The Old Testament in the Church

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The recent publication of *The Authority of the Old Testament* by John Bright indicates the persistent interest of our times in the question of the Old Testament's place in the life and faith of the Christian church. This book written by one standing in the conservative Reformed tradition reflects an uneasy nervous tension much like a parent about to let his teenager use the family car. The author who is professor of Hebrew and Interpretation of the Old Testament at Union Theological Seminary at Richmond, Virginia, labors with utmost caution between a summary downgrading of the Old Testament and an unqualified acceptance of it. The book is in fact a struggle of the author to set the Old Testament in its proper place so that Christians may have the proper appreciation for it. And in relating the struggle he has projected as on a screen the picture of the church's struggle.

It is therefore appropriate for anyone who accepts the Scriptures as the rule for faith and life to take interest in and to participate in the search for a well-informed and carefully directed use of the Old Testament. The literature on the subject is enormous, as one can see by a casual scanning of the articles, monographs, and books published during the past two decades. I do not claim to have read all the literature, but enough to arouse an urge to write this article about this interesting, yet perplexing, subject.

**EARLY CHURCH TO AUGUSTINE**

The much discussed relationship which the Old Testament sustains to the New was once defined by the church father St. Augustine as follows: that the New Testament is latent in the Old and that the Old Testament becomes patent in the New. Apart from the relationship it sought to define, this statement reflected the full acceptance of the Old Testament as part of the inspired canon by the church. The ascribing of inspiration to the Old Testament can be regarded as a simple step of accepting the Bible which Jesus and the apostles regarded as Scripture; but it is equally and more rightly possible to surmise that a struggle took place on the question of the place the Old Testament should have in the Christian community.

The foregleams of that struggle appear in the New Testament itself. At the council of the church in Jerusalem, recorded in Acts 15, the authority of the Old Testament to require cultic practices was called into question. Should the Old Testament in its entirety be regulative for the Christian community? Even though

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1 Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967
2 For an extensive bibliography, see John Bright's work, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-261.
the church honored the Old Testament as God's Word, yet she declared that parts of that Word were not binding on the Christian. The apostle Paul, a member of that council, later elaborated on this question in his writings to emphasize the point that the Old Testament law in no instance had regulative control; in fact, to insist on the necessity of the law for justification is to nullify the death of Christ (Gal. 3:21). The writer of the Hebrews described the old covenant as being obsolete and passing away which, to say the least, placed the Old Testament on a secondary level. From these and other examples we gather that the church, although she revered the Old Testament, yet assumed the right to set parts of it aside.

The readiness of the church to open the canon to other writings could not but intensify hostility between Christians and Jews. Not only did Christians raise the words of Jesus and the writings of evangelists and apostles to equal rank with the Old Testament, but they also began to give recognition to non-canonical Jewish literature now known as Apocrypha. Because of the bitter enmity that developed, Christians would more and more question the competence of Judaism for determining the limits of the canon which ostensibly were set at the council of Jamnia around the close of the first century. Moreover, Christians claimed special insight given by the Holy Spirit so that they could normally and rightly draw up a "Christian" canon, which they indeed did. This meant that they looked with favor on some non-canonical writings which in the course of time, because of constant use, were placed within the canon of the Old Testament.

The freedom to pass judgment on the canon also expressed itself in rejection of the Old Testament as being inferior to the New Testament. Marcion, a radical Gnostic, taught that the God of the Old Testament was not the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Consequently, the Old Testament has no canonical standing, but only certain parts of the New Testament. Against Marcion and other Gnostics condemned as heretics, the church declared, among other things, that the Old Testament should be retained as part of the inspired literature incorporated within the Christian canon.

The rejection of Marcionism, however, did not dismiss the problem of how to harmonize the Old Testament teachings with those of the New. How should one, for example, who had been taught to overcome evil with good, or to pray for his enemies, understand the command of God to Joshua to exterminate the Canaanites? What must one do with cries or demands for vindication of the psalmists in the light of Paul's teaching that no one is just in the sight of God? Would not a semi-Marcionism which would place the Old Testament in a lower level of inspiration or which would regard it as the vestibule to the New Testament have settled the matter? The early church fathers did not need to resort to such expedients for they had a ready device in the allegory as the method of interpretation to bring the Old Testament in line with the New. Allegory had previously been used by Philo to harmonize the teachings of the Old Testament with Greek philosophy. It became the method of Christian scholars at Alexandria to find the New Testament thought in the Old. The allegory removed the offense of the
Old Testament so that the Old Testament’s place in the canon was fully justified.

