

# THE SPRINGFIELDER

Vol. XXVI

Summer, 1962

No. 2

THE SPRINGFIELDER is published quarterly by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

## EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

ERICH H. HEINTZEN, *Editor*

J. A. O. PREUS, *Associate Editor*

MARK J. STEEGE, *Associate Editor*

RICHARD P. JUNGKUNTZ, *Associate Editor*

## Contents

Page

### EDITORIALS

Convention *Post Scripta* ..... 3

### IMPLICATIONS OF THE HISTORICO-CRITICAL METHOD OF INTERPRETING THE OLD TESTAMENT (conclusion) .....

6

Raymond Surburg, Professor, Old Testament

### THE DAVIDSMEYER MEMORIAL LECTURES, 1962

#### I. WHAT I EXPECT OF MY PASTOR

IN THE PULPIT..... 26

Norman A. Graebner, Urbana, Illinois

#### II. WHAT I EXPECT OF MY PASTOR

OUTSIDE THE PULPIT..... 36

Hon. Norman A. Erbe, Des Moines, Iowa

BOOK REVIEWS ..... 43

BOOKS RECEIVED ..... 60

Clergy changes of address reported to Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, will also cover mailing change of *The Springfielder*. Other changes of address should be sent to the Business Manager of *The Springfielder*, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

Address communications to the Editor, Erich H. Heintzen, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

Business correspondence should be addressed to Peter Mealwitz, Director of Seminary Relations, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

# Implications of the Historico-Critical Method in Interpreting the Old Testament

RAYMOND SURBURG

PART TWO

(conclusion)

*(Part One discussed the origin and development of the historico-critical method and contrasted its views with the traditional view of the inspiration of the Bible. Part Two treats of the historico-critical interpretation of the miracles and Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament and contrasts that position with the attitude of Jesus toward the Old Covenant).—Ed.*

## IV.

THE acceptance of the historico-critical method has further resulted in the rejection or nationalization of the miracles of the Old Testament. Miracles are interwoven with the entire fabric of the history of Israel; especially is this true of certain periods of Old Testament history. The early course of Israel's history is dominated by miracles, such as her liberation from the Egyptian yoke (e.g. the plagues), the passing through the Red Sea, Israel's sojourn in the wilderness (e.g. the manna, water from the rock, sending of quails, and blooming of the staff of Aaron), the conquest of Canaan (e.g. the crossing of Jordan and conquest of Jericho). During the period of the Judges there is the miraculous account of the fleece on the threshing floor (Judges 6:36-40). Within the time of the divided monarchy, Elijah and Elisha are outstanding as the greatest thaumaturgists of the Old Testament. Through Elijah the supply of meal and oil for the widow of Zarephath did not fail during the famine, later her dead son was restored to life, fire was brought from heaven and caused to consume the sacrifice on Mt. Carmel. Finally, Elijah was taken into heaven by means of a fiery chariot.

Elisha divided the water of the Jordan, purified with salt the waters of the spring at Jericho, fed a hundred men with twenty barley loaves and a few ears of grain and cured Naaman from

leprosy; after the death of Elisha, a man placed in the same sepulcher, on touching the bones of the prophet, was restored to life. There are eight and sixteen miracles recorded as performed by Elijah and Elisha respectively in I and II Kings. In the writings of the literary prophets, only one miracle is recorded, namely, the retrogression of the shadow on the sun dial in Hezekiah's palace. Prophecies, frequently predicting events many years before their occurrence, take the place of miracles in the literary prophets. During the Babylonian exile there are the miracles of the rescue of three men in the fiery furnace and the preservation of Daniel in the lions' den.

### *Old Testament Miracles: History or Myth?*

Theological liberals have always rejected the miracles of the Old Testament as impossible and therefore as unhistorical. Neo-orthodox scholars interpret the miracles somewhat differently, but in the last analysis arrive at the same conclusion. Aage Bentzen claimed that in dealing with Biblical narratives, it is necessary to distinguish between the problems of historical research and the Christian faith.<sup>67</sup> When working with the history of Israel the question of credibility must be raised. This is especially needed when operating with miraculous events. Although Bentzen says that historical science cannot deny the possibility of miracles or the existence of God, neither can it assert their existence.<sup>68</sup> Miracles, he claims, lie outside the field of experience, which is determined by nature as known to all men. It is the aim of historical research to show how everything happened quite naturally. "Therefore historical research must dismiss miraculous stories as of no use to describe events of history. It cannot deny that they are true. But it cannot use them. It may assume in many cases, an 'historical nucleus' behind the miraculous 'embellishment' worked into the story by tradition and poetry. But it cannot accept the whole story as it stands as credible. It must leave it unused."<sup>69</sup> Although the Old Testament historian cannot employ the miracles in the sense that they record objective history, they are still valuable, according to Bentzen, because they aid the modern reader to understand the Israelite religion at a given period in its historical development.

