Cf. the plan of Eduard Koenig, supra, p. 12, and Ernst Sellin, supra, p. 21, note 40.

¹³¹Ibid., p. 19. Supra, p. 19, note 31.

¹³²Cf. Simpson, Guthbert A., "Professor Proksch's Theologie des Alten Testaments," Anglican Theological Review, XXXIV (April, 1952), pp. 116-122.

¹³³Ibid.

the work remains on the plane of an objective study.¹³⁴ As such a study, however, it is well-done and valuable; Baumgaertel ranks it with the works of Eichrodt, Sellin, and Kohler as one of "our most useful tools."¹³⁵

Although as yet no full-scale Theology of the Old Testament has come from Arthur Weiser, Gerhard von Rad, or Friedrich Baumgaertel, a discussion of their views represents some of the most recent thought in Germany on the task and method of an Old Testament Theology. Arthur Weiser objects, first of all, to a mere history of Old Testament religion on the ground that it fails to be objective. "To be objective is to let the object confront us with its own understanding of being."¹³⁶ On the other hand, Weiser is equally opposed to systematic treatment of Old Testament thought; the Old Testament knows no doctrine of God, for this is contrary to its dynamic view of reality.¹³⁷ The theological task should be left to exegesis; if this is carried on without the imposition of extraneous viewpoints one will be left with a sense of the ideas common to the totality of the Old Testament.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Cf. Baumgaertel, op. cit., col. 267.

¹³⁵ Ibid., col. 266.

¹³⁶ Arthur Weiser, "Die theologische Aufgabe der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft," in Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments (Beiheft zur Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft Nr. 66), edited by P. Volz, F. Stummer, and J. Heipel (Giessen: Topelmann, 1936), p. 222.

¹³⁷ Ibid.; cf. Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 274f. Cf. also Arthur Weiser, "Vom Verstaendnis des Alten Testaments," Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXI (1945-48), 17-30.

¹³⁸ Weiser, "Die theologische Aufgabe der alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft," pp. 222ff.; cf. Kraeling, op. cit., pp. 272f.

Gerhard von Rad advocates an approach to the Old Testament as redemptive history (Heilsgeschichte). Writing in 1943, he agrees with Weiser in opposing systematization of Old Testament thought, but accuses Weiser of "liquidating" Old Testament Theology by leaving it to exegesis.¹³⁹ A method is meaningful only if it is suited to the subject, and since the Old Testament is a witness of God's continuing acts in history, the history must stand right in the center of the presentation, much more than has been the case in any Old Testament Theology to date.¹⁴⁰ Redemptive history is "a series of events set in motion by God's word and constantly transformed and led to its goal by a new word of God."¹⁴¹ The Hebrew Creed was a "heilgeschichtliches Credo," a confession of the acts of God in past history.¹⁴² At the same time, von Rad recognizes that this approach has its problems. The first is that the history of Israel is by no means certain; the second, that this approach could lead to a scheme of immanent development comparable to that of Hegel; the third, that it is difficult to fit "unhistorical" books like Job and Ecclesiastes into this sort of pattern.¹⁴³ Von Rad's ideas seem to have had a particularly great influence on the American theologian, G. Ernest Wright, who adopts the idea of a "confessional recital of the acts of God."¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹Von Rad, "Grundprobleme," col. 227.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Ibid., cols. 227f.

¹⁴²Kraeieling, op. cit., pp. 276f.

¹⁴³Von Rad, op. cit., cols. 228-30.

¹⁴⁴Infra, p. 56.

Friedrich Baumgaertel, writing in 1951, also adopts the idea of a redemptive history, but with a different emphasis. From his point of view the prophecy-fulfillment scheme is outmoded and inadequate, as the work of Vischer has proved. Instead he proposes that the Old Testament is promissory rather than prophetic in character, and would write an Old Testament Theology from this point of view.¹⁴⁵

The Netherlands

The sole contribution of the Netherlands to modern Old Testament theology is the Hoofdpijnen der Theologie van het Oude Testament of Th. C. Vriezen, professor of Old Testament at the University of Groningen.¹⁴⁶ Opposing both the "mummifying process" of absolutizing the Old Testament as God's Word and the opposite fault of making it only man's word, Vriezen calls for a "theological Biblical criticism," and wishes in his book to bridge the gap between scientific Old Testament study and its use for practical, religious purposes.¹⁴⁷ As is indicated by the title, Hoofdpijnen, he restricts his discussions to matters of major importance and omits what he considers items of purely historical interest. His presentation is systematic, resembling that of Sellin or

¹⁴⁵Baumgaertel, op. cit., cols. 258-71; cf. Kræling, op. cit., p. 281.

¹⁴⁶Th. C. Vriezen, Hoofdpijnen der Theologie van het Oude Testament (Wageningen: H. Veeman & Zonen, 1949). For the following discussion the writer was dependant on the review of this work by Otto Eissfeldt, Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXVIII (1956), 221-22, and on the account of it in Otto Eissfeldt, "Zur Neubesinnung auf die Biblische Theologie," Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LXII (1949-50), 312-13.

