

REVIEW OF SOME OLD TESTAMENT

PUBLICATIONS

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AN INTRODUCTION TO OLD TESTAMENT STUDY by John H. Hayes

Published by Abingdon Press and distributed in the UK by the SPCK.
400pp, Paperback £8.50

This book by the Editor of the Journal of Biblical Literature provides an excellent orientation in Old Testament study. As such it will be of considerable usefulness to the student freshly involved in Old Testament work and, also, a sourcebook of some value to the more advanced scholar.

Hayes' purpose in writing the volume is, clearly, less to provide a detailed Old Testament Introduction in the conventional sense (as e.g. Eissfeldt and Harrison) but rather to provide an understanding of the issues, problems and methodologies that lie behind contemporary study of the Old Testament. The book is well organised, clearly and interestingly written and shows some evidence of being the result of the author's seminary teaching. The bibliographies are extensive and, helpfully, exclusively relate to material available in English. Footnotes are lacking - the most important references being included in the text. All these features facilitate its use by the non-specialist.

The early sections of the book include discussion of the Canon and Old Testament Textual criticism and are followed by an outline of the Historical-Critical and Form Critical approaches to Old Testament study. As with the remainder of the work his method is to summarise, often with extensive quotation, the main authorities in the respective fields. This is usually done excellently and ought to give the reader an early mastery of the main issues. The latter part of the book is occupied with the particular areas of the Old Testament material. While clearly holding liberal views Hayes shows a sensitivity and balance in the majority of his comments. Even Harold Lindsell and E.J.Young receive a sympathetic mention in his discussion of the Pentateuch. This balance is, however, less marked in the later chapters of the book (especially

on Daniel) and, inevitably, in those areas which conservatives have, until recently, largely left to the liberals by default, e.g. the Historical books. The last mentioned section together with the material on prophecy is, perhaps, the thinnest part of the book, but a consideration of the discussions on the Psalms and Wisdom should not go unrewarded.

In sum. A most useful volume for the student of the Old Testament, especially if, e.g. Harrison or Young are consulted at doubtful points. For those of us in the ministry and particularly interested in the Old Testament Hayes has provided a valuable and stimulating survey of modern trends in a usually highly readable style.

APPROACHES TO OLD TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION by John Goldingay.
Published by the Inter-Varsity Press in the series 'Issues in Contemporary Theology' under the General Editorship of I. Howard Marshall. 192pp. Paperback. £4.25

This small volume is, unquestionably, one of the most important publications in the Old Testament field of studies in 1981. One of a series intended to provide a conservative overview of areas of debate in contemporary theology, Goldingay's work is a dialogue with the various viewpoints currently expressed on the subject of Old Testament interpretation. This feature tends to make the book unnecessarily complicated for the less tutored reader since it inevitably leads to a considerable philosophical bias (especially in chapter 3). In addition, Goldingay's position on the liberal wing of conservatism necessarily involves him in a number of debates which most readers of this journal would place under the heading of apologetics rather than hermeneutics. Despite these weaknesses, however, a careful study of the book should alert readers (i) to the importance of the subject (Goldingay quotes Gunneweg when the latter says "it would be no exaggeration to understand the hermeneutical problem of the Old Testament as the problem of Christian theology, seeing that all the other questions of theology are affected in one way or another by its resolution").

(ii) to the way ahead for Christian interpretation of the Old Testament. Goldingay notes that at least five approaches to OT interpretation may be discerned beneath current discussion. Each chapter of the book is devoted to the study of one of these

methodologies.

The third chapter of the book (together with the fifth) will be of least usefulness, except to the theological student. Within it the author surveys that approach to the OT which views it as the story of salvation. Although a large part of the chapter is occupied with discussion on the nature of history and the relationship of that history to revelation Goldingay does make a number of very important observations. He notes: (i) to view the OT properly as salvation history establishes a broader view of what the Scriptures mean by salvation than the solely spiritual viewpoint that tends to dominate Christian theology. On p87 he says "In OT times God wills Israel's salvation and blessing (national, personal, and spiritual well-being) and seeks to grant it by his initiatives and by the way his providence takes account of the acts of Israel and of other nations. But that will to save and bless is never fully satisfied, and the Christ event is his final means of achieving it".

(ii) To view the OT as salvation history avoids the necessity to treat it as figurative (while ignoring its literal meaning) or, simply in a literal way (which panders, for example, to liberation theology).

