

**A THEOLOGY OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT**

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A THEOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

JOHN L. McKENZIE

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A Theology of the Old Testament

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To A.E.

Series Foreword

MARK TWAIN ONCE RUMINATED, “It ain’t the parts of the Bible I can’t understand that bother me; it’s the parts I do.” John L. McKenzie, commenting on the same subject from another perspective, wrote, “The simple see at once that the way of Jesus is very hard to do, but easy to understand. It takes real cleverness and sophisticated intelligence to find ways to evade and distort the clear meaning of what Jesus said.”

But McKenzie, like Twain, was himself a person of exceedingly high intelligence, distinctively witty, with a double-edged sword’s incisiveness. As the first Catholic elected President of the Society of Biblical Literature, President of the Catholic Biblical Association, fluent in ten languages, sole author of a 900,000-word Bible dictionary, of over a dozen books and hundreds of essays, John McKenzie attained worldwide recognition as the dean of Catholic biblical scholars.

But again like Twain, McKenzie possessed a cultivated reservoir of abiding empathy—cognitive and emotional—for ordinary people and what they endure, millennia-in and millennia-out. He insisted: “I am a human being before I am a theologian.” Unlike many who become entrenched in a hermetic, scholarly world of ever-multiplying abstractions, McKenzie never permitted his God-given faculty of empathy to atrophy. To the contrary, he refused to leave his fellow human beings out in the cold on the doorstep of some empathically-defective theological house of cards. This refusal made all the difference. It also often cost him the support, or engendered the hostility, of his ecclesiastical and academic associates and institutional superiors—as so often happens in scholarly, commercial and governmental endeavors, when unwanted truth that is the fruit of unauthorized empathy is factored into the equation.

Series Foreword

John McKenzie produced works of biblically “prophetic scholarship” unlike anything created in the twentieth century by any scholar of his stature. They validate, with fastidious erudition, what the “simple see at once” as the truth of Jesus—e.g., “No reader of the New Testament, simple or sophisticated, can retain any doubt of Jesus’ position toward violence directed to persons, individual or collective; he rejected it totally”—but which pastors and professors entrenched in ecclesiastical nationalism and/or organizational survivalism have chronically obscured or disparaged.

In literate societies, power-elites know that to preemptively or remedially justify the evil and cruelty they execute, their think-tanks must include theologians as part of their mercenary army of academics. These well-endowed, but empathically underdeveloped, theological hired guns then proselytize bishops, clergy, and Christians in general by gilding the illogical with coats of scholarly circumlocutions so thick that the opposite of what Jesus said appears to be Gospel truth. The intent of this learned legerdemain is the manufacturing of a faux consensus fidei to justify, in Jesus’ sacred name, everything necessary to protect and augment an odious—local, planetary and/or ecclesial—status quo.

John McKenzie is the antidote to such secular and ecclesial think-tank pseudo-evangelization. Truths Jesus taught—that the simple see at once and that Christian Churches and their leaders have long since abandoned, but must again come to see if they are to honestly proclaim and live the Gospel—are given superior scholarly exposition via McKenzie. This is what moved Dorothy Day to write in her diary on April 14, 1968, “Up at 5:00 and reading *The Power and the Wisdom*. I thank God for sending me men with such insights as Fr. McKenzie.”

For those familiar with McKenzie this re-publication of his writings offers an opportunity to encounter again a consistent scholarly-empathic frame of consciousness about Genesis through Revelation, whose major *crux interpretum* is the Servant of Yahweh (Isaiah 42). Ultimately embodied in the person of Jesus, the Servant is the revealer of Abba almighty—who is “on our side,” if our means each person and all humanity. For all Christians, John L. McKenzie’s prophetic scholarship offers a wellspring of Jesus-sourced truth about the life they have been

Series Foreword

chosen to live, the world in which they live, and the Christ in whom they
“live and move and have their being.”

(Rev.) Emmanuel Charles McCarthy

September 2008

Brockton, Massachusetts

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PREFACE

For Old Testament scholars, the theology of the Old Testament and the history of Israel are the two works which offer them the best chance to summarize their entire work. My project does not have the proportions of the works of Walther Eichrodt and Gerhard von Rad, but neither does any other modern Old Testament theology have those proportions. I make no attempt to work on that scale.

