

37. Vol IV, Part 1, "The Doctrine of Reconciliation" (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961) p.175
38. Ibid.
39. Barth says: "God is always God even in His humiliation. The divine being does not suffer any change, any diminution, any transformation into something else, let alone any cessation. The deity of Christ is one unaltered, because unalterable, deity of God. Any subtraction or weakening of it would at once throw doubt upon the atonement made by Him." Ibid. pp.179-80
40. Ibid. p.176
41. Ibid. p.184
42. Ibid. p.185

SOME RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE FIELD OF OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

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THE LAST ten years or so has seen, both in liberal and conservative circles, a renewed interest in the Old Testament and its message. The purpose of this article is to draw

attention to some of the most significant volumes that have appeared in this period, especially works which may be described as general or introductory in character. We begin with the consideration of a major contribution to the study of the Old Testament text.

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THE TEXT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT by ERNST WURTHWEIN SCM Press.
244pp £8.50

The student searching for a basic but comprehensive introduction to the subject of the Old Testament Text, (comparable, eg, to B.M.Metzger's excellent volume on the New Testament entitled 'The Text of the New Testament', OUP 2nd Edition, 1968 has been for a long time severely handicapped. Previously only Wurthwein's second German edition, translated by Peter Ackroyd in 1957 and published by Blackwell, Oxford, has seriously met this need, but it has itself been out of print for a long time. SCM Press (and the new translator Erroll F. Rhodes) are, therefore, to be highly commended for the production of this new second English Edition based on the fourth German edition of 1978 which was itself produced as a supplementary volume to the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. The book is divided, broadly, into two halves; the first dealing with Old Testament text and criticism, the second providing an extensive set of plates and commentary illustrating directly the more generalised account of the earlier part of the work. In the first part of the book four major areas are thoroughly covered: a) The transmission of the Text in the original Hebrew; b) The primary versions; c) other versions; d) Textual criticism. All the various manuscripts and versions are keyed into BH (especially BH3 and BH5) providing a valuable introduction to the bewildering symbols of BH. The many modern discoveries which have been made, especially at Qumran, are integrated into this new volume.

There is little doubt that this is an important book which, with a few reservations (eg especially Wurthwein's discussion of the history of the canon) can be thoroughly recommended to serious Old Testament students.

By far the majority of recent general volumes have however been occupied with the theology of the Old Testament and we draw attention to the following:

1. **THEOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT** by G.Oehler (translated by G.E.Day). Published by Klock and Klock 595pp
2. **PROMISE AND DELIVERANCE** by S.G.De Graff (translated by H.E.Runner), in 3 volumes; by Padeia Press:
 1. From Creation to the Conquest of Canaan 423pp
 2. The Failure of Israel's Theocracy 456pp
 3. Christ's Ministry and Death 453pp

3. **THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT** by G.J. Botterweck and H.Ringgren (Ed's), translated by J.T. Willis, G.W.Bromiley and D.E.Green. Published by Eerdmans. The three volumes currently available are:
 1. Abh - Baddhadh 479 pp
 2. Bdl - Galah 488 pp
 3. Gillulim - Haras 463 pp
4. **OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY IN OUTLINE** by W.Zimmerli (translated by D.E.Green) Published by T & T Clarke 258 pp
5. **OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY: A FRESH APPROACH** by R.E.Clements Published by Marshall, Morgan and Scott 214 pp
6. **INTRODUCTION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AS SCRIPTURE** by B.S. Childs. Published by SCM Press 688 pp

For a considerable number of years Oehler's work (originally published posthumously in 1873) constituted one of the major introductions to Old Testament Theology before the increase in literary criticism, in particular at the end of the last century which led to a drying up of such material under the influence of its fragmentary and destructive methodology. However, though the work is old, Klock and Klock are to be commended for making it freely available again.

Oehler argued that the study of the theology of the Old Testament was a distinct theological discipline (separable, in particular from dogmatics and the history of religion). Its source material is the Old Testament as a whole, especially as interpreted within the framework of a historico - genetic (we might say, redemptive - historical) approach. This led him to certain important conclusions: (i) It is canonical study i.e. (and contra G.Vos cf P. Misselbrook; 'Biblical Theology' Foundations No.4). The whole of the Old Testament is included within its scope. Note, therefore, the section on wisdom literature (p 537-581) virtually ignored by Vos. (ii) It is historical and progressive - the unfolding plan of salvation of one God. In particular it is epochal, marked by certain self-generating divisions (Oehler has two: Mosaicism and Prophetism. While these might be queried his sub-divisions accord well with most recent studies on the subject). (iii) It is in-

complete, but self-consistent i.e. it stands in its whole-ness as the promise does to realisation and yet it can be studied within its own framework and in Biblical exegesis has priority over the New Testament.

