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# An Historical Survey of Old Testament Theology Since 1922

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(Concluded)

## *The Netherlands*

The sole contribution of the Netherlands to modern Old Testament theology is the *Hoofdpijnen der Theologie van het Oude Testament* of Th. C. Vriezen, professor of Old Testament at the University of Groningen.<sup>109</sup> Opposing both the "mummifying process" of absolutizing the Old Testament as God's Word and the opposite fault of making it only man's word, Vriezen calls for a "theological Biblical criticism," and wishes in his book to bridge the gap between scientific Old Testament study and its use for practical, religious purposes.<sup>110</sup> As is indicated by the title, *Hoofdpijnen*, he restricts his discussions to matters of major importance and omits what he considers items of purely historical interest. His presentation is systematic, resembling that of Sellin or Koehler.<sup>111</sup> Eissfeldt characterizes the book as a useful manual of Old Testament ideas and as abreast of the very latest modern research.<sup>112</sup> A new, enlarged edition appeared in 1955, and translations into German and French are planned.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Th. C. Vriezen, *Hoofdpijnen der Theologie van het Oude Testament* (Wageningen: H. Veeman & Zonen, 1949). For the following discussion the writer was dependent on the review of this work by Otto Eissfeldt, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, LXVIII (1956), 221—222, and on the account of it in Otto Eissfeldt, "Zur Neubesinnung auf die Biblische Theologie," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, LXII (1949 to 1950), 312—313.

<sup>110</sup> Eissfeldt, "Zur Neubesinnung auf die Biblische Theologie," pp. 312 f.

<sup>111</sup> The six chief parts are: "(1) Der Charakter der AT Religion als Gemeinschaft des heiligen Gottes mit dem Menschen; (2) Gott; (3) Der Mensch; (4) Der Verkehr von Gott und Mensch; (5) Der Verkehr von Mensch und Mensch; (6) Gott, Mensch, und Welt in Gegenwart und Zukunft." (Ibid., p. 313)

<sup>112</sup> Eissfeldt, "Review," p. 221.

<sup>113</sup> H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1956), p. 13.

*France*

The only Protestant Old Testament theology in the French language is that of Edmond Jacob, which appeared in 1955.<sup>114</sup> Jacob's work is a systematic treatment reminiscent of that of Sellin or Koehler and is prefaced with a defense of this mode of presentation. It is Jacob's contention that already within the Old Testament there are theologians: the Yahvist, the Chronicler, the writer of Deutero-Isaiah. Therefore integration of the Old Testament into a systematic framework is not necessarily doing violence to its content (p. 10). The Old Testament is one book and presents one religion; all its strands are summed up in Christ (p. 11). It is impossible to oppose the history of Israel's religion to Old Testament theology. Both are historical and descriptive disciplines, one showing the variety of the history and the other its unity (p. 24). Despite his words about the centrality of Christ, then, Jacob considers Old Testament theology as a very limited historical discipline which does not deal with the question of validity.<sup>115</sup>

Jacob's method is to rearrange the materials of a history of religion into a systematic scheme. He purposely confines himself to a treatment of God and His relation to the world and to man, leaving out Old Testament piety and ethics (p. 26). The main aspect of the Old Testament view of God, he asserts, is that He is a living God. The two great themes are the presence of this living God and the action of God.<sup>116</sup> With this central idea Jacob is able to give what is perhaps a better account of the anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament than other writers (pp. 30 ff.). The ample bibliographies which Jacob lists reveal his thorough acquaintance with the literature in the field and increase the value of the book.

Jacob's work resembles that of Koehler (whom he quotes often and approvingly) in method and spirit. Criticism of it, then, would

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<sup>114</sup> *Théologie de l'Ancien Testament*. An English translation has appeared since this article was prepared, under the title *Theology of the Old Testament*, translated by Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (New York: Harper and Brothers, c. 1958).