Nevertheless, I did attack the work with some eagerness; I did not yet know of a hidden obstacle. Old Testament theology, as the reader can learn more fully in the Introduction, has no set and accepted structure and style. I knew this. I have some experience in producing books, and I confess that the outline of a book, with one other exception, has never been a problem. To be candid, I have generally worked without one, hoping that the material would develop itself, so to speak. Perhaps the results show this, but one develops one's own style. This proved impossible for Old Testament theology. Before I could write the first section, I had to commit myself effectively to the content of every other section. This has some reference to the works which I mention in the Epilogue. Once the work was planned and partly written, no substantial revision was possible. I could not think of revision; I could only think of throwing it away and starting over again. My fellow authors know as well as I that this must sometimes be done, but they also know that it is only done out of desperation.

Those who have written Old Testament theologies have gone each his own way. I found that once one chooses his own way, one must go it at the peril of falling into the way of another. Hans-Joachim Kraus wrote that it is unnecessary for any one to read all the German biblical theologies, as he did. He is quite right, although I was surprised to learn how many of them, beginning with G. F. Oehler, I have read,

most of them with some care and close attention. One must read most of them; but it is a very peculiar form of study the major fruit of which is to know what you are not going to do.

Shortly after I had planned what I was going to do, I happened to read an article by James Barr which I can no longer retrace, in which he said that biblical theology is now out of date; I quote substantially, not verbatim. Such observations do not sit well when they touch a large project which one has just signed a contract to do. I believe that Professor Barr has somewhat altered his stance, since he has produced some opinions on how biblical theology should be done. I am sorry that I was unable to use what he has written, for reasons just given. What the article gave me, of course, was a firm determination to show that Barr is out of date. It has affected my treatment, and that to such an extent that I realize I must offer Professor Barr my amazed thanks.

I must now proceed to the agreeable task of acknowledging the assistance rendered by those—unlike Professor Barr—who knew what they were doing. Mr. John J. Delaney rescued the book from near oblivion and has seen it through the press. His work has been marked by great patience and tolerance, as well as by an almost blind faith in the author; it has been a pleasure to deal with him. Dr. Mary Jo Weaver, as a graduate student at Notre Dame, rendered invaluable editorial assistance for the majority of the work, as well as other aids according to the needs she perceived; possibly I am still unaware of some of them. Miss Anita Weisbrod (since June 1971, Mrs. James M. Robinson) furnished assistance and encouragement in many thoughtful ways for this and for some other literary endeavors. Mrs. Rachel Gibbons typed all the manuscript, which was done in Chicago; to acknowledge this is not to mention the deep and devoted friendship of which I have been the beneficiary. I am grateful to Dan Herr of the Thomas More Association for the kind of advice and counsel which he swears he never gives. I experienced a couple of encounters with infirmity during the writing of this book, which set me back in my work. These were made tolerable by the kindly attention and assistance of more people than I can mention. In addition to those named

above, I cannot omit the Reverend Thomas Munson; Louisa and Joseph Cahill; Robert Fox; Joel Wells; Ann and John Coyne; Virginia and John Burkhart. Of such services is the fabric of life woven, and we too often forget it. I present this book to my colleagues with apprehension, but to my friends with deep gratitude.

John L. McKenzie

Chicago
De Paul University

**A THEOLOGY OF
THE OLD TESTAMENT**

SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANEP	ed. James B. Pritchard, <i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures</i> , Princeton, 1954.
ANES	ed. James B. Pritchard, <i>The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament</i> , Princeton, 1969.
ANET	ed. James B. Pritchard, <i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> , Princeton, 1955.
BeitrWissAT	<i>Beiträge zur Wissenschaft des Alten Testaments</i>
BeihZATWiss	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
CathBiblQuart	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
D	The Deuteronomist source of the Pentateuch
E	The Elohist source of the Pentateuch
HAT	<i>Handbuch zum Alten Testament</i>
J	The Jahwist source of the Pentateuch
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
Kittel ThW	ed. Gerhard Kittel, <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
P	The priestly source of the Pentateuch
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
ThSt	<i>Theological Studies</i>
ZATWiss	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
+	and
=	parallel passage

INTRODUCTION

PRINCIPLES, METHODS, AND STRUCTURE

Biblical theology is the only discipline or subdiscipline in the field of theology that lacks generally accepted principles, methods, and structure. There is not even a generally accepted definition of its purpose and scope. The writer is compelled at the very beginning of his task to a choice between some structure already created and to the accompanying duty of meeting the criticisms leveled against the structure, or to the creation of a new structure and the accompanying risk of new criticism.

