

BOOK REVIEWS

The Pre-Existence of Christ in the New Testament. By Fred B. Craddock. Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1968. 186 pp. plus index. \$4.50. Reviewed by William W. Menzies, Central Bible College, Springfield, Missouri.

Hermeneutics is as much the concern of this volume as is the stated-subject-matter, Christology. The central burden of the author is to discover a fresh means of communicating what he conceives to be the message of the New Testament to modern man, whom he believes has rejected pre-scientific categories. This concern for a relevant message, together with a resignation to the triumph of secularism, puts the author in the same stream as Bultmann, Tillich, and Bonhoeffer, to whom he acknowledges considerable debt (p. 176). "Words that opened doors and windows of understanding centuries ago today shut out light, and the summons to faith is obstructed by obscure language. The church agreed long ago that Gentiles did not have to become Jews in order to become Christians. So now it has to be determined that citizens of our world do not have to become citizens of the Graeco-Roman world in order to be Christians." (p. 172).

Craddock has sought to trace the concept of pre-existence through the background materials adjacent to the New Testament, through the New Testament writers themselves, and finally, through attempts since then in the church to interpret the significance of Christ's pre-existence. The introductory chapter, devoted to methodology, discloses Craddock's special approach, which he chooses to call "functional Christology." By this he means that he wishes to go beyond the mere identification of thought-patterns in the New Testament with similar expressions found in the background sources. He wishes, rather, to interpret what each New Testament writer was attempting to convey by the employment of categories borrowed from contemporary culture. What this "functional" approach really amounts to appears to be a system of de-mythologization strongly reminiscent of Bultmann, but with some differences. For example, Craddock is more inclined to concede that the New Testament proclamation must be more than mere *address*; it must have *meaning*. (p. 154). Although Craddock displays a strong inclination toward existential interpretation, he refuses to allow Christology to be dissolved in anthropology, and insists that the error of such modern attempts at "relevance" as Altizer and Hamilton have concocted lies in their loss of the transcendent. (p. 179).

The book consists of three major chapters, the first being a comparative study of pre-existence themes in the Jewish Wisdom literature, Jewish apocalyptic, Philo, Stoicism, and various Gnostic systems. Craddock dis-

plays an impressive command of the material. The second chapter is an attempt to employ the "functional" approach in dealing with the various New Testament writers. Although Craddock deplores the "flattening" of the New Testament, preferring to view each writer as a creative person, he does see basic harmony within the New Testament writers regarding the meaning of the pre-existence of Christ, in sharp contrast to the non-Biblical literature.

The final chapter is a comparative study of various attempts in the church to bring the language of the New Testament up to date. His plea is that even if the term "pre-existence" is rejected as outdated, let there still be retained the concept of the transcendent, which it implies, or we will be left without a suitable frame of reference for understanding human history. (p. 185).

Conservatives will argue with Craddock's existentialism, his universalism (p. 169), his definition of sin and salvation (p. 169), and his concept of Biblical inspiration, but his comparative studies of New Testament background materials and of recent theological systems make this volume worth the reading.

Jesus—God and Man. By Wolfhart Pannenberg. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1969. 415 pp. including indices. \$10.00. Reviewed by William H. Pardee, Grand Rapids Baptist Theological Seminary.

Pannenberg, Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Munich, is a rising new star in the German theological heavens. This volume is a major work in Christology. It does not have as its presupposition the divinity of Christ by which the resurrection becomes somewhat of an appendix in Christology. It is rather that the resurrection gives significance to His work and testifies to his divinity. But more than that, it first "decides" his unity with God (p. 396). After a discussion of method the author begins with the resurrection. In this he affirms the historicity of the resurrection of Christ by which is meant that it was an event which really happened at a definite time. It is not clear, however, that it is being considered as a bodily resurrection. The last statement of the book is significant:

"Only the *eschaton* will ultimately disclose what really happened in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Until then we must speak favorably in thoroughly legitimate, but still only metaphorical and symbolic, form about Jesus' resurrection and the significance inherent in it." (p. 397).

Pannenberg proceeds to a lengthy discussion of the relationship of the divinity of Jesus to that of the Father. He follows an historical pattern as he seeks to find a succession of answers to this question. The rise of the Logos Christology in the second century apologists, he believes, shifted the Church's thinking from resurrection to incarnational Christology which he believes to be the wrong approach. Further, it had its

weaknesses in that it lent support to Arius and tended to loosen the Son's divinity from the historical revelation. This type of Christology, he feels, has been renewed in Brunner and Barth.

