

The Old Testament in Christian Proclamation

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During the difficult years of Communist rule many preachers in our church turned towards the Old Testament portions, and found not only amazing wealth of material, but also practical guidance for the life of the congregation and also for society and nation.¹ At times of great crises such as 1956 in our country we experienced that the story and message of the prophets of ancient Israel were relevant in our situation, too.² Many of us came out of those critical times with the conviction that preaching the Old Testament³ is essential for the life of the church. In the following this matter is to be pursued further.

I.

1. In the early days of spreading the gospel many of the Christians of Gentile background got in direct contact with the Old Testament after having been contacted by Christian evangelists. Notable exemptions were the “God-fearing Gentiles” (*goim*)⁴, who were prepared to receive Christ through their contact with Judaism (Acts 8:27). Many got to know the Old Testament through Christian witness to the Messiah.⁵ Among them St. Luke, the writer of the Third Gospel and of Acts, occupies a prominent role. His Gentile origin is generally accepted.⁶ It is a significant part of Luke’s message that he sees Jesus’ activity as the fulfillment of the promises found in the torah, the prophets, and the writings of Israel.⁷ The knowledge of Christ led him to the Old Testament and to its christological interpretation.

Luke learned from the Old Testament that the Father of Jesus Christ is the God of Israel who is the Creator and life giver of all,⁸ who continues in Jesus his saving activity, including standing by the poor and the marginalized.⁹ This vision enables him to put the Christ-Event into the very center of history, stretching from creation until the final consummation. This was the way of Luke to become a New Testament author. So he is among the writers, who were lead through the Old Testament to the full comprehension of the significance of the event of the incarnation. Luke and his fellow writers opened the way for contemporary Gentiles from Christ to the Old Testament, and from there, with a deeper comprehension of Christ’s mystery, back to the New. Consequently, with the closing of the process of canonization the organic togetherness of the two testaments was clear.¹⁰ For the church Christ became the hermeneutic key for understanding the scriptures of both testaments.¹¹

2. By emphasizing that God the Savior is identical with God the Creator, Luke fits in among the New Testament writers of Jewish origin. His voice, as that of a Gentile, makes it even more emphatic that the message about the unity of creation and redemption manifested in the person of Jesus Christ is an essential contribution of the Hebrew Scriptures to capturing all dimensions of salvation. This understanding was absolutely necessary for a Christian struggle against Gnosticism,¹² which was characterized by a sharp dichotomy between immaterial¹³ spiritual and material. For the same reason the eucharistic prayers of the church very early included thanksgiving for both creation and redemption.¹⁴ Thus, in spite of vigorous Gnostic-dualistic pressures the spirituality of breaking bread and pouring wine has been constitutive for the

spirituality of the Eucharist.¹⁵

Unfortunately, even without Marcion's rejecting the Old Testament, Gnostic dualism found its way into the church whenever the New Testament was interpreted through the spectacles of Gnosticism instead of taking its Old Testament background seriously. This has often happened with "spiritualizing" the Old Testament through depriving the events described in it from their historicity, and interpreting them as "shadows" of reality justified with a platonic misunderstanding of Col. 1:17. So we get into a vicious circle. New Testament texts are interpreted in the light of platonic-Gnostic dualism. This interpretation, then, is projected back into the Old Testament, which is thereby reduced to a book of illustrations of immaterially "spiritual" truths without reference to events of history. For example, Genesis 24, instead of speaking about the story of the son of the promise who is given a spouse securing thereby the continuation of saving events in the family of Abraham, becomes exclusively¹⁶ a foreshadowing of Christ and his bride the Church. The Song of Solomon in this interpretation does not speak about love between woman and man, which includes erotic and the possibility of procreation, but only about the relationship between Christ and the Church.¹⁷ In the light of Isa. 54:6 and Eph. 5:23 there is room to see the relationship of lovers in analogy with Christ and Church.

This kind of "spiritualizing" has often brought itself a total neglect and/or rejection of Israel as a community existing even after the incarnation mostly by simple replacing Israel by the church. This was bound to lead to anti-Semitism.