<sup>115</sup> ". . . le present ouvrage . . . n'a nullement la pretention d'être un 'compendium' des valeurs permanents ou chrétiennes de l'Ancien Testament." (Page 26)

<sup>116</sup> "Dire de Dieu que c'était un dieu vivant, c'était la réaction élémentaire et primordiale de l'homme devant l'expérience de la puissance. . . ." (Page 29)

follow that directed against Koehler.<sup>117</sup> The disadvantages of a systematic treatment become especially apparent in Jacob's treatment of the notion of revelation through history. He develops this idea at some length (pp. 149—163), but his scheme of systematization prevents him from carrying through this principle in the rest of the book. When analyzed, the scheme of organization around the presence and action of God turns out to be another way of stating the old division theology, anthropology, soteriology.<sup>118</sup>

*Old Testament Theology in the Roman Catholic Church*

The theology of the Old Testament, like Biblical theology in general, had been treated very little by Roman Catholic scholars.<sup>119</sup> The state of affairs after World War I, however, produced a reaction in the Roman Church parallel to that in the Protestant churches.<sup>120</sup> In 1943 Pope Pius XII issued the encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu*, in which he encouraged Biblical studies, asking that primary attention be given not to historical, archaeological, and philological matters, but to the theological content of the various books. The admonition of the Pope to scholars that they should "confirm the Christian doctrine by sentences from the Sacred Books and illustrate it by outstanding examples from sacred history"<sup>121</sup> has been heeded by three Roman Catholic scholars who have produced full-scale Old Testament theologies.

The *Theologia Biblica* of F. Ceuppens, a Latin work covering the entire Bible in four volumes, is not a Biblical theology in the ordinary sense of the term but rather an attempt at establishing

<sup>117</sup> *Supra*, p. 586.

<sup>118</sup> Part One of Jacob's book, "Les aspects caractéristiques du Dieu de l'Ancien Testament," is theology proper; Part Two, "L'Action du Dieu de l'Ancien Testament," includes the nature and destiny of man (anthropology), and Part Three, "Contestation et triomphe final de l'action de Dieu," covers what is usually covered under Soteriology.

<sup>119</sup> P. van Imschoot, *Théologie de l'Ancien Testament* (Tournai, Belgium: Desclée, 1954), I, vii.

<sup>120</sup> "The trends in Roman Catholic theology, like those which we are to see in Protestant and Orthodox theology, obviously reflected an awareness of the perilous state of the world and especially of Western civilization as revealed by the wars and revolutions of the day." (Latourette, p. 1362)

<sup>121</sup> Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu*, printed in translation in *Theology of the Old Testament*, by Paul Heinisch, translated from the German by William Heidt (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, c. 1955), pp. 431—455.

the doctrines of the church from the Scripture.<sup>122</sup> Following quite literally the instructions of the pope, the author sets himself the task of "aiding the professor of dogmatic theology in establishing the scriptural basis of his theses," and in doing so follows the order of the *Summa Theologia* of St. Thomas Aquinas.<sup>123</sup>

The theology of Paul Heinisch, first published in 1940 as part of the *Bonner Bibel*,<sup>124</sup> bears a much closer resemblance to Protestant works of the modern period. Encouraged by the papal encyclical on Bible studies, the author aims to present "the legitimate religion of Israel" (p. 3) as that which is fundamental and permanent, in contrast to the transitional portions of Old Testament belief (p. 5). A history of Israel's religion, on the other hand, presents what actually was believed and practiced. These data, and data from comparison with other religions, are also a part, though subsidiary, of an Old Testament theology (p. 5).