These emphases are gradually re-emerging in Old Testament theology and their appearance already in Oehler is the value of this work.

Oehler was sometimes inclined to presuppositions which reflect the critical orthodoxy of his day, and it is a pity that he did not spend more time in looking at the historical narratives. Nevertheless, these mature reflections of a formidable Old Testament scholar of the last century are to be commended to all serious students of the message of the Old Testament. It is of particular value (especially to the preacher) because of the succinct, clearly divided and well-indexed character of the work.

Perhaps under the advent of Biblical literalism, certainly as a consequence of inadequate scholarship, Old Testament theology also was ignored in conservative circles during the early years of this century. (There were one or two prominent exceptions). In the 1930s however, a revival in Biblical Christianity in Holland led to its re-emergence. During this period De Graff, an influential leader in the reformed churches of the Netherlands, produced in 1936 his most influential work 'Verbondsgeschiedenis'. It is this work which we are here considering in the translation by E.H.Runner.

Originally produced as outlines to help Sunday School teachers tell the stories of the Bible, each chapter (based on a varying length of Biblical narrative) includes: (i) a general historico-theological introduction; (ii) a 'main thought'; (iii) an expanded 'story form' account of the passage in question. De Graff's simplicity (which is never simplistic) is impressive, for which the translator also deserves credit. There is much of immense value, not only to the Sunday School teacher, and many passages of Scripture take on a new and thrilling light as De Graff expounds them to us. His opening essay including comments on how to teach children is especially stimulating - would that our Sunday School teachers took it to heart!

However, a brief resume of the author's methodology is in order, for herein, in particular, the strengths and the weaknesses of the work are especially apparent. De Graff very properly regards Old Testament history as a dynamic unified story of God's dealings in redeeming creation (not just man!). The Bible, therefore, is the account of the unfolding of God's covenant of redemption. Consequently the Old Testament cannot be studied in a fragmented, or individualistic way. In all this De Graff is substantially right, whatever one's view of the covenant of redemption. Moreover, his emphasis upon cosmic redemption is timely and his view of Scripture usually excludes allegorical interpretation, although the canvas is sometimes a little flat and the sense of progress observed by excessive typology.

A further feature of De Graff's methodology is his christological emphasis or "dimension". For him "the entire Scripture is God's revelation of himself as the redeemer. The redemption in the mediator is revealed to us in every story". If this meant no more than that the Scripture is "Salvational" and finds its fulfilment in Christ this would be a correct emphasis, however, De Graff means more - every story has to have a direct reference to Christ. The effect of this is: (i) Excessive and uncontrolled typology is required to justify his assertion: (ii) the Old Testament becomes an illustration of New Testament truths rather than a part of that redemptive history which reaches its fulness of revelation in the New Testament. (iii) New Testament interprets Old Testament rather than the Old Testament finding its full significance in the New Testament; (iv) We are often introduced less to the message of the passage in question (certainly not its main emphasis) but rather an interpretation forced upon the section by De Graff's systematic theology and methodological framework. So, e.g., Genesis 3 is entitled "The Covenant of God's Grace" when, clearly the fall is its most prominent feature.

Notwithstanding these weaknesses (which have been mostly remedied by later conservative Biblical theology) De Graff's work used discriminatingly should prove a great help to the preacher, Sunday School teacher etc. and, perhaps, find a place in family worship. It is undoubtedly

the best survey of Biblical history currently available.

We turn next to two contributions of German theology of a more modern and critical character.

Serious Bible students have for some years had the not inconsiderable benefit of Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. The work here reviewed, **THE THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT** is the Old Testament counterpart which was begun in Germany in 1974 and promises eventually to extend to 12 volumes. At present the three mentioned above have been translated into English and the fourth may well be available before this review is published. There can be no doubt that, when complete, the **TDOT** will constitute the major reference work on Old Testament words and concepts.