(iii) Such an approach also means that subsequent events in the narrative will throw light on the significance of earlier events. (Note, for example, the way Isaiah 40-55 interprets and illuminates the Exodus).

(iv) Perhaps the most important point that this chapter makes is that if the OT is salvation history this implies that the believer must appropriate it and apply it as his history.

The final chapter occupies itself with the growth of the biblical tradition, the OT's own methods of re-interpreting itself and the defining of the OT canon. Much of this material is very unsatisfactory from a conservative viewpoint. However, the final section of the chapter concerns itself with the interpretation of the OT as Scripture in NT times and emphasises the importance of knowing the contemporary methods of Jewish exegesis when seeking to understand the way the NT writers use the OT. Sadly, however, as with most other students in this area, Goldingay does not appear to regard apostolic exegesis as normative for the modern church.

Consequently, the reader is left wondering how far he can follow the apostolic examples.

More satisfactory and useful are chapters 1,2 and 4. In the first Goldingay notes that OT and NT faith is a fundamental unity. Such differences as do exist must always be seen within the context of this broad similarity. This necessitates the conceptualisation of OT faith, i.e. the provision of an objective and descriptive theology of the OT which dogmatic theology is able to take up and re-express in contemporary categories. Goldingay notes, very properly, that, in this way, dogmatic theology is able to build upon biblical theology and not, as has so often been the case, impose its own concerns on the biblical data in such a way as to hinder the biblical categories from emerging. If the above approach is used, however, the OT can be truly authoritative and normative for the believer.

The form of OT theology should reflect the structure of OT faith and should eschew any attempt to find one central 'key' to interpretation (e.g. covenant). Rather, Goldingay says, "Understanding the OT resembles understanding a battle or person or appreciating a landscape, rather than understanding the layout of an architect-planned town No one solution to the problem of structuring an OT theology will illuminate the whole: a multiplicity of approaches will lead to a multiplicity of insights" (p28-29). The justification for this endeavour is that "to accept the OT as faith means accepting it for what it meant to its adherents in OT times" (p33).

What is the relation of the OT to the NT? OT and NT are joint witnesses to faith and are to be studied together without denying the integrity of the OT by over emphasis on the NT's role in interpreting it. Christ does help to illuminate the OT but, equally, the OT helps us to understand Christ and we must be open to its insights. Moreover, Goldingay emphasises that careful attention should be given on avoiding an over-emphasis on the distinctiveness of the two covenants or of underplaying the differences. Such differences as do exist are not due to OT error but to the place that they occupy within the whole and are intelligible in the wider context.

Perhaps the most valuable discussion in the whole book is the second chapter entitled 'The OT as a way of life'. Having isolated

five ways in which the OT shapes behaviour and the necessity of integrating each of these elements into a comprehensive OT ethics. Goldingay proceeds to trace the relationship of such ethics to those living under the new covenant. While the NT emphasises that Christian ethics are above all connected with the receipt of the Spirit, yet, ambivalently, the NT also recognises the normativeness of OT law for the Christian. Rejecting the threefold division of the law as an altogether too blunt instrument, Goldingay argues that the OT itself indicates the ways in which its laws are to be understood and utilised. The OT imposes its own structure and order and the canonical context offers guidance on the inter-relationship of the commands. Indeed, OT ethics is rather like OT theology. Just as theology undergirds the text of the OT and ensures the authority and normativeness of the OT so it is with its ethics. The Christian ethicist's task is also similar to that of the dogmatician, viz. to re-interpret such principles so that the believer is given specific and contemporary applications of such principles.

Goldingay emphasises that the diversity of standards in the OT should not be seen as a problem since biblical ethics is in a constant tension between ideal and condescension due to hardness of heart. Christian ethics must learn from the OT and include both elements.

Finally, Goldingay notes that charges are sometimes made that OT ethics are limited since they reflect a different world view to that of modern man. He suggests that it is at these points in particular that contemporary man should listen most carefully to what the OT is saying.

Chapter 4 is concerned with the OT's witness to Christ (which, one might add, is often the only use evangelicals have for the OT). Looking first at narrative material, Goldingay investigates typological interpretation and notes that the following elements characterise it: Typology embodies a conviction that there is a fundamental analogy between different divine acts; it believes that parallel events occur throughout salvation history although more is realised at the end than was experienced at earlier stages; that there is a degree of analogy together with anticipation or contrast and that symbolism or structural affinity is believed to exist between the events.

Allegory, on the other hand, is concerned with words not events.