3. Where any kind of dualistic "spiritual" interpretation prevails, the Old Testament loses its real significance. The experience of the power of God's Word by the reformers was bound to lead them to a new appreciation of the Old Testament in its real historic nature¹⁸ both for doing theology and for preaching. The hermeneutic principle of *sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone) developed which was bound to lead to the view that scripture is its own authentic interpreter.¹⁹ This recognition had two practical consequences: (a) It encouraged preachers to look for background information in the Old Testament while interpreting New Testament texts; (b) it also influenced them to bring Old Testament texts to the pulpit. Calvin followed the method of some church fathers such as St. Augustine and St. John Chrysostom and read through and interpreted whole books (*lectio continua*) of the Old Testament.

This practice of the reformers was later distorted, and the devaluation of the Old Testament occurred once again. Dualism has always lurked and has attempted to influence the church toward a dualistically spiritualized misinterpretation of the Old Testament or even toward putting it out of use. The Nazi "German Christians" went to the extreme in producing their "dejudaized" Bible.²⁰ This act also had a prehistory in Christian anti-Semitism, and in the Protestant theology of the last century. Adolf Harnack in his book on Marcion says: "To reject the Old Testament in the second century was a mistake which the universal church rightly rejected; to retain it in the sixteenth century was a fate from which the Reformation was not able to disentangle itself; but to conserve it since the nineteenth century as a canonical document in Protestantism is a result of religious and church paralysis."²¹ In Harnack's view the Old Testament is not to be rejected because there are no "Christian elements." Thus certain selected portions of the Old Testament might be useful to read. It would be a "great deed" demanded of Protestantism not to maintain the Old Testament as a holy scripture.

Even those who thought more positively about the Old Testament at that period would not regard it as of equal value with the New Testament. Some missed the "Christian ideas" in it, and would not identify Yahweh with the Father of Jesus Christ. Others thought it was "subchristian" or even "anti-Christian." These critics would agree that it represented a stage of development preparing the way for Christianity.²²

4. One of the most important facts in the development of the theology of the twentieth century is the rediscovery of the Old Testament. The Word-Event²³ experience of Karl Barth has had its impact on every field of the theological enterprise. The fact that God's Word has been given in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments means that "a *fundamental, qualitative* difference" in relationship between the two testaments cannot be accepted.²⁴ The "God of Moses, Jeremiah, Job, of Psalms 39 and 139 is also the God of Capernaum and Nazareth, of Gethsemane and Golgotha."²⁵ "The prophets speak with the apostles 'in the face of an indivisible, perfect revelation of the triune God,' and they 'proclaim God speaking in Christ.'"²⁶ That is the reply of Barth to the aforementioned claims of the mainstream of Protestant theology in which he himself had been nurtured. This important stand taken by Barth was made in 1927, and proved to be of utmost significance a few years later in the struggle against Nazism, too. The ground occupied by some OT scholars had been made available by Barth.²⁷ It was providential that with the growth of Nazism the study and high appreciation of the Old Testament kept on growing to prepare the church for the coming struggle.²⁸

In the effort to recover the Old Testament for the church's proclamation Wilhelm Vischer also played an important role. He taught that the cornerstone of the Old Testament is Jesus Christ, and that both testaments bear witness to Him. Consequently the church which rejects the Old Testament is not a church anymore.²⁹ Gerhard von Rad³⁰ saw the relationship of the two testaments as that of structural analogy, that of "peculiar interconnection of revelation by word and revelation by event...the supreme analogy...is in the ever deeper and harder confrontation of humans with a God who keeps on hiding himself, over against whom humans are exposed exclusively to the bold venture of faith."³¹ In other words, the same God is experienced as turning to humans to judge, to forgive, to covenant with, to deliver, to lead, and to command.³² The task of the chosen one is to convey blessing for all nations of the world.³³

The writers of the New Testament witnessed to their experience of having been addressed in Jesus Christ by the same God who had spoken to Moses from the burning bush. At the same time they felt the new intensity of being spoken to by Christ (Heb. 1:1-4). They represent both continuity and discontinuity with the Old Testament.³⁴ The New Testament as a whole witnesses to the uniqueness of the Christ-Event and its organic oneness with the Old. Therefore, these writers are able to find analogies to enlighten their witness to the God of Israel, who is testified to in the torah, the prophets, and the writings, who sent his Son in the fullness of times (Gal. 4:4). Consequently, there are points of analogy and contact between the people of God in the Old Testament and the people called by Christ. This relationship is expressed among others by the typological interpretation of the Old Testament.³⁵

In the efforts of recovering the Old Testament for the life and witness of the church, Dietrich Bonhoeffer had an important role to play, too. The Old Testament was decisive for shaping his theology. At Finkenwalde he was able to put his thoughts in practice in terms of preaching and liturgy, where the daily chanting of psalms was part

of the liturgy, was very significant. The vigorous and fruitful pursuit of Old Testament studies in our own days challenges us to take the Old Testament right into the center of the life of the congregations, and offers us the necessary tools to do so.

