

p. 118 It is significant that for approximately a generation after the complete triumph of the Wellhausen school - from the closing decades of the nineteenth century until the third decade of the twentieth, when the masterwork of Walther Eichrodt was published¹⁰ - virtually no attempt was made to produce a theology of the Old Testament.¹¹

Footnote 10 W. Eichrodt, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Stuttgart: Ehrenfried Klotz, Vol. I, 6th ed., 1959; Vols. II and III, 4th ed., 1961); Eng. trans. of Vol. I by J. A. Baker, as Theology of the Old Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961). Vol. I of this work first appeared in 1933, Vol. II in 1935, Vol. III in 1939. The 1930's also saw the publication of the shorter, and vastly different, treatments of Old Testament theology by E. Sellin and L. Kohler (the latter also available in English: Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957).

p. 119 Of course a reaction was bound to come and did. In Old Testament studies this coincided quite naturally with the breakdown of the critical orthodoxy associated with the name of Wellhausen. This last came about gradually over a period of years as new discoveries were brought to bear on the biblical record and as new insights were gained in the light of which the Wellhausenist reconstruction of Israel's religious history was seen at essential points to be untenable. As archaeological discoveries brilliantly illuminated the world of Israel's origins, it became clear that a new evaluation of the pentateuchal traditions was required and that the conventional picture of earliest Israel's religion would have to be revised completely; such terms as polydaemonism (or animism) and henotheism were seen not to apply at all. At the same time, studies of shorter units of tradition within the pentateuchal documents in the light of material discovered elsewhere, while leading to no general abandonment of the documentary hypothesis, made it evident that all the documents incorporate much older material, in many instances p.120 material that demonstrably reaches back to the beginnings of Israel's history. This placed the documentary hypothesis in an entirely new light. It was realized that the date of a document by no means determines the date of its contents or passes verdict on its historical value and that, because of this fact, the documents themselves could no longer be used to support a neat pattern of evolutionary development. Further, . . . it became apparent that the prophets . . . were actually men whose preaching was deeply rooted in the sacred traditions of Israel's formative period.

p. 120 Whatever their disagreements in their understanding of Israel's history (especially in the earliest period), it became impossible for scholars to view Israel's religion in terms of an evolutionary process, as the older critics had done.

p. 121 Moreover, as the developmental pattern imposed on the history of Israel's religion by the Wellhausen school was seen to be fallacious, it became increasingly apparent that there is actually more unity in the Old Testament faith than had previously been supposed. . . . In any even, biblical theology . . . has experienced nothing less than a renaissance in recent decades. As evidence of that fact one need only point to the numerous volumes that have appeared in almost every modern European language in the past thirty years bearing the title Old Testament Theology or New Testament Theology . . . There is, to be sure, wide disagreement as regards the task and method of the discipline . . . Indeed, one has only to compare, say, treatments of Old Testament theology by two such outstanding scholars as Walther Eichrodt and Gerhard von Rad . . . to see that disagreements in this regard are at times so great as to appear irreconcilable. Nevertheless, the validity of the task itself and the relevance of the attempt to discharge it would be all but universally conceded today.¹⁹