Biblical theology as a distinct discipline is generally recognized as first appearing in a monograph of J. P. Gabler.¹ Gabler insisted that biblical theology should neither follow the structure and method of dogmatic theology nor receive predetermined conclusions from dogmatic theology. The problem of method and structure will be better seen if we begin, with Gabler, with some idea of dogmatic or systematic theology. Under either name, theology of this kind is an effort to reduce the doctrines of Christianity or of some particular Christian church to a system. Historically no system has been constructed except by the use of the categories of some philosophical system chosen by the theologian for this purpose. In the development of systematic theology the philosophy can in the course of time become altered by the influence of other systems or simply by deterioration; when this has happened, the systematic structure of the philosophy has been loosened. The diversity of philosophical systems, apart from development and deterioration, means that different systems have been devised. More than once the

¹ *De iusto discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae*, 1787.

union between the philosophical system and the doctrine has been so close that the system itself approaches the sacredness of the doctrine, and its language becomes the only orthodox language in which to express doctrine.

It is important to recognize that systematic philosophy in the sense of a comprehensive system began with the Summas of the scholastic theologians of the Middle Ages. Augustine, the most prolific theological writer of the patristic period, never wrote a systematic theology. He did employ the categories of philosophy to set forth doctrine. But he never dealt with any more than particular questions, which could be conceived rather broadly. By the twelfth century theology had become the study of the sacred page (the Bible) without being biblical theology; the professor taught "questions," the study of particular problems, many of which had no reference to the biblical text and were solved by philosophical discussion. The study of particular questions did not demand rigorous consistency in the whole view of theology; there was simply no whole view. When a system was created like the system of Thomas Aquinas, certain basic general principles emerged which were applied to each particular question; the entire system was brought to bear in the solution of each particular problem.

It is not entirely true to say that systematic theology was unhistorical; it is true that it was not historical in the modern critical sense. The systematic theologian was at pains to show that his theological conclusion was in harmony with the traditional belief and teaching of the Church. Systematic theologians made some effort, usually with inadequate tools, to ascertain what traditional doctrines were. With primitive methods they often succeeded in showing that their conclusions had always been taught in the Church, where critical methods now show that manifestly they were not. The systematic theologies of the classical period of theology were weak in the theory of development and haunted by the principle that the entire system of doctrine was found in the Scriptures, if one could interpret them properly.

The progress of theology in the churches has in fact been advanced by the study of particular questions, in modern

times by principles and methods not very closely related to the established systems. It is recognized by theologians that a slavish adherence to the principles and methods of the established systems means that many questions are rendered immediately insoluble. It means also that one denies any advance in philosophical methods since the systems were created. Most modern theologians think it is unlikely that a synthesis like the synthesis of Thomas Aquinas could now be devised, and they do not work towards such a synthesis. They are committed to the study of particular questions. Their work is systematic only in the sense that they employ philosophical methods and discourse to present theological conclusions; their method is more like the method of Augustine than it is like the method of Aquinas.

Biblical theology, which has appeared in modern times as a branch or subheading of systematic theology, has not yet been able to break out of the patterns of the older and larger discipline. Roman Catholic theologians have long distinguished between dogmatic or systematic theology and positive theology. By positive theology they mean the study of the written sources of doctrine: the Scriptures; the decrees of the Popes, bishops, and councils; and the writings of the Fathers of the Church. These studies are carried on within the framework of systematic theology; and the purpose of such biblical theology was to produce and criticize "proof-texts" employed within areas of systematic theological discussion. In this method neither the Scriptures nor particular books are studied as a whole for themselves; the entire direction is governed by the theses of systematic theology. Most of the Bible is irrelevant to systematic theology. The distinction between systematic and positive theology is hardly used by Protestant theologians, but Protestant theology has long been familiar with the collection of proof-texts. Older biblical theologies, both Catholic and Protestant, were produced in which the material was arranged according to the divisions or treatises of systematic theology.² Even when these theologies were not mere collections of proof-texts, the systematic arrangement

² Franciscus Ceuppens, O.P., *Theologia Biblica*, 5 v. (2nd ed., Turin, 1953).

was followed because no other arrangement of theological thinking was conceivable.

The nineteenth century saw the rise of the historical and literary criticism which has dominated biblical studies up to the present time. Within the same period systematic theology lost esteem, largely because of the failure of systematic theologians to use or even to accept historical and critical methods. Theology, traditionally a disciplined expression of religious belief, was regarded as too closely attached to belief ever to achieve the objectivity of historical scholarship. Biblical theologies were not written during most of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because biblical scholars seriously doubted whether the theological method would permit historical and critical scholarship. Instead biblical scholars produced histories of Israelite religion. It was felt that theological method, which had always dealt with eternal verities, would not allow a true presentation of the development of Israelite religion.