¹⁴⁷Eissfeldt, "Zur Neubesinnung auf die Biblische Theologie," pp. 312f.

Koehler.¹⁴⁸ Eissfeldt characterizes the book as a useful manual of Old Testament ideas and as abreast of the very latest modern research.¹⁴⁹ A new, enlarged edition appeared in 1955, and translations into German and French are planned.¹⁵⁰

France

The only Protestant Old Testament Theology in the French language is that of Edmond Jacob, which appeared in 1955.¹⁵¹ Jacob's work is a systematic treatment reminiscent of that of Sellin or Koehler, and is prefaced with a defense of this mode of presentation. It is Jacob's contention that already within the Old Testament there are theologians: the Yahvist, the Chronicler, the writer of Deutero-Isaiah. Therefore, integration of the Old Testament into a systematic framework is not necessarily doing violence to its content.¹⁵² The Old Testament is one book and presents one religion; all its strands are summed up in Christ.¹⁵³ It is impossible to oppose the history of Israel's religion to Old Testament theology; both are historical and descriptive disciplines, one showing

¹⁴⁸The six chief parts are: "(1) Der Charakter der AT Religion als Gemeinschaft des heiligen Gottes mit dem Menschen; (2) Gott; (3) Der Mensch; (4) Der Verkehr von Gott und Mensch; (5) Der Verkehr von Mensch und Mensch; (6) Gott, Mensch, und Welt in Gegenwart und Zukunft." *Ibid.*, p. 313.

¹⁴⁹Eissfeldt, "Review," p. 221.

¹⁵⁰H. E. Rowley, The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 13.

¹⁵¹Edmond Jacob, Theologie de l'Ancien Testament (Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, c.1955).

¹⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 11.

the variety of the history and the other its unity.¹⁵⁴ Despite his words about the centrality of Christ, then, Jacob considers Old Testament Theology as a very limited historical discipline which does not deal with the question of validity.¹⁵⁵

Jacob's method is to rearrange the materials of a history of religion into a systematic scheme. He purposely confines himself to a treatment of God and his relation to the world and to man, leaving out Old Testament piety and ethics.¹⁵⁶ The main aspect of the Old Testament view of God, he asserts, is that he is a living God; the two great themes are the presence of this living God, and the action of God.¹⁵⁷ With this central idea, Jacob is able to give what is perhaps a better account of the anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament than that of other writers.¹⁵⁸ The ample bibliographies which Jacob lists reveal his thorough acquaintance with the literature in the field, and increase the value of the book.

Jacob's work resembles that of Koehler (whom he quotes often and approvingly) in method and spirit. Criticism of it, then, would follow that directed against Koehler.¹⁵⁹ The disadvantages of a systematic

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁵⁵" . . . le present ouvrage . . . n'a nullement la pretention d'être un 'compendium' des valeurs permanents ou chrétiennes de l'Ancien Testament." Ibid., p. 26.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷"Dira de Dieu que c'était un dieu vivant, c'était la réaction élémentaire et primordiale de l'homme devant l'expérience de la puissance" Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 30ff.

¹⁵⁹Supra, pp. 26f.

treatment become especially apparent in Jacob's treatment of the notion of revelation through history. He develops this idea at some length,¹⁶⁰ but his scheme of systematization prevents him from carrying through this principle in the rest of the book. When analyzed, the scheme of organization around the presence and action of God turns out to be another way of stating the old division: Theology, Anthropology, Soteriology.¹⁶¹

Old Testament Theology in the Roman Catholic Church

The theology of the Old Testament has been treated very little by Roman Catholic scholars, as is the case with Biblical theology in general.¹⁶² The state of affairs after World War I, however, produced a reaction in the Roman church parallel to that in the Protestant churches.¹⁶³ In 1943 Pope Pius XII issued the encyclical "Divine afflante Spiritu," in which he encouraged Biblical studies, asking that primary attention be given not to historical, archaeological, and philological matters,

¹⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 149-63.

¹⁶¹Part one of Jacob's book, "Les aspects caracteristiques due Dieu de l'Ancien Testament," is Theology proper; part two, "L'Action du Dieu de l'Ancien Testament," includes the nature and destiny of man (Anthropology), and part three, "Contestation et triomphe final de l'action de Dieu," covers what is usually covered under Soteriology.

¹⁶²van Imschoot, P., Theologie de l'Ancien Testament (Tournai, Belgium: Desclée, 1954), 1, vii.

¹⁶³"The trends in Roman Catholic theology, like those which we are to see in Protestant and Orthodox theology, obviously reflected an awareness of the parlous state of the world and especially of Western civilization as revealed by the wars and revolutions of the day." Latourette, op. cit., p. 1362.

but to the theological content of the various books.¹⁶⁴ The admonition of the Pope to scholars that they should "confirm the Christian doctrine by sentences from the Sacred Books and illustrate it by outstanding examples from sacred history"¹⁶⁵ has been heeded by three Roman Catholic scholars who have produced full-scale Old Testament Theologies.