Heinisch's book is organized on a rather rigidly systematic plan, and this, together with the fact that at times dogmatic considerations control his views, constitutes the weaknesses of the book. The three traditional divisions theology, anthropology, and soteriology recur, and the titles of some of the sections are "Proofs for God's Existence," "God's Transcendent Perfection," "God, the First Mover," and "Immortality of the Soul." Without being as explicitly Thomistic as Ceuppens, Heinisch seems nevertheless to be much influenced by Thomistic categories and Greek thought forms in general. He quotes the Book of Wisdom often, and this can lead him to a distortion of Old Testament thought, as in the following section on the proof for God's existence: "When with evident reference to the meaning of the name Yahweh the author of the Book of Wisdom censured those 'who through the means of visible things are unable to know him who is (*ton onta*), or through meditating upon the work fail to recognize the workman,' he was contrasting the 'One who is' with all created things."<sup>125</sup>

<sup>122</sup> F. Ceuppens, *Theologia Biblica* (Rome: Marietti, 1938), 4 vols. The writer was dependent for information about this book on the review by Stanislas Lyonnet, *Biblica*, XXXVII (1956), 490—494.

<sup>123</sup> Lyonnet, p. 490.

<sup>124</sup> Heinisch, p. vi.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. the description of God as an *ens a se* and the proof of this from the Tetragrammaton. (Page 44)

The argument here seems strongly Greek rather than Hebrew. Despite the author's acceptance of the necessity and validity of historical study of the Bible, he at times ignores its results without specifically challenging them, and his own conclusions, whatever their validity, are weakened by what appears to be question begging.<sup>126</sup> The criticisms applied to the systematic treatments of Sellin and Koehler<sup>127</sup> apply with special force to the work of Heinisch.

The third Roman Catholic author to undertake a theology of the Old Testament is P. van Imschoot, who issued the first volume of a projected two-volume work in 1954.<sup>128</sup> In general his work, though also inspired by the encyclical of Pius XII (pp. viii, ix), is less consciously Roman Catholic than those of Heinisch and Ceuppens. It bears a stronger resemblance to the objective works of Koehler and Sellin.<sup>129</sup> Van Imschoot is more conscious of the development of Israel's religion than Heinisch and declares that the Old Testament religion was intended for a "hardhearted" people and thus has not only gaps but imperfections and temporary concessions to a churlish people (pp. 2 f.). Although he declares his intention of organizing the Old Testament doctrines according to their function in the New (p. 4) and adopts the familiar three-fold division of traditional Christian dogmatics (p. 5), he nevertheless insists on the necessity of taking account of the historical context and the steps of revelation, lest one falsify the thought of the writer (pp. 3 f.). Admitting that the Old Testament is often more interested in a religion of the heart than in a theology, Van Imschoot nevertheless defends theological treatment of its ideas by arguing that particularly in the prophetic books one finds certain "categorical affirmations" about God and His metaphysical

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<sup>126</sup> For instance, in the section on the holiness of God (p. 70) he ignores what the history of religion would say about the incident of Uzzah touching the ark; the fact that God appeared to the patriarchs in various places is a proof of His universal character; the creation account and the Cain and Abel story are proofs that God was considered as good and loving from earliest times. (Pages 77, 92)

<sup>127</sup> *Supra*, pp. 584—586.

<sup>128</sup> Van Imschoot, p. viii. The first volume contains *Theology Proper*; the second will contain *Anthropology* and *Soteriology*.

<sup>129</sup> Van Imschoot acknowledges his great indebtedness to the works of those German scholars. (Page 5)

attributes and morals. These can be extracted and permit a systematic treatment.<sup>130</sup> (Page 4)

### OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY IN ENGLAND

In general it may be said that the same factors which operated to encourage the resurgence of Biblical theology of the Old Testament in Europe produced the modern discussion of the subject in Britain. After World War I and in even greater measure after World War II, English theologians began to question the humanistic faith of the liberals, forced by economic calamity and political chaos to concede that history is no continuous upward evolution.<sup>131</sup> But although the interest in theology and the discussion of Biblical scholarship were vigorous in Britain, neither the Scots nor the English moved so far from 19th-century patterns as had some on the Continent.<sup>132</sup> The reason for this typically British moderation may have been the fact that Britain experienced neither so severe a defeat as did Germany in the First World War nor an anti-Christian and anti-Semitic movement such as Nazism. The theological debate which had risen from an existential concern on the Continent was carried on in Britain simply as a result "of the dust it was raising in Germany."<sup>133</sup> Some of the force of Barth's impact was lessened by the fact that the Congregationalist theologian P. T. Forsyth had to some extent anticipated Barth and made him unnecessary for British theologians.<sup>134</sup> Thus discussion of Old Testament theology in Britain was neither as lively nor as productive as that on the Continent.