It is of note that he uses ten pages (141-150) to arrive at the conclusion that the story of the virgin birth is legendary, and that "it is therefore highly probable that the story is to be judged as non-historical." By what assumptions this conclusion is arrived at when at the same time the equally miraculous event of the resurrection of Christ is affirmed to be historical we are not told.

In turning to the work of Christ, Pannenberg rejects the historic Protestant conception of the three offices of Christ. He feels that it bypasses the historical reality of Jesus as true man. Neither the crucifixion nor the resurrection were actively accomplished by Jesus. His death was a fate which came upon him which he accepted obediently. God raised him from the dead, and it is this resurrection which gives significance to his pre-easter ministry. Both the passion and the resurrection were "sent" to Jesus though they were not a complete surprise. His death was substitutionary in the sense that he died the death of a blasphemer. No one else must die this death of eternal damnation to the extent that he has community with Jesus. It is clear, at this point, that the author rejects the traditional view of vicarious atonement.

He, in harmony, with most modern thought, rejects the doctrine of the two natures of Christ. To conceive, of "two beings complete in themselves" uniting together "to form a single whole" (p. 287) is irrational. For this, he apparently substitutes some type of a moral union of Jesus with God. It is Jesus' dedication to the Father which constitutes his personal identity with the Son. The highest expression of this unity is reached in his exaltation to participation in God's Lordship. This is Lordship over the Church and over the entire cosmos.

One is amazed at the breadth of learning exhibited by Pannenberg. One could only wish that he would be more consistent in his rejection of the antisupernaturalistic modes of thinking inherited from his predecessors in modern theology. If he were more radically supernaturalistic in his analysis, he might have proved more Biblical in his conclusions.

Conflict and Harmony in Science and the Bible. By Jack Wood Sears: Baker Book House, 1969. 97 pp. Paperback. No bibliography or index; moderate amount of bibliographic footnotes. Reviewed by Gilbert Maple, Jr., Science Department, Trinity College, Deerfield, Illinois.

This short, pithy volume by the head of the Biology Department at Harding College (Searcy, Arkansas) is actually the transcription of a lecture series presented at the University of Mississippi during a lectureship entitled "Christian Faith in a Contemporary World" sponsored by the University Christian Student Center. In its pages we do not find the typical diatribe which usually accompanies a consideration of this topic, and al-

though he decries originality in his preface, Dr. Sears proceeds in a captivating fashion to weave a tapestry of thought which is one of the clearest discussions of this often-muddled topic that this reviewer has encountered. He sets the tenor of his presentation almost immediately as he points out that "much of the cause of the conflicts . . . was due not so much to either science or the Bible, but rather to the closed minds of the hyperorthodox, as Bernard Ramm refers to them." (p. 12) Merrill Tenney lauds Sears' scientific candor and uncompromising perspective in his short introduction, and the reader is thus prepared to examine the data.

At the risk of appearing too prejudiced, Dr. Sears posits that the conflicts now apparent in our understanding of scientific and Biblical truths "should not surprise anyone, but should be expected." (p. 13) As to the answer to the eternal "Why", four reasons are discussed: a) We just do not attempt to understand the fullness of both positions; b) none of us approaches the Bible without certain encumbering presuppositions; c) we are careless in our interpretations of the relevant data; and d) we are basically an ignorant people, no one having at his command the complete storehouse of facts from which to draw their conclusions. As a Christian and a practicing scientist, I must concur with this analysis and further approve the openmindedness and humble hesitancy to pronounce final judgment in either direction which the author proposes as a step toward the solution of the conflicts. Not only is the orthodox Christian position assailed in this discussion, but Dr. Sears condemns adequately the haughty arrogance with which scientists often disregard the limitations of their discipline. Science as a human endeavor is too imperfect to be exalted and worshipped as is so often the case today. "When you've got it, flaunt it!" may be a worthwhile maxim in the advertising world, but the lack of intellectual honesty and the conspicuous presence of innocuous dogmatism should be anathema to the contemporary evangelical Christian, be he scientist or layman.