The Theologia Biblica of F. Ceuppens, a Latin work covering the entire Bible in four volumes, is not a Biblical theology in the ordinary sense of the term, but rather an attempt at establishing the doctrines of the church from the Scriptures.¹⁶⁶ Following quite literally the instructions of the Pope, the author sets himself the task of "aiding the professor of dogmatic theology in establishing the scriptural basis of his theses," and in doing so follows the order of the Summa of St. Thomas Aquinas.¹⁶⁷

The Theology of Paul Heinisch, first published in 1952 as part of the Bonner Bibel,¹⁶⁸ bears a much closer resemblance to Protestant works of the modern period. Encouraged by the papal encyclical on Bible

¹⁶⁴Pius XII, "Divino afflante Spiritu," printed in translation in Theology of the Old Testament, by Paul Heinisch, edited and translated by W. Heidt (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, c.1955), pp. 431-55.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., p. 451

¹⁶⁶F. Ceuppens, Theologia Biblica (Roma: Marietti, 1938), 4 vols. The writer was dependent for information about this book on the review by Stanislas Lyonnet, Biblica, LXXVII (1956), 490-94.

¹⁶⁷Lyonnet, op. cit., p. 490.

¹⁶⁸Paul Heinisch, Theology of the Old Testament, translated from the German by William Heidt (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, c. 1955), p. vi.

studies, the author aims to present "the legitimate religion of Israel"¹⁶⁹ as that which is fundamental and permanent, in contrast to the transitional portions of Old Testament belief.¹⁷⁰ A history of Israel's religion, on the other hand, presents what actually was believed and practiced; these data, and data from comparison with other religions, are also a part, though subsidiary, of an Old Testament theology.¹⁷¹

Heinisch's book is organized on a rather rigidly systematic plan, and this, together with the fact that at times dogmatic considerations control his viewpoints, constitutes the weakness of the book. The three traditional divisions: Theology, Anthropology, and Soteriology, recur, and the titles of some of the sections are: "Proofs for God's Existence," "God's Transcendent Perfection," "God, the First Mover," and "Immortality of the Soul." Without being as explicitly Thomistic as Ceuppens, Heinisch seems nevertheless to be much influenced by Thomistic categories and Greek thought forms in general. He quotes the Book of Wisdom often, and this can lead him to a distortion of Old Testament thought, as in the following section on the proof for God's existence:

When with evident reference to the meaning of the name Yahweh the author of the Book of Wisdom censured those "who through the means of visible things are unable to know him who is (ton onta), or through meditating upon the work fail to recognize the workman," he was contrasting the "One who is" with all created things.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Ibid., p. 44. Cf. the description of God as an ens a se and the proof of this from the Tetragrammaton. Ibid.

The argument here seems strongly Greek, rather than Hebrew. Despite the author's acceptance of the necessity and validity of historical study of the Bible, he at times ignores its results without specifically challenging them, and his own conclusions, whatever their validity, are weakened by what appears to be question-begging.¹⁷³ The criticisms applied to the systematic treatments of Sellin and Koehler¹⁷⁴ apply with special force to the work of Heinisch.

The third Roman Catholic author to undertake a Theology of the Old Testament is P. van Inshoot, who issued the first volume of a projected two-volume work in 1954.¹⁷⁵ In general his work, though also inspired by the encyclical of Pius XII,¹⁷⁶ is less consciously Roman Catholic than those of Heinisch and Ceuppens, and bears a stronger resemblance to the objective works of Koehler and Sellin.¹⁷⁷ Van Inshoot is more conscious of the development of Israel's religion than Heinisch, and declares that the Old Testament religion was intended for a "hard-hearted" people and thus has not only gaps but imperfections and temporary concessions to a churlish people.¹⁷⁸ Although he declares his intention of organizing

¹⁷³For instance, in the section on the holiness of God (p. 70) he ignores what the history of religion would say about the incident of Uzzah touching the ark; the fact that God appeared to the patriarchs in various places is a proof of his universal character; the creation account and the Cain and Abel story are proofs that God was considered as good and loving from earliest times. (pp. 77, 92).

¹⁷⁴Supra, pp. 24, 26f.

¹⁷⁵Van Inshoot, op. cit., p. viii. The first volume contains Theology proper; the second will contain Anthropology and Soteriology.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., pp. viii, ix.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., p. 5. The author acknowledges his great indebtedness to the works of the two German scholars.

¹⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 2f.

the Old Testament doctrines according to their function in the New,¹⁷⁹ and adopts the familiar three-fold division of traditional Christian dogmatics,¹⁸⁰ he nevertheless insists on the necessity of taking account of the historical context and the steps of revelation, lest one falsify the thought of the writer.¹⁸¹ Admitting that the Old Testament is often more interested in a religion of the heart than in a theology, van Inshoot nevertheless defends theological treatment of its ideas by arguing that particularly in the prophetic books one finds certain "categorical affirmations" about God and his metaphysical attributes and morals. These can be extracted and permit a systematic treatment.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁸¹Ibid., pp. 3f.