II.

1. The preaching of the Old Testament is important first of all, because in doing so we follow the example of Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the evangelists, as we have already seen in connection with Luke. As far as the Jewish authors of the New Testament are concerned, they see their heritage in a new light in Christ. Preaching the Old Testament they proclaimed Jesus Christ.

2. This recognition is to be followed by practical action of the preacher. The dynamic interaction of the two testaments makes it essential for her/him to take the full scripture into account even when preaching New Testament texts. That is the way of putting the Reformation principle (scripture is its own interpreter) into practice.³⁶ One possible, simple way of doing this is to try to find the same topic in the other testament.³⁷ Thus the portions taken from both testaments will enlighten one another.³⁸

3. The third important principle is the study of the text in its original context with all historical and literary critical means available. This offers us the possibility of getting an insight into the event.³⁹ The present writer is deeply convinced that illumination comes from the Holy Spirit; without His work the Word would not reach us. The Spirit makes the preacher, as it were, contemporary with the biblical witnesses. The One who spoke through the prophets (Nicene Creed) binds us preachers together with them. However, the Holy Spirit is not working without our God-given human intellectual capacities, but captures, enlightens, and uses them (2 Cor. 10:45b). The search for the right understanding of the contexts helps us to see the struggle in which the biblical witnesses were involved. In doing this we need the help of the Rabbis and Jewish scholars of the Old Testament.

The words of a respected German teacher of homiletics fit here: "The Holy Scriptures contain both the Old and the New Testaments in their wholeness. The awareness of the preacher of the mutual dynamic relatedness (*gegenseitige Bezogenheit*) of the two testaments is fundamental for the understanding of the text. The Old Testament even as a textbook is indispensable for the preacher. Biblical preaching by definition is the preaching of the Old Testament, too....It is unacceptable to preach a New Testament text as if the Old Testament did not exist....Furthermore, it is the peculiarity of the Old Testament texts that witness to the God of Israel. Therefore, while preaching the Old Testament one must not forget that along with the Church Israel does exist...and Yahweh remains faithful to his people."⁴⁰

4. It has already been pointed out that *Christian* preaching is by definition the proclamation of Christ. What does it mean in practice that the preacher's task is in every single case to proclaim Christ? In order to answer this question Bonhoeffer's views on creation are worth considering: "...the God of creation and of the real beginning is at the same time the God of resurrection. From the beginning the world is placed under the sign of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Indeed it is because we know of the resurrection that we know of God's creation in the beginning....The dead Jesus Christ of Good Friday and the resurrected *Kyrios* (Lord) of Easter Sunday: that is...creation from the beginning."⁴¹ Creation and New Creation belong together.⁴²

Approaching the witness of Israel from a different aspect Walter Brueggemann

puts creation and homecoming from the exile side by side as Yahweh's work of "radical newness." "Yahweh promises to overcome all forsakenness and abandonment....Here it is Yahweh's resolve...not to abandon, but to embrace. The very future of the world...depends on this resolve of Yahweh."⁴³ From here a straight path leads to resurrection, because in the few Old Testament texts directly referring to resurrection- along with some other texts - "Israel's testimony breaks finally even the boundary of death."⁴⁴

Bonhoeffer and Brueggemann agree that there are important features of God's actions which are in harmony with His very character. The scriptures inform us of certain patterns of behavior characteristics of God. These patterns might be termed as types (*typoi*) of God's activities. This is the basis for a biblical view of typology. This typology is not a speculative-dualistic one as in the ancient East. Rather it is built of the historical experience of God's people, who bear witness to the same God being active in history, the God who remains faithful to his promises, is actively involved in events, leads his people, and shapes the future, who breaks through the boundaries of history. These decisive acts of Yahweh are types of the things to come. These events which "foreshadow" the future are not shadows, but significant events in themselves, and as such include promises for the future. It is a distortion to regard the events recorded in the Old Testament as only shadows of things to come without significance in themselves.⁴⁵ The scriptures do speak about creation and providence, that is, about material/historical events. This view, and the practice resulting from it, has caused a lot of harm and helped Christian communities to avoid struggling with inhuman deeds in history, such as the holocaust, because it instructed people not to bother with "material things" but to seek dualistic-spiritual values instead.⁴⁶

