

The Revival of Biblical Theology

RALPH M. EARLE

A review of recent religious literature discloses three significant changes in the field of Biblical studies. Three great trends had their rise in the nineteenth century and flooded over into the twentieth century. But in the last few months and years there has been a marked reversal in the direction of the current.

The time was when Old Testament theology, New Testament theology, Pauline and Johannine theology were required disciplines in theological schools. That day has long since passed. In the Biblical field theology has been replaced by criticism. Today the student in the average seminary finds most of his time in the Biblical department devoted to the investigation of problems in literary and historical criticism. There is very little time or desire for seeking the vital religious message of the Bible.

A second trend sponsored by the German scholarship of the nineteenth century was the substitution of analysis for synthesis in the study of the Bible. The analytical method was pursued with such insatiable passion that it became increasingly atomistic and devastating. Sharp-eyed critics, by means of high-power mental microscopes, managed to find as many as two or three documentary sources for a single verse in the Old Testament. Phrase by phrase the books of the Pentateuch and the prophets were torn to pieces and assigned to their various pigeon-holes. Even some recent outstanding works in the field of Old Testament introduction have carried on the ruthless work of dissection

until the student finds himself in Ezekiel's valley of dry bones. Bones are scattered all about, "and behold they were very dry." Much of modern Biblical scholarship has not only stripped the meat from the bones but scattered the very bones themselves in a mass of hopeless confusion. What is needed is a revival that will get the bones organized into skeletons, get some flesh on them, and then breathe into them the breath of life. Biblical study must cease to be dead and deadening.

A third trend was the wholesale application of the infallible theory of evolution to the study of Biblical religion. Any seemingly advanced conception of God must automatically be assigned to a late date. All the writings of the Bible were fitted with easy confidence into the framework of this evolutionary scheme. The Old and New Testaments were simply source materials for the study of the development of the Hebrew and Christian religions. God and divine inspiration were shoved out the back door of theological thinking.

But in very recent times a decided reaction has set in. This change is reflected in a number of articles appearing during the last year; although I should like to insert, if I may, a personal statement that I became very much aware of this new emphasis in the books I was reading before I read any articles or reviews calling attention to it. I mention that to confirm the fact that recent literature does exhibit clearly and unquestionably a change of direction.

I.

First, there is apparent a new emphasis upon Biblical theology in current religious periodicals. In the autumn number of *Religion in Life* for 1946 there is an article entitled, "Biblical Theology and the Sermon on the Mount," by Alexander Purdy. Professor Purdy, of Hartford Theological Seminary, speaks of "the current revival of biblical theology." After stating that "the discipline known as biblical theology has largely vanished from our theological curricula," he goes on to say: "The re-emergence of biblical theology, in fact if not in form, is accordingly one of the most striking phenomena of current New Testament studies."

Dr. Purdy mentions Barthianism as one of the influences producing this change and then notes among "other possible reasons for the revival of biblical theology" the inadequacy of historical criticism. After justifiably labeling the results of form criticism as "subjective" he makes this intelligent observation:

If precise historical conclusions as to the origin of Christianity are uncertain, the fact remains that it emerged as a living, vital faith. Now such a faith is desperately needed in our troubled times. It is natural and praiseworthy, as well as justifiable, that scholars should sense this need and should be influenced by it in their examination of the records. For these and other reasons we are witnessing a revival of interest in the theology of the New Testament.¹

Another recent article of significance is "Neo-orthodoxy and the Bible," by Professor G. Ernest Wright of McCormick Theological Seminary, a paper read at the 1946 meeting of the National Association of Biblical Instructors and published in the May, 1946, issue of the *Journal of Bible and Religion*. Professor Wright speaks of the fear entertained by Biblical schol-

ars "of being considered unscholarly and homiletical." He then goes on to make this pertinent observation:

Our training has led us to picture the ideal figure to which we should conform as an Aristotle or Einstein, rather than as an Isaiah or Jesus. It is much more comfortable to be a strictly impartial and objective marshaller of facts, than an interpreter of their ultimate meaning and truth.²

Professor Wright objects to the dominance of Greek influence in religious thinking today. Greek philosophy magnified the good life but was utterly inadequate because it had no solution for the problem of human sin.