In sharp contrast to the allegorical school of Alexandria the grammatical-historical school at Antioch of Syria arose. This school, in the first place, gave precedence to the Hebrew text rather than the LXX. And secondly, from this text these scholars sought to interpret the Old Testament according to the grammatical-historical sense. These two factors, one can readily surmise, produced results in exegesis at wide variance with the Alexandrine school whose allegorical method gave little attention to the historical setting and whose Greek text differed from the Hebrew extensively. However, the Antiochene school also confronted the problem of relating the Old Testament with the New. This relationship was established by means of typology. The historical persons and events were regarded as types which foreshadowed the messianic times. The type given in the Old Testament had its historical quality and possessed meaning for its time. Since, however, the Old Testament looked forward for fulfillment of promise, the historical type was the model or picture of the event that brought on fulfillment. The “historical” sense would be considered the lower and the “typical” sense the higher.

Although we are usually interested in assessing the merits of one school in comparison with the other, our interest in these schools at this moment, however, is to point out that they both kept the two Testaments together by means of their exegesis. Perhaps it would be more correct to observe that because of their apriorism that the two Testaments were parts of one Book these early fathers were under necessity to find some method of interpretation to support that unity. The New Testament indeed urged believers to accept the Old Testament as the Word of God, yet it in no way became definitive by what means of interpretation the bond between the Old and the New was to be preserved. To be sure, Antioch could appeal to Paul who twice mentioned “types” (Rom. 5:14; I Cor. 10:6), or to the writer of the Hebrews who also made use of “types” to designate the heavenly model of the tabernacle in the wilderness (Heb. 8:5); and Alexandria in turn could appeal to Paul’s use of the term allegory, if not to his method of using it (Gal. 4:24). Each system ostensibly had New Testament warrant, and each seemed to enhance the unity of the two Testaments.

The traditions of Antioch and Alexandria converge upon the era of the two Latin fathers Augustine and Jerome which in effect set the pattern for medieval hermeneutics. Since Augustine knew little Hebrew, he was limited to the use of the Septuagint (LXX) and consequently regarded it as the inspired text. This text carried the traditions and background of the Alexandrine school. Consequently we are not surprised that allegory played an important role in Augustine’s exegesis. However, his contemporary, Jerome, because of his scholarly pursuits, came under the influence of Antioch. Jerome’s fame arose primarily out of his translating the entire Bible into the vernacular Latin bearing the name Vulgate. This translation was especially praiseworthy because it was taken from the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Prior to this the Old Latin versions were derived from the LXX

text. Jerome's studies took him into Syria where he learned Hebrew and where he had first hand knowledge of Antiochene typology. It is not without significance that, in spite of the heresies of monophysitism and of pelagianism for which Antiochene scholars were condemned by the fifth ecumenical council; in spite of these heresies which would undoubtedly bring disrepute upon that school, Jerome could wholeheartedly prefer the Hebrew text to that of the LXX, and could also accept typology as a hermeneutical principle. "Guilt by association" apparently did not blind him to merits in heterodoxy. Later Junilius Africanus, bishop of Africa, became an able representative of Antiochene theology which he learned in his studies in Persia.

From the time of Augustine to the Reformation exegetical methods were uncritically adopted and used much as they were established by the Latin fathers. Both typology and allegory were in vogue. The four-fold sense of Scripture, a heritage stemming from the Alexandrine fathers, labored the text for its literal sense, then its historical through its allegorical to arrive at its mystical sense. The Bible thus understood was given to the Germanic peoples of Europe who were won to the Christian church. It would be unthinkable for these untutored pagan tribes to call the exegesis of their mother church into question. They came as kindergarden pupils into the school of the church whose teachings were accepted without challenge. In this setting the Old Testament served a useful purpose to bring these converts out of their polytheism into true monotheism. Here they learned that there was but one true God who revealed himself to Israel and that worship of other gods was abhorrent in his sight.

The tradition which the church produced through decrees and dogmas of the councils became an important factor in the interpretation of Scripture. Ideally tradition was to have equality with the Bible in determining the faith and life of the church. Practically, however, tradition had undesignedly taken up within itself methods for interpreting the Scripture which virtually reduced the rank of the Scripture to a servant of tradition, a phenomenon which later also plagued Protestantism. If then biblical exegesis was fully regulated by the church, there would not be any occasion for the problem of the Old Testament to emerge. The problem lay peacefully dormant until the Reformation made the Scripture the only source of authority.

Reformation Age

The coming of the Reformation, however its rise may be attributed to causes outside the church, drove the church to examine the structure of her authority. Since the claim for her authority was derived from Scripture, especially the words of Jesus to the apostle Peter, it became more and more urgent to determine whether the Scriptures were properly understood and interpreted. Had the popes and councils actually been in dialogue with the Word of God, or had they merely indulged a soliloquy to produce a monolithic structure which, like the Chaldeans described by Habakkuk (1:7), proceeded from itself? Within the church men
who enjoyed the advantages of learning carefully and critically probed the use made of Scripture. It then became apparent that Scripture and tradition were caught within a vicious circle in which the interpretation of Scripture produced tradition and tradition in turn controlled interpretation. The circle was broken open as methods of interpretation were called into question because these produced results that were sought for to enhance the dogma and authority of the church. With the breaking of the circle Scripture was released from the hold of tradition to undergo a new reading and interpretation by any who chose to do so.