Typology is an approach to theology while allegory is an approach to interpretation. Goldingay says, "valid typology will then be limited to study which sees the Christ event as the ultimate event symbolised by the anticipatory types. Valid allegory will be biblical interpretation which understands a particular statement as an expression of truths found elsewhere in the Christian Bible, though not in the overt meaning of this particular statement" (p107).

The problem that both approaches have to face is whether or not the 'new' meaning of the text has been brought to the text or event by the interpreter or whether it unveils an extra meaning to a text of univocal meaning. In fact, the text should limit the interpretation and the potential meanings of the text. Properly accomplished the NT not only illuminates the OT but the reverse is also true. Indeed the interpretation of Jesus' ministry was understood and limited by the apostolic use of OT symbols.

Goldingay seems a little uncertain as to how typology and allegory may be validly controlled. Perhaps his unwillingness to regard apostolic exegesis as normative gives him difficulties. Nevertheless, he notes that the OT itself provides examples of such exegesis, especially in the prophetic re-interpretation of earlier material. Moreover, he makes the very important point that the whole of the OT (not a selection of it) is open to typological interpretation precisely because in this way it all becomes normative to the believer. Further, he warns that the excessive scope that is sometimes given to the approach that begins with the Christ event must be limited or else interpretation becomes circular and the authority of the OT text is seen to rest outside of the OT itself.

The last section of the chapter deals with the 'explicit forward look' of the OT and especially of the prophets. Goldingay emphasises that the promise-fulfilment motif runs throughout the OT which is a book of ever increasing anticipation and re-interpretation since "these prophecies stand as statements of the purpose of God, not random resolutions. They represent God's ultimate purpose and the principles they embody can be re-applied in the future" (p121). Though Goldingay seems to underplay the significance of predictive prophecy in the OT yet his main point stands.

We still await a thoroughly conservative, easily intelligible OT

hermeneutics which will guide us safely through the shoals of OT interpretation. However, despite its shortcomings this book does at least alert us to many of the issues and suggest the path that we must follow if we are to move ahead. It is also a salutary book since it shows that evangelicals have largely ignored the massive problems associated with the interpretation of the OT. This is especially galling since such work as has been done has been accomplished by those whose views on Scripture might have suggested to us that they would not be interested in the subject. If they have laboured in the field, how do we explain our complacency?

THE LITERATURE AND MEANING OF SCRIPTURE edited by Morris A. Inch and C. Hassell Bullock.

Published by Baker Book House. 303pp

PAUL'S USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT by E. Earle Ellis

Published by Baker Book House. 204pp

It is a not altogether unjustified criticism of conservative evangelicals that, while they have declaimed at length on the nature of Scripture, they have neglected the crucial question 'What does it mean?'

Awareness of this hermeneutical vacuum is, however, growing. Nowhere is this more apparent among the publishers than in the productions of Baker Book House. This is discernable in two ways. Firstly, Baker have been quick to reissue works that may not be familiar to evangelicals but which are essential reading in this field. The 'Twin Brooks' series of reprints which has for some time included John Bright's 'The Authority of the Old Testament' has now been extended to accommodate Ellis' 'Paul's Use of the Old Testament'. Secondly, new and relevant titles have been forthcoming. Last year Walter Kaiser's excellent 'Towards an exegetical Theology' and Henry Virkler's 'Hermeneutics' were published. These titles have been recently joined by 'The Literature and Meaning of Scripture' edited by Inch and Bullock. The last mentioned volume and Ellis' book are here under review.

Inch and Bullock's volume is an important one which has been written because of the authors' conviction that (a) attention to the correct interpretation of Scripture is essential among Bible believing Christians, and, (b) that there is a need to treat such study from within the scope of Biblical Theology rather than

Systematics. This latter emphasis, the book argues, brings into being a work "for which they (i.e. the authors) could find no precedent, and therefore no guideline" (p9). The writers express the hope that "we think it may break ground for additional publications" (p10), a sentiment which the reviewer would like to endorse.

The twelve chapters of the book are each contributed by past or present members of the staff at Wheaton College and are intended to approach the meaning of the Biblical text and the special hermeneutics involved by dealing, individually, with the variety of types of literature found in the Scriptures. All the major categories are discussed and from a conservative standpoint. Each chapter is divided, approximately equally, into two parts. The first part deals with the distinctive hermeneutical features of the material under discussion and the second to a commentary on a Biblical text in which the principles outlined in the earlier section are applied by way of illustration.

