

The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow, edited by Harold R. Willoughby (The University of Chicago Press) 1947

"The War in Europe and the Future of Biblical Studies", W. F. Albright

p. 171 As is well known, Wellhausen drew his basic scheme of religious and institutional development from Wilhelm Vatke, whose major work, Die Religion des Alten Testaments, appeared in 1835, when he was a young Hegelian enthusiast of only twenty-nine. In those years not a single ancient Near Eastern script except Egyptian had been deciphered, and Champollion's solution of the hieroglyphic puzzle, still incomplete and widely rejected, had yielded virtually no new historical results. For all one's admiration of the young Privat-Dozent's acumen, his judgments on ancient civilization and his antiquarian footnotes strike a qualified modern reader as grotesque.

p. 172 My two judgments are that the current trend away from evolutionary historicism will continue and that the complementary trend toward increased attention to biblical theology will become accelerated for some time to come. In other words, I expect that the emphasis on diachronic approach which has prevailed for over a century will yield to emphasis on synchronic treatment of the material. It is, of course, no secret that there is just now an increasingly strong reaction against the normative Hegelianism of the founders of German historical criticism - Vatke, Wellhausen, and F. C. Baur, whose basic approach has continued to dominate the field ever since. It is also a matter of common knowledge that the output of books and papers dealing with biblical theology has been steadily increasing of late and that more and more of these publications have taken a strong stand with W. Eichrodt against evolutionary historicism. . . .

In order to catch some glimpse of the underlying historical meaning of the tendency, we must remember that Wellhausenism is a Hegelian structure, which flourished naturally under the conditions of the German Reich but was already alien to the spirit of the Weimar Republic and could be introduced into England and America only by the creation of ad hoc ideological patterns which could not last long. To the nationalistic Wellhausen there was something inspiring in the progress of biblical institutions from early Israelite anarchy to national unity and from alleged primitive fetishism to abstract