Therefore it has to be emphasized that the Exodus and the wandering in the wilderness not only foreshadow the way of the church marching towards the heavenly rest, but are important events of God's dealing with the chosen people, and as such are paradigms for the present (Heb. 3:1 - 4:16; 12:1-2).⁴⁷ Joseph and David are not only types of the coming Christ, but are significant persons in the story of Israel. The *Ebed Yahweh* songs in general and Isa. 53:5 in particular do have significance in themselves for Israel, and are not only shadows of the cross. These types are important revelations of God's actions with his people and with the world.

5. From the point of view of preaching it seems to be important to distinguish between typology and allegory. The first one refers to analogies between real events. The second is not rooted in history, but is completely arbitrary.⁴⁸ In Gal. 4:24 Paul uses the verb *allegoreyo*, in 1 Cor. 10:11 the word used is *tytikos*. In both cases he points to events in the history of Israel and sees analogies with events in the church. He sees that the birth of Ismael was due to human effort, while Isaac's birth was a manifestation of grace. Consequently the two women are also types and not allegories. Using the method of allegory anything and its opposite can also be proposed. The history of preaching offers many examples of that.⁴⁹ The dynamics of promise and fulfillment plays an important role in the Hebrew Bible. It was the book of promises for the early church.

It is important for the preacher to be in a living relationship with the scripture through prayerful study. Exegetical works do give us help to unfold the content of our text.⁵⁰ Biblical theology helps us in shaping our own views concerning the scriptures as a whole.⁵¹

In studying the Old Testament the recent work of Walter Brueggemann offers help to us. On the one hand it leads us into a deeper understanding of the dynamics of revelation. On the other hand Brueggemann juxtaposes the pluralism within the Old Testament with the pluralism of the contemporary world. It is not a matter of reading contemporary (postmodern) ideas into the Bible, but discovering the relevance of pluralism with the Old Testament for the mission in a pluralist society. There is a “pluralism of faith affirmations”; that of methods of interpretation;⁵² a pluralism of interpreting communities. “There is no going back...to older assured hegemony...no going back to agreed-on critical methods that can maintain hegemony, and no going back to a dominant interpretive community that imagines itself to be immune to contextual-ideological shaping and interest.”⁵³ From the point of view of the preacher this is very important. We cannot preach with an assured hegemony protected by the structures of the Constantinian Era behind us. If we do, we shall be rejected by our contemporaries who seem to be more willing to listen to voice of testimony rather than that of hegemony.

Another Old Testament scholar, George A. F. Knight, also offers us help in shaping our own theology of preaching in which the two testaments form an organic unity: “The biblical faith...is centered on life on this earth....In fact...it is finally centered on one man....He was born into the ancient covenant. He was an Israelite. He was a member of that people of whom God had said, ‘Israel is my...first born son’...Jesus was not born as a mere isolated individual....He was the epitome, the indigenization, the ‘explicitation’ of the divine activity that works through the Covenant that had been in progress since the foundation of the world...ever since God said to Abraham ‘Go’ and Abraham went, and God went with him; ever since God said to Moses, ‘Go into the chaos which is Egyptian society, and bring out my people Israel’ and had then added the words, ‘It is I AM who is sending you, the I AM who will be with you always.’ This ‘with-ness’ of the I AM with this world in covenant is what we ultimately call Incarnation.”⁵⁴ He illustrates his vision with some examples in which we can see a kind of synthesis of typological and promise-fulfillment interpretations. He understands the *ego eimi* sayings of Jesus as having an ambivalent character and do not contain statement about Jesus’ preexistence. However, in their ambivalence they bear witness to Jesus going on the sea according to Mark 6:47-52 what God had done in the beginning with the primal watery chaos, and also in Psalm 46:7.⁵⁵ In the Gospel of John, Knight sees “explicit interpretations of who Jesus is....So when we hear the words ‘I AM’ from Jesus’ lips...for example ‘before Abraham was, I AM’ (John 8:58),...John is declaring that from the beginning Jesus had been doing what God does,...love, and save and recreate.”⁵⁶