Though not full-scale theologies of the Old Testament in scope or purpose, the works of W. J. Phythian-Adams may be considered to have begun British discussion of Old Testament theology. They

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<sup>130</sup> Mention should be made of the outstandingly complete bibliographies and footnote references to pertinent literature. These increase the value of the book for the student. As an indication of the spreading popularity of theological study of the Old Testament in Europe, one may note the work of the Italian scholar G. Berini, who in 1953 published *Le Preghiere penitenziali del Salterio*, and of the Spaniard, F. Asensio, who has contributed a study of the doctrine of election *Yahveh y su Pueblo* (1953). (Rowley, p. 13)

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Herbert F. Hahn, p. 238.

<sup>132</sup> Kenneth S. Latourette, pp. 1387—1388.

<sup>133</sup> Emil G. Kraeling, p. 178.

<sup>134</sup> Latourette, p. 1388.

are particularly important because they stress the idea of revelation through history, which was to become very important for other British theologians. In three small books,<sup>135</sup> Phythian-Adams aimed both to show the historicity of much of early Israelite tradition and to show the history of Israel as one in which "is revealed uniquely the existence of a Divine Purpose, working in and through the Chosen People towards a consummation determined before all the ages."<sup>136</sup>

Another work demonstrates a concern for something more than a mere historical and comparative study of Old Testament religion, but is of limited scope and was not intended as an Old Testament theology.<sup>137</sup>

One of the most important contributions to Old Testament theology in Britain was made by H. Wheeler Robinson, who discussed the nature of the discipline<sup>138</sup> and had nearly completed the prolegomena to a theology at the time of his death.<sup>139</sup> In the earlier essay he emphasized the strong sense of corporate personality among the Hebrews. This, he said, made history for them the supreme revelation of God (p. 304). "If such a people were to know God, it would be through the concrete experience of living rather than by any intellectualistic construction" (p. 303). Robinson opposed such terms as "monotheism," "omnipotence," and the like, as suggesting modern and intellectualistic thought patterns (p. 308). In his longer work on revelation in the Old Testament, he further develops the idea of a revelation through history. God makes known His divine will which is to be performed in the particular concrete situation and also threatens or promises divine activity

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<sup>135</sup> W. J. Phythian-Adams, *The Call of Israel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934). *The Fulness of Israel* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938). *The People and the Presence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942).

<sup>136</sup> Smart, p. 132. See n. 5, above.

<sup>137</sup> Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Epworth Press, 1944). The ideas discussed are the holiness of God, the righteousness of God, salvation, the covenant love of God, the election love of God, and the spirit of God, plus an account of how these ideas are resumed in the New Testament.

<sup>138</sup> "The Theology of the Old Testament," in *Record and Revelation*, ed. H. Wheeler Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), pp. 303—348.

<sup>139</sup> *Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946).



to be realized in the concrete situation.<sup>140</sup> It is significant that despite this emphasis on history Robinson would not have written his theology along a historical outline but in a systematic fashion comparable to that of Koehler.<sup>141</sup>

C. H. Dodd's tiny work *The Bible Today* (Cambridge: University Press, c. 1946) is important, not as an Old Testament theology but for its re-emphasis on the importance of history and for its suggestion as to how this idea could help solve the problem of the validity of the Old Testament for modern life. Observing that both Nazism and Marxism are based on an interpretation of history and that the Western democracies have nothing similar (pp. 122—124), Dodd turns to the idea of revelation through history as basic to the Old Testament. "We have learned from the prophets how the Word of God makes history when it comes to a man as the meaning of the facts of his experience and through his response gives a new direction to events" (p. 57). This experience of the Old Testament prophets is paralleled by the New Testament encounter with the risen Christ, and the apostolic witness is similar to the prophetic Word in providing an interpretation of historical events (pp. 103 f.). And now the church repeats in its services words and actions which recall God's acts and make them contemporary. Believers are confronted with redemptive history culminating in Christ and lay themselves open to God's Word of judgment and renewal there spoken (pp. 158—162). Thus Dodd outlines an approach which could be used in discussing the validity of the ideas presented in an Old Testament theology.