Yet it was not noticed that the same reason could be urged against the writing of a Catholic or Protestant theology. Theological Summas have always taken the date of their composition as the high point of theological and credal development. They incorporated a scheme of doctrine which was not known or accepted before they were composed. The apostles would not have understood the Summas of the Middle Ages. The systematic theologians seemed serenely indifferent to development. Walther Eichrodt made an important point when he observed that unless there are certain constant elements in the history of a religion, no theology is possible; and theology can deal only with these constant elements, for they give the religion an identity which can be recognized.³ It does not follow from this that Eichrodt's "cross section" is the best method to employ in studying the theology of the Old Testament. The problem of any theology, Old Testament or Christian, is that the Summa presents a scheme of doctrine which was never known to more than a few of the believers of that religion. I wish to make the point that no theology has ever

³ *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, v. 1 (8th ed., Stuttgart, 1968), xi ff.

found a way to deal with the problem of development of doctrine; the problem is not peculiar to the theology of the Old Testament.

The rehabilitation of biblical theology and the renewal of interest in the discipline date from the publication of the first volume of Walther Eichrodt's *Theologie des Alten Testaments* in 1933. Eichrodt affirmed that a theology should not be a history of religion but a systematic exposition of doctrine. It should not, however, follow the categories of systematic theology but should find its own categories based on its own material. Eichrodt chose the covenant of Israel with Yahweh as the central and determining theme of the Old Testament and arranged his material according to its relation to covenant. The work has become a standard classic; it is the best compendium of biblical doctrine, whatever one means by the term, which has been produced. Yet its readers in the last twenty to thirty years have generally agreed that it does not succeed in its effort to create a covenant-centered theology. The beliefs of the Old Testament are simply not that consistent; and if a synthesis cannot be constructed around the word "covenant," one wonders what central theme distinctive of the Old Testament could be found. The covenant synthesis, in the last analysis, is impossible without some artificiality.

Eichrodt also affirmed that Old Testament theology is meaningless in Christian theology unless the relation of Old Testament to New Testament be shown positively. Here we touch again upon an ancient problem which has never been satisfactorily resolved. From the New Testament to the Middle Ages, the relevance of the Old Testament was found either in predictions or in its typology-allegory. Typology and allegory ultimately issue in a hidden meaning revealed only through the New Testament and the Church. Neither prediction nor typology-allegory can be accepted by modern criticism. From the Middle Ages on, the probative value of the Old Testament was the area of interest; as we have seen, this fails to treat the Old Testament as meaningful literature. There is still much uncertainty in modern interpretation concerning the relevance of the Old Testament. Many readers of

Rudolf Bultmann think that he leans to the opinion of Marcion that the Old Testament does not contribute to the understanding of Christianity. The problem must be discussed in its proper place at the conclusion of this work. At this point, it is sufficient to notice that the proper function of the interpreter seems to be rather to interpret the Old Testament than to proclaim its value. If he can succeed in making its meaning clear, he will not have to show its relevance for Christian theology.

A response to Eichrodt was produced on the same scale by Gerhard von Rad.⁴ Von Rad did not attempt to synthesize the material either in systematic or in his own categories. For him it is a question rather of diverse theologies within the Old Testament than of a single theology; and the structure of the book follows in the main the sequence of the books of the Old Testament. Yet the work is not a history of religion, but a studied effort to write a theology of development. Even here the prophets must be set apart entirely from the narratives, the poems, and wisdom. The major criticism leveled against Von Rad is his extremely casual attitude towards the history behind the Old Testament books, and Eichrodt has asked how a theology without a historical basis can be a genuine theology.⁵ Von Rad's position, however, is worth recalling: theology is a study of the beliefs of people, not of their history; and the theological interpretation of their history is independent of the "facts" of their history.⁶

Other Old Testament theologies which have appeared over the same period since 1933 have been studies of particular questions, with no attempt to synthesize either in systematic categories or in any others.⁷ These works have their own value as aids to the interpretation and exposition of the Old

⁴ *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, v. 2 (Munich, 1957 and 1960).

⁵ *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, v. 2 (5th ed., Stuttgart, 1964), vii-ix.

⁶ *Old Testament Theology*, v. 1 (New York, 1962), 106-12.

⁷ Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament* (New York, 1958); Ludwig Köhler, *Old Testament Theology* (Philadelphia, 1958); Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford, 1966).