Neo-orthodox theologians reject the historicity of the Old Testament miracles by portraying the Biblical writers as employing

"the myth" in their writings. To interpret "mythological" accounts literally is to be guilty of wooden-headed literalism, the great error of orthodoxy. Reinold Niebuhr warns against the error of regarding "the early form in which the myth is stated as authoritative."<sup>70</sup> "Religion" says Niebuhr "is involved in myth as a necessary symbol of the faith."<sup>71</sup> Charles Kean, an adherent of the "mythological" school, demands as a first requisite for dealing with Biblical history "a rejection of Biblical fundamentalism, because no appreciation of mythology is possible if the myths themselves are literalized."<sup>72</sup>

Leading interpreters at the present time look upon the discussion of miracles in the Old Testament as out of place in the presentation of objective history. Stories that record the miraculous are to be regarded "mythologically." It is their contention that the miraculous element in the Biblical narratives is of no ultimate consequence for the historical character of those parts of Scripture in which the miracles are imbedded.

Although Alan Richardson recognizes the fact that the concept of the miraculous is essential to the proper understanding of God and the Bible narratives, yet he still maintains it is important for readers to examine critically the miraculous incidents of the Old Testament and to scrutinize them in the light of modern knowledge.<sup>73</sup> There are two main groups of miracles that require examination: 1. those associated with the Exodus (The Ten plagues, Ex. 8-12; the crossing of the Red Sea, Ex. 14; the miracles of Moses in the wilderness); and 2. those found in the biographies of Elijah and Elisha.

The Elijah-Elisha complex of miracles are, according to Richardson, best understood as "legendary tales of wonders which accumulate around famous men" and testify to the impression their personalities made upon their contemporaries.<sup>74</sup>

### *The Exodus Miracles*

Regarding the miracles associated with the exodus of Israel from Egypt, neo-orthodox historians will not admit them as true historical happenings. Thus William Neil calls the exodus story "a saga" concerning which the student does not know what is behind it. To quote him: "Taken separately, most of the details—the plagues, the crossing of the water, the pillar of fire—can be ra-

tionally explained."<sup>75</sup> Neil attributes these miraculous stories now found in the Bible to embellishments by story tellers.

Muilenberg, in *The Way of Israel*, in discussing the passing of the Children of Israel through the Sea of Reeds, states that if the historian is asked what really happened there, he would be forced to answer that he does not know.<sup>76</sup> Faith, however, responds to the same question: "Our God delivered us from bondage." Coert Rylaarsdam explains the account of the passing of the Israelites through the waters of the Red Sea as a story which in the course of time went through the process of communal embellishment. "The crossing was an event which lay wholly within the nexus of nature and history as these are scientifically understood."<sup>77</sup> The event of the deliverance of the Israelites was simply caused by an east wind which drove back the water, enabling the Israelites to cross over safely. A different account makes the parting of the water due to Moses' use of a magic wand. A third account (Exodus 14:17-18, 22b) has the waters separated by the rod as to stand like walls.<sup>78</sup>

Bernhard Anderson informs the readers of the Book of Exodus that it is essential when interpreting the Egyptian plagues to realize: "The Israelites did not have our kind of historical curiosity. These narratives do not purport to be an objective photographic report of exactly what took place, devoid of all bias and interpretation. Rather, they testify to events as Israel experienced them, as they were interpreted within the community of faith."<sup>79</sup> Anderson in discussing the various miracles in the Exodus story advises the readers to be aware of the existence of "irregularities, inconsistencies, and folk elements in the narratives as they are now in the Bible. The material in Exodus has been colored by Israelite faith. Since the whole account is interpretative, it is very difficult to separate sharply the central elements of the tradition from the late accretions."<sup>80</sup>

Richardson denies the reliability of the narratives of the exodus miracles because their portrayal comes from a late period which makes it impossible to reconstruct any of them in terms of reliable accounts of what transpired.<sup>81</sup>

Like liberal theologians of the last hundred years, so also neo-orthodox writers reinterpret the miraculous accounts of the Old

Testament. In contradistinction to the traditional understanding of miracles, the position of neo-orthodoxy rejects the possibility and reality of miracles. The traditional understanding, accepted by all branches of Christendom before the age of rationalism, interprets miracles as "events due to an incursion of God into human life and history beyond what could occur by any merely natural means."<sup>82</sup> This position has been stated by Pieters: "We believe that these things so recorded, are true, and actually happened as related, in spite of the fact that they are impossible and incredible to the man who does not believe in an almighty God."<sup>83</sup> The New Testament also bears out the interpretation of the miracles of the Old Testament. Christ and the Apostles regarded the Old Testament miracles as actual interventions of the power of God in the course of human history. This was also the view of the Ancient Church Fathers and of the Protestant Reformers.