While the Bible affirms the worth of man, its central problem is the reason for man's inability to obtain the good life he desires. It thus concerns itself with the problem of human sin, with a realistic analysis of human nature, with God's attempt to deliver man from the tragedies which have resulted from the misuse of his freedom, and with an answer to the question untouched by the Greeks: how shall man do that which he knows he ought to do?³

One of Professor Wright's great contributions to contemporary Biblical study is his emphasis on the vital importance of the religious message of the Bible. In this article he declares:

Throughout the New Testament and the prophetic writings of the Old there is a sense of urgency, a sense of the absolute importance of their proclamation, and a demand that the hearer make a decision.⁴

Dr. Wright has himself highlighted this sense of urgency and authority in his powerful little book, *The Challenge of Israel's Faith*,⁵ one of the most helpful books written in the Old Testament field in our day. Every preacher would do well to read and reread this small but weighty volume. One quotation from it will have to suffice for

¹ G. Ernest Wright, "Neo-Orthodoxy and the Bible," *The Journal of Bible and Religion*, XIV (1946), p. 88.

² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁴ Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944.

⁵ Alexander C. Purdy, "Biblical Theology and the Sermon on the Mount," *Religion in Life*, XV (1946), pp. 498, 499.

the present. He says:

Many of us have been doing more reasoning and arguing than *proclaiming* the word of the Lord. If the truth of God the King is to produce conviction, to strike at the will, to reorganize life, it must above all be preached and proclaimed, lest we lose ourselves in discussion and fail to utter it at all! It is at this point that the biblical study of the last century failed us.⁶

Before turning our attention from periodicals to books, we should mention a new quarterly journal which began with the issue of January, 1947. It is called *Interpretation—A Journal of Bible and Theology* and is put out by Union Theological Seminary, of Richmond, Virginia. The first article in *Interpretation* was a happy choice. Dr. H. H. Rowley, of Manchester, England, has reflected the purpose and plan of the journal in his article entitled, "The Relevance of Biblical Interpretation." His opening sentence reads: "The appearance of a journal specifically devoted to biblical interpretation is a symptom of our time."

After pointing out the effect on Bible study produced by the scholars of the nineteenth century, Dr. Rowley goes on to say:

Against this a reaction has set in. There is a growing recognition that only a biblical religion, founded on and nourished by the Bible, can suffice for this or any other day. It would be unfair to pretend that such an attitude is wholly new, nor do I maintain this for a moment here. My point is simply that at the present time there is a strong trend in this direction.⁷

Let me give briefly here just two more quotations from this article. Dr. Rowley declares: "The renewed interest in theology is a significant mark of our time." Then, after discussing the defects of an over-emphasis on the historical-critical method during the last century, he says:

That is why men are asking for commentaries

with a new emphasis, and an interpretation that is no less scholarly than we have known but more profoundly theological. We need a more dynamic view of the Bible and its ideas.⁸

II.

We want now to look at some books which reflect the new interest in Biblical theology. Unless otherwise noted all references are to books published in 1946. The discussion of them is not based on material gleaned from reviews but an actual reading of them.

The Westminster Press of Philadelphia has rendered, and is rendering, a great service to the American public in reprinting many of the most significant theological books appearing in England. The value of this contribution can only be appreciated by comparing the solid worth of the Westminster books of the past three years with the type of volumes coming from some other presses. We want to notice two or three of these British books in relation to the revival of Biblical theology.

One of the most satisfying books which I have read in recent months is one entitled *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, by Norman H. Snaith. Dr. Snaith is a Methodist leader in England and teaches Old Testament at Wesley College, Leeds.

The main contention of this book is that Christian theology has tended wrongly to build more on Greek intellectual concepts than on the great religious teachings of the Old Testament. In his preface the author states very clearly the thesis of the book. He writes:

In this Fernley-Hartley Lecture I have set forth what I believe to be the distinctive ideas of Old Testament religion. These are different from the ideas of any other religion whatsoever. In particular they are quite distinct from the ideas of the Greek thinkers. The aim of Hebrew religion was *Da'ath Elohim* (the Knowledge of God); the aim of Greek thought was *Gnothi seauton* (Know thyself). Between these two there is a great gulf

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 47.