¹⁸²Ibid., p. 4. Mention should be made of the outstandingly complete bibliographies and footnote references to pertinent literature which much increase the value of the book for the student. As an indication of the spreading popularity of theological study of the Old Testament in Europe, one may note the work of the Italian scholar G. Berini, who in 1953 published La Preghiere penitenziali del Salterio, and of the Spaniard, F. Asensio, who has contributed a study of the doctrine of election Yahveh y su Pueblo (1953). Rowley, op. cit., p. 13.

CHAPTER IV

OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY IN ENGLAND

In general it may be said that the same factors which operated to encourage the resurgence of Biblical theology of the Old Testament in Europe produced the modern discussion of the subject in Britain. After World War I and in even greater measure after World War II, English theologians began to question the humanistic faith of the liberals, forced by economic calamity and political chaos to concede that history is no continuous upward evolution.¹ But although the interest in theology and the discussion of Biblical scholarship were vigorous in Britain, neither the Scots nor the English moved as far from nineteenth century patterns as had some on the continent.² The reason for this typically British moderation may have been the fact that Britain experienced neither so severe a defeat as did Germany in the first World War nor an anti-Christian and anti-Semitic movement such as Nazism. The theological debate which had risen from every existential concerns on the continent was carried on in Britain simply as a result "of the dust it was raising in Germany."³ Some of the force of Barth's impact was lessened by the fact that the Congregationalist theologian P. T. Forsyth had to some extent

¹Cf. Herbert F. Hahn, The Old Testament in Modern Research (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, c.1954), p. 238.

²Kenneth S. Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper & Bros., c.1953), pp. 1387-88.

³Enil G. Kraeling, The Old Testament Since the Reformation (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), p. 178.

anticipated Barth and made him unnecessary for British theologians.⁴ Thus discussion of Old Testament Theology in Britain was neither as lively nor as productive as that on the Continent.

Though not full-scale theologies of the Old Testament in scope or purpose, the works of W. J. Phythian-Adams may be considered to have begun British discussion of Old Testament Theology, and are particularly important as stressing the idea of revelation through history which was to become very important for other British theologians. In three small books, The Call of Israel,⁵ The Fulness of Israel,⁶ and The People and the Presence,⁷ Phythian-Adams aimed both to show the historicity of much of early Israelite tradition and to show the history of Israel as one in which "is revealed uniquely the existence of a Divine Purpose, working in and through the Chosen People towards a consummation determined before all the ages."⁸

The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament, by Norman Snaith, demonstrates a concern for something more than a mere historical and comparative

⁴Latourette, op. cit., p. 1388.

⁵W. J. Phythian-Adams, The Call of Israel (London: Oxford University Press, 1934).

⁶W. J. Phythian-Adams, The Fulness of Israel (London: Oxford University Press, 1938).

⁷W. J. Phythian-Adams, The People and the Presence (London: Oxford University Press, 1942).

⁸James D. Smart, "The Death and Rebirth of Old Testament Theology," Journal of Religion, XXIII (1943), 132.

study of Old Testament religion, but is of limited scope and was not intended as an Old Testament Theology.⁹

One of the most important contributions to Old Testament Theology in Britain was made by H. Wheeler Robinson, who discussed the nature of the discipline in an essay in Record and Revelation¹⁰ and had nearly completed the prolegomena to a Theology at the time of his death.¹¹ In the earlier essay, Robinson emphasized the strong sense of corporate personality among the Hebrews; this, he said, made history for them the supreme revelation of God.¹² "If such a people were to know God, it would be through the concrete experience of living, rather than by any intellectualistic construction."¹³ Robinson opposed such terms as "monotheism," "omnipotence," and the like as suggesting modern and intellectualistic thought patterns.¹⁴ In his longer work on revelation in the Old Testament, Robinson further develops the idea of a revelation through history, when God makes known his divine will which is to be performed in the particular

⁹Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: Epworth Press, 1944). The ideas discussed are: the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, salvation, the covenant love of God, the election love of God, and the spirit of God, plus an account of how these ideas are resumed in the New Testament.

¹⁰H. Wheeler Robinson, "The Theology of the Old Testament," in Record and Revelation, edited by H. Wheeler Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), pp. 303-48.

¹¹H. Wheeler Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946).

¹²Robinson, "The Theology of the Old Testament," p. 304.