Dr. Sears then discusses Evolution from the scientific standpoint, examining first the general evidences cited by scientists and then the specific schema concerning horses and man, these latter being regarded as two of the most potent arrows in the quiver of the classical Darwinist. He frequently cites Kerkut's memorable work (*Implications of Evolution*), particularly bringing into play Kerkut's expose of the loopholes in the traditional concepts of the origin of life, the influence of uninformatarianism, and the old saw of monophyleticism versus polyphyleticism as they apply to the radiation of all life forms. An excellent set of diagrams accompanies this discussion, and these should aid even the most inexperienced reader to understand the text.

Although it is logically tenable and simply stated, the chapter on the validity of Scripture is probably the weakest offering in this sterling work, but this is understandable in light of Sears' training. He deals with the various modes of inspiration and revelation, the validity of miracles, prophecy, the inherent unity of the Biblical text and the style of writing as the

legs upon which his table of faith rests, but his strongest point is that the Scriptures must accepted on faith without equivocation, even as being a scientist demands ultimately a faith in the validity of one's own training and the accumulated knowledge of others over centuries of time.

As the concluding chapter unfolds, we find another shiny nugget in this lodestone. Sears discusses the natural versus the supernatural interpretation of phenomena, concluding that miracles are disturbing to the scientist because they cannot be predicted and they defy explanation, since they elude study by being unrepeatably. He proposes a Christian Concept of reality which allows for even the predictable miracle and yet does not negate the basic emphasis of science. Sears introduces entropy in a cogent illustration of his point, identifying the tendency in nature toward randomness as being absent in living systems, supplanted by an integrative force which unifies and gives us our account of creation and the subsequent life upon this planet.

For those who find themselves groping after illumination in the maze of the controversy between science and religion, J. W. Sears offers here a good concise and worthwhile light upon the subject. Pastors and college-trained laymen alike will find in it non-compromising, Christ-exalting presentation of the pertinent data, which lead inexorably to the author's conclusion—there is perfect harmony here, which we can utilize to draw ourselves closer to God to find those treasurers of wisdom and knowledge which are ours by birth and heritage in His Kingdom.

Man's Origin, Man's Destiny. By A. E. Wilder Smith. Wheaton, Illinois: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1968. Pp. 320 with glosary, index, and bibliography. \$5.95. Reviewed by John C. Whitcomb, Jr., Grace Theological Seminary, Winona Lake, Indiana.

A. E. Wilder Smith holds three earned doctorates in organic chemistry and medicine from universities in England and Switzerland, and most recently has held the position of Professor of Pharmacology at the Medical Center, University of Illinois. He has authored and co-authored more than fifty scientific publications and has gained a wide reputation on both sides of the Atlantic as a speaker to student groups on such subjects as drug addiction and Darwinism. The present work is a translation and expansion of *Herkunft und Zukunft des Menschen* published in 1966 in Switzerland.

The book is divided into two unequal sections, Part I on "Man's Origin" being six times as long as Part II on "Man's Destiny." The author begins by orienting himself to the Genesis record: (1) the creation week was literal, with no gap between the first two verses; (2) living things were created directly, without long intervals and processes. Thus uniformitarianism (as expressed in the geologic time table) and evolutionism (in all its forms) are Biblically invalid.

The author develops his thesis vigorously and brilliantly. He demolishes Neo-Darwinism with the help of original and memorable illustra-

tions, such as the 100,000 white cards with individual parachutes (pp. 57, 66, 70), the "catastrophe" of human birth (pp. 72-74), and the earth-sized sardine can (pp. 82ff); and improves on Jeans' monkey-typewriter illustration (p. 64). Natural selection is not only scientifically invalid for macro-evolution, but is definitely anti-Christian (pp. 169-82, 210-12).

The final section on man's destiny is strong on the resurrection of the body (with some analogies from nature), but makes a rather mechanical distinction between soul and spirit (pp. 248ff) and allows for the salvation of heathen who have not heard the Gospel (p. 265). The use of the Chinese "Tao" concept (from C. S. Lewis) does not clearly strengthen the section (pp. 242ff).

In the reviewer's opinion, A. E. Wilder Smith's work will rank high among twentieth century critiques of Neo-Darwinism from the perspective of Biblical creationism.

Jaspers and Bultmann: A dialogue between philosophy and theology in the existentialist tradition. By Eugene T. Long. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1968. Pp. 153. \$5.00. Reviewed by Stanley R. Obitts, Westmont College, Santa Barbara, Cal.