Testament; and we are permitted to ask whether the idea of "systematic" as applied to the Old Testament has the same meaning as it has when we speak of "systematic theology." I do not imply that one must return to the history of religion. Theology is, by etymology, "God-talk." If one collects all the God-talk there is in the Old Testament, a fairly clear personal reality emerges which is not entirely consistent with itself. Once it emerges, no one could ever confuse it with any other personal reality. Yet, as we have indicated, all the collected God-talk coalesces into a totality which seems to represent the belief of no single Israelite who ever lived. When the biblical theologian puts this God-talk together (let us avoid the word "synthesis" for the moment), he does it by some principle which he deduces from sources other than the Old Testament. When he seeks to reconcile the inconsistencies mentioned, he does so because he experiences the totality which the Israelites did not experience. They therefore felt no need to reconcile the inconsistencies. Nor should one forget the capacity of prephilosophical man to accumulate inconsistencies with no attempt to arrange them. This can be seen clearly in Israelite law; and Henri Frankfort pointed out the ability of the Egyptians to think in parallel and sometimes contradictory lines in their mythology.⁸ The same capacity certainly appears in the compilers of the Old Testament books. The principles of synthesis deduced from sources other than the Bible are the principles of logical discourse in which modern man is trained. The biblical literature is not logical discourse; and the task of biblical theology may be simply to translate it into logical discourse.

The task of Old Testament theology may become easier and be more successfully accomplished if we remember that it is precisely the theology of the Old Testament, not the exegesis of the Old Testament, not the history of the religion of Israel, not the theology of the entire Bible, which is the object of the study. The religion of Israel included many factors which are not found in the Old Testament; some are unknown, others are poorly known. For the historian of Israelite

⁸ H. Frankfort et al., *Before Philosophy* (Baltimore, 1949).

religion, the temple and cult of Bethel are extremely important, and he is hampered in his task because so little is known of them. To the theologian of the Old Testament the temple and cult of Bethel are important only because of what Amos and Hosea said about them. To their contemporaries Amos and Hosea were not very important.

The interest of the theologian of the Old Testament is not in the religious experience either of Israel as a whole or of the individual Israelites. Any such "experience" is a phenomenon of a particular time and place; as such, it is the object of history, not of theology. The interest of the theologian of the Old Testament is directed to the documents of the Old Testament. It is directed, as we have said, to the totality of the utterances, not to the single items. Presumably something emerges from the totality which does not emerge from any single utterance. If this can be articulated, it is a theological statement concerning the Old Testament which no Old Testament writer ever made or could make. If it is true, something is added to the sum of human knowledge. And since the Old Testament theologian is writing for himself and the other students of the Old Testament, he must articulate this in logical discourse, the language which is used in academic discussion. He is not writing for the ancient Israelites and should not use their language nor their thought patterns. What emerges from the totality might be expressed in a poem, a song, a play, a novel; unless the theologian has the literary skill required for the production of these forms, he had better abstain from them; and such a work would not be a theology, which is rational discourse by definition.

We return, then, to our original definition of systematic theology as the expression of belief in the categories and the language of a theological system. No learned man can pretend to write a learned work which would not reflect his philosophy; if he did not have a philosophy, he would not be a learned man. Modern philosophers seem generally agreed that there is no philosophy which is totally true or totally false. It is less important that the writer has a better philosophy, assuming that the word "better" can be used meaningfully, than that he know the virtues and the limitations of the

philosophy which he has, that his philosophy would not become a substitute for thought rather than a tool. Much has been said about the imposition of the categories of Greek philosophy upon the Bible, and the consequent distortion of the Bible.⁹ This criticism is valid for many works. Yet modern man can hardly open his mouth in rational discourse except in Greek categories; it is important not to avoid them—which is impossible—but to recognize them, to know that what he is saying is not exactly what the Bible says. He is, as I have said, articulating that perception which comes from the totality of the Bible. The articulation is not Bible; it can be true to the Bible, or biblical theology is impossible. As a biblical historian I am a nearly uncritical disciple of Collingwood; I try to rethink the thoughts of the past.¹⁰ As a biblical theologian I try not to rethink the thoughts of the past, but seek new insights which arise from the totality of the thoughts of the past. Let me add that these new insights are impossible unless one has rethought the thoughts of the past; to put it simply, one must read the Bible before one writes its theology.

This epistemological excursion seemed necessary before we could define the task of biblical theology, and even more demanded before we could define its principles. The question of synthesis and system remains. I have asked, but not yet answered, whether we can use the word "systematic" of biblical theology in the same meaning in which it is used of systematic theology. The most ambitious venture in this area, the work of Eichrodt, has been successful in spite of the partial failing of the system as such. Von Rad's theology is not systematic in the sense I have already described, the sense in which certain basic principles are applied to each particular question so that the entire system is brought to bear on any particular problem. This type of system seems impossible in Old Testament theology, and we must anticipate a theolog-

⁹ Thorlief Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek* (London, 1960); James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London, 1961).

¹⁰ R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York, 1956), 210-28.

ical statement to explain why. Basic principles emerge in a rational system, which is a thing. What emerges in the Old Testament is not a rational system but a basic personal reality, Yahweh, who is consistent as a person is, not as a rational system. No particular problem is solved without reference to Yahweh, who is not a rational principle.