With this new freedom for studying the Bible two well-known problems again appear: the problem of hermeneutics and the problem of the relationship of the Old Testament to the New. These inter-related problems were as old as the New Testament itself; and they had engaged the mind of the church in her history and ostensibly had been solved. Now the Reformation scholars spurred on by a newly acquired freedom and not yet restrained by later confessional statements seized the opportunity to let the Scripture be heard as it intended to be heard.¹

Luther as the Reformation's foremost spokesman held that the Scripture was the only source of authority. Councils and dogmas were to be accepted only to the degree that they were in accord with Holy Writ. Although at first he used the four-fold sense of medieval exegesis he soon abandoned it to find the literal and the spiritual sense of the text. He rejected the use of allegory except in preaching about the cultic laws in Leviticus. The law of the Old Testament had its literal sense but also its spiritual meaning which awakened guilt within man. The words of Scripture are more than mere letters arranged on the page, for these words have spiritual power to bring man to salvation. Thus it was not enough to be satisfied with the literal sense for the Word was to be encountered in its spiritual power.

The relationship between the Old and New Testament can be seen on the one hand as a contrast between law and gospel, between works and grace, between Moses and Christ, and on the other hand as a unity bound together in Christ who speaks through David and the prophets and appears as the Word made flesh in the New Testament. We do Luther no disservice to describe his relationships between the Old and New Testaments as a paradox involving contrast and continuity. The contrast takes into account the superiority of the New Testament, and the continuity gives recognition to the presence of the gospel throughout the entire Scripture.

Calvin in common with other reformers set the Scriptures as the sole authority for the Christian church. His exegesis may be described as thoroughly grammatical and historical to the extent it was possible in his day. To his exegesis he added practical observations for faith and life. Calvin did not resort to the four-fold sense of Scripture so common among the medieval scholastics. Allegory had no place in

his method, but he freely used typology by which the Old Testament promise realized its fulfillment in the New. The relationship between the Testaments appeared in the glory of God revealed to Israel and made manifest when the Word became flesh. Further, the kingdom of God established in the Old Testament found its consummation in the church of the New. Also the covenant played an important role in bridging the distance between the two parts of Scripture. Perhaps Calvin’s unique emphasis on God’s sovereign grace manifested in choosing his people from the beginning of time overarched all the biblical descriptions that united the Old with the New.

Zwingli who enjoyed a rich training in Greek and Roman thought embraced a broad view of revelation that esteemed sayings of Plato and Seneca as work of the same Holy Spirit who inspired the biblical writers. The Scripture, however, was inspired throughout, even though within it Zwingli detected laws and customs that had meaning and authority only for Israel. When the time-conditioned portions of the Scripture are properly recognized and discounted, the Scripture becomes authoritative for the Christian. In his contention with the Anabaptists who sought to build the Christian ethic on the Sermon on the Mount and rejected the Old Testament law as being given only to the Jews, the Swiss reformer insisted that since God had established one covenant for one people it followed that the Old Testament was also meant for the Christian. He did, however, set the Old Testament at a lower level because of its ritual and ceremonies and because of its nationalism which stood in sharp contrast to the open universalism of the New Testament. Differences of rank did indeed exist, yet after due allowance is made for these limitations Zwingli regarded it unnecessary to remove the Old Testament from the sacred canon.

Any student of Reformation history can readily discern the gains which came to enrich the life and faith of the Christian church. High on the list one will find the Bible as an “open” book to be read and interpreted by king and peasant alike. The strangle hold of ecclesiastical control over the reading and interpreting of the Scriptures was broken. The Book was liberated from Latin the language of scholars to be released into the languages of all peoples. In the ecstasy of appreciation for the newly uncovered treasure we rarely see any mention of the problems that the “open” Bible brought with it. The happy privilege of a free and unfettered use of the Scriptures all but blots out the thought of any problem. Even so today the many Bible Societies established for the translating and distributing of Bibles throughout the world embody the same Reformation ideal that all mankind should possess the Bible as an “open” book to be read and interpreted according to the readers’ insights. However, no attention is given to the problems of interpretation and of Old and New Testament relationship. This cautionary comment does not imply that the gain of an “open” Bible has been nullified by the problems thereby projected. Quite the contrary! The point is rather that these problems are not readily observed and they emerge especially when confessional statements are made or when preaching and teaching the Bible must come to grips with these difficulties.
The Reformers as briefly sketched above were agreed in ascribing primary authority to the Scripture. Further the canon of the Old and the New Testaments was retained even though all books were not accorded equal veneration. In no instance was it deemed necessary to remove any book from the canon. The main point of difference struggled with the place the Old Testament should have in the life and faith of the Christian church. Luther's position primarily established a contrast between the Old and New as between law and gospel. To be sure, he found Christ in many parts of the Old Testament to bind the Old with the New. Calvin labored to confirm the unity of the Bible by means of his exegetical method in accord with his presupposition that one God had ordained one redemption for one people. Zwingli held the Old Testament rather loosely, especially at those parts which fell below the spiritual tone of the New. In effect, the Reformers worked around a paradox which may be stated as follows: The Old Testament is part of the sacred canon and therefore authoritative; and the Old Testament has secondary status in that it serves as preparation for the New.