Despite its title, the present book is primarily concerned with Bultmann's concept of Christian faith. Jaspers' doctrine of philosophical faith is adduced as an evaluative tool. The gist of Jaspers' criticisms of Bultmann before a group of Swiss Theologians at Basel, published in 1953, is re-applied with little hesitation. The weaknesses thereby exposed in Bultmann's position are given very brief and rather vague remedies by the author.

Religious faith, while necessary, does not supplant philosophical faith, declares Jaspers, for only through the latter can Existenz affirm itself *vis a vis* Transcendence. Being an existential act in which Transcendence becomes actualized, philosophical faith can never be tied to any particular, finite, religious context. On the other hand, it normally needs some religious context, such as Christianity for the Europeans. The individual finds it difficult to awaken to his true self without the aid of religious myth. Hence, Jaspers does not appreciate Bultmann's demythologizing.

While agreeing that faith is not assent to doctrine, Bultmann wishes to avoid the subjectivism threatening Jaspers as the latter strives in vain to specify exactly how one lays hold of Transcendence meaningful apart from any particular, finite form. Authentic surrender of God, decides Bultmann, is objective in that the Christian kerygma through which it comes is radically historical. But this brings against him the charge of exclusivism, by Jaspers, who fears that Bultmann has thereby lost God in the finite.

Professor Long views this debate between an existentialist theologian and an existentialist philosopher from three vantage points: their concepts of revelation, of language and communication, and of truth in faith.

Both Bultmann and Jaspers consider revelation to be an event from within history. While Jaspers forthwith throws history away by his interpretation of it as a "cipher," Bultmann binds himself so closely to the Christian historical tradition that he cannot admit the possibility of God's acting in other traditions. Long, also opting for the theory that revelation can only be *in actu*, can find no justification from within the finite Christian circle for claims of exclusive truth.

Since Jaspers' Transcendence presents itself as the Encompassing only in the historical moment of Existenz, its affirmation in philosophical faith finds both objective and subjective statements inadequate. While consenting to the impossibility of a positive description of God, Bultmann, on the other hand, is not content to leave God beyond all language and means of communication, for this would render God's Word inoperative. In the revelatory event God and man address each other with analogical speech, concludes Bultmann. Such language is more than non-cognitive, but less than objectifying, thereby preventing the identification of any particular event as the act of God. But Long counts the cost of this kind of protection of the eschatological event seen by faith in the historical event of Jesus Christ to be the virtual loss of the worldly event in the revelatory event. Unfortunately, he sheds little light on the problem with his advice that the language of faith should be viewed as "a disclosing of the world as world in such a way that man may hear the Word of God within it." (p. 115).

The author's evaluation of the problem of truth in faith, as faced by these existential thinkers, is somewhat less vague. For both Jaspers and Bultmann, the faith event must be seen in the historical context of man's being-in-the-world. Such faith need not trouble itself with either strictly objective, empirical or strictly subjective, abstract truth claims. Existentialism provides the religious believer with a ready defense against both the logical positivists and the rationalists, it is alleged. But, as Long correctly observes, Jaspers and Bultmann are still faced with the problem of verification or falsification in a context broader than that presented by either empiricism or rationalism alone. Jaspers has realized this more honestly than has Bultmann. Jaspers' philosophical faith, although affirming a non-characterizable Transcendence, is nevertheless supposed to continually assess and be assessed by science, reason, and tradition. But, as Hepburn pointed out some time ago, Bultmann, in removing faith from the realm of the provable "has again omitted to argue for a vital proposition, namely that absence of evidence does not disqualify a religion from being acceptable by reasonable men" (p. 145).

Long's book is authoritative in its explanation of Jaspers' and Bultmann's positions. And it reads well for being derived from a doctoral dissertation. But it comes to an end without probing such crucial questions as the adequacy of a solely *in actu* revelation, or whether the fact that Bultmann was trying to combine Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* with Kahler's concept of kerygma, including the latter's distinction between *geschichtlich* and *historisch*, may have insulated Bultmann from part of Jaspers' attack.

Biblical Numerology. By John J. Davis. Winona Lake, Ind.: BMH Books, 1968. pp. 156 and bibliography and indexes. \$3.95 cloth; \$2.95 paperback. Reviewed by Charles Lee Feinberg, Talbot Theological Seminary, La Mirada, California.

Conservative scholars of the Bible are seldom inclined to trouble themselves with books on Biblical numerology because of the known extremes to which such studies have led in the past. But this delightful volume is entirely different. As a careful and sane scholar Dr. Davis of Grace Seminary set before him a threefold aim: (1) to gather and classify all data relating to numbers and their use in the Bible; (2) to clarify the use of numbers in Scripture; and (3) to establish valid principles for interpreting Bible numbers.