One seems, then, to be forced into the approach of particular topics; and in these treatments there is order and arrangement, but no system or structure. The topics are usually selected according to the personal studies and interest of the writers; this is not in itself deplorable, but it manifests that biblical theology is an unstructured discipline. Yet there are other factors at work which deserve mention. Up to this time it has been difficult for a Catholic to write a theology of the Old Testament without an explicit section on messianism. A small essay of my own was criticized even in the editorial stage because this topic was not presented with sufficient emphasis. I have been convinced for years that messianism is a Christian interest and a Christian theme; that it is a Christian response to the Old Testament and should be treated as such; that in a theology of the Old Testament, as I have described it thus far, messianism would appear neither in the chapter headings nor in the index. It is not only not a dominant theme, but in the proper sense of the word it is doubtfully a theme of the Old Testament at all. This theme is imposed upon the theologian by theological factors foreign to his area of study. He should be free to make his own selection and to make his own errors of judgment. Yet such a work deserves a title like "Essays in the Theology of the Old Testament," or "Towards a Theology of the Old Testament," or "Prolegomena to a Theology of the Old Testament."

We have already noticed the obvious fact that the principles, methods, and style of theology change, and usually change later than they ought. The change comes because the world and the Church are asking questions which theology is not answering or not even hearing. To illustrate: I have been a fairly convinced pacifist for twenty years. This conviction began with the teaching of the prophets. I do not remember any theology of the Old Testament which dealt with the

problems of war and peace. They shall certainly be treated in this work; the purpose is not to promote pacifism, but simply to discern whether in that totality which we have mentioned there emerges some insight into this problem. Those who do not accept my insight are forced either to say that their insight is contradictory or that the Old Testament does not touch the problem at all. Such problems are not simply a question of relevance, but of meeting the development of theology. If this development is not to be met, there is no need for producing an additional theology, now or ever. Those we have are fully adequate. But since it is a biblical belief that whenever man encounters man, God is present as a witness and a party to the encounter, Old Testament theology must deal with such problems as war and peace, poverty, the urban problems, industrial and technological society, and such—not directly, of course, but by stating clearly what principles may emerge from the totality of the utterances. Theology keeps reforming its principles and its contents from the course of the human adventure. This is what gives the theologian the new questions. It is also one of the things, and perhaps the most important, which distinguishes theology from the history of religion.

If any structure emerges from the totality of the God-talk of the Old Testament, it ought to arise from the emphases of the Old Testament. These emphases, which have long been recognized, are simply those themes which occur most frequently and which appear to be decisive in giving Old Testament belief its distinctive identity. The theologian can hardly divert much from his predecessors in his titles of chapters and subdivision. Nor can he avoid personal value judgments in the weight which he assigns to various topics and themes; if he were to present the themes with perfect objectivity, as if they were coins of the same denomination, he would not be faithful to his material. The order in which they are presented is not determined by the Old Testament, but by his own judgment of the most logical and coherent arrangement of material which was never arranged by those who wrote his sources. There is no reason in the Old Testament why biblical theology should begin with creation; in our own

theology creation is the belief which is presupposed by all other beliefs. Biblical theology of the Old Testament, we have said, is written for modern readers who are probably religious believers, not for the scribes of Israel and Judaism who produced the source material of biblical theology. Their categories of thought must be of some importance for the arrangement of the material. But in whatever categories the material is arranged, the theologian is not going to escape a topical treatment; his problem is to rise above the merely topical treatment, the disconnected *quaestiones*.

The problem of synthesis is situated in the analysis of experience; the biblical theologian does not have a unique problem. The historian of the battle of Gettysburg is unable to reconstruct the experience of those who were present; strictly, none of those present experienced the totality of the battle. The historian must assemble a large number of individual testimonies. The structure of the presentation will be generally chronological and topographical, for the historian cannot present an intelligible narrative if he attempts to chronicle the events minute by minute. The account will be as confusing as the battle was. He knows, however, better than the participants, better even than the generals, that a pattern was emerging. He must show it even though the commanders did not see it. The pattern led with inevitable logic to Pickett's charge, which becomes not only the climactic action, but the one action of the three-days' conflict which was total. The confusion ends on the third day when the two armies finally confront each other with their entire strength. This analysis of an experience is closer, I believe, to the task of the biblical theologian, than the analysis of a philosophical complex of ideas. I do not mean that the theology of the Old Testament ends with such a satisfying catharsis as Pickett's charge; it does not, and the theologian of the Old Testament cannot, as long as he limits himself to his material, show that the inner logic of the experience of Israel leads inevitably to the Christ-event. But he is engaged in the analysis of an experience prolonged in space and time. He believes that the experience, prolonged and complex as it is, has a unity which permits him to treat it as one. What is the principle of unity?