The above paradox, issuing directly from the Scripture itself, had remained quiet under the spell of ecclesiastical authority. The spell was broken; the paradox became alive. A search was begun to resolve the tension of the paradox, which search the Reformers initiated.

**Post-Reformation Period**

As Protestantism became more and more established it needed less defence against the Roman Church. Its authority was now vested in the Bible which then became the object of study and evaluation. In its most conservative declaration, the Formula Consensus of the Second Helvetic Confession (1675), reformed theologians of Switzerland declared that the words, the letters, the vowel points and punctuation were given under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and therefore all were inspired. Comparisons of the Hebrew text with versions and variations within manuscripts to the degree that they were then known revealed that the Consensus was an overstatement, for vowels were a later addition to the Hebrew text and scribal changes in the transmission of the text could be discerned. The text which had been accepted as the Word of God had incorporated the evidences of human attempts to make that Word more readable and understandable. The human-temporal element played an important role in the transmission of the Scriptures.

Significant contributions of post-reformation biblical research for interpretation of the Old Testament come under the title of literary and historical criticism. Since the word criticism lends itself to an erroneous interpretation we should bear in mind the two usages of that word: fault-finding or passing severe judgment, and investigation or research. It is the latter which offers the proper meaning for the word criticism. Methods and principles of criticism were in common use in studies of classical literature and also in Semitic writings which were coming into the hands of European scholars. From Jean Astruc's publication of his Memoirs
in 1753 in which he detected two literary sources for the book of Genesis until our day, literary analysis of books of the Bible has engaged many scholars in determining the sources and times of writing of parts of Scripture. Long held views such as Moses the writer of the Pentateuch, Isaiah the author of the 66 chapters in his book, and Paul the author of Hebrews were challenged and declared to be untenable in the light of the evidence from the Bible. Furthermore in line with the prevailing Hegelian scheme of progress and development, writings were assigned dates according to a sequence of lower to higher levels of thought. Even though variations and disagreements, not to mention rejections of conclusions, appeared among scholars, yet a general consensus developed on literary sources and times of writing. Because of phenomenal archaeological discoveries during the past fifty to seventy-five years in the ancient world of the Bible conclusions in biblical criticism have been and are being revised. These discoveries have produced volumes of literature in areas of ancient worship, law, wisdom, and history so that literary and historical criticism will continue to be an interesting and profitable discipline in biblical studies.

The church, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, reacted unfavorably at first toward the results of criticism. The issue in conflict was the divine quality of the Bible. Some questioned the propriety if not the right to subject the Holy Book to methods of analysis used for secular writings. Others were loath to acknowledge any human or fallible elements within the sacred writings. Moreover, biblical research often carried on its labors apart from any indication of accepting the Old Testament as the revelation of God. Were the ancient writers from their situation in life simply producing literature about God, man, and the world, then the Bible can and does become a history of the religion of Israel. However, if indeed some scholars regarded the Old Testament as either the religion or the history of Israel, others did not find themselves shut up to these conclusions, for they accepted the results of criticism to enhance the understanding of the revelation of God given to Israel through her history. Furthermore, since the Old Testament intends to show that God's redemption took place in the course of history, it became especially important to know the historical context in which God revealed himself. Thus it became increasingly clear that biblical research can be an indispensable aid for understanding the Bible. As a result we can discern a steady trend among Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars to accept the results of biblical criticism. We refer to this change as a trend which implies that a sizable portion of churches and scholars react unfavorably even as many in the churches did in the past.5

Since the Old Testament reflected the moral and religious standard of Israel's day which did not reach the level of the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, it was not surprising for churchmen of post-Reformation times to give less than un-

qualified approval of the Old Testament. The various branches of the Protestant church acknowledged the divine character of the Book and that it served as the historical introduction to the New Testament. However, it could not be used to establish Christian doctrine unless it had been reinterpreted in the light of the New Testament. The cry for vengeance or the principle of retribution was not in conformity with the teaching of love for the enemy enjoined in the New Testament. Some regarded the Old Testament as an elementary school book which in truth had value for instructing the Jews, but obviously no longer had that value for Christians. The theologian Schleiermacher made no distinction between the Old Testament and pagan literature for both can equally serve as an introduction to the New Testament. Judaism has indeed an advantage over pagan faiths since it is in historical line with Christianity. It would seem reasonable, therefore, to retain the Old Testament for the sake of historical continuity and enrichment, but it would be erroneous to use it as the foundation for the Christian faith. Many could agree to the use of the prophets and psalms for high moral teachings and for use in worship; but this partial acceptance would not mean indorsement of the entire Old Testament.