In carrying out this threefold objective, the writer has given us a thorough treatment of the structure and syntax of numbers in the Scriptures. The data are carefully aligned and the evidence is presented without prejudice. In the remainder of the book four lines of research are followed: the conventional use of numbers, the rhetorical use, the symbolic use, and the mystical use. In the first section Dr. Davis has done splendid work in treating the problems relating to excessively large numbers and apparent contradictions in numbers in different books. His defense of the numbers is valid and his proposals for harmonization of seeming discrepancies are reasonable. Where we cannot control the sources, he is honest to admit it.

The author shows that the rhetorical use of numbers conveys two concepts: intensification or emphasis and the idea of indefiniteness. He displays a good knowledge of the cognate literature on the subject. Now, whereas the author allows a conventional and rhetorical use of numbers, he rightly disallows the symbolic and mystical use. In this area too much credence has been given in the past only to harm a sound hermeneutic of Scripture. The pitfalls are an excessive subjective approach and conclusions that are valueless. He expertly demonstrates the capriciousness of the mystical use of numbers in Scripture.

In all his treatment the author is thorough (see his handling of John 21:11 and Rev. 13:18), and thus has given us a valuable work in this field. His reading has been wide in this area and up to date. If one were to have a single volume of Scripture numbers, this book should be the choice.

Baptism and Christian Unity by Alec Gilmore, Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: The Judson Press, pp. 108, 1966, \$3.95. Reviewed by Robert Duncan Culver.

This effort at ecumenical promotion is by a Baptist editor and pastor of West Worthing, Sussex, England. His subject is a live one today among all Christians, whether persuaded of the wholesomeness of the ecumenical movement or not. As Gilmore points out, not long ago communities were fairly stable. Hence a small congregation of Methodists, another of Baptists, another of Presbyterians or Congregationalists plus the ubiquitous (in Great Britain) Episcopal Church could co-exist rather painlessly, if competitively, for generations. But now movement of populations plus many

other factors has brought the non-immersed knocking for entrance to Baptist Churches. People who believe that episcopacy is necessary for a valid ministry are seeking to organize churches in communities wherein a large part of the constituency rejects bishops outright. In America there is hardly an immersionist congregation anywhere, holding also to believers baptism, which not under mounting pressure to admit members who were sprinkled (baptized?) as infants or have received no baptism at all.

Gilmore wants Baptist Churches in Great Britain to get ready for a United (Ecumenical) Church. He proposes that a limited validity be allowed to infant baptism—i.e., where administered with proper believing sponsorship, etc.;—that “re-baptism” of those whose conscience calls for immersion be practiced but not promoted; that a service of dedication—thanksgiving—blessing be encouraged for the infant children of believers, and of unbelievers as well, where the church or a Christian family will accept sponsorship for them.

He does not seem to endorse what is often called “open membership” where a Christian profession, no questions asked about baptism, is all that is asked of anyone.

What does appear, passing strange, but no longer shocking, for a Baptist is that he seems ready to accept episcopacy. Perhaps he thinks since now the religious establishment is no longer very important that Bishops are not so bad after all. Knowledgeable observers have been saying for a long time that if and when the ecumenical Church emerges it will have to be episcopal in polity.

The book provides a good guide to Free Church literature on the subject of church ordinances and the ecumenical movement composed in Great Britain over the last 30 or 40 years. The book is well written and easy to read.

One wonders just how free a pastor in a Baptist Church will be to preach on baptism by immersion only of believers only if Gilmore’s plan is accepted.

A CRITIQUE OF G. ERNEST WRIGHT'S THE CHALLENGE OF ISRAEL'S FAITH

John Warwick Montgomery, Ph.D.

The Challenge of Israel's Faith, a slim volume of a little over one hundred pages, is G. Ernest Wright's attempt to clarify some of the major doctrines of Old Testament theology for the benefit of the mid-twentieth century reader. In his Foreward Wright says, “My concern in these pages . . . is not with the history of Israelite religion but rather with the central propositions of Israelite faith.” The book was first published in 1944, and is now in its fourth impression; its author has come to be recognized as one of the foremost Protestant scholars in America—and one of the leading lights in the new “biblical theology” movement. In the interests of brevity, I shall here subordinate exposition to criticism, and shall follow the (somewhat arbitrary) approach of dealing with one main positive and one main negative feature of each chapter or section of Wright's treatise. I shall then conclude with a few general comments on the book as a whole.

