

## BOOK REVIEWS

*The Meaning of the Old Testament.* By Daniel Lys. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967. Pp. 192. \$3.75. Reviewed by Bruce K. Waltke, Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas.

The title of the book sets forth the twofold purpose of the author: the meaning of the text to the biblical writer, and the meaning of the text to man today. Since the appropriation of the text ought to be based on a valid understanding of the text, Professor Lys of Montpellier is primarily concerned with the question of interpretation: what did the author want to say.

The crux of the hermeneutical problem, according to Lys, is a proper assumption of the apparent contradiction of the eternal God revealing himself in successive periods of history. In a brilliant chapter he demonstrates that various methods of interpretation are unsatisfactory because they avoid this contradiction by reducing every element of the Old Testament either to history or to eternity. Lys, on his part, assumes this contradiction by recognizing "the dynamism of revelation." By this term he means that God at successive intervals totally revealed himself to the biblical writers in order to move history to his predetermined end; namely, the revelation in Jesus Christ. He argues, therefore, that the exegete ought to rediscover and illumine this dynamism, this spiritual message, this intent of the biblical writer.

This prudence should lead the exegete to apply the following rules: 1) in each text discover the message behind the language; 2) follow the message in time through the history of each text and the succession of texts; 3) see the scope of the dynamism of this revelation at the end of this history of the message.

The reviewer offers the following criticisms in addition to those advanced by W. Sibley Towner in *JBL*, LXXXVI (Sept., 1967, pp. 325 f. 1) Lys assumes the validity of the traditio-historical approach. The reviewer for the most part finds this approach to be unscientific and unsatisfactory. 2) When Lys says that the exegete must distinguish what the writer wanted to say from what he did say (p. 135) he opens the door wide to pure subjectivism, thereby allowing the exegete to make the text say whatever he wants it to say. 3) Lys' dynamic view of biblical revelation leads him to the same conclusion as his teacher, Visher, who contended that the plain meaning of the Old Testament is its meaning in the light of God's intention as revealed in Jesus Christ. John Bright has correctly cautioned, however: "But in doing this we must be careful to hear the Old Testament's own word, . . . in its distinctive meaning" (*The Authority of the Old Testament*, 1967, pp. 86-89).

On the other hand the reviewer feels indebted to the author for the following: 1) his articulate presentation of the unity of the Old Testament; 2) his forceful rejection of the evolutionary-positivistic approach to Scripture; 3) his concept of dynamism in revelation which forms a firm basis for typology and for counting on a revelation of the past (p. 102); 4) his lucid definition of parable, allegory and typology (pp. 49-75); 5) his useful references to the often little known work of French biblical scholars.

*Homiletics: A Manual of The Theory and Practice of Preaching.* By M. Reu. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967. 593 pp. \$5.95. Reviewed by Lloyd M. Perry, Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois.

The author of this work was one of the most eminent Lutheran theologians in America. He spent many years teaching in the area of Practical Theology at the Wartburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. His breadth of experience and background enabled him to tap the wealth of the classical rhetoricians and the treasures of homiletical literature. He produced not only a textbook for the classroom but also a handbook profitable for study by pastors already engaged in their ministry.

The basic postulate of this work is that the source of the sermon is the Sacred Scriptures. The task of the preacher is to expound and apply the doctrine of the Word for the edification of the hearers. A strong emphasis is placed upon the need for text analysis. The author breaks through the barrier which is often erected between homiletics and exegesis. All doctrine converges in the central truth of the Scriptures, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The "whole counsel of God" is presented by the preacher as he follows the church year as a guide for his preaching.

The book is comprehensive in its coverage of homiletics. A large portion of the contents deals with the nature and purpose of the sermon. The author thus manifests the need for a sound philosophy for preaching before discussing such items as subject-matter and structure. This is a valid educational principle which has been overlooked by many writers in the field.

A careful study of the introductions and footnotes provides valuable help in bibliographical research. The following statements from the book give an idea of its approach to preaching:

"The sermon is the presentation of God's Word in its meaning for the Christian congregation of the present." "Hence the first duty of the homilete is the exposition of the text, that is, the interpretation of a given passage according to the rules of scientific exegesis." "A proper regard for the material and the purpose of the sermon demands, therefore, that careful attention be given to its structure."

Generally the author's views are more sympathetic to liberal than to traditional views of the Bible. For example, the Documentary Theory is accepted in regard to the Old Testament, while much of the Bible is presented in the form of stories, such as Creation, the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, the Flood, Joseph, Jonah, Daniel, Job, etc. (p. 122). To this reviewer, a book on "understanding the Bible" should recognize the basic truth of I Corinthians 2:14, since spiritual things are "spiritually discerned."

*The Morning Star, Wycliffe and the Dawn of the Reformation.* By G. H. W. Parker. Vol. III of *The Advance of Christianity Through the Centuries*, F. F. Bruce, General Editor. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965. Pp. 231 plus chronological tables, bibliography and index. \$4.00. Reviewed by Clair Davis, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa.

G. H. W. Parker is the Lecturer in History in the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, and his book concerns the period of approximately 1350-1500. While attention is given to the abuses and reforms of the late medieval church in general, the basic purpose is to show the particular reform movements in England (Wycliffe and the Lollards), Bohemia (Hus), the Rhine (Brethren of the Common Life), France (Lefevre d'Étaples and the school at Montaigu), Spain (the Inquisition!), and Italy (Savonarola). It should serve as a fine introduction to this time, particularly when use is made of the documentation and comprehensive bibliography (almost entirely of books in English).

The theme seems to be the relationship between the new nationalisms of Europe and reform movements. Since Rome's supervision of the church had had economic and even political implications, it was perhaps inevitable that the princes of Europe should seek control over the church in their territories. They would necessarily look at "their" churches from a secular viewpoint, which determined their choice of church officials and policies; any reforms attempted against the resultant corruptions would appear to be directed ultimately against the state. Although Wycliffe's insistence upon the spiritual character of church authority could be very useful in state attempts to tax or confiscate church property, when later the same sort of argument was directed by the Lollards against the new national church, the state could be just as opposed to the revolutionary political implications as the Pope was. The same pattern of opposition to reform for the sake of the harmony of the state is described in the more centralized situation in France and in de-centralized Germany. Even the Pope himself, as he became the temporal ruler of much of Italy, saw the need of putting stability ahead of reform. Even worse, when the popes rejected the conciliar movement's theory of church government, they felt compelled to reject along with it most of the reforms which the conciliarists demanded.

Can some parallel be drawn with the contemporary situation, where the rise of political nationalism still leads to nationalistic churches with little interest in "European Protestant" creeds, and which are hence easy prey for "dynamic" neo-orthodoxy? Can there be a *doctrinal* international Christian fellowship in a day of rising nationalism?

Then as now the basis for such a fellowship was seen in Bible study and personal piety (the Brethren of the Common Life and Montaigu). Such comparatively inconspicuous, semi-mystical movements could carry on their work with much less attention and persecution from the corrupt church and her sponsoring state (although the Brethren did have to agree not to study *all* of the Bible). But finally theological conclusions demanded practical actions, and then persecution came anyway (particularly when the theology of the "harmless" group was seen to be identical with that of the activist Lutherans). Personal piety was useful, but apparently did not serve as a substitute for *institutional* reform. Perhaps even this conclusion is relevant for our day.