It can only be the discovery of Yahweh, the God of Israel. I said "discovery," although "recognition" might serve as well. Let us return to the totality of which we have spoken. The discovery of Yahweh was something like the discovery of America; it took several centuries before Israel really began to understand what it had discovered. Yet Yahweh is a single reality. The biblical theologian has to be historian as much as philosopher, perhaps even more so, because the discovery of Yahweh occurs in a series of events like Gettysburg or the discovery of America. It was not the speculative evolution of an idea, not as the Old Testament presents it.

It may appear at this point that the theology is relapsing into the history of Israelite religion; but I have already referred to the pattern which can be discerned even in such nonphilosophical events as the battle of Gettysburg. It is the pattern which gives the battle intelligibility; and the general who anticipates the pattern, as Lee habitually did before Gettysburg, defeats his opponent. Israel's response to Yahweh was habitually a response based on imperfect knowledge at best, on misunderstanding and nonrecognition at worst; and I am speaking of the Old Testament books, not of the superstitious Israelites whom Amos encountered at Bethel. Amos does not recapitulate the supreme insight of the Old Testament into the reality of Yahweh; from some points of view he understood the reality of Yahweh quite dimly. The task of synthesis is to show that Amos has his place in the collective experience with others whose insight is not the same. The totality of the experience makes Amos intelligible—not completely, but better than if he is treated as an isolated and eccentric phenomenon with no ancestor and no descendant. But our interest is not to make Amos intelligible; it is to make Yahweh not intelligible, but recognizable. Amos is in the pattern; he is not the pattern. He is perhaps the clearest exponent of Yahweh as the Righteous Judge. This is the title of Yahweh; as a total expression of the reality of Yahweh, it is not much better than Prime and Unmoved Mover.

The biblical theologian can scarcely avoid value judgments in his arrangement. Like the military historian, he should be

able to distinguish the accessory and the inconclusive from the central and decisive. Not all parts of the Old Testament contribute equally to the total experience. Reviewers of Eichrodt noticed that he had difficulty including wisdom in his synthesis. Yet wisdom is more central in the Old Testament than one could judge from a covenant-centered theology. Wisdom simply has no reference to the covenant; it is older than the covenant, it is so basic to human experience that it has as many nonbiblical contacts as biblical. But it is an important part of Old Testament God-talk and includes themes which are scarcely touched in other books. Some of these themes are permanent in theological discussion and literature. The theologian ought to know that such value judgments are dangerous. But neither he nor his readers can escape their own history. It is difficult to imagine any theological question asked in this generation on which the book of Chronicles is likely to shed any light. But the theologian can write only in his generation.

To what extent are the synthesis and the value judgment determined by the Christian faith of the theologian? We have seen that the question of the relation of Old and New Testaments has been a matter of deep concern to the most important recent Old Testament theologians. I do not think that it is the concern of the Christian Old Testament theologian to explain or to justify the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament; this is the task of the New Testament theologian, for the problems arise in the New Testament. Still less is it the concern of the Old Testament theologian to explain the use of the Old Testament in the postapostolic church. He may deplore its use if he wishes, and he may feel compelled to dissociate himself from certain startling Christian misunderstandings of the Old Testament. As a Christian pedagogue, he may feel it his duty to dispel those misunderstandings which he thinks are serious enough in the contemporary world to deserve notice. But it is the conviction of this writer, reached after some years of discussion, dispute, and vacillation, and not entirely in agreement with some of his previous statements, that the Old Testament theologian will do well if he states the theology of the Old Testament

clearly and accurately. Quite simply, I have not found the Old Testament so alien to the Christian faith which I profess that the relations of the two are a serious problem. The one whom Jesus called his father is the Yahweh of the Old Testament. It is here that the totality of the experience becomes vital; for the father is not the Yahweh of any single book or writer of the Old Testament. The task of Old Testament theology for the Christian could be conceived simply as the total description of that being whom Jesus called his father. The Christian Old Testament theologian ought to do at least this; perhaps it is all he can do. This, it will be observed, leaves almost no room for prediction, foreshadowing, allegory, or typology; and these techniques will not be employed in this work.