Contributions vary in quality and in detailed format. For example, Barabas' article on the Johannine literature concentrates on providing an outline reading list. By contrast, most of the other essays concentrate on articulating their own guidelines for interpretation. Both these approaches are necessary and the fact that this volume is unable to do so within its scope makes it necessarily preliminary. Some startling facts are mentioned, e.g. Bilezikian (on Apocalyptic) notes that commentaries are still written on Revelation without their authors having any knowledge of the wealth of extra-biblical apocalyptic texts which go so far in helping us to understand what John's readers would have made of his book! Such assertions should lead to some heart-searching among those who are so dogmatic on the interpretation of such material. Brevity is also a problem in the book since the general lucidness of the text is occasionally obscured by a theological shorthand which may make the reader unfamiliar with the ideas expressed struggle to work out what is being said. However, so many excellent suggestions are made throughout the book that a complete reading is recommended. This is an epoch-making book which ought to make the diligent reader more faithful in rightly dividing the word of truth.

Ellis' work is a more technical work, providing an exhaustive (and sometimes exhausting) treatment of Paul's use of the OT. It remains the standard textbook on the subject even though it was first

published in 1957. The topics covered are of fundamental importance not only to all interpreters of the Apostle but to all Christians who seek to study and expound the OT since the inspired interpretation of Paul must surely be the paradigm for all subsequent teachers. The first chapter majors on the subject of Paul's attitude to Scripture. This discussion is followed by a consideration and comparison of Paul's usage with that of contemporary Judaism and the other writings of the Apostolic Church. The final chapter draws together the various features of Paul's exegetical methodology in a seminal discussion of his topical emphases, typology, new covenant exegesis and the Apostle's adoption of a 'Midrash Peshet' interpretation of Scripture. The extensive indices (especially that which contains all the Biblical texts discussed in the body of the work) should make this volume one which is frequently consulted by those who are preaching Paul and those passages quoted from the OT in the NT. Properly used our preaching should be more Biblical and Christ-centred after consulting this book ... Can there be a greater commendation?

LOVE TO THE LOVELESS - THE STORY AND MESSAGE OF HOSEA

by Derek Kidner.

Published by the Inter-Varsity Press in the series 'The Bible Speaks Today'. 142pp. Paperback. £3.25

This is vintage, pithy Kidner at his fertile best! Commendation can be no greater than to suggest that this book is a happy sequel to the earlier volume in the series by Alec Motyer on Amos.

The exposition by Kidner sets out to be just that. It is not a commentary since its prime purpose is application. However, considerable exegetical endeavour lies behind the book and so regularly surfaces that many will probably feel that it is largely unnecessary to resort to more detailed commentary. Moreover, since the exposition is rooted in such thorough textual study, its message is both thoroughly contemporary and extensively 'bibline'. Thus the volume provides considerable guidance as to the how and what in all sermons and expositions of prophetic material and reclaims for God's people a relevant message in those Scriptures so often shrouded by eschatological and apocalyptic speculation.

Typically, the text abounds with the succinct phrases and sentences which so characterise Kidner's work, regularly suggesting an entire

sermon outline in a few words when others seem to require paragraphs and pages.

Perhaps a brief quotation from the Introduction will whet the appetite: "It is rather easy to grow up with a naive idea of God - something like a child's impression of the adult world The child's idea of his elders is a puzzled one. They make the rules (he says to himself) - there's power for you! And they have money, whatever they may say - there's freedom! What couldn't we do, we children, with all that freedom, all that power?

"In this book we see things not in these simplistic terms, where situations and people are uncomplicated and power is like a magic wand. Hosea introduces us to a family which is a miniature of our world - or rather, of the most enlightened part of the world of his own day. But it is a problem family, and God compares His situation not to that of an autocrat whose orders nobody dares question, nor of a father who rejoices in an adoring wife and children, but to that of a husband whose wife has left him, and a father whose children are like strangers in his own house and are fast destroying themselves.

"Where does omnipotence, where do instant solutions come into such a picture ... There is precious little exercise of power in such a story ..., for power would solve nothing. Instead, there is hurt, humiliation, waiting, personal approach and appeal, and, at last, mutual commitment. Cost, too; but mostly the cost of risking rebuff, reopening wounds, working at a difficult relationship and being determined that it shall last and grow." (p11-13).

So the summary of chapters 1-3.

Maps and an abridged survey lead to a final plea to the author: "Please, Mr Kidner, spend the rest of your retirement in further studies of this kind."
