

# Introduction

In innumerable ways the reviving interest in biblical theology which has marked the last thirty years makes itself felt. Volumes on the theology of the Old or New Testament or on both have appeared, and countless articles and monographs on aspects of the subject. In addition the great German *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, which is not yet complete and which contains not a little on the Old Testament background of the New Testament as well as on the New Testament itself, has both brought its own important contribution to the subject and inspired lesser works in various languages. Amongst these is the Swiss work which is here translated. Its authors include a number of well-known French and Swiss scholars, and it was prepared to serve French-speaking students, ministers, and laymen. Its authors are all Protestant, and it was published by the well-known firm of theological publishers, Delachaux and Niestlé. At the same time, its authors are aware of the growing co-operation in biblical study between Protestant and Catholic scholars, which is one of the significant trends of our time. That this work has been translated into English means that its value has been recognized beyond the circle of those for whom it was first intended.

A valuable feature of the volume is its concentration on a limited number of longer articles with abundant cross references, rather than on a large number of very brief articles. While this may mean that the reader will not immediately find what he seeks, it will mean that he will find something more rewarding when he finds it in a larger context. He must not expect to find a Bible Dictionary here. What he will have in his hand is a dictionary of the major theological terms and ideas found in the Bible, and by the careful and diligent use of this work he will acquire a considerable understanding of biblical theology. The layman will profit greatly from its use, since all is written simply and with no unnecessary use of technical jargon, and the minister will find rich suggestions for expository preaching in many of the entries.

It is much to be hoped that this and similar works will bring about the revival of theological preaching – not to weary but to instruct. In the great periods of the history of the Church men knew what they believed, and a deeper theological interest to-day would lead to greater vitality in the Church. For theology is not

something dull and remote, but something exciting and relevant. The Bible brings Good News to men, the stirring message of the wonder of God's love and the redemption whereby we can be lifted to share His life and power, and enter into His purpose for the world. No generation has been more thrilled than ours to deepen its knowledge of the mysteries of nature and the universe. To understand the spirit and will of the Creator of the universe, the mysteries of the purpose and destiny for which man was created, is yet more thrilling. In so far as this volume excites interest in these things and helps to satisfy that interest it will fulfil its purpose.

The good cook knows how to stimulate appetite as well as to satisfy it: this volume will be found both satisfying and stimulating, and if the reader, like the present writer, is inclined to ask for more, it will be the tribute to the quality of what he has found here.

H. H. Rowley

## Preface

### To the Original Edition

There is no need for us to emphasize the well-known fact that our generation is seeking anew and rediscovering, in Holy Scripture, the Word of the living God, and that it looks eagerly to its preachers, teachers and editors for their help and guidance in an ever-increasing understanding of it. To borrow the title of a famous manual, the contemporary Churches are living in the time of a “Biblical Renaissance” the full consequences of which cannot yet be estimated, to such an extent is its influence penetrating and illuminating every aspect of Church life.

If one of the constant duties of the Church is to encourage orientalists, philologists, exegetes, historians of Israel, of Judaism, and of the early Church to intensify their researches, it is also her duty to place within the reach of those who are not specialists the result of all this scholarly work – and it is the aim of this *Vocabulary* to contribute to such an end.

This implies in the first place that it has been prepared in order to be of use to the greatest possible number of readers. In the world of to-day the Church is in so great a need of members who are capable of witnessing, not only by their behaviour but in their speech, to the salvation which has laid hold upon them, that she cannot but wish to see them fully at home in the world of revelation, and hence increasingly in possession of a better understanding of the biblical message. So the first task which we have set ourselves is to present to the wider public an exact realization of the full and rich significance which our words assume when they are chosen to be the vehicles of the Word of God – and in doing so not to disappoint the theologians. We have also felt obliged to avoid a narrow parochial spirit and hence to interest and help not Protestants only, but those outside the Church who are puzzled or revolted by the Bible, and further – without any ulterior proselytizing motive – those Roman Catholics who are taking part in the work of biblical renewal which is going on within their own Church. In short, we realize that the coincidence of this biblical renaissance with the quickened hope of Church unity is not a matter of chance.

In order to realize as closely as possible the aim we have set ourselves to achieve, it was necessary to choose a suitable method. Now every choice implies limitation. Let us enumerate one or two of the possibilities we have had to give up. First of all it was necessary not to make the book too burdensome and hence too unwieldy: as a result there are many terms which we have not been able to include. This does not mean that such terms are without theological significance, but that they are not an essential part of the key-words of the Bible or that their meaning is expressed also by other words which are found in the *Vocabulary* (hence the frequency of the asterisk, which refers the reader to the article devoted to the term immediately following it). It was also necessary to avoid a whole mass of technical erudition: Hebrew or Greek terms, annotations, discussions or refutations of exegetical hypotheses, etc.

Despite this limitation in the carrying out of their task, the collaborators have tried to provide a work of profound and far-reaching theology and exegesis. We hope they have succeeded in doing this and that this restriction has not resulted in any lowering of the general standard of the *Vocabulary*. With one or two exceptions, it has also been necessary to exclude bibliographical notices: clergy who are at all well-read will know where to find such information: as for the laity, it hardly seemed necessary to refer them to publications which for the most part would bewilder them by their scientific character. Broadly speaking, however, it may be noted that the collaborators in the *Vocabulary*, while consulting their own special sources, have had recourse above all to the articles in the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, edited since 1933 by G. Kittel and later by G. Friedrich, and published by Kohlhammer of Stuttgart, and to the best *Theologies* of the Old and New Testaments. This amounts to saying that the *Vocabulary* may be considered – and in that case one of our aims would be realized – as a popular manual of biblical theology the principal ideas of which are classified alphabetically.