The position of neo-orthodox writers who deny the historicity and reliability of miracles of the Old Testament is in essence repeating the objections of Strauss (1808-1874) who regarded miracles as mythical accretions to the original narrative, and entirely unhistorical. The rejection and rationalization of miracles rests upon a rationalistic attitude toward Scriptures. For the most part this interpretation of miracles is based upon *a priori* philosophical principles that are false. In other instances, it involves the rejection of human testimony, or the manipulation of evidence in the interest of preconceived theories. The writer finds himself in strong disagreement with the "mythological" interpretation because of the latter's view of God and Scripture. The rejection of miracles of the Old Testament goes hand in hand with the concept that Scripture is not a direct revelation from God to man but merely the record of what certain Israelites imagined they had experienced or of the interpretation they placed on certain acts of God.

The Books of Daniel and Jonah are denied their historical character by assigning them to the area of fiction; at the same time thus disposing of three miracles in these two books, which have always been a stumbling block to rationalistic interpreters.

## V.

Higher criticism, as espoused by liberal and neo-orthodox theologians, has resulted in the rejection of many Old Testament

prophecies formerly conceived of as Messianic, as well as the proposing of a new concept of the nature of Messianic prophecy. An unprejudiced reading of the Old Testament shows that it has a two-fold purpose: 1. to preserve the knowledge of the true God among the Israelites; and, 2. to prepare the Israelites for the coming of Christ and the New Testament era. Immediately after the fall, God announced the coming of a Redeemer. At first the references to Him were revealed in a general manner, but later the promises became specific and assume in the prophetic literature a definite form and pattern. Bible-believing Christians of different denominations have considered the following passages as Messianic: Gen. 3:14-15; 9:24-27; 12:1-3; 49:8-12; Numbers 24:15-19; Deuteronomy 18:15-18; 2 Sam. 7:12-17; 23:1-7; Job 19:25-27; Proverbs 8:22-31; Psalms 2, 8, 16, 22, 45, 72, 110, 118; Amos 9:11-15; Hosea 1:10-11; 2:18-23; 3:4-5; Isaiah 2:2-4; 4:2-4; 7:13-14; 9:1-7; 11:1-5; 40:1-6; 42:1-7; 49:1-9a; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12; 60:1-6; 61:1-3; Micah 5:1-4; Jer. 23:5-6; 31:31-34; 33:16-17; Ezekiel 17:22-24; 21:30-32; 34:23-24; 37:22-25; Daniel 7:12; 9:24-27; Haggai 2:6-9; Zechariah 3:8-10; 6:9-15; 9:9-10; 11:12; 12:10; 13:7; Malachi 3:1-5; 4:2-4. These passages are taken from works on Messianic prophecy by L. Fuerbringer, Hengstenberg, F. Delitzsch, Reich, Stöckhardt, Mack, Riehm, Heinisch, Cooper, Sampey and Knox.<sup>84</sup>

The designation of the above listed passages as Messianic rests upon certain assertions by the New Testament concerning the Christo-centric character of the Old Testament. Alan Richardson admits that from the apostolic days, the view developed that "the importance of Old Testament prophecy consisted chiefly in the element of prediction which it contained."<sup>85</sup> Again he says: "But whatever we may think of the details of their application of it, there can be no doubt about the principle which the evangelists and indeed all the New Testament writers affirm: that in Christ all the prophecies are fulfilled."<sup>86</sup> Jesus Christ said to the Scribes and Pharisees of His day: "Ye search the Scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39) To the unbelieving Jews, Christ spoke the condemning words: "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me." Luke in describing the missionary activity of Apollos writes: "Thus Apollos showed by the Scriptures (namely, the Old Testament) that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts

18:28). Peter writes concerning the New Testament understanding of the Old Testament: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow" (I Peter 1:10-11). Paul assures his co-worker and associate, Timothy, that the Old Testament Scriptures which he had learned from childhood were able to make the user of them wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. The basic attitude of the Evangelists and Apostles can be summarized in the words of Paul, that in Jesus Christ all the promises of God are Yea and Amen (2 Cor. 1:20).