The nearest thing to an English theology of the Old Testament is Rowley's lecture series on Old Testament topics.<sup>142</sup> Though admittedly incomplete, this work is nevertheless a fairly comprehensive survey of Old Testament ideas (p. 9). Here again is found the typically British emphasis on history as a medium of revelation, but with important qualifications. Rowley holds that

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<sup>140</sup> Robinson, *Inspiration and Revelation*, p. 106. Cf. Norman Porteous, "Old Testament Theology," in *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), pp. 333—337.

<sup>141</sup> Robinson, "The Theology of the Old Testament," pp. 321—348.

<sup>142</sup> H. H. Rowley, *The Faith of Israel: Aspects of Old Testament Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1956).

history alone is not the most important medium of revelation but that other factors enter in (p. 20). Rowley insists very strongly on maintaining objectivity and not yielding to allegory in interpretation (p. 14). Nevertheless he is concerned with trying to show the permanent worth of the ideas he discusses. The argument used to establish the validity of Old Testament ideas is that if we leave out divination, the Old Testament media of revelation (history, human personality, and nature) are still valid (p. 47). Rowley does not demonstrate just how this insight in any way establishes the validity of the *content* of the revelation. In the body of the work Rowley's method is critical and historical. He does not choose one central idea but in general follows the outline: God, man, and salvation (p. 20). A certain overemphasis on the prophets can be detected in the work.<sup>143</sup>

In addition to the above-mentioned works, Norman Porteous and Christopher North<sup>144</sup> have contributed brief discussions of the nature of Old Testament theology. It is evident that thus far British contributions to this field have not been of the scope or significance of the works of continental theologians. However, the British emphasis on revelation through history has helped to make clear the nature of revelation in the Old Testament and has suggested a way of relating this revelation to the modern situation.<sup>145</sup>

#### OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY IN AMERICA

America has made very little contribution to the field of Old Testament theology either in the older or in the modern period. As James Smart observed almost caustically: ". . . so far as America is concerned, it would hardly be true to speak of the death and rebirth of Old Testament theology, since there is reasonable doubt whether the subject has ever been properly alive in these regions."<sup>146</sup> In contrast to the depletion of Europe's resources by

<sup>143</sup> Rowley is able to dismiss an idea by saying, "But these do not stand in the prophetic teaching" (Page 63)

<sup>144</sup> Porteous, pp. 315—345. C. R. North, "Old Testament Theology and the History of Hebrew Religion," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, II (1949), 113—126.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Hahn, p. 244.

<sup>146</sup> Smart, p. 2.

the great wars, 20th-century America has experienced phenomenal population growth and increase in wealth.<sup>147</sup> Thus, though there have arisen American offshoots of neo-orthodoxy and similar movements, the reaction to liberal thought has not been so profound as that experienced in Europe.<sup>148</sup>

The first attempt at a comprehensive treatment of Old Testament theology<sup>149</sup> was intended as a manual for preachers making available "the resources of the Bible as modern scholarship has enabled us to appreciate them" (p. 3). It covers both the Old and the New Testament. Burrows proposes as a criterion for the normative character of the Biblical ideas "the authority of superior knowledge" (p. 8), or the *testimonium internum Spiritus Sancti* (p. 42). Burrows is conscious of the dangers of a systematic treatment<sup>150</sup> but states that his purposes demand such an outline. He hopes to overcome the disadvantages by giving a chronological account of the development. (Page 16)

Although Burrows' book is interesting both as the first American work in this field and as an original attempt to combine the theology of both Testaments, it suffers from several serious weaknesses. The first is Burrows' use of a rigidly evolutionary scheme of development of ideas, adopted from an older criticism which is quite thoroughly discredited today.<sup>151</sup> With this approach, and with the task of combining the Old and New Testaments in one medium-sized book, Burrows is led to slight the Old Testament, and the work suffers from superficiality, part of which may be excusable on the ground that it was intended as a textbook.<sup>152</sup>

A more thorough treatment of Old Testament theology is the

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<sup>147</sup> Latourette, p. 1410.

