

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

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Editorial ✠

THE PARISH PASTOR AND OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

THIS ISSUE REPRESENTS a new venture for this journal. At the request of the Commission on Church Literature of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod a special 96-page issue devoted entirely to Old Testament studies was planned. The issue is beamed at parish pastors and Old Testament scholars. We hope that it will serve two purposes: (1) to make clear what much of the shouting is about in the field of Old Testament studies, and (2) to help the man who wishes to preach the Old Testament with greater effectiveness.

The lead article by Arlis Ehlen, Concordia Seminary graduate and Fulbright scholar now teaching at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, combines a summary of the history of the term *Heilsgeschichte* with a helpful description of its meaning and relevance to Old Testament studies. The article by Walter Rast, assistant professor in the department of theology at Valparaiso University, provides a valuable overview of the most important Roman Catholic studies in Old Testament interpretation, with special emphasis on Messianic prophecies. The critical reader will find in both articles much that is new and much that is good. He will not encounter much difficulty in deciding how much of the new is good and how much of the good is new.

Richard Jungkuntz, assistant professor of New Testament at Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ill., contributes a basic study of the relationship of the Old Testament to the New in his article on John 10:34-36. The exegetical history of this passage is well known to most readers of this journal. His treatment is a good lesson in exegetical methodology while at the same time it discloses significant depths in these words of our Lord, which previous interpretations had not always plumbed.

Alfred Sauer, professor of exegetical theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, addresses himself to the vexing question of the interpretation of Messianic prophecies. His threefold categorization suggests a helpful approach to a difficult question.

Norman C. Habel, also of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, where he is an assistant professor of exegetical theology, demonstrates in detail a method of prophetic interpretation which takes the words from Deuteronomy 18 and shows by careful textual work the meaning which these words had for their first hearers as well as the long shadow which they cast ahead of themselves. The careful historical analysis of the original force of these words puts the author into position to transfer God's meaning to the man of today, without robbing these words of their Messianic implications.

Walter R. Roehrs, former editor of this journal and professor of exegetical theology at the St. Louis seminary, shows the centrality of the covenant concept for his view of the Old Testament as well as the relationship between the covenant motif, so basic for the *Heilsgeschichte* approach, and the doctrine of justification through faith.

The editor writes a final article on preaching from the Old Testament in an attempt to synthesize many of the themes discussed in this issue and to show their relevance for the preacher's work.

The cooperation of the contributors was deeply appreciated by the editor. All men, deeply involved in their personal studies and activities, somehow found time to contribute original studies or completely reworked papers on schedule and in a style which in every case is a model of clarity of expression and reasoning. It would be impossible to evaluate the service rendered by these men in any terms of dollars and cents. We feel certain that they will hear directly from many of our readers.

Some may be unhappy with the strong historical emphasis of this issue, especially in the lead articles by Ehlen and Rast. Our hope is that these articles will make it possible for the parish pastor to orient himself rather quickly in a vast field of studies. We trust that most of this issue will be carefully read, marked, and discussed. We should be surprised if our readers glibly endorsed the principles described in the three historical articles. We would be disappointed if they did not find much stimulation and help in these articles.

The articles by Jungkuntz, Sauer, and Habel demonstrate exegetical methodology which is in harmony with the best in the Christian tradition. But the reader again will want to read, mark, and study the presuppositions, methodology, and conclusions of these writers. We do not mean thereby to suggest that exegesis is a subjective, undisciplined exercise in which every practitioner is also his own teacher. These studies probably confirm a suspicion which many of you have harbored, namely, that exegesis is an art rather than a science and that one should speak of principles of hermeneutics rather than rules of hermeneutics. One principle all three writers drive home is that Scripture must always be permitted to cast its own light on its meaning.

Walter Roehrs' article read in connection with Ehlen's demonstrates another point of value and interest — that the covenant theme and the *Heilsgeschichte* theology is not new for many of our readers. Some of the terms, some of the emphases, some of the methods are new. But the basic stuff was mastered by seminary students of 40 and 50 years ago, at least at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

With a prayer that this issue will render a service in our Lord's church, we pass it into your hands.

H. T. M.