Christians were not the only religionists who used the Old Testament and found many predictive passages about the coming Messiah's person and rule. According to Edersheim, the number of passages in the Old Testament regarded by Jews in pre-Christian times as prophetic of the Messiah is greater in number than those cited by Christians. Edersheim lists upward of 456 references in the Old Testament considered as Messianic by the Jews, of which 75 are from the Pentateuch, 243 from the prophets, and 138 from the Hagiographa.<sup>87</sup> "But comparatively few of these," he adds, "are what would be termed verbal predictions." However, this interpretation corroborates the fact that the whole Old Testament is to be regarded as bearing a prophetic character. It is as Unger wrote: "The idea underlying the whole development of these Scriptures and the life dealt with therein is that of God's gracious manifestation of himself to men, and the establishment of his kingdom on the earth. This idea becomes more and more distinct and centralizes itself more and more fully in the person of the coming King, Messiah."<sup>88</sup> Both Jews and Christians have attached special importance to the following passages: Gen. 3:15; 9:27; 12:3; 22:18; 49:8, 10; Deut. 18:18; II Sam. 7:11-16; 23:5; Psalms 2, 16, 22, 40, 110; Isaiah chapters 2, 7, 9, 11, 40, 42, 49, 53; Jer. 23:5-6; Dan. 7:27; Zech. 12:10-14; Haggai 2:9; Mal. 3:1; 4:5,6.

### *Messiah: Divine Prediction or Jewish Dream?*

An examination of the writings of liberal and neo-orthodox theologians discloses their departure from the Scriptural position



that the Old Testament spoke in a predictive manner about Jesus Christ. Burrows in *An Outline of Biblical Theology* discusses the matter of the Messiahship of Jesus. He admits that Christian theology from the beginning identified Jesus with the Messiah and that this was the burden of apostolic preaching. However, Burrows depicts the Messianic hope not as a matter of God's self-revelation, but rather as a hope which was developed and fostered by the Jewish people in the course of their history as a result of the political disappointment they experienced.<sup>89</sup> It is the contention of modern higher criticism that many passages traditionally interpreted as Messianic will not upon closer scrutiny of scientific exegesis bear nor allow the Messianic interpretation assigned to them. Thus the Swedish scholar Ringgren asserts that a number of Old Testament passages which from the earliest days of the Christian Church had been interpreted as fulfilled in Christ, have now been explained differently. Consequently, a gulf has been established between the interpretation arrived at by the historico-critical method and the understanding of the same passages by the Christian traditional faith.<sup>90</sup>

An outstanding contemporary neo-orthodox theologian says about predictive Messianic prophecy: "We can indeed no longer imagine that the Old Testament writers were given a miraculous 'preview' of the events of the life and death of Jesus, or that detailed predictions of his ministry and passion were divinely dictated to them; nor shall we look for precise fulfillments of particular Old Testament texts, as writers in the pre-critical period have done ever since the days of the author of St. Matthew's Gospel (e.g. 1:22f, 2,5ff, 15, 17f, 23, etc.)."<sup>91</sup> This view negates direct divine communications to the saints of old about the coming of the Christ. The discussion on "the Messiah" in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* does not mention any prophecies regarding the Messiah prior to the passages in the Samuel books where David is told that an eternal king would rule on the throne of David.<sup>92</sup> According to Dentan, the Messianic teaching of the Old Testament is not a matter of divine revelation, but the product of development of Israel's experience. The conception of a divinely chosen deliverer is to be traced to the Near Eastern idea of kingship which took root in Israel during the Davidic reign. In the Near Eastern world the king was regarded as a semi-divine figure from whom there radiated power able to give prosperity, peace, and victory in

battle. When the hopes of the people of Israel were disappointed by the actual kings of David's line, it was only natural that the people should transfer their hopes to some future ideal king. By the end of the kingdom of Judah in 587 B.C. this concept of an ideal ruler had become fixed in Hebrew eschatological expectation.<sup>93</sup>

Psalms 2, 8, 45, 72, 89, 110 usually interpreted traditionally as Messianic and containing predictions about Jesus Christ, are said to have had their origin, according to modern critical scholars, as "royal psalms." The latter were composed and used in connection with the yearly enthronement of Yahweh or New Year's Festival of Yahweh. Before David died his admirers idealized him.<sup>94</sup> As the process of glorification progressed, David became a Messianic figure and was considered a prototype of the future Messianic king. In regard to the whole idea of divine kingship in Israel and the festival of the ascension of the throne (Thronbesteigungsfest), which is made the basis for the interpretation of the so-called "Royal Psalms," and also of the new concept of Messianic prophecy, it should be noted that there is no reference to such a festival in the Bible. Yahweh has always been King; he never is represented as becoming King. The alleged renewal of Yahweh's Kingship was not celebrated among the Hebrews as far as it can be determined from the Old Testament. It was especially in the exilic and post-exilic periods that the Messianic hope was supposed to have been developed. This, it is said, was due to the disappointment of the Jewish people to have a kingdom of their own, and instead of focusing their hopes in political action, they began to center their hopes exclusively in the idea of God's intervention in human affairs by setting up His eternal rule on earth. The title of "Anointed One" or "Messiah" given at first to the kings of Israel was used just before the Christian era to designate the ideal King who was to establish God's reign among men on earth.