In fact, after having read and compared all the contributions, my impression was much more that of the unity of a manual than of the diffuseness of a dictionary, and the idea did occur to me (though I was asked to give it up as it sounded too pretentious) to entitle the work *La Parole et les mots* (“Words and the Word of God”). I merely allude to my proposed title in the preface in order to emphasize what seems to me to be the result of our labours, and I hardly dare add (for I hope so much that I may not be contradicted by the reader) the sign of our success. In effect such a title would have suggested that, by whatever word we enter the world of the Bible, so rich, so varied, so subtle and so strange, we are inevitably led to what forms the heart of it: the Word of God incarnated in Jesus Christ. Whether we speak of the Church, of Jerusalem, of the law, of sacrifices, of the ministry, of edification, of the Temple, of man or of the covenant, each of these words only yields its secret when referred to the Word, Jesus Christ. That is why the unity of the *Vocabulary* does not seem to have been affected by the number of collaborators: in spite of their differences of approach and method, of the varying degrees in which their competence was already proved, and of their

inevitable prejudices, and although each of them was marked by the joys and the anxieties of the *hic et nunc* of his ecclesiastical vocation, the collaborators have worked for eighteen months at a common task.

It remains for me to express my gratitude to all those who have made possible the realization of a plan which I have had at heart for many years. First of all to our contributors: they have spared neither time nor pains to make this work as useful as the public has a right to expect. I am thinking in particular of those among them who are accustomed to write for specialists, and who have here tried to express the conclusions of their scholarly work in a language which will reach a much wider circle of readers. My gratitude also goes out to the pastors whose wholehearted and fraternal co-operation I have enjoyed: their collaboration proves that it is well worth while, after the completion of a university course, to set apart some time for further study. It is very wrong of us to bear them at times a grudge because they so jealously insulate from the claims of their parochial duties the few hours of meditation and research which they need if they are not to become buried in routine work: after all it is in the service of the Church that one is a theologian!

And what would become of the Church and its theological thinking were it not for the publishers who consider their fine job to be a vocation and a real spiritual ministry? It is desired that, if only to thank them, those who use this *Vocabulary* will help to make it widely known, will offer it as a gift to friends, confirmation candidates, students, will speak of it to those who they know are lovers of the Bible and to those who they know are troubled or irritated by it.

Before submitting the detailed plan of our *Vocabulary* to the approval of the editorial committee, four previous drafts had been drawn up and then abandoned since 1945. Hence I know well enough that in such a work it is difficult to attain perfection: the choice of the articles, their length, and the authors to whom they should be given, are points likely to arouse much discussion. One thing nevertheless is more important than such discussions, however important they may be: namely to encounter, in the human witness of Holy Scripture, Jesus Christ the Word of God. Our aim has been no other than to facilitate this "one thing needful".

J.-J. von Allmen  
Lucerne, Autumn 1953.

P.S. – It has been impossible to avoid the use of certain technical theological terms if the articles were not to be made heavy and cumbrous by constant explanations. It is a question of the following terms in particular:

*Aeon*: a Greek term normally translated "century", not in the sense of a time period of a hundred years but in the sense of a certain manner of life defined with reference to God and eternity. *The present aeon* is the world as we know it characterized by rebellion against God and destined to come to an end on the return of Christ: *the aeon to come* is the age which will be fully manifested after

the return of Christ, but which at the same time is already present since the Nativity (see article \*time).

*Eschatology, eschatological:* terms derived from the Greek *eschaton* – meaning “the ultimate”. Hence eschatology is the complex of biblical doctrines concerning the end of the world and the life of the world to come. Since the event of the coming of Jesus Christ, which means the breaking into this world of the Kingdom of God, the sphere in which eschatology is operative is already mysteriously present in our world, signifying for it both a challenge and a promise (see article \*time).

*Yahwist, Elohist:* these terms denote the oldest literary sources of the early books of the O.T. It is known of course that these books as we read them to-day constitute a sort of puzzle, the several parts of which have been provided by at least four main sources (to the two sources mentioned must be added the so-called deuteronomic and priestly sources). The designation of the two sources in question by the terms Yahwist or Elohist is derived from the name by which they refer to God, i.e. Yahweh or Elohim.

The *Septuagint* (LXX) is the Greek translation of the Hebrew O.T. It owes its name to the legend according to which seventy translators arrived at their version independently only to discover later the perfect identity of their translations. The aim of this legend was to give credit to the idea that the Bible of the Jews of the Dispersion who spoke Greek was just as much inspired as the Hebrew Bible of the Jews of Palestine.

*The Pentateuch* is the collection of the five books attributed by Jewish tradition to Moses, namely Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

*The Synoptic Gospels* or more briefly the “*synoptics*” are the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark and Luke. They are so called because, broadly speaking, they follow the same general lines and so – in accordance with the etymology of the term – can be compared or viewed as a whole or in the same perspective.