The Christian faith of the interpreter, however, will be a factor in determining the questions he asks. We have noticed that the biblical theologian and his readers live in a determined period of history and a determined type of culture. The Christian believes that Christianity is a fulfillment of the Old Testament, whatever he means by fulfillment. He reads the Old Testament as a Christian, not as an Israelite. Theology seeks an understanding of faith; it is the Christian faith, not the Israelite faith, which he seeks to understand. The scholar cannot prevent his faith from giving form to the questions he asks: what he can prevent is allowing his faith, instead of the Old Testament, to determine the answers to the questions of the Old Testament theology. We have adverted to the totality of the utterances, and to the insight which ought to emerge from the totality above and beyond what the texts themselves communicate. This insight is the insight of a Christian; but the Christian scholar must avoid reading things into the text. His proper skill is exegesis, interpretation.

This writer has said elsewhere that Jesus is the Messiah of Judaism, and that he can be understood only as the Messiah of Judaism. I stand by this observation; but I do not believe that it obliges me to find faith in Jesus Messiah in the Old Testament, nor to base faith in Jesus Messiah in the Old Testament. Jesus transformed the idea of Messiah when he

fulfilled it. The total reality of Jesus Messiah is found nowhere in the Old Testament, not even in its totality. Jesus could have emerged from nothing except Israel and the Old Testament; but the study of the Old Testament does not demand that Jesus Messiah emerge from it.

The task of Old Testament theology can now be summarized as the analysis of an experience through the study of the written records of that experience. The experience is a collective experience which covers roughly a thousand years of history and literature. The experience is one because of the historical continuity of the group which had the experience and because of the identity of the divine being which the group retained as the object of its faith throughout the experience. The analysis must be done in certain categories and not merely by a chronological recital. We seek always the totality of the utterances and the insight which can be gained by assembling them. The theology of the Old Testament has to be a study of the reality of Yahweh. The Old Testament is the sole literary witness to that reality as the record of the experience of Israel, the sole historical witness.

THE ISRAELITE EXPERIENCE OF YAHWEH

The Old Testament is a collection of the literary remains of a people of the ancient Near East known generally, but not entirely accurately, as Israel, the ancient name also of the land in which this people lived. The reservation on the name of Israel is due simply to the historical ambiguity of the relations of the people of Israel with the people of Judah, who carried on the religion and the literary and historical traditions of Israel after a people which bore that name had ceased to exist. The solution of this historical problem is not the task of the theology of the Old Testament. The collection of the books does not disclose that Israel and Judah had different ideas and beliefs about their God Yahweh. The literary records were assembled and preserved primarily because they are the records of the experience of this people with Yahweh. This motivation is not valid for all the portions of the books; some of them appear to be nonreligious writing included because of their relevance to the religious experience of Israel.

It is obvious that the record of a religious experience, especially an experience which covers a period so long and so remote and which occurs in a culture so different, presents problems of its own. The theologian of the Old Testament must assume certain literary critical conclusions as valid presuppositions, as far as these conclusions are generally accepted. Theology has nothing to do with establishing or refuting literary critical conclusions. If the critical work is not well done, some of his theological conclusions may suffer erosion. The theologian must also accept a certain amount of historical conclusions. What people think happened is theologically as important as what did happen. It is extremely

doubtful that we have a record of the origins of Israel and its religion which is in all details accurate; and the Israelite reconstruction of the account of origins reflects the faith of the time of the reconstruction more clearly than it reflects the events of Israel's origins. But the reconstruction is basic in the theology of the Old Testament, and the theologian is less concerned with the historical task of recovering a more accurate explanation of Israel's origins. It is not unique to Israel that a people should have a legendary account of its origins which is more an utterance of the unity established since its origins than it is an explanation of the origins. The problem of the relation of theology to history is not solved by this brief comment, and it will return in subsequent pages. The faith of the Old Testament reposes on the acts of Yahweh in history; this is a principle which is indisputable. The Old Testament also betrays some ignorance of much of Israel's early history; this is also indisputable. The two terms of the paradox are not reconciled by asserting that Israel believed a number of things about the acts of Yahweh which are not true. The assertion is valid and it is valid for any religion which can be studied; this does not mean that the religion has no theology or that the theology is no more than a tissue of erroneous ideas about the deity. Israel's insight into the reality of Yahweh is not to be measured by its historical knowledge, even the knowledge of its own past.

If we inquire in what ways Israel, according to its literary records, experienced Yahweh, certain categories suggest themselves; and these categories will furnish the structure of the theological analysis which we undertake here. With some brief remarks, we set them forth as a preliminary outline.

I place cult first as the normal and most frequent manner in which the Israelite experienced Yahweh. The importance of cult need not be measured exactly according to the space which is given it in the Old Testament, but the space given it is abundant. That the cult is a ritual encounter with the deity is a universal human belief; we do not have to validate it for Israel, but simply to see what the peculiarly Israelite understanding and practice of cult may have been. In the Old Testament we are almost always dealing with the religion and