Chapter I. "Thus Saith the Lord": The Eternal in the Temporal

The first chapter in *The Challenge of Israel's Faith* appropriately deals with the divine character of the Old Testament Scriptures. Professor Wright attempts to determine in what sense we may consider Scripture as "God's Word."

On the positive side we commend Wright for his criticism of the almost completely descriptive Biblical studies carried on today (linguistic, literary, historical studies), which have neglected the basic issue of the dynamic, vital message presented by such Biblical figures as the prophets. Wright says: "Scripture is of little value, except for antiquarian purposes, unless it affords the readers a quickening of spirit, a searching of heart, and a cleansing of soul" (p. 5).

However, we object to the distinction Wright makes between the "words" of Scripture and the "Word behind the words" (pp. 12-13). Wright makes this distinction (which, incidentally, is not made by the Scripture itself!) because he accepts the presence of "absurdities" (p. 7) and "inconsistencies" (p. 9) in the Bible. He does not consider the force of such Biblical statements as II Tim. 3:16, Matt. 5:18, II Pet. 1:21, Deut. 4:2. Because Wright feels compelled to distinguish "between what is God's Word and what is man's word" (p. 9), he must find an epistemological test to which he can submit passages of the Bible. The test he offers for our consideration is that of *conscience* (p. 12). "Those tremendous words from Isaiah are authoritative in that . . . they strike some kindred note within us which says, 'This is true!'" (p. 12). Wright attributes this view to both Luther and Calvin (pp. 11-12). However, we hasten to point out that conscience is no adequate epistemological test by which to determine the divine, authoritative Word of God. Conscience is subjective, and its specific judgments may be culturally determined, as anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead have shown. Even the consciences of Christians can be dulled (e.g. I Tim. 1:19). Philosophically, subjectiveness of the sort advocated by Wright in dealing with the Scriptures leads straight to *relativism*, for each man has the final say as to what portions of the Bible manifest "the Word behind the words" and which ones do not. If the Scriptures are not objectively true (apart from the judgment of conscience) we have no solid basis of Revelation from which to draw our doctrinal statements or our homiletical exhortations. Furthermore, we criticize Wright for attributing his epistemological position to the Reformers. Both Luther and Calvin (whatever Luther's idiosyncrasies on the content of the Canon) believed the Canonical Scriptures to be objectively inspired. Readers of Reu's *Luther and the Scriptures* will receive a far different impression than Wright gives concerning Luther's view of the Scripture; and a perusal of Chapter I of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* will indicate the true nature of the Calvinistic position on Holy Writ—a position which Calvin directly influenced. The Reformers were not Old Testament prophets nor New Testament apostles; they did not reveal new truth to be checked against human conscience for verification; their role was rather to bring men back to the truths already revealed once for

all in Scripture. They asked that their teachings be checked against the *objective truth* of the Bible (contrast what Wright says on p. 46). If we today forget the unique character of the work which the prophets and apostles did, we do so at our own peril. We are not to judge the truth value of what God has already revealed through them. Like the Reformers we are to preach what *has* been revealed, and appeal, not to conscience, but to Holy Write itself for validation of our message.

Chapter II. "Choose You This Day": The Meaning of History

The second chapter of Wright's book deals with the interesting subject of Philosophy of History, about which we hear a great deal these days. Wright is concerned chiefly with the philosophy of history presented by the Old Testament prophets.

This chapter rightly points out that the prophets were not "preachers concerned only with individual piety or the 'spiritual glow,'" nor philosophers who stood on the side-lines and theorized about the events of their times. We agree (and see a real application for today's pastor) in the "two conditions" which Wright sets forth for really understanding the prophets: that "we be willing to stand with them at their point of vantage... and experience the challenge and immediacy of the will of God for that moment" (p. 29); and that we endeavor to do the same for *our own* critical moment of history.