<sup>148</sup> Heick and Neve, II, 330—334.

<sup>149</sup> Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946).

<sup>150</sup> "The most regrettable consequence of such a treatment is the loss of the majestic, dramatic sweep of the divine revelation in history as presented in the Bible" (p. vii).

<sup>151</sup> Burrows adopts the principles found in Fosdick's *Guide to Understanding the Bible*. For a discussion of the inadequacies of these principles cf. Eichrodt's "Review," etc. See n. 38, above.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1. Cf. Kraeling, pp. 260 f., 276; cf. also Hahn, p. 247.

work by Otto J. Baab.<sup>153</sup> Feeling that the modern emphasis on critical analysis of the Bible has produced confusion and indifference toward it, Baab wishes to integrate Old Testament ideas and to show the meaning and abiding value that they possess (pp. 77 f.). The work of the historian of religion is "relatively meaningless for modern life" (p. 19). Theology of the Old Testament must go beyond history and attempt to show the validity of its ideas. Baab believes this can be done by demonstrating the genuineness of Israel's religious experience. (Pages 22, 251)

Baab's plan of organization is a systematic one, with slight variations from Koehler and Sellin.<sup>154</sup> He deliberately avoids being controlled by a New Testament point of view (p. 269). In a final chapter Baab returns to the task of establishing the permanent worth and normative character of Old Testament ideas. He tries to prove this from the unity of the Old Testament, its distinctive character over against its environment, and from applying the tests of philosophy, history, and psychology to Israel's religious experience of God, man, and creation. (Pages 259—268)

Baab's emphasis on the religious experience of Israel is the most original insight in his work — and its major weakness. In the end he is compelled to admit that the validity of Old Testament ideas cannot be argued in this way, and the book has received the most severe criticism just on this point.<sup>155</sup>

The most prolific American writer on the nature of Old Testament theology is G. Ernest Wright, who has developed his idea of the task of the discipline in a series of small studies published between 1946 and 1952.<sup>156</sup> Wright is opposed to a systematic

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<sup>153</sup> *Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, c. 1949). The first chapter of this book is mostly a reproduction of an earlier essay of his titled "Old Testament Theology: Its Possibility and Methodology," in *The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow*, ed. H. R. Willoughby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), pp. 401—418.

<sup>154</sup> Divisions are God, Man, Sin, Salvation, Kingdom of God, Death and the Hereafter, and Evil.

<sup>155</sup> "In the last analysis this faith is not arguable. Its identification as the central passion and driving force in Biblical religion and in subsequent Jewish-Christian history is sufficient argument" (ibid., p. 64). Cf. Porteous, p. 334. See n. 12, above.

<sup>156</sup> *The Challenge of Israel's Faith* (London: SCM Press, 1946); *The Old Testament Against Its Environment* (London: SCM Press, 1950); *God Who*

treatment of Old Testament ideas, since he feels that the rubrics of systematic theology are too abstract and universalized to fit the Biblical point of view. "I should say rather that we must first ascertain the central interest and methodology of the Biblical writers and define Biblical theology accordingly."<sup>157</sup>

Since the Bible, from Wright's point of view, is more the acts of God than the Word of God, he defines Biblical theology as "the confessional recital of the redemptive acts of God in a particular history, because history is the chief medium of revelation."<sup>158</sup> This credo is also the element which holds the two Testaments together, since the center of the New Testament and of Christian theology is not the words of Christ but God's act in Christ.<sup>159</sup> The faith of Israel was based from the beginning not on a numinous awareness of nature but on historical event, and the New Testament credo as distilled from the kerygma is identical with the Old Testament creed.<sup>160</sup> The chief task of Biblical theology is to expound the meanings and implications of the Biblical credo.<sup>161</sup>