¹³Ibid., p. 303.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 308.

concrete situation, and also threatens or promises divine activity to be realized in the concrete situation.¹⁵ It is significant that despite this emphasis on history, Robinson would not have written his theology along a historical outline, but in a systematic fashion comparable to that of Koehler.¹⁶

The tiny work of C. H. Dodd called The Bible Today¹⁷ is important, not as an Old Testament Theology itself, but for its re-emphasis on the importance of history and for its suggestion as to how this idea could help solve the problem of the validity of the Old Testament for modern life. Observing that both Nazism and Marxism are based on an interpretation of history, and that the Western democracies have nothing similar,¹⁸ Dodd turns to the idea of revelation through history as basic to the Old Testament. "We have learned from the prophets how the Word of God makes history when it comes to a man as the meaning of the facts of his experience, and through his response gives a new direction to events."¹⁹ This experience which the Old Testament prophets had is paralleled by the New Testament encounter with the risen Christ; and the apostolic witness is similar to the prophetic word in providing an

¹⁵Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation, p. 106. Cf. Norman Porteous, "Old Testament Theology," in The Old Testament and Modern Study, edited by H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), pp. 333-37.

¹⁶Robinson, "The Theology of the Old Testament," pp. 321-48.

¹⁷C. H. Dodd, The Bible Today (Cambridge: University Press, c.1946).

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 122-24.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 57.

interpretation of historical events.²⁰ And now the Church repeats in its services words and actions which recall God's acts and make them contemporary; believers are confronted with redemptive history culminating in Christ, and lay themselves open to God's word of judgment and renewal there spoken.²¹ Thus Dodd outlines an approach which could be used in discussing the validity of the ideas presented in an Old Testament theology.

The nearest thing to an English Theology of the Old Testament is The Faith of Israel, by R. H. Rowley.²² The work is a series of lectures on Old Testament topics which, though admittedly incomplete, is nevertheless a fairly comprehensive survey of Old Testament ideas.²³ Here again is found the typically British emphasis on history as a medium of revelation, but with important qualifications. Rowley holds that history alone is not the most important medium of revelation, but that other factors enter in.²⁴ Rowley insists very strongly on maintaining objectivity and not yielding to allegory in interpretation;²⁵ nevertheless, he is concerned with trying to show the permanent worth of the ideas he discusses. The argument used to establish the validity of Old Testament ideas is that, leaving out divinization, the Old Testament media of revelation

²⁰ Ibid., p. 103f.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 158-62.

²² R. H. Rowley, The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought (London: SCM Press, 1956).

²³ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

(history, human personality, and nature) are still valid.²⁶ Rowley does not demonstrate just how this insight in any way establishes the validity of the content of the revelation. In the body of the work Rowley's method is critical and historical; he does not choose one central idea and in general follows the outline: God, Man, and Salvation.²⁷ A certain over-emphasis on the prophets can be detected in the work.²⁸

In addition to the above-mentioned works, Norman Porteous²⁹ and Christopher North³⁰ have contributed brief discussions of the nature of Old Testament Theology. It is evident that thus far British contributions to this field have not been of the scope or significance of the works of continental theologians. However, the British emphasis on revelation through history has helped to make clear the nature of revelation in the Old Testament, and has suggested a way of relating this revelation to the modern situation.³¹

²⁶Ibid., p. 47.

²⁷Ibid., p. 20.

²⁸Rowley is able to dismiss an idea by saying, "But these do not stand in the prophetic teaching." Ibid., p. 63.

²⁹Porteous, op. cit., pp. 315-45.

³⁰North, C. R., "Old Testament Theology and the History of Hebrew Religion," Scottish Journal of Theology, II (1949), 113-26.

³¹Cf. Hahn, op. cit., p. 244.

CHAPTER V

OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY IN AMERICA

America has made very little contribution to the field of Old Testament Theology either in the older or modern period. As James Smart observed almost caustically, ". . . so far as America is concerned, it would hardly be true to speak of the death and rebirth of Old Testament Theology, since there is reasonable doubt whether the subject has ever been properly alive in these regions."¹ In contrast to the depletion of Europe's resources by the great wars, twentieth century America has experienced phenomenal population growth and increase in wealth;² thus, though there have arisen American offshoots of neo-orthodoxy and similar movements, the reaction to liberal thought has not been as profound as that experienced in Europe.³

The first attempt at a comprehensive treatment of Old Testament Theology was Millar Burrows' Outline of Biblical Theology, published in 1946.⁴ Intended as a manual for preachers making available "the resources of the Bible as modern scholarship has enabled us to appreciate them,"⁵

¹James D. Smart, "The Death and Rebirth of Old Testament Theology," Journal of Religion, XXIII (1943), 2.

²Kenneth S. Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper & Bros., c.1953), p. 1410.

³O. W. Heick and J. L. Neve, A History of Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, c.1946), II, 330-34.

⁴Millar Burrows, An Outline of Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946).