Perhaps the most difficult problems in preaching the Old Testament arise when the preacher encounters the difficult texts, which speak about Yahweh’s unreliability, harshness, capacity for violence “beyond rationality.”⁵⁷ Bonhoeffer called these “offensive” texts.⁵⁸ He rejected the view of the “history of religion” school which saw an earlier stage of development. Brueggemann also regards these as essential and organic parts of Israel’s (counter)testimony. Both agree that one has to struggle with the text and see the offensiveness or ambiguity of the particular text in the context of the whole testimony. Bonhoeffer emphatically says that all these are to be seen and interpreted in the light of the cross and the resurrection.⁵⁹

The historical character of revelation must be clearly seen. However, it is not to

be seen as the old “history of religion school” regarded it. But there is a history of Israel (of humans) struggling with God (Gen. 32:22-32). This struggle with God’s involvement takes place not above, but within history. The revelatory process includes by its very nature facing up to the real problems of life full of inhumanities and cruelties. God reveals himself within the process of this dynamic interaction in the struggle of life. Here we have to do with a divine accommodation in God’s condescension to human capacity for perception. The alternative would have been a total disregard for humans created after God’s image. God, who would later be incarnate in Jesus, had long before “humbled himself” in initiating the process of self-revealing applied to human condition, which includes human imperfection in terms of receiving, comprehending, and accepting God’s word⁶⁰ in struggle and obedience. In this sense there is a development of thinking and relating to God’s condescension. In all these one sees God’s respect for humans created according to His image. God not only does not hate what He created,⁶¹ but has a respect for them. The human agents of revelation are not passive media automatically filled with words to be delivered as if a tape recorder was speaking which could be copied *en masse*. It pleased God to tie humans to himself with human ties.⁶² The climax of this binding with human ties is the very fact of the incarnation which is the expression of full respect for humans. Had revelation been given automatically there would not have been need for incarnation, cross, and resurrection.

To have this vision of the Old Testament - or both testaments for that matter - results in seeing that Christ both relativizes and absolutizes the elements of the process of revelation. Relativizes in the sense as Jesus does in the sayings of the Sermon on the Mount: “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times...But I say to you....” He also absolutizes them in the sense that God’s saving activity is to be continued and extended according to the promises for all nations (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 19:25; Psalm 87:4). So the struggle against sin has to go on, but it has to be undertaken while making a clear distinction between sin to be rejected and sinner to be saved.

Along with the “offensive” text we find a refined but deliberate condemnation of sin. God has given man one partner to become “one flesh” with (Gen. 2:18-24). There is not a single open word of condemnation over Lamech taking two wives. We have, however, a description of Lamech in his vain and foolish pride, boasting for committing murder carried out by the weapon made by his son. In front of his wives he gives the reader a clear picture concerning God’s intentions (Gen. 4:19-24). The same message is in the disclosure of the sins of David. In these stories many problems of life in family and society are envisaged. Here we have the great problems of our days: the smith makes sword first, the physicist atomic bomb, the computer specialist instruments to direct ballistic missiles. Lamech boasting of his murder with a bloodstained sword in his hand might be a symbol of the self-destructing civilization of our days. As Bonhoeffer puts it: “The men and stories of the Old Testament are not moral prototypes but witnesses of the election and promise of God. The Old Testament witnesses to God’s free, merciful, and wrathful action with his people, not moral example.”⁶³

During the years of the “soft dictatorship,” which was a dictatorship anyway, I preached a series of sermons on the Book of Daniel, in which proud rulers and empires pass away and Yahweh’s lordship over history is being proclaimed.⁶⁴ The book gave us guidance until we witnessed the collapse of the Empire without “touch of hand”

(Dan. 2:34).

In the postmodern world, when the optimism of the modern Era has gone, when uncertainty and loss of values and decomposition of language prevail; when the old stories lose their attraction,⁶⁵ there is room for witness of those who found meaning in being in covenant with the God of the Old Testament who cares for all nations and the whole of creation in Christ (1 John 5:20).⁶⁶ In this era of despair the church, and within it the preacher, has an immense responsibility towards the world. We are debtors to the world (Rom. 1:14). We are debtors to proclaim the Gospel of Christ; to preach the “eternal gospel” to all (Rev. 14:6) at a time of the greatest crisis of our civilization, among the changes, turbulence, and despair of the present world. The Old Testament makes it clear that this proclamation must not be reduced to verbal communication. It must sound out the life of the community which carries the ancient memories of past ages, and present experiences of the community gathered together over the ages to proclaim in the unity of word and deed God the Creator who is God the Savior.