⁷ *Interpretation*, I (1947), p. 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

fixed. We do not see that either admits of any compromise. They are fundamentally different in a priori assumption, in method of approach, and in final conclusion. . . . The New Testament has been interpreted according to Plato and Aristotle, and the distinctive Old Testament ideas have been left out of account. . . . The "righteousness" of Aristotle has been substituted for the "righteousness" of the Old Testament.¹⁰

We have already noted Professor Wright's similar complaint against the dominance of Greek influence over modern thinking. Another quotation from his previously mentioned article will make this still more clear. He says:

Now what impresses me most about the Bible is the utter difference between its solution of the problems of existence and that of all other religions and philosophies of which I am aware. . . . Most thinking people today, however, hold a position much more similar to the idealism of Greek philosophy than it is to Biblical faith.¹¹

Dr. Snaith selects as the distinctive ideas of the Old Testament the holiness of God, the covenant-love of God, the election-love of God and the spirit of God, and devotes a chapter to the discussion of each.

The main feature in Dr. Snaith's treatment of these ideas is his careful and painstaking study of the exact meanings of the words used in the Old Testament to express these ideas. While a knowledge of Hebrew is an advantage in getting the most out of this book, it is not at all a prerequisite to its study. Any serious student will find the hours spent in reading the book both profitable and pleasurable. While dealing with profound truths, Dr. Snaith has the happy — and altogether too rare — faculty of making theology interesting and even fascinating.

One of the more important points which Dr. Snaith emphasizes is that

¹⁰ Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946, p. 9.

¹¹ *Journal of Bible and Religion*, XIV (1946), p. 192.

the Hebrews always thought of virtues in terms of concrete activity rather than abstract passivity. God's acts reveal His character, and His character can only be known by observing His activity.

It is interesting to see the emphasis given by a Methodist writer to the ideas of covenant and election. Dr. Snaith does not confess any obligation to the continental crisis theologians, but perhaps a wholesome, mildly corrective influence has come to him from those quarters. His theological point of view is definitely theocentric. Perhaps a closing quotation from this book will illustrate that fact and also furnish a summary of the book's main thesis.

The Hebrew system starts with God. The only true wisdom is Knowledge of God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The corollary is that man can never know himself, what he is and what is his relation to the world, unless first he learn of God and be submissive to God's sovereign will. The Greek system, on the contrary, starts from the knowledge of man, and seeks to rise to an understanding of the ways and Nature of God through the knowledge of what is called "man's higher nature." According to the Bible, man has no higher nature except he be born of the Spirit.¹²

My own reaction to Dr. Snaith's book is well expressed in a review of it by the editor of *Interpretation*. He says:

It is in a real sense an Old Testament Theology, one of the best, if not the most exhaustive, in the English language. It is more than that; it is a passionate appeal for a return to the Old Testament, not for illustrations or for prooftexts supporting a doctrine or a sermon, but for a thought pattern for Christian theology.¹³

Speaking of Old Testament theologies, this might be a good place to mention Snaith's own statement about the current dearth in that field. He says: "It is significant that for the last standard work in English on Old

¹² Snaith, *op. cit.*, pp. 237, 238.

¹³ *Interpretation*, I, p. 87.

Testament theology we have to go back to A. B. Davidson's *The Theology of the Old Testament* which is dated 1901.¹⁴ Books on the origin and development of the Hebrew religion have taken the place of works on Old Testament theology.

Less satisfying to me than Dr. Snaith's book was the one by Professor H. H. Rowley, entitled *The Re-Discovery of the Old Testament*. But his volume contains some helpful emphases, to which we shall now call attention.

The most obvious thing that should be said, of course, is that we are grateful to the author for his attempt to underscore the importance of the Old Testament for the Christian church. There has been in recent years a very decided neglect of the older scriptures. But here, again, we can see a change. The author says regarding the modern attitude of ignoring the Old Testament: "Against this we are now witnessing a healthy reaction, and the rise of a new sense of the meaning and worth of the Old Testament."¹⁵

Dr. Rowley calls attention to the fact — sometimes forgotten — that the Old Testament was the Bible of Jesus and the early Christians. The New Testament was not intended to replace it, but to supplement it. "Many things did not need to be said in the New Testament, just because they were already so magnificently said in the Old."¹⁶ Writing in a similar vein he says: "The New Testament moves in the world of ideas that is found in the Old."¹⁷

One of the better chapters of the book is on "The Meaning of History." Here the author emphasizes the fact that the historical books of the Old

Testament were classified among the prophets because to the Hebrews history had religious meaning. They conceived of history as God in action, working out His principles of government. Dr. Rowley also has a good chapter on "The Significance of Prophecy." Not so satisfactory is his treatment of "The Growth of Monotheism." He is not prepared to accept Albright's belief in a Mosaic monotheism, although he allows for a practical henotheism.