## VI.

The tenets of modern biblical criticism, which rearranges the contents of the Old Testament, are also in conflict with the authoritative teaching of the New Testament on isagogical matters. That there is likewise a conflict between modern biblical criticism and the assertions of the New Testament is recognized by various Old Testament scholars. Thus Kuhl wrote: "If the Holy Scripture

was the word of God in the sense that God Himself had given it to man in this form, then indeed it was elevated above all criticism. Up till now any criticism that has been made within the confines of the Church has always been restricted to textual criticism, such as Origen's fundamental and valuable attempt with his *Hexapla*; and the intention has always been not to criticize the word of God, but rather to get closer to the true Word."<sup>95</sup>

The whole period from the days of Christ and the Apostles to the time of the Reformation may be labelled according to Kuhl, the uncritical period in the interpretation of the Old Testament.

Observant readers will perceive that the New Testament writers use the Old Testament extensively. New Testament authors portray their teachings as the fulfillment of all the pious yearnings of the Old Covenant saints, and evangelists claim that many events in the life of Jesus were fulfilled as foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. It is, therefore, no coincidence that the books of the New Testament contain over 250 quotations, some of them fairly extensive, and in individual expressions and turns of speech more than 900 Old Testament allusions are found.<sup>96</sup> The New Testament writers quote from 34 of the 39 books of the Old Testament.

### *A Question of Isagogics*

According to L. M. Sweet, to understand properly the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament by Christ and the apostles, there are three constructive principles which must be grasped and adopted. These are: the unity of the Old Testament and the New Testament; the prevision of the New Testament in the Old Testament; and the authority of the Old Testament as the Word of God intended for all time.<sup>97</sup>

Liberal and Neo-orthodox theologians and exegetes hold that the Old and New Testament authors, because they wrote out of their cultural and religious milieu, were fallible human beings, subject to error and other human limitations.<sup>98</sup> Jesus Himself is faulted because He was bound by human limitations and therefore could not always give correct information for all matters on which He spoke. The basic methods of higher criticism are applied to the subject of biblical revelation, whether found in either of the two testaments. The dogmatic claims which the Bible makes about its origin and authority are not taken seriously. The Neo-orthodox

theologians merely look upon the Old and New Testaments as containing a human response to God's activity, which ultimately is synonymous with making the Scriptures the product of the Church's experience. This does not, therefore, recognize God as the *principium essendi* of theology, as held by Lutheran theologians in the past.<sup>99</sup>

Such reasoning and procedure eventuate in the fitting of isagogical material relative to the Old Testament into the naturalistic or evolutionary development of doctrine. Thus the psalms of David are not authentic because they are considered to conflict with the dating of the religious ideas found in them. New Testament assertions attributing books to Moses or Isaiah are not accepted as true because they also conflict with the findings of higher criticism, which are placed over the assertions of Jesus, Paul or the other New Testament writers. Likewise New Testament declarations about the Old Testament, which are not consonant with the findings of modern critical scholarship, are rejected as incorrect.

#### *Jesus and the Old Testament*

What was the position of Jesus Christ on the Old Testament? How did He interpret the writings of the Old Covenant? Jesus Christ as the Personal Word is the visible expression of the invisible God (Hebrews 1:3). Christians believe that Christ is the true "expression" of God, and as the revelatory Word He makes God known and conveys God's will to mankind in such a way that what Christ says and does is inerrant and infallible. He tells us that, among other things, He came to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37). Therefore, Thomas Griffith asserted of Christ: "He came to reveal God's will, and this implies and requires special knowledge. It demands that every assertion of His be true. The Divine Knowledge did not, because it could not, undergo any change by the Incarnation. He continued to subsist in the form of God even while He existed in the form of man."<sup>100</sup>

In the light of this position, Christians consider the pronouncements of Christ on matters pertaining to the isagogics of the Old Testament as true. It follows that any statement by Christ as a fact about the Old Testament is, or ought to be, accepted because of His infallibility. Positions of Biblical criticism that contravene the statements of our Lord should not be accepted, but often are.

There is no doubt that the Old Testament Jesus quoted from was practically the same as that which we have today. An unbiased reading will also show that He regarded it with utmost authority, as the final court of appeal for all questions pertaining to it. There is scarcely a historical book, from Genesis to 2 Chronicles to which Jesus does not refer. It is interesting to note that Jesus' testimony includes references to every book of the Pentateuch, to Isaiah, Jonah, Daniel, and to the very miracles that are doubted and explained away by present-day Biblical criticism. Jesus nowhere calls into question the genuineness of any Old Testament book. The Law is ascribed to Moses, David's name is connected with the 110th Psalm, the prophecies of Isaiah are assigned to the prophet Isaiah, and the prophecies of Daniel to Daniel.