Notes

¹ Similar experiences and practices had been present in the Hungarian church since the sixteenth century as the people had lived through crises many times. During the Ottoman-Turkish invasion of a large part of the country, preachers made analogies with Israel in exile in the spirit of the Deuteronomy tradition in Babylonian captivity. They proclaimed God’s judgment on the people with the promise of restoration. The Old Testament often offered guidance in many details.

² In 1955 I made a plan of preaching for 1956 and was to preach the Book of Nehemiah chapter by chapter from June onwards. It was amazing how the events were enlightened and interpreted by reading that book. On the day the Russian Army began to crush the revolution by opening a full-scale bombardment of the city of Budapest, I was to preach on Nehemiah 13. The emphasis in the sermon written beforehand was on verse 43. By the time we entered the church about fifteen miles from Budapest, the noise of the bombardment could be heard during the service. I had to change my words accordingly. I do not remember what I said. The prepared text of the sermon, which I still have, speaks about the joy of the people being heard far away.

³ It is proposed here that a distinction is to be made between preaching a text or preaching on or from a text. The former means that the preacher is to enter into the dynamics of the text and be mastered by it instead of having mastery over it. This view is represented by Karl Barth and many others. “The preacher must yield himself to the movement of the Word of God.” Karl Barth, *Prayer and Preaching* (London: SCM Press, 1964), 92. Cf. 70 & 89-92. *Mastery over a text or a topic is what a rhetor practices*. There have been many “rhetors” in the history of preaching.

⁴ Today this term is used for Gentiles in the Jewish communities of Central Europe for non-Jews.

⁵ “The way to the Old Testament for Christians was mediated by the New Testament. Thus the Old Testament through the New Testament first became the ‘inheritance’ also for Christians.” Dietrich Preuss, *Das Alte Testament in christlicher Predigt* (Stuttgart: V. W. Kohlhammer, 1984), 21-22.

⁶ Walter Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas* (Berlin: Ev. Verlaganstalt, 1966), 34-35; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1980), 41-42; Mircea Eliade, *The Encyclopedia of Religions*, vol. 9, no. 51, (New York: Macmillan, 1986); Konrat Ziegler & Walther Sonstheimer (Hrsg.), *Der kleine Pauly Lexikon der Antike* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1979) Band 3: 771-772.

⁷ Luke 4:20-25, 24:27, 44-45. Grundmann, *Lukas*, 2-5; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 149-150, 155.

⁸ Acts 17:26.

⁹ Luke 1:46-55. Cf. Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 648-649. In reference to Luke 7:22 and 9:31, where the very word *exodus* is used, Brueggemann says: “Thus it is possible to see that the narratives of Jesus’ powerful transformative acts (miracles) are in effect enactments of *exodus*.” 179.

¹⁰ Including John and not only for 1-5 and 4-22 but also for his expressing Old Testament concepts using the language of Hellenism. John was “showing how Old Testament themes were implicitly woven into Jesus’ actions and words.” Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (1-11) (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1966), LXIV.

¹¹ A. H. J. Gunneweg, *Vom Verstehen des Alten Testaments* ATD Ergänzungsreihe 5 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 26.

¹² Grundmann, *Lukas*, 5-7.

¹³ Spiritual in Gnosticism is something opposed to material. In the scriptures spiritual is the person or thing under the guidance of the Spirit of God. This Old Testament view is taken over and becomes emphatic first of all, but not exclusively, in Pauline theology. That is why the manna is for Paul spiritual food (1 Cor. 10:3-4).

¹⁴ The bread and wine on the Lord’s table represent both the gifts of creation and the fruit of human labor, which is also a gift of creation. The Jewish *Birkat ha-mazon* is also in the background. These gifts offered as sacrifice of thanksgiving are given back as the body and blood of Christ. Cf., e.g., “Didache”, “The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome” (about 215 A.D.). Lucien Deiss, *Springtime of the Liturgy: Liturgical Texts of the First Four Centuries*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1979).

¹⁵ The present writer in his Hungarian book on Liturgics deals with this matter. János D. Pasztor, *A reformatus keresztyen egyház istentisztelete LITURGIKA* (Debrecen: Ref. Theol. Akadémia, 1985), 20, 108.