The last chapters of the book contain more striking statements of truth than the earlier ones. In his discussion of "The Meaning of Worship" Dr. Rowley says: "It scarcely needs to be said that all who refuse to allow any sacrificial significance to the Cross part company with the New Testament, as well as cut adrift from the Old."¹⁸ He also declares that the sacrificial system of the Old Testament "fitly prepares for the New Testament conception of the Work of Christ."¹⁹ This is certainly not thorough-going liberalism.

One of the values of the book is that it furnishes a corrective to an over-emphasis on the historical method in Old Testament study. The author makes this wise observation: "For any true understanding of prophecy we must have a clear historical sense. Yet beyond that we must have spiritual penetration."²⁰

Another English book published here by Westminster Press this last year is *Christianity According to St. John*, by W. F. Howard. Dr. Howard is an outstanding authority in the Johannine field, having published sixteen years ago a scholarly work entitled, *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation*. It is interesting to note that in his new book he has concerned himself entirely with

¹⁴ Snaith, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

¹⁵ H. H. Rowley, *The Re-Discovery of the Old Testament*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946, p. 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

the theology of the Johannine literature. It is at least another straw blowing in the same direction.

Like Dr. Snaith, his fellow-Methodist, Professor Howard is opposed to the modern habit of finding the roots of New Testament theology in Greek philosophy, which has been done especially in the field of the Johannine writings. Most of the books on the Fourth Gospel written in the past generation have played on one string, and one only: John's Gospel is the Hellenistic Gospel, saturated with Greek thought.

It is a refreshing change, to say the least, to find a distinguished scholar emphasizing the Jewish background of the Gospel of John. After his extensive and intensive study of the subject Professor Howard writes: "The more closely the Johannine writings are studied the more clearly does the Jewish character of both language and thought stand out."²¹

Again he says: "The Fourth Evangelist was a Jew in training and tradition. . . . The clue to the Johannine conceptions is to be sought in Jewish sources rather than in foreign cults and philosophies."²²

There are so many good things in this book—including a careful study of significant Greek terms—that one hardly knows where to begin or leave off. Perhaps we had better confine ourselves to the quotation of one particularly fine statement. "Truth is not a correct conception of God to be apprehended by the intellect so much as a revelation of reality to be received in a personal relationship."²³ That is the kind of emphasis that theology must have if it is to be vital and living.

It is over fifty years since George B. Stevens of Yale published his definitive work on *Johannine Theology* in

1894. The book has served nobly as a text for countless classes in that subject. But for almost a generation that course has been disappearing from the curriculum until it has become a rare antique. It is certainly not without significance that there has again appeared an able exposition of the teachings of one whom D. A. Hayes styled "the greatest theologian and the most profound philosopher of the early Christian church."²⁴

While we are thinking of the Gospel of John we might mention another study of it which also appeared in 1946. If one desires a very readable popular presentation of the liberal view of the Fourth Gospel, he will find it in *The Spiritual Gospel*, by W. A. Smart.²⁵ The author builds on the usual thesis of the Greek background of the Gospel and holds that we do not have here the actual words of Jesus. Rather we have "the claims of a religious genius for his Lord."²⁶ However, he thinks that we should accept the Johannine picture of Jesus. The book is definitely less objectionable than most books on John's Gospel which have appeared in recent years.

In passing we might mention briefly another English book published by Westminster Press, *Jesus the Messiah*, by William Manson. This has been highly recommended in reviews, but we found it somewhat disappointing. Two outstanding statements appear in the preface:

The real background of the mind of Jesus, to judge from the tradition, was not Jewish apocalyptic or ethnic gnosis, but the prophetic religion of the Old Testament. . . . By a renewed placing of the Synoptic tradition against the background of the Old Testament religion I have come to a deepened sense of its historical and revelational value.²⁷

²⁴ D. A. Hayes, *John and His Writings*, New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1917, p. 68.

²⁵ New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1946.

²⁶ p. 134.