As with the **TDNT** the structure of the work is lexical, although in fact it constitutes a consideration of the major theological ideas of the Old Testament, together with other major subjects. Methodologically, this approach is somewhat odd (cf J.Barr's criticism of **TDNT** in 'The Semantics of Biblical Language') and a topical structure might have been preferred. Nevertheless, the work is a source of information and provides an essential tool for the Old Testament student with its studies of etymology and semantic usage of the major words in the Old Testament. The bibliography and cross-references should also prove valuable.

The contributions are mainly from North Europe, very few being represented from USA and UK. This is a pity as the work does tend, therefore, to reflect the distinctively German theological outlook (with its emphasis on literary criticism). Moreover, the recommended further reading has not been adequately extended to include English articles which would limit its usefulness as a tool for research. Inevitably, the work has imbibed the literary critical method in particular (reference to J.E.D.P., textual glosses, etc. abound), there is too ready a willingness to interpret Israelite religion indiscriminately in the light of ANE parallels and an almost complete failure to take seriously the canonical context. These volumes are highly recommended but the work must be used with

restraint.

The work by Zimmerli emerges from a basically similar school of thought but represents the wrestlings of Old Testament theologians in Germany, (and elsewhere) with the question of the unity and message of the Old Testament faced with the diversity of Old Testament material (a problem made acute by the modern methods of Biblical criticism which are presupposed). Zimmerli finds that a "coherent whole" is obtainable because of the sameness of the God known as Jehovah who reveals himself throughout the Old Testament material. This method, close to Barthianism in places, is the escape route by which Zimmerli is able to speak of a unified message in the Old Testament.

From the perspective afforded by this methodology, Zimmerli proceeds formally to divide the material into five major sections covering respectively; Yahweh; His gifts; His commandment; Life before God and, finally, Crisis and Hope. Within these sections material is dealt with from a literary, critical perspective which reads in places rather more like a history of Israelite religion than a theology. Nevertheless, much of the detailed material is extremely valuable, the quintessence of modern study being well summarised within its pages. The small print sections of exegesis are especially helpful and full of detail and thought-provoking material. Section III, Yahweh's commandment, was particularly helpful to the reviewer.

In sum the volume is an amalgamation of good but brief material, interspersed and constantly weakened by the insistence of Biblical criticism - a feature which obscures the structure of the Old Testament material as well as impoverishing its message.

A radically different answer to the problem of Old Testament unity which Zimmerli wrestles with is that being pioneered in certain circles in the English-speaking theological world of which the two volumes under consideration here probably represent the most important contributions. The demand for a message to declare on the basis of the Old Testament material has become so insistent with Childs and Clements that they have sought a resolution by

emphasising the canonical character and structure of the Old Testament. The Old Testament as we find it, as the (traditionally) authorised message of the Jewish and Christian communities becomes, therefore, the starting point, both for introduction (Childs) and theology (Clements).

Childs begins his work with some weighty polemics against much modern Old Testament study. He argues that all too often a methodology (literary, traditio-historical, redactional etc) has been employed on the Old Testament in such a way that, while providing immensely useful insights into the Old Testament, the fact has been forgotten that the object of study is the present canonical shape of the material. Consequently, little attention has been given to the structure of the whole, rather the text has been viewed not in its final canonical context but from an imposed framework which assumes the determining force of every Biblical text to be its original setting/meaning. For Childs, this problem goes back to the false dichotomy (his opinion!) between conservative and radical criticism. The former, he argues, has emphasised the canon at the expense of criticism, the latter the reverse. Neither, says Childs, is correct - critical study is to be conducted but the framework for the ultimate meaning is the canonical structure. In other words, the different and disparate elements of the Old Testament tradition were combined together within an interpretative framework which has often radically changed its original meaning - but it is the final interpretation which has provided the normative meaning. Other methods of interpretation are, therefore, relativised and sometimes the canonical structure deliberately obscures those features which other methods major upon. This approach obviously has implications for text criticism since it is the completed canonical text (dated C1 AD by Childs) that we are concerned to reconstruct. Evidence for earlier (pre-canonical) texts is of secondary importance.

The opening 108 pages of Childs book are concerned with the exposition of the above methodology, the remainder of the 688 pages deal with each of the Old Testament books in turn and provide an "Introduction" in the light of this approach. Each is divided into (usually) three sections:

a) Historical - critical problems; b) Canonical shape;
c) Theological and Hermeneutical implications. It is noticeable that on his methodology a) is almost unnecessary and often bears little relation to what follows. Moreover, with emphasis lying upon Biblical theology he provides many real and beneficial insights into the books in the second two sections.