⁵Ibid., p. 3.

it covers both the Old and New Testaments. Burrows proposes as a criterion for the normative character of the Biblical ideas "the authority of superior knowledge,"⁶ or in other words, "the testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti."⁷ Burrows is conscious of the dangers of a systematic treatment⁸ but states that his purposes demand such an outline. He hopes to overcome the disadvantages by giving a chronological account of the development.⁹

Although Burrows' book is interesting both as the first American work in this field and as an original attempt to combine the theology of both Testaments, it suffers from several serious weaknesses. The first is Burrows' use of a rigidly evolutionary schema of development of ideas, adopted from an older criticism which is quite thoroughly discredited today.¹⁰ With this approach, and with the task of combining Old and New Testaments in one medium-sized book, Burrows is led to slight the Old Testament, and the work suffers from superficiality, part of which may be excusable on the ground that it was intended as a textbook.¹¹

⁶Ibid., p. 8.

⁷Ibid., p. 42.

⁸"The most regrettable consequence of such a treatment is the loss of the majestic, dramatic sweep of the divine revelation in history as presented in the Bible." Ibid., p. vii.

⁹Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰Burrows adopts the principles found in Fosdick's Guide to Understanding the Bible. For a discussion of the inadequacies of these principles cf. Walter Eichrodt, "Review of Fosdick's Guide to Understanding the Bible," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXV (1946), pp. 205-17.

¹¹Ibid., p. 1. Cf. Emil Kraepling, The Old Testament Since the Reformation (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), pp. 260f., 276; cf. also Herbert F. Hahn, The Old Testament in Modern Research (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, c.1954), p. 247.

A more thorough treatment of Old Testament Theology is the work bearing that title by Otto Baab.¹² Feeling that the modern emphasis on critical analysis of the Bible has produced confusion and indifference toward it, Baab wishes to integrate Old Testament ideas and to show the meaning and abiding value that they possess.¹³ The work of the historian of religion is "relatively meaningless for modern life."¹⁴ Theology of the Old Testament must go beyond history and attempt to show the validity of its ideas.¹⁵ Baab believes this can be done by demonstrating the genuineness of Israel's religious experience.¹⁶

Baab's plan of organization is a systematic one, with slight variations from that of Koehler and Sellin.¹⁷ He deliberately avoids being controlled by a New Testament point of view.¹⁸ In a final chapter Baab returns to the task of establishing the permanent worth and normative character of Old Testament ideas. He tries to prove this from the unity of the Old Testament, its distinctive character over against its environment, and from applying the tests of philosophy, history, and psychology to Israel's religious experience of God, man, and creation.¹⁹

¹²Otto J. Baab, Theology of the Old Testament (Nashville: Abingdon, c.1949). The first chapter of this book is mostly a reproduction of an earlier essay of his titled "Old Testament Theology: Its Possibility and Methodology," in The Study of The Bible Today and Tomorrow, edited by H. R. Willoughby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), pp. 401-18.

¹³Baab, Theology of the Old Testament, pp. 77f.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 22, 251.

¹⁷Divisions are: God, Man, Sin, Salvation, Kingdom of God, Death and the Hereafter, and Evil.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 269.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 259-68.

Baab's emphasis on the religious experience of Israel is the most original insight in his work. It is this also which constitutes its major weakness. In the end he is compelled to admit that the validity of Old Testament ideas cannot be argued in this way,²⁰ and the book has received the most severe criticism just on this point.²¹

The most prolific American writer on the nature of Old Testament Theology is G. Ernest Wright, who has developed his idea of the task of the discipline in a series of small studies published between 1946 and 1952.²² Wright is opposed to a systematic treatment of Old Testament ideas, since he feels that the rubrics of systematic theology are too abstract and universalized to fit the Biblical point of view. "I should say rather that we must first ascertain the central interest and methodology of the Biblical writers and define Biblical theology accordingly."²³

Since the Bible, from Wright's point of view, is more the Acts of God than the Word of God,²⁴ he defines Biblical Theology as "the confessional recital of the redemptive acts of God in a particular history,

²⁰In the last analysis, this faith is not arguable; its identification as the central passion and driving force in Biblical religion and in subsequent Jewish-Christian history is sufficient argument." Ibid., p. 64.

²¹Cf. the remarks of Norman Porteous, "Old Testament Theology," in The Old Testament and Modern Study, edited by H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon, c.1951), p. 334.

²²G. Ernest Wright, The Challenge of Israel's Faith (London: SCM Press, 1946); The Old Testament Against Its Environment (London: SCM Press, 1950); God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital (London: SCM Press, 1952); "The Faith of Israel," in The Interpreter's Bible, I (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, c.1952), pp. 349-89.

²³Wright, God Who Acts, p. 37.

²⁴Ibid., p. 12.

because history is the chief medium of revelation."²⁵ This credo is also the element which holds the two Testaments together,²⁶ since the center of the New Testament and of Christian theology is not the words of Christ, but God's act in Christ.²⁷ The faith of Israel was based from the beginning, not on a numinous awareness of nature, but on historical event,²⁸ and the New Testament credo as distilled from the kerygma is identical with the Old Testament creed.²⁹ The chief task of Biblical theology is to expound the meanings and implications of the Biblical credo.³⁰

Wright acknowledges his dependence on the works and ideas of Eichrodt,³¹ Dodd,³² and von Rad;³³ yet, though Wright's proposed approach has been anticipated, he has outlined this sort of method more fully than any other writer. He has not yet written a full-scale Theology, but the outline for one proposed in God Who Acts³⁴ and the brief summary of Old Testament thought in The Interpreter's Bible³⁵ serve to indicate the

²⁵Ibid., p. 13.