²⁷ William Manson, *Jesus the Messiah*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946, p. 9.

²¹ W. F. Howard, *Christianity According to St. John*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946, pp. 29, 30.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 185, 186.

The subtitle of the book reads: "The Synoptic tradition of the revelation of God in Christ: with special reference to Form-criticism." Dr. Manson has made a real contribution in pointing out the limitations of this popular new method for the study of the Gospels and presenting careful evidence against the validity of some of the assumptions of its adherents. As a mild, yet scholarly, corrective of radical criticism it may be destined to play an important part in the changing scene. We can only hope that it may.

Far more satisfying to our appetite was a book carrying the superscription "An Essay in Biblical Theology" and entitled *The Resurrection of Christ*, by Professor Michael Ramsey of the University of Durham, England.

In this book Dr. Ramsey has made a careful investigation of the critical problems involved in a belief in the resurrection of Jesus. He pays high tribute to Bishop Westcott.

Westcott's teaching represents the historic faith of the church as presented in a spirit of scholarly orthodoxy in the latter decades of the last century. . . . Westcott's teaching may yet be found to outlive the theories which the succeeding half-century has produced.²⁸

After examining briefly the theories of Strauss, Keim, Streeter and Kirsopp Lake, Professor Ramsey asserts his own belief in the bodily resurrection of Christ. "The Gospel in the New Testament involves the freedom of the living God and an act of new creation which includes the bodily no less than the spiritual life of man."²⁹

We come now to two books written by American scholars and published by the Westminster Press in 1946. The title of the first one is an illustration and confirmation of the title of

this article. Millar Burrows, Professor of Biblical theology at Yale Divinity School has called his latest and most important book *An Outline of Biblical Theology*. The author very modestly in his preface emphasizes the fact that he is only attempting to give a bare *outline* of the great subject of Biblical theology. But it would seem to this reviewer that he has covered the field very comprehensively, although obviously the task could not be accomplished with complete thoroughness in one volume.

In the introduction Professor Burrows has indicated clearly the need for a revival of the study of Biblical theology. He writes:

In recent times there has been a marked decline in biblical preaching. . . . New subjects have crowded into the theological curriculum and pushed the Bible into a corner. . . . The modern critical study of the Bible has unquestionably caused confusion and the loss of a sense of divine authority, thus diminishing the confidence with which a preacher could use the Bible. The result . . . has been a perceptible thinning out of the content of preaching. Listening for the word of God, the people too often hear only a man's opinions. . . . What Christian preaching needs above all, however, is not biblical adornment but the structure and substance of the Scriptures. Our major concern here is with the essential nature and basic features, the real fundamentals, of biblical religion.³⁰

In his chapter on "Authority and Revelation" Professor Burrows makes some very fine statements regarding inspiration and Biblical authority. He writes: "Christianity, like Judaism before it, has always held that its faith is based on divine revelation, and the authentic record and deposit of that revelation has been seen in the Bible."³¹

Again, in seeking to understand the importance of Biblical history, Dr.

²⁸ A. Michael Ramsey: *The Resurrection of Christ*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946, p. 48.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

³⁰ Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946, pp. 2, 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Burrows writes:

The conviction that God is revealed in history, and especially in the history of his chosen people, explains why there is so much history in the Bible. It is told, not for the sake of the record itself, but for the revelation of God's judgments in the events narrated.³²

But Old Testament history has one final and certain goal. "The special revelation of God in the history of Israel reaches its culmination in the incarnation of God in Christ. . . . All the saving truth of Scripture is summed up in the person of Jesus."³³

To try to review briefly a book of this scope would be utterly impossible. We shall have to be content with one or two general observations. In the first place, the traditionally orthodox conservative who seeks here a confirmation of his views will be definitely disappointed. Professor Burrows does not represent that point of view. But, secondly, we should like to say that the serious student of the Bible will find here a comprehensive, panoramic view of the great teachings of the Scriptures which will help him to achieve a far better perspective for the study of God's Word. Viewed in any way, this text in Biblical theology is a contribution of major importance. It is also a significant indication of the present-day trend which we have labelled "The Revival of Biblical Theology."

One of the interesting features of the book is the inclusion of hundreds of footnotes referring to Biblical passages. In fact, very few other references are made. The author is interested primarily in stimulating an intelligent study of the Bible itself.