Scholars such as G. F. Oehler and L. Diestel placed the Old Testament in the progressive revelation of God. It must be read in the setting of Israel's life in which the process of revelation began. Process necessarily implied difference in levels of ethical and religious thought. These levels were, therefore, to be expected in the Old Testament so that Christians should not indiscriminately appeal to it for instruction in faith and life. Diestel in warning against using the Old Testament as a repository for Christian doctrine advised that the historical setting of the Old Testament be taken into account, that the development of religious thought be observed, and that the Old Testament related to and interpreted by the New Testament can be properly used in the thought and life of the Christian Church. It is therefore possible that the Old Testament can be appropriately related to the Christian faith.

Since the Christian Church through her history gave priority rating to the New Testament, it is noteworthy to observe a few instances in which the Old Testament laws and customs were embraced for regulation of life. The Munsterites, a development out of the Anabaptist movement, during their brief history set up their community along the line of the kingdom of Israel. Practices such as polygamy, circumcision and observing of dietary laws were part of the community's life at the cost of being held in disrepute. In England the dissenters in interest of freedom found that the prophets were most useful instruments for denouncing the oppressive rule of kings and priests. Here sabbath legislation became especially strong through the influence of the Puritans on civic life. Also certain "fringe" groups observed the laws of circumcision and of eating proper foods. Seventh Day Adventism of more recent times has carried on these observances. The law of the tithe found and still finds much acceptance especially because of its practicality for the support of church work. The above survey to which the observance
of marriage laws and of not taking interest on loans may be added indicates how little the customs and laws of the Old Testament served to regulate the life of the church.

In summary, the church stemming out of the Reformation was disposed to keep the Old Testament as part of the sacred canon. She was disposed to use it as the fitting and enlightening historical introduction to the New Testament. If we have rightly heard the servants of this church, then in her more circumspect acceptance of the Old Testament the church made sure that the Old Testament Word should be evaluated, corrected and completed by the New Testament Word; and in her less discerning moments the church indiscriminately made the Old Testament serve her doctrinal statement or way of life. Her labors were both her burden and her joy. Much like a composer of a symphony after laboring with his theme through different movements may find no solution for his theme, but in the searching has produced the beauty and ecstasy of the symphony, so let it be for the church in her labors, for her labors produced no solution, but while she labored she heard the symphony of God's redemption for the world issue forth from both the Old and New Testaments.

The Problem Today

Our final purpose in this paper is to view the main lines of thought on our subject as expressed by scholars of the past half century. Lest any reader should entertain hopes of a new solution to an old problem, he should be properly forewarned by the words of the Preacher "That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been" (Eccl. 3:15). A better maxim for our purpose, however, is to be found in the paradox: History never repeats itself, and history always repeats itself.

The results of recent discussions on the Old-New Testament relationship may be summarized under three heads:

1. The low point of view which would dismiss the Old Testament from the sacred canon.
2. The high point of view which regards the Old Testament as the primary source of revelation.
3. The moderate point of view which sublimes the Old Testament to the New but retains it as part of divine revelation.

1. The low point of view. We may recall that Marcion during the second century reacted radically against the Old Testament to exclude it from the canon. He affirmed that the God of the Old Testament was not the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Harnack the renowned historian in his work on Marcion claimed that the ancient heretic was right in his judgment of the Old Testament. It is to be regretted that the reformers had not gone further to place the Old Testament books in the same category with the Apocrypha. Much of the opposition to Christianity, so Harnack alleged, stems from the offence arising out of the Old Testament. Even though Jesus regarded it as Scripture, we need not do so since Jesus
himself affirmed that all true knowledge of God comes through him (Matt. 11:17). Harnack did not press his point as was done by Friedrich Delitzsch, the famous Old Testament scholar, who in his two volume work, Die grosse Täuschung (1920-21), went to great lengths to point out the inferior quality of the Old Testament in the light of the New, and consequently urged that the Old Testament be removed from the canon, to enhance the witness of the church.

Of more recent times E. Hirsch in his Das Alte Testament und die Predigt des Evangeliums (1936) contended that the Old Testament serves as the antithesis to the Christian faith based on the New Testament. He was especially influenced by Kierkegaard who regarded the Old Testament as the negative background by which the excellence of the New Testament becomes clear. Hirsch tolerated the Old Testament only as the antithesis to the New. He lived during the fierce anti-Semitic outrage in Germany which in part may have induced him to relieve the church of the Old Testament burden as he saw it. His devaluation of the Old Testament was too one-sided and arbitrary for the Old Testament has teachings on faith and conduct that are not antithetical to the New but stand in close harmony with it.