¹⁶ The word exclusively is important here, because there is room for drawing analogies (types) between events of the Old Testament and the Christ-Event.

¹⁷ As Brueggemann succinctly puts it: The Song of Solomon “is the fullest articulation in the tradition of Israel of celebrative well-being that affirms in exotic, erotic detail the goodness of life given by God.” He also refers to Bonhoeffer’s similar approach. Cf. Brueggemann, *O T Testimony*, 341.

¹⁸ As for the historical character of Old Testament, which for that very reason demands historical-critical research without yielding the monopoly of interpretation to critical research, which itself is far from being “neutral and objective.” The impact of Barth’s recovery of theological interpretation has been important for many biblical theologians including Brueggemann, *O T Testimony*, 1-114. As for the notion of “God acting” Brueggemann’s way of thinking is convincing, 124-125. See footnote 18, too.

¹⁹ These tenets of the Reformation were also rediscoveries: the liturgical order of the ancient church with readings taken from the Old Testament, the Epistles, and the Gospels were originally meant to show how these passages threw light on one another. The *solus Scriptura* was first formulated by Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln (1168-1198), and Roger Bacon, also English cleric, “Doctor mirabilis” (1214-1292).

²⁰ The “theological uncertainty about the value and authority of the Old Testament, which rested on the uncertain relationship of Old Testament science against the Old Testament itself,” the anti-Semitism of much of Christianity since the Middle Ages, and the Nazi belief in “the hour of Germans,” when God reveals Himself in the historical moment in the people and Blood, and in Hitler. “In Hitler has the time been fulfilled for the German Volk. It is through Hitler that Christ, God the Helper and Liberator has been mighty among us. Hitler is the way of the Spirit and of the will of God for the Church of the German nation. We shall build the church along with the preserved old stones (Bible and Confessions) with new ones (Race and folkishness [Volkstum]).” Alfred Burgsmüller and Rudolf Weth (Hrsg.), trans. JDP, *Die Barmer Theologische Erklärung, Einführung und Dokumentation* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1983), 84. Cf. Martin Kuske, *The Old Testament as the Book of Christ: An Appraisal of Bonhoeffer’s Interpretation*, trans. S. T. Kimbrough (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 8, footnote 33. These are the consequences of getting rid of the Old Testament.

²¹ Adolf Harnack, *Marcion das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (1921), 248-249. Quoted by Kuske, *Appraisal of Bonhoeffer*, 9.

²² The names of Friedrich Baumgarten, Reinhold Seeberg, Ernst Sellin and their views are given in more details in Kuske, *Appraisal of Bonhoeffer*, 9-14.

²³ Karl Barth, “Reformierte Lehre ihr Wesen und ihre Aufgabe” in *Das Wort Gottes und die Theologie* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1929), 179-212.

²⁴ Kuske, *Appraisal of Bonhoeffer*, 14-15.

²⁵ Karl Barth, *Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes Prolegomena zur christlichen Dogmatik* (1927), 242 Quoted by Kuske, *Appraisal of Bonhoeffer*, 15

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Brueggemann, *O T Testimony*, 25-26

²⁸ Ibid , 35-37

²⁹ Wilhelm Vischer, *Das Christuszeugnis des Alten Testaments* (Zollikon Evangelischer Verlag, 1946) Band I 32 (First edition 1934¹ At that time the Nazis were in power and the German (Nazi) Christians were very active) English translation *The Witness of the Old Testament to Christ* (London Lutterworth, 1949), 27

³⁰ Von Rad's emphasis on the "mighty acts of Jahweh" has to be seen in the context of the growing Nazi danger of anti-Semitism Cf Brueggemann, *O T Testimony*, 37-38

³¹ Gerhard von Rad, *Theology des Alten Testaments* (Munchen Chr Kaiser, 1960) Band II 377 The quotation has been translated by JDP

³² The English translation is also available Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York Harper & Row, 1965), 363-364 Cf Brueggemann, *O T Testimony*, 145-212 As for his evaluation of von Rad's theology see 38-42 In my own understanding Brueggemann, in spite of his criticism of von Rad, *mutatis mutandis* carries on this aspect of his views

³³ Brueggemann, *O T Testimony*, 492-527

³⁴ The dialectic of the Sermon on the Mount is another clear expression of this Matt 5 17-48 emphasizes continuity, then goes on " But I say to you "