The other book by an American scholar is *Eyes of Faith*, by Paul Minear, now professor of New Testament Interpretation at Andover New-

ton Theological School. It is a work on theological epistemology, seeking to answer the vital question of how we may know God.

Dr. Otto Piper speaks very highly of this book in a review of it in the current issue of *Interpretation*. He says:

The treatment of the subject is not only learned and profound but also full of religious vitality. Its historical significance cannot easily be over-rated. In the field of biblical theology this is the first creative reaction America produces to the theological renaissance of the Continent. The many new approaches to biblical theology and theological epistemology which the European theologians have ventured in recent years are here integrated in one consistent view. Because he is so familiar with the American philosophy of religion, Dr. Minear is able powerfully to oppose it with his biblical outlook.³⁴

The great indebtedness of Professor Minear to the crisis theologians of the continent is obvious to even the casual observer. The first three chapter headings alone give that fact away: "God Visits Man," "God Chooses Man," "God Says, 'Choose'." Then, if one glances at the footnotes he meets frequently with familiar names, especially those of Brunner and Kierkegaard. It is interesting to note that the author refers a number of times to *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* by Snaith, to which we have already drawn attention.

Eyes of Faith is not exactly easy reading. What book on epistemology is? But the one who will put his plowshare in deep and then apply plenty of mental power will find his work rewarded. I can only offer my personal experience for whatever it is worth. The first hour or two that I spent with the book was a thrilling time. I found myself gripped over and over again as the author grappled with vital problems of man's relation to God.

Dr. Minear states as the object of

³² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 40.

³⁴ *Interpretation*, I (1946), p. 83.

this book "that of coming to terms with the Biblical perspective." He indicates the true nature of his work when he says: "Our desire is not to construct a Biblical theology, but to provide a preface for such theology."³⁵

III.

We spoke at the beginning of three trends evident in current religious literature. We have devoted most of our attention to the first of these, the revival of interest in Biblical theology. Now we wish to note briefly the other two.

In the hands of German critics the analytical method was worked vigorously—we might say viciously—until the Bible became a scattered heap of minute fragments. The contrasts between the Old and New Testaments were played up to the exclusion of all sense of unity in the Bible. In the New Testament a half dozen or more religions were found. This was the emphasis of Parson's *The Religions of the New Testament* (1939) and E. F. Scott's *Varieties of New Testament Religion* (1943).

But now a reaction has set in. This is how A. M. Hunter of Oxford, England, expresses it in his excellent little book, *The Message of the New Testament*, published by the Westminster Press in 1944.

These words are a parable of what is happening in the world of New Testament scholarship today. Anyone conversant with the most recent work on the New Testament must have sensed in it a change of approach, a change of direction. The scholars are leaving "the circumference and the corners." They are "bent on the centre" There is a growing recognition of the essential unity of the New Testament and of the need for synthesis.³⁶

"Since the dawn of criticism," he

³⁵ Paul Minear, *Eyes of Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), pp. 1, 2.

³⁶ A. M. Hunter, *The Message of the New Testament*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944, p. 9.

writes, "the approach has been largely analytical."³⁷ Here is the way he describes it:

It is on such differences that analytical criticism concentrates; it reveals contrasts, divergencies, inconsistencies; it distinguishes the various christologies, soteriologies, eschatologies in the New Testament and labels them Synoptic, Pauline, Petrine, Johannine, and so on.³⁸

But things have been changing in very recent times. "The Liberals are now fighting a defensive battle."³⁹ Scholars are finding a new point of view. "The older approach was analytical; the newer approach will be synthetic. The older approach revealed variety, the newer approach will disclose unity amid that variety."⁴⁰

This splendid little book by A. M. Hunter is literally packed with quotable material. The purpose of the book is indicated by its three main divisions: One Lord, One Church, One Salvation. It reminds a person of Floyd Filson's excellent study, *One Lord, One Faith* (1943).

The unity of the Old and New Testaments is also being stressed today. G. Ernest Wright has recently written:

Here, then, is the essential meaning of the Bible, as I see it, according to its own claims. It is upon such a rough outline that a Biblical theology must be erected—not merely a genetic theology of the Old Testament, nor one of the New in isolation, but a *Biblical* theology.⁴¹

One is constrained to express the hope that Professor Wright will some day find time to produce just such a work on Biblical theology.