The low view receives very thorough exposition by R. Bultmann in his essays, "The Significance of the Old Testament for the Christian Faith" and "Prophecy and Fulfillment."

In the first essay Bultmann declares that one who regards Jesus as a continuation of the Old Testament prophets in their emphasis upon the true worship of God and outgoing love for the neighbor has robbed the New Testament of its uniqueness and has made it a refined Judaism. If, however, one embracing the Christian faith has recognized Jesus Christ as the unique revelation of God, then the Old Testament can have no validity in matters of faith.

The particular purpose of the Old Testament is to give man understanding of his existence as sinner under the demands of the law. However, apart from the Old Testament the Gentile also stands as sinner under the demands of the law of conscience. We who have been under the Old and New Testament influence do not readily appreciate that the demands of the law that drive the sinner in his guilt to Jesus Christ for pardon do exist apart from the Old Testament as Paul asserted (Rom. 1:32; 2:14f.). Hence Bultmann argues that merely because the Old Testament awakens man to a sense of sin and guilt it cannot therefore be accepted as the unique Word of God.

Bultmann correctly observes that within the Old Testament we have both law and gospel, guilt and forgiveness. These are fully communicated by God to Israel in her history. Although God's forgiving grace does not appear on every page of the Old Testament, yet an impressive portion witnesses to God's faithful grace to

his wayward people. It must be noted that this grace was mediated to Israel as people. The call of Abraham, the deliverance from Egypt, and the restoration from Babylon are favors bestowed on Israel, not on those outside of that nation.

In contrast to the above the final act of God's grace in Jesus Christ is not restricted to a people within one historical process. Israel's history does not parallel the history of the Christian community coming out of many ethnic backgrounds. Since this act of God in Christ takes on worldwide dimensions, the Christian Church has no significant tie with the Old Testament redemptive history. Therefore, the Old Testament for the Christian is no longer a revelation as it has been and still is for the Jew.

The Old Testament serves a useful purpose for understanding the claims of God upon man, for hearing the demands of the law, and for realizing the forgiveness of God's grace. It is here that the Christian can see himself mirrored as a sinner being reconciled to God in Christ. This then would make the Old Testament Word an indirect Word of God for the Christian. Thus the Christian faith may take hold of the Old Testament which was spoken as God's Word for another situation in order to prepare him for hearing the Word of Christ spoken into the present situation. In this sense, Bultmann asserts, the Old Testament may be called prophecy which has fulfillment in the New Testament.

In the second essay, "Prophecy and Fulfillment," Bultmann takes hold of three concepts that sought fulfillment: the covenant, the kingdom, and the people. Each of these concepts represented God's relationship to Israel, and each failed to reach fulfillment. The covenant to be fulfilled in Israel's history required cultic ceremonies which ignored moral demands. Since Israel was unable to meet the moral requirements of God's law and relied on cultic ceremonies, the covenant of the Old Testament miscarried. The concept of kingdom, which extols God as King, identified this rule of God with historical Israel. However, especially after the Babylonian exile, the kingdom as the embodiment of historical Israel in a world power became less likely a realization which was then sought in some eschatological hope. Here also the concept of kingdom miscarried. So also there was a miscarriage of the concept of people which sought fulfillment in some form of worldly power.

The miscarriage of the concepts of covenant, kingdom and people which is seen in the Old Testament turns out to be the negative side of promise which looks forward to fulfillment. And indeed fulfillment was realized in the coming of Jesus Christ for in him God has changed the failure of the Old Testament into an achieved reality. This reality has a two-fold dimension in that the kingdom and people are within the here-and-now of secular history and are oriented toward the full reality at the return of Jesus Christ. The point is that the miscarriage of the Old Testament issues into the promise which finds fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

2. The high point of view for the Old Testament receives its ablest presentation by A. A. van Ruler of Utrecht University, Netherlands, in Die Christliche
Kirche und das Alte Testament. Van Ruler is much impressed with the deep concern that God has for the world which he created and for the practical daily affairs of Israel's life. This kind of impression must be seen in contrast to the spiritual teachings of the New Testament on guilt and forgiveness in man's relationship to God through Jesus Christ. Van Ruler takes hold of the theme of the kingdom of God as the primary witness of the Old Testament. This kingdom is the "plus" of the Old Testament over against the New (p. 71). The "plus" of the New Testament over against the Old, in turn, is the deity of Jesus. This "plus" of the Old Testament, the theocracy, deals with the common affairs of life, such as the possession of the land, the social and economic life, the administration of justice, and the development of culture. These are the "politics" of God in the widest and best sense of that word (p. 85). To put this in a phrase, it is the sanctification of the earth.