Like Zimmerli, Childs' book reflects the bareness felt in Old Testament study and the need for a message in a discipline submerged under the weight of its critical methodologies which have left it without a voice. God can now be heard speaking with a normative message through the final canonical form. In fact, however, the authority rests in tradition which fixed the final form. Moreover, it ought to be asked whether a text or a book which is based upon historical fiction and/or a re-interpretation of the original (pre-canonical) meaning and context can provide a word from God. Is there not a sleight of hand here, for how can a confident message be proclaimed on the basis of a literary deception?

Childs will give us many valuable insights into the word of God which we do well to receive insofar as they are consistent with a conservative and biblical methodology. However, and herein lies a real danger, the gulf between the conservative and liberal remains the same as before even if, by a clever approach, the two arrive at a similar message. One rests on the eternal word, the sure and steadfast word of an eternal God revealed in the history of Old Testament Scripture, and the other upon a frozen canonical process which is a compilation (and distortion) of mythical elements of religious tradition. Consequently, we simply cannot have our cake and eat it as Childs wishes.

The volume by Clements is markedly similar, except that it takes theology as a whole and not introduction as its starting point. Whereas, therefore, Childs affords us a theology of each book, Clements seeks to assemble his message from the whole, the central section of his book being occupied with such a purpose. This itself, reflects Clements' major concern, that the major themes of the Old Testament be given more attention in Biblical Theology

since they provide the backbone to the unity of the Old Testament writings. This volume clearly complements Childs and it is particularly good to see discussion of the God of Israel, The People of God (including Election and the Covenant); Law and Promise. As with Clements' work generally there is much here of value. Like Childs he emphasises that the actual canonical shape of the Old Testament Scripture must be taken seriously as the controlling feature. The introductory chapters marked "The Problem of Old Testament Theology"; "Dimensions of Faith in the Old Testament" together with the final chapter "The Old Testament and the Study of Theology" discuss this, providing a detailed and illuminating study of the position of these two scholars. It is particularly interesting to observe the problems their methodology creates for them since they are unable to hold a conservative view of the Old Testament documents. Here, then, is a volume well worth reading by the student of Old Testament theology.

A final overview of these various volumes concerned with Biblical Theology would probably be helpful. Oehler provides us with the base upon which all subsequent conservative Biblical theology must surely build. The constant dialogue between exegesis and the redemptive-historical framework is a necessary base for a sound Biblical theology and this volume points the way ahead very clearly. However, Oehler tended to emphasise the cultic and dogmatic features of Old Testament religion at the expense of the historical narrative. It is to the credit, therefore, of De Graff that he shows that the story form narratives of the Old Testament share in this Biblical theological framework. Sadly, his inadequate formulation of the christological dimension (in itself a necessary emphasis) has in places prejudiced his understanding of certain passages. Of the other volumes Childs reminds us that each book has a distinct message as a theological work and the historical framework must not obscure this feature. Childs' book together with the TDOT, Zimmerli and Clements are each valuable in their own way but each are severely affected by their critical standpoint (especially Zimmerli and TDOT). As source books, however, each is helpful - the German volumes for exegetical data, Childs and Clements for theological structure.

Finally, the other volume:

SURVEY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT by I.L.Jensen. Published by
Moody Press 488 pp

This volume written from a conservative (and noticeably Pre-millennial) perspective is an attempt to bring Biblical theology into personal Bible study so that the panorama of God's redemption is seen in every part of the Old Testament. It is the reviewer's opinion that the author, who is Professor of the Bible at Bryan College, Dayton, Tennessee, succeeds remarkably well.

Following a general introduction (p 15-63) each book in the Old Testament is then individually covered. 119 charts and 25 maps are provided to illuminate the material. Each book is usually discussed under the following headings: Preparation for Study; Background; Survey; Prominent Subjects and Applications. The volume is not so much a comprehensive guide as a guided motivation to personal Bible study and research of the message of the Scripture. Questions are raised rather than answers given and the student is regularly drawn back from this introductory material to make his own assessment of the Biblical material.

The reviewer highly recommends this volume, having already distributed several copies (and obtained one for the church library). He is convinced that properly used this book would be of far more benefit to many in our congregations than most of the Bible study notes currently available and might well install in our people an enthusiasm for the personal study of the Old Testament. We can always iron out the pre-millennialism in our preaching, if required! Finally, it is not without value to preachers who come fresh to some new section of God's Word in helping them to the overall structure of the individual books of the Bible.

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