Thus we read how in Matthew 8:4 Jesus says to the leper: "Go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commandeth." To the Pharisees the Lord said: "Moses because of your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives" (Matt. 19:8). "For Moses said, Honor thy father and thy mother; and whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death" (Mark 7:10). "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me" (Luke 24:40). "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom you trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words" (John 5:45-47). In the same Gospel Jesus says: "Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers) and ye on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken . . ." (John 7:22-23). The parenthetical words—"not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers"—would seem to indicate that Jesus was aware that circumcision had been given to the Patriarchs before the time of Moses, which means that Jesus was concerned about historical exactness.

Jesus frequently quoted from the Book of Psalms but only once does He mention an author. Psalm 110 is ascribed to David; in fact, the validity of Christ's argument depends on the psalm being a Davidic psalm. This reference, as far as it goes, seems to confirm the ascription of the Psalms in relationship to authorship.

Isaiah is quoted a number of times by Christ. In Isaiah 6:9 Jesus finds a prophecy of the refusal of the Jews to listen to Him. "In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand" (Matt. 13:14,15). Again Chapter 29:13 of Isaiah's prophecy is cited: "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites . . . This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." (Matt. 7-6). When Jesus returned to Nazareth during the Galilean ministry, they delivered to Him in the synagogue "the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, etc." (Luke 4:17,18). This passage is from Isaiah Ch. 61, which belongs to the Deutero-Isaiah or the Trito Isaiah of the critics. In John 12:38-41, verse 38, Jesus quoted from Isaiah 53:1 and in verse 40 Jesus again quoted chapter 6:10. Here both parts of Isaiah are ascribed to the prophet Isaiah, who is said to have seen Christ's glory.

It is argued by critical scholars that Christ and the New Testament writers were not concerned with technical introduction.<sup>101</sup> This may be true, but it is difficult to see how Matt. 3:3; Luke 3:4; John 1:23; and Matt. 12:18-21 can be interpreted as not referring to the actual prophet Isaiah. This interpretation also agrees with the voice of tradition for the Isaiah Manuscript of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint evidence, Jewish tradition, Josephus, the Apocrypha, the Church Fathers and the general witness of Christian scholars to the middle of the eighteenth century.

In the Mt. Olivet discourse, Jesus predicted the downfall of the Jewish state and refers to the Roman armies as "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet." In Daniel 9:27 we read: "For the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate" and in Chapter 12:11 that "the abomination that maketh desolate (shall) set up."

An analysis of the references to the Old Testament narratives and records reveals that Christ accepts them as authentic and historically true. Thus Caven asserts: "He (Christ) does not give or suggest in any case a mythical or allegorical interpretation. The accounts of the creation, the flood, or the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as many incidents and events of later occurrence, are taken as authentic."<sup>102</sup> It is said by the opponents of the historical

interpretation of Gen. 1-11 that the references of Jesus to these early chapters would serve the purpose for which He refers to these episodes, even if they were not true events. However, this is not the case, for the words of Jesus would lose much of their force and appropriateness if the events referred to are not historical.

When the Pharisees ask Christ about the lawfulness of putting away a wife for any cause, Jesus responds: "Have you not read that He which made them in the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh" (Matt. 19:4-5). Again: "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not, until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:37,39). Again: "And thou, Capernaum, which are exalted into heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matt. 11:23,24). These assertions of Jesus lose their weight and solemnity if the flood as described in Genesis and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah were mere myths. The argument of Christ that a holy and just God will again pronounce judgment is then stripped of all validity.

Today it is customary to distinguish between the type of history recorded in Genesis chapters 1-11 and chapters 12-50.<sup>103</sup> In weighing Jesus' references to the early episodes of Genesis, one does not find that He distinguishes between earlier and later Old Testament records on the matter of their trustworthiness.

Jesus accepted the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures, its declarations about Himself and the fulfillment of many prophecies concerning Him. Here Jesus comes into conflict with modern higher criticism which denies that Old Testament writers centuries in advance made direct predictions about Christ. In the opinion, therefore, of C. H. Dodd, the interpretation of Old Testament prophetic writings has suffered because of the traditional concept that the Old Testament prophets had "foretold the Messiah."<sup>104</sup> In the same book, Dodd further states: "The whole Messianic belief must

be understood as an imaginative expression of the conviction that the great God has purposes yet unfulfilled which He must accomplish in and through His people. According to the level of religious belief and experience the idea might become subservient to the most vulgar kind of chauvinism, or to a high ethical monotheism."<sup>105</sup>