It is van Ruler's contention that the Christian church in her preaching needs to present not only the doctrine of Jesus Christ, but more especially the kingdom of God which Jesus Christ came to establish. That kind of preaching will come to grips with such earthy matters about which the Old Testament speaks. If the preaching of the church is largely restricted to the New Testament, then the spiritualizing of earthy matters takes place with the result that the church becomes unrelated to the world. Since the Old Testament may be considered as God's first approach to the world, the church should carefully observe that that approach revolved about the day-by-day, this-world existence of the people that God had redeemed. The rule of God, the theocracy, was not an eschatological prospect as commonly envisaged by Christians who rely heavily on the New Testament. It was rather the a priori motif that was being expressed throughout the Old Testament. The New Testament filled in that basic pattern through the forgiveness and reconciliation of Christ. The Old Testament, then, is more than a convenient and perhaps necessary background for understanding the New Testament message; and, surely it is more than a recital of dead legalism or a miscarriage of the Old Testament covenant and ideal.

3. The moderate point of view. This point of view will mediate between the first two. To mediate between different positions on any matter implies an acceptance in part as well as rejection in part, with the hope of finding a middle way which embodies a synthesis of all the important factors.

Any evaluation of scholars such as Harnack and Hirsch in their low views of the Old Testament must recognize that they have indeed uncovered certain "low" levels in the record of Israel's history. Difficult as it is for those of us who have grown up in a tradition that makes the entire Old Testament the authoritative Word of God to see something inferior in it, we ought not let a tradition blind us to keep us from seeing the Old Testament as it really is. We ought to recognize that these scholars have pointed out some serious faults in the Old Testament's
witness, such as the narratives of vengeance and guile, the extermination of pagan nations, or the laws for the execution of heretics. One who has embraced the Gospel of love and forgiveness cannot but be embarrassed with the sub-Christian, if not non-Christian, parts of the Old Testament.

We are not the first to have seen these parts of the Scripture. Throughout her history the church knew these parts as well as we. Yet she was not minded to regard the Old Testament as non-canonical or a less sacred part of the Bible for she listened to some parts of the Old Testament with as much profit as to the New. She heard the Word of God through prophets and psalmists as clearly as through apostles and evangelists. The church focused her attention on the Old Testament through the lens of the New to accept it as the proper preparation for the coming of Christ the Lord. So it was that the church adopted the Old Testament as a whole fully cognizant that she could not use it all as normative for faith and life which the Spirit had given to the new creation of God. Within that Old Testament the church found proper attitudes of contrition and humility before God; she observed the redeeming grace of God for his wayward people; and here she learned the principles for the establishing of God's rule upon earth. These were some of the positive values that the church saw in the Old Testament.

But the church, especially since Reformation times, has seen some negative features in the Old Testament. F. Baumgarten in his essay, "The Hermeneutical Problem of the Old Testament," selects as typical instances such shortcomings as the sinister and murderous deeds of Jehu or the demand for vindication as in Psalm 26. When we confront shortcomings of this nature we ought with as much integrity as we possess to admit that these are low levels in the sacred canon which clearly indicate that God came to Israel, or rather to man, where man actually lived and thought. God's redemptive act and word occurred there. It must then be understood that such acts and words are below the level of the New Testament acts and words, and therefore are not normative or authoritative for us as Christians.

The position of van Ruler, as given above, may be seen as a vigorous protest against those on the one hand who dismiss the Old Testament because of its little value for the Christian church and those on the other hand who read back a New Testament interpretation into the Old Testament, a somewhat ingenious Christologizing to remove the offense. Let it be said with hearty appreciation that van Ruler has defended the Old Testament against the low judgments passed upon it and has delivered it from the sentimentalization of those who fail to see any problems in it. We may well heed van Ruler's emphasis that in the Old Testament God encounters man in his total need, a need which involves his earthy existence.

After acknowledging our debt to van Ruler for his imaginative and valuable insight, we still are not convinced that he has taken into account all the data both of the Old Testament and of the New. The kingdom of God as seen in Israel also appears in the church of the New Testament, and indeed in the church's earthy

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existence to which the epistles especially attest. The New Testament contains more than teachings about a spiritual relationship with God through Jesus Christ for it instructs the church how to conduct herself in the daily struggle with the forces of the world in which she actually lived. Moreover, the Old Testament is more than the record of the theocracy in its encounter with human needs and problems. Problems of anxiety and despair that disrupt the personal and spiritual relationship with God also arose. Further, psalmists and prophets deal with subjects such as penitence, forgiveness and joy which are elements that describe spiritual and individual relationships.