³⁵ von Rad, *Alten Testaments*, 370-388 English translation 357-376

³⁶ See section I 3 in article

³⁷ That might have been the intention of some of the ancient pericopes, portions assigned for certain times which consisted of Old Testament, Epistle, and Gospel readings addressing the same issue

³⁸ von Rad, *Alten Testaments* , 397

³⁹ The scriptures witness to events either by telling the story or by reflecting upon certain events So the psalms recall the deeds of God with His people (e g , 78), and the apostles reflect upon the Christ event Cf Janos D Pasztor, *The Heritage of the Reformation Word-Event for Church and World*, Warfield Lectures, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1992

⁴⁰ Rudolf Bohren, *Predigtlehre*, trans JDP (Munchen Chr Kaiser, 1974), 120-121

⁴¹ D Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall* English trans J C Flatter, (1971), 19-20 Quoted by Kuske, *Appraisal of Bonhoeffer*, 36-37

⁴² Cf Brueggemann, *O T Testimony*, 550-551

⁴³ Ibid , 551

⁴⁴ Ibid , 484

⁴⁵ In my own church we have often found this kind of preaching in the case of the "difficult" - which Bonhoeffer called "offensive" - texts about killings and cruelty The enemy is sin which is to be annihilated This kind of preaching is a kind of primitive "demythologization" Cf Helmut Thielicke, *Der evangelische Glaube*, English trans Geoffrey W Bromiley, (Tubingen J C B Mohr, 1968), Band I 50-66 *The Evangelical Faith* (Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1974), vol 1, 34 & 38-65

⁴⁶ During World War II we received Christian pamphlets, printed in Germany, speaking about *parousia*, last judgement, etc , without mentioning what was going on in the country

⁴⁷ In the same way the Book of Acts of the Apostles gives not only information about the beginnings of the Church and her mission, but also offers a paradigm for every age

⁴⁸ "To speak so as to imply other than what is said " Liddel and Scott, *Abridged Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1874), 35

⁴⁹ L C Westermann, W , Zimmerli, and Jurgen Moltmann *The Theology of Hope* of the latter is built upon this model completely

⁵⁰ Good commentaries give us informaton about the text, and lead us to perceive how others read the same text in a different context

⁵¹ Just one of the many possible examples E P Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia Fortress Press, 1977) gives us an excellent insight evaluation of the world of thought of St Paul in relation to Judaism including such questions as the relationship of justification by grace alone through faith and participation as tenets of Pauline theology This book helps us to gain new insight when studying any text

of the *Corpus Paulinus*

⁵² The historical critical approach has not disappeared, but has lost its hegemony. The story of the texts is still informative, but so is the work of the redactors. In other words the text as it stands in Israel representing Israel's testimony of Yahweh is of fundamental significance.

⁵³ Brueggemann, *O T Testimony*, xvi

⁵⁴ A. F. K. Knight, *I AM This is My Name: The God of the Bible and the Religions of Man* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 49.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁵⁷ Expression used by Brueggemann, *O T Testimony*, 383.

⁵⁸ Kuske, *Appraisal of Bonhoeffer*, 48-52.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶⁰ According to Brueggemann "as far as Israel is concerned, 'being' is established in and through speech and not behind it." *O T Testimony*, 714, footnote 21. That is meant by divine condescension. God allows Israel to struggle in speech - availing ourselves with Brueggemann's vocabulary - in terms of testimony and countertestimony instead of solemn declarations that would have been to be accepted without contradiction and delay. (As in the case of the early Jesuit practice to accept orders *sicut cadaver* (as a dead body).) These struggles and contradictions do show a certain development.

⁶¹ Cf. the prayer for Lent: "Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou has made." *The Book of Common Prayer* (Kingsport TN: Kingsport Press), 166.

⁶² "I led them with cords of human kindness" Hosea 11:4.

⁶³ Quoted by Kuske, *Appraisal of Bonhoeffer*, 50.

⁶⁴ Janos D. Pasztor, "Preaching in a Society Hostile to the Gospel," *Journal for Preachers* 15 (Advent 1991): 3-9.

⁶⁵ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁶⁶ Brueggemann, *O T Testimony*, 492-563. P. 498 stresses the significance of Gen. 12:3 and Exod. 19:5-6 for a theology of mission to the nations.