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says: "I am not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill." Here is then a general statement to the effect that Christ came to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies about Him. When the Jewish leaders persisted in rejecting Christ as the Messiah, Jesus quoted from Psalm 118 and applied it to Himself: "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner." On Maundy Thursday evening when Jesus was deserted by His disciples, He said that the prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled: "I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall all be scattered" (Matt. 26:31). According to Jesus, His betrayal, seizure and death occurred that "the Scripture of the prophets might be fulfilled" (Matt. 26:56). Further, according to Jesus, Psalm 41 pronounces the treachery of Judas in these words: "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" and the defection of Judas Iscariot takes place "that the Scriptures may be fulfilled" (John 17:12). The persistent opposition of His enemies is a fulfillment of what was foretold: "They hated me without a cause" (John 15:25). While in the state of exaltation, Jesus appeared to two disciples on their way to Emmaus. He removes their doubt about a suffering and dying Messiah by beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." "And He said unto them: These are the words which I spoke unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them: Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day" (Luke 24:44-46).

### *"Ignorance" and "Accommodation"*

Many users of the historico-critical method are well aware of the evidence which has just been cited. An attempt is, therefore, made to explain away the significance of Christ's assertions. It is contended by those who place the conclusions of modern biblical



criticism above the authority of Jesus, that He had no knowledge beyond that which his contemporaries possessed. Since the Jews believed that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, that the narratives of the Old Testament are all authentic history, and that the words of Scripture are inspired, therefore Christ held the same views on these matters, even though modern criticism has shown these views to be erroneous. To espouse such a position, it is asserted, in no way detracts from the Lord's qualifications for His proper work, which was not literary, but religious and spiritual. Modern scholars tell us that Jesus Christ was qualified to give instruction on doctrinal subjects but His infallibility did not extend to questions of scholarship and criticism. Regarding Old Testament authorship of various books, He spoke as any other man of His times. Caven claims that "This view is advanced, not only by critics who reject the divinity of Christ, but by many who profess to believe that doctrine."<sup>106</sup> Thus Dr. S. Davidson wrote: "It should also be observed that historical and critical questions could only belong to his human culture, a culture stamped with the characteristics of His age and country."<sup>107</sup>

The doctrine of the Kenosis is invoked to explain Jesus' lack of correct knowledge on critical issues, such as the authorship of the Pentateuch, and the ascription of second Isaiah to the prophet Isaiah. Justification for the claims of imperfection and limitations of the Lord on Old Testament problems is found in the statement of Christ recorded in Mark that He did not know the day nor hour when heaven and earth shall pass away (Mark 13:22). Philippians 2:7 is also interpreted as supporting the allegation of modern critical scholarship to the paucity of true information on the part of Jesus about Old Testament isagogical matters. While it is true that Jesus voluntarily limited Himself in areas of human and divine knowledge (Luke 5:22; John 1:48; Matt. 20:17-19) it should also be recognized that He never spoke on subjects concerning which He was voluntarily ignorant. It is as Unger wrote: "If His kenosis is extended beyond the precise delimitation of Scripture, Christ becomes a mere man, and He is no longer infallible in matters either of history or faith."<sup>108</sup>

Another way in which scholars have endeavored to justify the inaccurate information allegedly given by Jesus is to say that He accommodated Himself to current opinion or belief. It is felt by modern scholars that no good end would have been served if Christ in regard to the interpretation of the Old Testament had

upset and contradicted prevailing opinion. He would simply have created more suspicion about Himself and His teaching than was already in evidence against Him.

The accommodation theory, supposedly practiced by Jesus, means that He possessed more accurate knowledge but He refused to divulge it. An analysis of cases where alleged accommodation took place would reveal some which would make it difficult to vindicate Jesus' perfect integrity.

Davidson has said: "Agreeing as we do in the sentiment that our Savior and His apostles accommodated their mode of reasoning to habitual notions of the Jews, no authority can be attributed to that reasoning *except when it takes the form of an independent declaration or statement*, and so rests on the speaker's credit."<sup>109</sup> A study of the statements of Jesus respecting the Old Testament scripture gives the impression of being "independent declarations." How shall one regard statements such as the following: "One jot or one tittle shall not pass away, etc." or "The Scripture cannot be broken," "David in spirit calls him Lord," "All things must be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me."