In compressing the data of the Old Testament within the concept of theocracy van Ruler has not determined what the "low levels" of theocracy, such as the institution of slavery, the regulations for marriage, the cancelation of debts, only to mention a few of the laws of the theocracy, should mean for the Christian church. His book gives the impression that once the Old Testament is seen as God's kingdom coming into the world, the problem of preaching that kingdom will not arise. Surely we must admit that the principles of that kingdom have reached new and higher dimensions, even this-worldly dimensions, in the New Testament. In what way, one is moved to ask, can we now make use of the pattern of the Old Testament kingdom which in the language of the New is declared to be old and obsolete?

Since van Ruler has recovered a much needed emphasis in the understanding and presentation of the Old Testament, we are loathe to be critical of his work. However, his point of view indulges an arbitrary selection of data that unfortunately fails to do justice to both Old and New Testament.10

PROPOSED SOLUTION

The study pursued in this paper will have achieved its purpose if it has made clear that the Christian church through its various spokesmen acknowledged both Testaments as the Word of God. This study has also observed that the church struggled with the difficult problem of how she should use the Old Testament in a modern age far removed from the conditions of life in ancient Israel. Impossible as it was to find a method that would satisfy all minds, each generation and each branch of Christendom made their attempts to find a method which would make the Old Testament a living Word for the new age. Lest we let the problem go by default by ignoring it, and lest we handle it carelessly or capriciously, we ought to establish a workable method that will do justice to the full counsel of God which issues from both parts of Scripture.

1. The historical event must be clearly understood. During the past few decades biblical scholarship has discerned that the Old Testament revelation is presented through the mighty acts of God in history. It is therefore necessary for the interpreter to know the historical background and furthermore to comprehend

the interpretation the author makes of the event he narrates. A careful and patient
reading of the entire account will disclose what the author intends his readers or
listeners to learn about the acts of God. Let us cite a case in point. The historian
of Judges has declared his purpose for writing in 2:11-23. The history of the
Judges was cast into the cycle of apostasy, judgment, deliverance and rest. The
details of the exploits of the judges were to serve the main theme of God's judg-
ment on Israel's rebellion and his compassion which moved him to redeem his
people. Apparently the author feared that readers would become enamored with
details as in the case of Samson, that he expressly warned against a departure

Since books like Psalms and the Wisdom Literature do not readily present a
historical setting, it becomes difficult if not impossible to determine a historical
background. Here we of necessity must resort to surmise and conjecture and probe
the known history of Israel to find an appropriate setting. Since the major part of
the Old Testament presents its witness in the context of historical events, it would
be reasonable to assume that poets and wisemen wrote from the context of event
rather than from philosophical speculation.

2. The Old Testament event embodies promise for the future. The promise
received a partial fulfillment within the scope of Israel's life, yet more elaborate
and varied than envisaged by those receiving the promise. In the nation's pros-
perity historians recalled the fulfillment of the redemptive acts of God begun in
Israel's infancy, and in the nation's dark night of exile the prophet arose to speak
for he had seen the light of fulfillment which God would bring to pass, a ful-
fillment surely never imagined by those who in previous generations had experi-
enced the redeeming favor of God. Thus it was also when apostles and evangelists
saw fulfillment in magnitude and universalism of believers within the church.

Fulfillment realized in part within Israel's history, fulfillment breaking forth
into new dimensions in the New Testament, it is fulfillment which is the theme
that properly conditions our mind in our use of the Old Testament. It is from
this source we follow the wondrous trail of redemptive fulfillment that reaches
new heights in every succeeding age of the church.

3. The Old Testament is to be related to the New. Since we have accepted
the New as the fulfillment of the Old Testament promise and hope, we are under
compulsion in our use of the Old Testament to find correspondence, enlargement,
and realization in the New. To present the Old in isolation from the New is to
run the risk of offering a truncated understanding of the faith. Lest any inferior
portion of the Old should control the preaching of the church, it is necessary that
every Old Testament passage should be brought under the light of the New for
correction, improvement, and enlargement so that the full understanding of the
faith may not be hindered. We have been forewarned in the temptation of Jesus
that an appeal to the Old Testament may serve an evil purpose. To avoid any well
meaning but erroneous use of the Old Testament we would be well advised to
relate the Old Testament to the New.
4. The redemptive acts of God must be represented. Martin Noth in his discerning essay, "The 'Re-presentation' of the Old Testament in Proclamation," points out that Israel was constantly re-presenting the saving acts of God through her feasts. It was at times such as the observance of the Passover that Israel relived the deliverance from Egypt. The purpose was not merely the reliving of an ancient event, but especially to have something like a recurrence of deliverance take place in the present life.

We may well take the narrative of ancient Israel's redemptive history to re-present it as fully consummated in the redemptive act of Christ. Further that redemptive history should be so re-presented that it has meaning for every generation in the life of the church. It would then become the privilege of the church to recall the redemptive acts begun in Israel and fulfilled in Jesus Christ; and each generation would realize a consummation in part in the ongoing life and would await the final consummation at the appearing of our Lord.

11Ibid., pp. 76-88.