²⁶Wright, "The Faith of Israel," p. 350.

²⁷Wright, God Who Acts, p. 13.

²⁸Wright, Old Testament Against Its Environment, p. 22.

²⁹Wright, God Who Acts, pp. 66-76.

³⁰Wright, "The Faith of Israel," p. 351.

³¹Wright, Old Testament Against Its Environment, p. 14; "The Faith of Israel," p. 387. Supra, pp. 15-21.

³²Wright, God Who Acts, pp. 66-76. Supra, pp. 50f.

³³Ibid.; Supra, pp. 38f. From him Wright gets the phrase, "Heilsgeschichtliches Credo."

³⁴Ibid., pp. 107-28.

³⁵Wright, "The Faith of Israel," pp. 349-89.

direction he would take and the problems he would face. In his earliest work on the subject, Wright had spoken of "the central propositions of Israelite faith,"³⁶ and the outline of the brief book resembles the systematic treatment of Koehler or Sellin.³⁷ Though the language which he uses in opposing a systematic presentation would suggest that his approach had changed, Wright's later works reveal almost the same outline, although he prefaces them with a discussion of the covenant and election a la Eichrodt.³⁸ In his latest work, "The Faith of Israel," Wright admits that "By its very nature theology involves an attempt to systematize and generalize by means of abstract language. . . . The task of the church demands that we must make the attempt to organize the central articles of the faith. . . ."³⁹ Wright's words and his outline would seem to suggest that while revelation through history and the acts of God remain as important emphases, he is unable to avoid a sort of systematization of Old Testament thought.⁴⁰

³⁶Wright, The Challenge of Israel's Faith, p. 3.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 4f.

³⁸Wright, God Who Acts, pp. 107-28; "The Faith of Israel," 349-89.

³⁹Wright, "The Faith of Israel," p. 352.

⁴⁰A further difficulty which Wright experiences is finding a place for the literature unconnected with history, i.e., the Wisdom literature. Cf. Wright, God Who Acts, pp. 102-05. This same difficulty was felt by von Rad, infra, p. 38.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

If the first quarter of the twentieth century witnessed the death of Old Testament Theology, the years since 1922 have witnessed its rebirth and vigorous growth. The judgment of Herbert Hahn, who has surveyed the history of all sections of Old Testament study in this period, is that "theology has become the most important field of Old Testament scholarship."¹ The most important writing in the field has been done in Germany; the works of Eichrodt, Sellin, Koehler, and Procksch have become recognized as standard works on the subject.² France and the Netherlands have contributed several useful manuals of Old Testament Theology, and the discipline has gained in popularity in the Roman Catholic Church. Britain and America have contributed less, but they have nevertheless been active in the discussion of the nature and methods of Biblical Theology. The influence of this theological movement has extended to the works of men otherwise known mostly as critical scholars, so that von Rad, Breit, and Noth all included theological discussion along with literary analyses in recent studies.³ Summing up the trend toward Old Testament Theology, Gerhard von Rad wrote: "It has already been a great change which has taken place in the field of Old Testament Theology from about the middle of the

¹Herbert F. Hahn, The Old Testament in Modern Research (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, c.1954), p. 249.

²Cf. the appraisal of Gerhard von Rad, "Grundprobleme einer biblischen Theologie des Alten Testaments," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXVIII (Sept.-Oct., 1953), col. 225.

³Hahn, op. cit., p. 248.

twenties to the present. And we are still right in the midst of this movement, yes, perhaps only at its beginning."⁴

Without exception, the writers in the field of Old Testament Theology have accepted and stressed the necessity of critical, historical scholarship, even if they have not always accepted or taken seriously the results of critical studies, as in the case of Vischer or Moeller. Thus theologians have posed for themselves the problems of the validity and relevance of ideas which were historically conditioned and changed in the historical period. As Rowley put it, "The essence of the problem is the necessity to retain a historical sense, and to have a firm grasp of the process that provides the material for our theology, while yet not turning our theology back into a history."⁵ This problem was made more acute by the fact that a mere history of Israel's religion had been felt to be inadequate, particularly in view of the trying times and their demand for a positive message from the Old Testament. To what extent, then, theologians asked, is my Old Testament Theology to have a normative character? To what extent do I write as a Christian theologian? From these basic questions came one derived from them: how could one present Old Testament thought in a relevant way without distorting it?

