

Lys, Daniel, *The Meaning of the Old Testament*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967. 192 pp. \$ 3.75.

Unfortunately this book has suffered the Madison Avenue treatment in its dust jacket. The title in itself is somewhat over-pretentious. But to go on and describe the book as an attempt at understanding and appropriating the OT message in today's culture is misleading. What really describes what the book is all about is the subtitle, "An Essay on Hermeneutics." Throughout the book (pp. 53, 70, 80, 83, 96, 114, 132, 134, 139, etc.) the author insists that he is looking for a method of exegesis, one that will allow him to hold on to the idea of inspiration (p. 76), that is to say, his idea of inspiration. His concern is with a question being asked often these days, namely: "How can we discover the unity of revelation which is eternal in the unity of historical development?" (p. 81). But in order to be able to put the question this way, he has to concern himself with pointing out the unity of historical development as well as the unity of revelation. The unity of revelation he cavalierly establishes by saying that "the biblical writers claim that there is a *unity* in revelation, which the word 'canon' sums up" (p. 140). This claim of Lys's should be supported by some evidence. As a general statement it becomes useless as soon as it is made, and is not elaborated further. With the unity of historical development he spends more words.

Lys tries to explicate the unity of revelation and history by pointing out its analogy to the flight of an arrow. Unlike Zeno's arrow, whose trajectory consisted of the sum of successive immobile positions, Lys's arrow does not stand still. Its flight is looked at in order to establish the dynamic tension which exists among all the points in its trajectory. The point of impact is what gives meaning to the parabolic trajectory. It "ends" the arrow's course, and gives meaning to every previous moment in it. But Lys wishes to say more about the relationship between the course and the point of impact. He sees "a dynamism" between the two, which needs to be explained. "The target is not present at each point of the trajectory and must not be considered as if it were. Nonetheless, at every moment the movement of the arrow is pregnant with the possibility of hitting the target and has no meaning aside from this" (p. 110). But then one learns that this possibility is not a contingency. "We must see Jesus Christ not as the chronological result of the Old Testament, *after* the Old Testament, but as its axiological meaning, *in* the Old Testament, where the same God of grace was revealing himself" (pp. 163, 164, italics his). Put in terms of the analogy of the arrow, this reads: "When an Old Testament text is 'ended' by its fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth, it has something to tell us about Jesus because it represents the dynamism *rightly* aimed at the target" (p. 150, italics his).

Lys's answer to the question of the relationship of the OT to revelation and to the NT suffers from a simplistic explication of the nature of the Bible. The analogy of the arrow is overworked to the point that it becomes wearisome. It is, therefore, interesting to see that in an

unguarded moment he has to concede that there is more than one arrow in the OT and that some missed the target (pp. 154, 155). If some missed the target then not all were rightly aimed, and the fact that one, or some, were found to have hit the mark may be due, formally, to circumstances. Lys's efforts again point out the inability of one analogy to clarify every point in a matter as complicated as the relationship between the OT and the NT. He may be commended, however, for his efforts to trace a path between the *dangers* of "ethical left-wing liberalism" and "a pietist right-wing fundamentalism" (p. 156).

But the path in which one is led by him offers difficulties. Is there still room for fruitful discussion on the basis of "wrong" and "good" typology (p. 113)? James Barr (*Old and New in Interpretation*) has made clear that one's inability to do what the NT writers did, due to the desire to have methodological controls, is precisely what constitutes the problem. Lys seems to indicate, however, that in doing what the authors of the Gospel of Mt and the Epistle to the Heb did, one is fulfilling the task of "scientific exegesis" (p. 114). One also reads, "if the 'typological meaning' which is rediscovered retrospectively is 'willed by God,' it cannot differ from the results of prospective scientific research" (pp. 114-115). And what is one to make of the following statement, "Every apologetic which is founded on the comparison of biblical themes with those of the history of religions, in order to be valid, ought to be an apologetic of opposition and not of similarities" (p. 132)? Valid for whom? But what is most strange is that this statement is made in order to move to this other one: "Only in the perspective just sketched can it be said that there is inspiration of the biblical texts (so that scientifically the biblical message will appear to be different from the message of religions)" (p. 133). That scientific research by establishing similarities or differences is able to establish the will of God or inspiration is a claim that conscientious users of the scientific method do not make. Lys recognizes that the Bible does not give scientific information. He warns against a Christian cosmology or a Christian zoology. But then he wishes to confirm a dogmatic position on the unity of the Bible by means of the scientific method. This is to play loose with the word "scientific."

Pointing out his objections to the common understandings of progressive revelation, Lys makes clear (p. 94) that "God's revelation does not mean that he reveals something (science, or ethics, which could be cumulative) but that he reveals himself." To this one cannot but agree. But is the task of the Holy Spirit to reveal to faith the new meaning of a common idea (p. 141)? Are the writers of scripture making an effort to convey certain ideas as revealed and others as not revealed (p. 135)? This again emphasizes that the book's failure is due to the lack of the proper definition of some concepts basic to the discussion being proposed.

I will register my gratitude, however, for one thing Lys does. His appeal to the 20th-century preacher to demythologize his own culture

and to use it for the proclamation of God's word is most certainly timely and valid. He recognizes that in doing this "the risk of confusion or ambiguity is great. But this risk cannot be avoided, lest one shut himself up in the past in regard to the biblical message, the individual believer becomes a split personality and the church a ghetto" (p. 162). To save the Christian Gospel from this fate is undoubtedly the task of Christians today.

This is not a large book, but it could have been smaller and still have said what it says. At times it becomes repetitious. Wilbur Benware is credited with having revised the English version. On the whole the book is readable, though at times it does not read quite smoothly.

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Moltmann, Jürgen, *Theology of Hope*. Translated by James W. Leitch. New York: Harper and Row, 1967. 342 pp. \$ 8.50.

In reviewing this most suggestive book, one can only point to some of the major emphases and leave it to the reader to study the book for himself. For this is without doubt one of the more important publications during a decade in which books on theology have appeared in both volume and variety.

"The decisively important question is obviously that of the context in which the talk of revelation arises" (p. 43). What is at stake is an adequate conception of the kind of knowing process in which the word "God" is meaningfully employed. Knowledge of God is not mastery of a certain subject matter nor indeed a deduction from an ethical awareness, but rather it is an openness in the midst of life, openness to the future, a future that is shaped by and towards the very knowledge which revelation makes possible. Revelation is not a kind of mastery of the object by the subject. Rather it is an openness to the precariousness which the future enables and demands. The book assumes the viewpoint created by the context of revelation in order to examine that context. This context is not that of the isolated individual hoping for a lonely salvation. Moltmann wishes to avoid a subjectivistic individualism where the transcendental ego or the essential self is the subject of analysis. Thus, rather than identifying him *tout court* with the existentialist theologians, one must ask further concerning his realism of hope.

Man's possibilities are seen as patent of fulfillment only within a social context. The *eschaton*, which is not yet, will be realized only with the hopeful engagement of the Christian in the affairs of the world in a constructive, imaginative, indeed daring, fashion. The hopeful believer moves out into the unknown, confident that the promise of God embraces that unknown. It is in that *futurum absconditum* that God is hidden. For God is Yahweh, who is known by those who move ahead with Him not knowing where they go, but having heard His promise. Here is to be found the context of revelation. Over against the