Wright acknowledges his dependence on the works and ideas of Eichrodt, Dodd, and Von Rad.<sup>162</sup> Yet, though Wright's proposed approach has been anticipated, he has outlined this sort of method more fully than any other writer. He has not yet written a full-scale theology, but the outline for one proposed in *God Who Acts* (pp. 107—128) and the brief summary of Old Testament thought in *The Interpreter's Bible*<sup>163</sup> serve to indicate the direction he would take and the problems he would face. In his earliest work on the subject, Wright had spoken of "the central propositions of Israelite

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*Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (London: SCM Press, 1952); "The Faith of Israel," in *The Interpreter's Bible*, I (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, c. 1952), pp. 349—389.

<sup>157</sup> *God Who Acts*, p. 37.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12 f.

<sup>159</sup> "The Faith of Israel," p. 350; *God Who Acts*, p. 13.

<sup>160</sup> *Old Testament Against Its Environment*, p. 22; *God Who Acts*, pp. 66 to 76.

<sup>161</sup> "The Faith of Israel," p. 351.

<sup>162</sup> *Old Testament Against Its Environment*, p. 14; "The Faith of Israel," p. 387; *God Who Acts*, pp. 66—76; from Von Rad, Wright gets the phrase *Heilsgeschichtliches Credo*.

<sup>163</sup> "The Faith of Israel," pp. 349—389.

faith," and the outline of the brief book resembles the systematic treatment of Koehler or Sellin.<sup>164</sup> The language which he uses in opposing a systematic presentation would suggest that his approach had changed, but Wright's later works reveal almost the same outline, although he prefaces them with a discussion of the covenant and election *à la* Eichrodt.<sup>165</sup> In his latest work, "The Faith of Israel," Wright admits that "by its very nature theology involves an attempt to systematize and generalize by means of abstract language. . . . The task of the church demands that we must make the attempt to organize the central articles of the faith . . ." (p. 352). Wright's words and his outline would seem to suggest that while revelation through history and the acts of God remain as important emphases, he is unable to avoid a sort of systematization of Old Testament thought.<sup>166</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

If the first quarter of the 20th century witnessed the death of Old Testament theology, the years since 1922 have witnessed its rebirth and vigorous growth. The judgment of Herbert Hahn, who has surveyed the history of all sections of Old Testament study in this period, is that "theology has become the most important field of Old Testament scholarship."<sup>167</sup> The most important writing in the field has been done in Germany; the works of Eichrodt, Sellin, Koehler, and Proksch have become recognized as standard works on the subject.<sup>168</sup> France and the Netherlands have contributed several useful manuals of Old Testament theology, and the discipline has gained in popularity in the Roman Catholic Church. Britain and America have contributed less, but they have nevertheless been active in the discussion of the nature and methods of Biblical theology. The influence of this theological movement has extended to the works of men otherwise known mostly as critical scholars, so that Von Rad, Breit, and Noth all included

<sup>164</sup> *The Challenge of Israel's Faith*, pp. 3—5.

<sup>165</sup> *God Who Acts*, pp. 107—128; "The Faith of Israel," 349—389.

<sup>166</sup> A further difficulty which Wright experiences is finding a place for the literature unconnected with history, i. e., the Wisdom literature. Cf. Wright, *God Who Acts*, pp. 102—105. This same difficulty was felt by Von Rad.

<sup>167</sup> Hahn, p. 249.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. the appraisal of Gerhard von Rad, "Grundprobleme."

theological discussion, along with literary analyses, in recent studies.<sup>169</sup> Summing up the trend toward Old Testament theology, Gerhard von Rad wrote: "A great change has taken place in the field of Old Testament theology from about the middle of the twenties to the present. And we are still right in the midst of this movement, yes, perhaps only at its beginning."<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Hahn, p. 248.

<sup>170</sup> Von Rad, col. 225.

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