Yet we see manifested in this chapter a tendency which will become more evident as we proceed: a tendency to reduce the extent of God's direct intervention into the Old Testament scene. We refer to such rationalizations as the attempt to explain manna as "a honey-like substance which still drops from tamarisk trees in Sinai" (p. 22). Just as in the case of the kenosis theory (which attempts to reduce Christ's omniscience beyond the clear assertions of the New Testament), there is no logical stopping point for this type of rationalizing. The Scripture does make clear that God often works through the laws He has established; but it just as clearly shows that in Biblical times He frequently cut through these laws and directly intervened in the affairs of men. Once we begin to try to explain away the Biblical accounts of God's direct intervention in history, where should we stop? Perhaps we should view the Incarnation (as some neo-Orthodox theologians do) as primarily an immanent phenomenon! Or perhaps we should be consistent and speak (as the modernists do) of a "spiritual" Resurrection of Christ—rather than a physical, bodily, truly miraculous one. Obversely, it should be emphasized that if God did *in fact* intervene objectively in history in the person of Christ, there is no logical reason (only an emotional one—dislike of the miraculous) for trying to explain away His miraculous interventions in Old Testament times. —And, ironically enough, Wright criticizes *others* for Deistic tendencies (pp. 54-55)!

Chapter III. "Obey My Voice": A Chapter of Terminology

Here Professor Wright makes several excellent clarifications of the meaning of concepts vital to the theology of the Old Testament. His

apologetic arguments against those who set the New Testament "loving Father" against the Old Testament "God of wrath" are excellent (see especially p. 47). His discussion of the meaning of "fear" in the Old Testament is likewise valuable apologetically (p. 40).

From the negative side, we find Wright both criticizing Biblical rationalism and engaging in it himself! He says: "The Biblical study of the last century failed us. Its methods and argument were basically valid, but its proclamation of the saving faith was diluted in the waters of overconfident rationalism" (p. 47). Yet only a few pages before this, Wright goes against one of the foremost canons of literary criticism (even criticism of secular writings): that of always giving the benefit of the doubt to the text as it stands. He states as *fact*, (not hypothesis or even theory) the view that Ps. 51 is not a unity—and devotes a whole paragraph to the point (pp. 43-44). Yet Franz Delitzsch (*Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, 1888, Vol. II, p. 164) says, "The prayer: *build Thou the walls of Jerusalem* is not unsuitable in David's mouth." Wright should see that he is here (and elsewhere) committing the same sort of judgemental error against Holy Scripture that the 19th century rationalists committed.

Chapter IV. "For I Am Thy God": The Living and Anthropomorphic God

This chapter, in my opinion, constitutes one of the most magnificent in this little book. Wright's discussion of the characteristics of the God of the Old Testament is invaluable—especially for its criticism of false approaches to God present in our day. Modern liberal mysticism of the Schleiermacher variety is contrasted with the prophetic emphasis (pp. 49-53). Those who want ethics without theology are criticized (pp. 53-54). Likewise those who would depersonalize God (pp. 54-55). The sacrilegiously intimate sort of praying practised by many today is contrasted with God's holiness (separateness), as set forth in the Old Testament (pp. 56-57). Morality apart from God is condemned (pp. 57-59). The "concordance method" of Bible study is seen to be inadequate for discovering the grace or love of God in the Old Testament (pp. 59-62). Our present-day fetish of "tolerance" is contrasted with the concept of the "jealous God" of Scripture (pp. 62-65). Lastly, the anthropomorphic picture of God in the Old Testament is cogently defended (pp. 65-67).

Yet in this very matter of Scriptural anthropomorphism we can see the difficulties which Wright faces in trying to find the "Word behind the words" of Scripture by means of the criterion of conscience. We read (p. 67): "Of course, there are crude extremes of anthropomorphism into which no intelligent man can go. . . . The old bibliolatry is gone, and one cannot blindly and credulously accept something merely because it is in the Bible without considering its temporal and eternal validity (cf. chap. i)." We might ask Professor Wright how he goes about distinguishing "crude" from non-crude anthropomorphism (*De gustibus non est disputandum*), but an even more important question which should be asked him is the following: What gives us the overweening confidence that we can judge which things in Holy Writ have "temporal and eternal validity" and which ones do not? Christ validated the authority of the most disputed

portion of the Old Testament Scripture when he said, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"; did he give any equivalent validation for our ability to judge the truth-value of Scripture? I must confess that I find no New Testament passage which says that He did. And if He did not, it impresses me as presumption of the highest order that we should set ourselves up as judges of the "temporal and eternal validity" of God-breathed Scripture (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:21).