The writers of full-scale Old Testament Theologies have responded to this Geltungsproblem in three ways: first, by asserting the validity of Old Testament ideas and carrying out this assertion in their work; second, by asserting the validity of Old Testament ideas, but not carrying this

Von Rad, op. cit., col. 225.

Rowley, The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 15.

through in the body of the book; and third, by refusing to be concerned about the validity of Old Testament ideas. Vischer, Moeller, and perhaps Heinisch fall into the first class. Vischer asserts that the Old Testament is valid as a witness to Christ; Moeller treats it as Heilsgeschichte; Heinisch as a system of ideas which conforms to Christian, New Testament doctrine. All three, however, suffer from the same faults. They neglect the objective historical content of the Old Testament, seem to impose on it a unity and validity which is not there, and become involved in an artificial raising of Old Testament ideas to the level of the New Testament.

The second class contains the works of men like Eichrodt, Sellin, Proksch, Vriezen, and Imschoot, who propose a New Testament point of view to establish unity and validity, and Baab, Rowley, and Burrows, who try to establish the validity of the ideas in a more humanistic fashion. When these works are examined, however, it becomes apparent that the body of the work is an objective, historical study, whatever its quality. The problem of how the ideas are normative for the Church or individual Christian today does not receive full-dress treatment throughout the work.

Koehler and Jacob represent the third class; they explicitly refuse to discuss the problem of validity and regard their work as a rearrangement in systematic form of the results of the study of the history of religion, a scientific and critical study rather than a normative one.

Whatever the differences in attitude, the works of the men in classes two and three are much alike; in them Old Testament Theology is not treated as a normative discipline in theology, but as a descriptive, scientific study. In view of the fact that the men in these two groups

both outnumber and, as far as achievement is concerned, outrank those who have treated Old Testament Theology as a normative discipline or at least as having a partly normative character, it may be concluded that thus far the modern period of Old Testament Theology has confirmed the definition of the discipline offered in 1787 by J. P. Gabler: ". . . e genere historico, tradens, quid scripturas sacri de rebus divinis senserint."⁶ When Old Testament scholars have tried to establish the normative character of Old Testament ideas, they have necessarily had to venture outside the field of their greatest competence, and the result has been either that the Old Testament suffered a change in the process, or that the scholar best a retreat back to a descriptive method. The most significant Old Testament Theologies thus far produced differ from histories of Israel's religion mostly in arrangement of material, selection of material, and the "mood" of the writer.⁷ In spite of the demand for something more than a purely scientific treatment of Old Testament Theology, both at the beginning and throughout the period, the history of the modern period of Old Testament Theology seems to indicate that normative considerations are to be left to the systematic theologian.⁸

Closely associated with the question of validity has been the question of the most appropriate form for an Old Testament Theology. The

⁶Quoted in Friedrich Baumgaertel, "Erwägungen zur Darstellung der Theologie des Alten Testaments," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXVI (May, 1951), col. 258.

⁷Cf. William A. Irwin, "The Reviving Theology of the Old Testament," Journal of Religion, XXV (1945), 244-46.

⁸Cf. Emil Kraepling, The Old Testament Since the Reformation (London: Lutterworth Press, 1955), p. 284. "We observe, then, on all sides a drift toward the normative. It is doubtful, however, whether two kinds of normative theology can be admitted."

historical mode of presentation, that is, a form which follows the order of historical events, has been employed only in the works of Vischer and Moeller. Whether the form of presentation is wholly at fault or not, these works have not been regarded as successful. The remainder of the writers have employed a systematic form. Probably the extreme example of the use of this form is Heinisch's work, with its nearly Thomistic categories. Others have been less dogmatic; Koanig, Sellin, and Proksch prefix a history of the religious development to their systematic treatment.

One major attempt has been made to organize Old Testament thought according to a plan extracted from the Bible itself; Walter Eichrodt organized his first volume around the idea of the covenant. While he cannot be said to have succeeded completely, his work is perhaps the best Theology of the Old Testament yet written.⁹ As Emil Kraepling observes, "Only the peaceful rivalry of the productions themselves can demonstrate which is the most instructive, the most useful way of dealing with the Old Testament order."¹⁰

Despite the fact that there is still considerable uncertainty as to the best way of outlining an Old Testament Theology and despite the limitation of the discipline to a descriptive mode of presenting the material, Old Testament Theology in the modern period can still be said to have made a significant contribution to theology in general. To cite one instance, Rudolf Bultmann was enabled to include a handy summary of

⁹G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital (London: SCM Press, 1952), p. 36.

¹⁰Kraepling, op. cit., p. 284.

Old Testament thought as a background to Primitive Christianity by employing, for the most part, the Theologies of Eichrodt and Koehler.¹¹ Perhaps this, then, indicates the area of greatest usefulness of Old Testament Theology: the discipline can well fulfill the task, humble though it may seem, of packaging the materials of the Old Testament for the use of pastors and students in other fields of theology.

¹¹ Rudolf Bultmann, Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting (New York: Meridian, 1956), pp. 15-56, 209.

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