The outstanding Old Testament theology in German in our day was written by an eminent Swiss theologian, Walther Eichrodt. Of this work

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴¹ *Journal of Bible and Religion*, XIV (1946), p. 92.

W. F. Albright says: "The author's three-volume *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig, 1935-39) represents a strong reaction against the excesses of historicism in favor of a unitary conception of Israelite life and thinking."⁴²

The new emphasis on unity is applied to the study of the Gospels by R. V. G. Tasker in his 1944 book, *The Nature and Purpose of the Gospels*. One remark which he makes in the Preface will be of interest as indicating again one of the main sources responsible for the change in approach to the Bible. He says: "It will be evident that I have been in no small degree influenced by the crisis school of Evangelical theologians."⁴³

Another book by Tasker seeks to exhibit this basic unity in a wider field. Just published by the Westminster Press on March 27, 1947, it carries the title, *The Old Testament in the New Testament*. The author suggests that it is a sequel to his earlier work on the Gospels. In this study Dr. Tasker, who is Professor of New Testament Exegesis in the University of London, examines the quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament in the various sections of the New Testament.

After paying his respects to Karl Barth and Kierkegaard in the preface, Dr. Tasker goes on in his introduction to comment on the new trend we have been noting. He says: "Perhaps the most important feature of recent New Testament scholarship has been the stress which it has laid upon the essential unity of the Bible, and of Biblical theology."⁴⁴

In common with many British scholars, Dr. Tasker is more conservative

and constructive in his theological point of view than in his treatment of Biblical criticism. But he has made a real contribution in this book toward the re-emphasis on the unity of the Bible.

Very briefly we glance at the third trend, the reaction against the evolutionary explanation of everything in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. In the June, 1946, issue of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*⁴⁵ there appeared a review of Dr. Fosdick's volume, *A Guide to the Understanding of the Bible* (1938). It was written by Walther Eichrodt, the Swiss theologian already mentioned, and was hindered by the war from reaching this country earlier. In it are some significant statements relating to our study. Eichrodt writes of Fosdick: "He bases his approach to the ethical and spiritual values of the Bible almost wholly on an evolutionary historicism; . . . reflecting the prevailing intellectual atmosphere of the past generation in biblical scholarship."⁴⁶

Then the reviewer makes this very striking statement:

At the same time one cannot but be aware that Fosdick's book reflects a period of biblical scholarship which is now drawing to an end, while a new period is dawning. In his book the author has, to speak candidly, written the obituary of a whole scholarly approach and method of investigation.⁴⁷

Eichrodt points out the fact that Fosdick's chief difficulty was his slavery to the evolutionary explanation of history. He says:

Thus Fosdick adopts a fundamental error of modern scholarly research in making the evolution of the religion of Israel begin with the most primitive ideas and practices in order to point a contrast between the alleged low level of early Israel and the high level evident in later books of the

⁴² *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXV, p. 413.

⁴³ R. V. G. Tasker, *The Nature and Purpose of the Gospels*, New York: Harper, 1944, p. x.

⁴⁴ R. V. G. Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947, p. 13.

⁴⁵ Reprinted by permission in *The Asbury Seminary*, Vol. I, No. IV (December, 1946), pp. 129ff.

⁴⁶ *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXV (1946), p. 205.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Old Testament.⁴⁸

Pursuing the criticism a bit further he shows the arbitrariness of this method.

The author fails entirely to mention such fundamental matters as the wrath and the stern severity of God, which formed so large a part of the prophetic message, presumably because they do not seem to fit well into the rising evolutionary curve from primitive polytheism toward the concept of the God of love.⁴⁹

Lest it should appear that our terminal facilities are seriously out of order we must bring this study to a close. The evidence for a revival of

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

Biblical theology could be continued almost indefinitely. But we should like to conclude with a few words from the closing paragraph of Hunter's fine work on *The Message of the New Testament*. He writes:

These are great days for theology. The Queen of the Sciences is once again coming into her own. Men are beginning to see that a Christianity without a theology is not Christianity at all; and they are turning back, some to Luther or Calvin, some to Thomas Aquinas. Some of us, with no disrespect for these great names, feel that the theology which the age needs should be built primarily on New Testament foundations. But, whatever be our views, all are realizing anew the importance of Biblical theology, and the paramount importance of the New Testament.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 122.