If, on the other hand, the contention of the Biblical critics is correct that Jesus revealed a measure of ignorance about the authorship of parts of the Scripture, must it not be inferred that His statements which were misleading and which stood in the way of the promotion of true scholarship raise a doubt in the minds of men about His qualifications to be the permanent Teacher of the Church? Caven says: "Here is the dilemma for the radical critic—either he is agitating the Church about trifles, or, if his views have the apologetical importance which he usually attributes to them, he is censuring the Lord's discharge of His prophetic office; for the allegation is that Christ's words prove perplexing and misleading in regard to weighty issues which the progress of knowledge has obliged us to face. Surely we should be apprehensive of danger if we discover that views which claim our adhesion, on any grounds whatever, tend to depreciate the wisdom of Him whom we call 'Lord and Master', upon whom the Spirit was bestowed 'without measure' and who 'spake as never man spake'. It is a great thing in this controversy to have the Lord on our side."<sup>110</sup>

An examination of the references of Christ to Moses and the law do not give the impression that He was accommodating Himself to mistaken ideas. How are we to understand the obvious accuracy of references such as the following?: "Moses, therefore, gave you circumcision (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers)." Again: "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom ye trust; for had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me; but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" This is not the style of one who does not wish his words to be taken verbatim.

### *The Question*

While it is not necessary to suppose that during His state of humiliation Christ was conscious of all truth at every moment of time, it is essential to hold to the conviction that every given pronouncement of our Lord is free from the contamination of error, unless we are to undermine completely the confidence in Christ as a reliable teacher of doctrine.<sup>111</sup> If Christ is not to be trusted completely in all his assertions, how is the reader of His sayings going to know where to draw the line between matters of eternal import and those of purely parochial interest? Appropriately this presentation may be concluded with a searching question from the lips of Jesus Himself: "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

### NOTES

67. Aage Bentzen, "Biblical Criticism, History and Old Testament Criticism," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 23:85, January, 1951.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
70. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy* (London: Nisbet, 1944), p.28.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
72. Charles Duell Kean, *The Meaning of Existence* (London: Latimer House, 1947), p. 150.
73. Alan Richardson, "Miracles," Davies, Richardson and Wallis, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
75. Neil, *op. cit.*, p. 60.
76. James Muilenberg, *The Way of Israel* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1961), p. 49.

77. J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "The Book of Exodus," *The Interpreter's Bible*, I, p. 935.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 936.
79. B. W. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
81. Alan Richardson, *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 152.
82. Albertus Pieters, *Can We Trust Bible History?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1954), p. 35.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
84. L. Fuerbringer, *Exegesis of Messianic Prophecies* (St. Louis: Concordia Mimeo Co., no date), 95 pp.; E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Christology of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1956), 4 volumes; Franz Delitzsch, *Messianic Prophecies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 232 pp.; Max Reich, *The Messianic Hope of Israel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1945), 120 pp.; George Stöckhardt, *Adventspredigten. Auslegungen der vornehmsten Weissagungen des Alten Testaments* (St. Louis: Concordia Verlag, 1887), 246 pp.; Edward Mack, *The Christ of the Old Testament* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publications, 1926), 195 pp.; Aaron Judah Kligerman, *Messianic Prophecy in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), 155 pp.; David L. Cooper, *Messiah: His Nature and Person* (Los Angeles: Published by David L. Cooper, 1933), 224 pp.; Sampey, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-291; Ronald Knox, *Waiting for Christ* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960), 288 pp.
85. Alan Richardson, *A Theological Wordbook of the Bible*, *op. cit.*, p. 44.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
87. Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1899), II, 710.
88. Merrill F. Unger, "Messiah," *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), p. 718.
89. Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 91. Cf. also Pfeifer, *Religion in the Old Testament*, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157.
90. Helmer Ringgren, *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Chicago: Alec R. Allenson, 1956), p. 7.
91. Richardson, *A Theological Wordbook*, *op. cit.*, p. 179.
92. F. M. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 890.
93. Robert Dentan, "Bible—Religion and Theology (7)," *The Encyclopedia Americana* (1959 edition), III, 646.

94. Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1954), pp. 64ff.
95. Kuhl, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
97. Louis Matthews Sweet, "Quotations, N. T.," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Company, 1939), IV, 2517a.
98. James D. Smart, *The Interpretation of Scripture* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), p. 164.
99. Robert Preus, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
100. W. H. Griffith, "Old Testament Criticism and New Testament Christianity," *The Fundamentals* (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, no date), VIII, p. 22.
101. Young, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
102. William Caven, "The Testimony of Christ to the Old Testament," *The Fundamentals* (Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, no date), IV, p. 50.
103. G. Ernst Wright and Reginald Fuller, *The Books of the Acts of God* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1957), pp.53-66.; Bruce Balscheit, *L' Alliance de Grace*. Traduction de F. Ryser (Paris and Neuchatel: Delachaux et Niestle, 1947), p. 17. H. Wheeler Robinson, *The History of Israel* (London: Duckworth, 1949), p. 20.
104. Dodd, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
105. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
106. Caven, *op. cit.*, p. 65.
107. As quoted by Caven, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
108. Unger, *op. cit.*, p. 226.
109. As quoted by Caven, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
111. Lionel E. H. Stephens-Hodge, "Christ and the Old Testament," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 10:373, 1938.