Chapter V. "Ye Shall Be My People": The Covenanted Community

This chapter, as its title indicates, treats the extremely important theological concept of the Covenant, as seen in the relationship between God and the Israelites in the Old Testament. In discussing the Covenant, Wright effectively deals with several current misconceptions about Israelite faith. For example, he says concerning individualism and collectivism among the Hebrews: "Individualism appears for the first time, we are told, in the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. . . . This attempt to place the beginning of individualism in the Old Testament during the Exile is always made with the implication that the pre-Exile collectivism is inferior to post-Exilic individualism. Such an idea could only arise in an age like ours when the true nature of man in his relation to society is forgotten" (p. 79). We also find in this chapter the very important observation that the saving of a civilization or preservation of status quo was not the summum bonum in the eyes of an Old Testament prophet (pp. 70-71).

One of the unfortunate characteristics of the Calvinistic theological system has always been its overemphasis on the importance and application of the Covenant idea in Scripture; the very term "covenant theology" is a witness to the importance which Presbyterian and Reformed theologians have attached to this concept in their theological activity. It seems to me that in this chapter Professor Wright betrays the influence of his background by overextending the application of the Covenant in Scripture. He says on the one hand: "The ultimate ground of the covenant is in the sovereign will of God. It is he who has initiated the pact" (p. 78); yet he does not seem to recognize the uniqueness of God's Covenant with the Israelites. Historically, there is no evidence that God entered into a pact with any other people, but Wright speaks approvingly of the English Puritans and the Scottish "Covenanters" who "are well known for the covenants with which *they* bound both individuals and nation to God" (p. 81, italics mine). Note who did the "binding" in this case. One of the gravest faults of Calvinism has been its readiness to put God in a covenant relationship with their own national or cultural groups. The result of such attempts is generally legalism, bigotry, and intolerance—due to the creation of an in-group and the attributing of divine sanction to it (cf. the Anglo-Israelite movement). Probably Wright's conception of Scripture influences him here; for if the Old Testament is tainted by human error, and often historically unreliable (note Wright's uncritical acceptance of the documentary hypothesis, p. 72; cf. John 5:46, 47), then why can't we "assume," as the Israelites did, that God is in a covenant relationship with

us? However, the Pentateuch, as it stands, maintains that God did *in fact* establish a unique Covenant with Israel at Sinai; if the Canon of Revelation is closed, we have no right to assume that God has created or will create this sort of covenant relationship with other nations—including our own. God's only Covenant today is with believers in His Son—and note that Lutheran theology rightly sees Christ's atonement to be of universal application, not merely limited to the elect as the Calvinist believes.

Chapter VI. "Behold, the Days Come": The Outcome of History

Professor Wright's final chapter deals with the eschatology of the Old Testament. The value of the chapter again lies in the fact that the author refutes several modern misconceptions about the subject under discussion. We need only note one example: Wright's magnificent rebuttal of the "utopia without judgment" hope expressed by many religious liberals. Wright blasts (and rightly so) those who would identify the Kingdom of God with the present world order—or with a political ideology such as democracy.

On the other hand, we find a strange paradox: in contrast to Wright's overweening confidence and presumption in deciding which portions of Scripture are God's Word and which are man's words, we see him manifest real humility when faced with the coming New Heaven and New Earth: "We cannot form any rational conception of it. . . . No man can be certain as to the details of the future order; and the more dogmatic he attempts to be about them, the more he reduces his position to absurdity. The idea of the resurrection of the body, for example, can scarcely be more than a symbol of a deep truth to which a finite mind with finite language can hardly give adequate expression" (pp. 97-98). We wish only that Wright were more consistent. If God's plans for the end of the age are beyond his attempts to criticize them rationally, why does he think that he can judge rationally the "temporal and eternal validity" (p. 67) of God's written Revelation to man—especially in view of the numerous New Testament references to the nature of inspiration?

Conclusion

The Challenge of Israel's Faith contains much valuable material, especially of an apologetic character. Moreover, it is an eloquent testimony to the value of Old Testament studies for the minister and prospective minister (see specifically the Postscript). It contains little new material (conservatives have long argued for many of the points Wright makes), but the book should have a salutary effect on religious liberals, by forcing them further to the right theologically.

However, because of its weak view of the inspiration of Scripture, and its inadequate epistemological test for determining what is God's Word, the book suffers from the same grave difficulty that most neo-Orthodox writings have today: no solid foundation for the theological statements made. We are glad that Wright's "conscience" leads him back toward orthodoxy, but let us not forget that the conscience of 19th and early 20th century liberal scholarship seemed to lead in the opposite direction.