CHAPTER FOUR

THE NATURE OF TRUTH IN EVANGELIUM VERITATIS
AND IN THE WRITINGS OF JUSTIN MARTYR VIEWED
IN THE LIGHT OF THE BIBLE AND
EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

I. THE IDEA OF TRUTH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND IN THE
INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

A. The Theology of the Old Testament today

Prior to an investigation of the Hebrew words for truth, the
question must be asked: How do modern scholars understand the
nature of truth in the Old Testament? The answer is not easy in
view of markedly dissimilar approaches. A brief attempt must be
made, therefore, to understand these approaches.¹

On the one hand, a number of modern works resort to a system­
amtic treatment of Old Testament theology. L. Köhler,² for example,
adopts a simple three-fold approach which is subject-oriented—
God, man, and redemption. To be sure, Köhler develops some im­
portant ideas. Essentially, however, he merely attempts to reflect
what each part of the Old Testament canon says on theology,
anthropology, and soteriology. His method, therefore, differs little
from the method of standard Old Testament theologies of the 19th
century.³ Other theologians in the mid-twentieth century, e.g.,

¹ Many works on Old Testament theology have been produced in the 20th
century. In what follows, the aim is not to be exhaustive but suggestive. Nine
representative works are considered briefly.
Press, 1953, trans. from 3rd revised ed.).
³ E.g., A. B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament (New York:
Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907) which shows the same three divisions plus a
final section on eschatology (chapters XI-XII—"The Doctrine of the Last
Things"). Köhler gives only minor attention to eschatology in his final chap­
ter, "Salvation by Redemption" (op. cit., pp. 227-238).
P. van Imschoot, E. Jacob, and Th. C. Vriezen stress—each in his own way—a topical or systematic treatment of Old Testament theology.

On the other hand, however, several scholars (notably Procksch, Eichrodt, and von Rad) show a basic dissatisfaction with a topical approach. The work of Otto Procksch views all theology as Christology. Christ, he says, is the midpoint of theology as well as the origin and goal of all history in which theology occurs. In the history and faith of Israel, he continues, one finds a pre-Christian world of the spirit which reaches its goal in Jesus Christ. Therefore, Jesus brings to completion the work of Moses and the prophets. Moreover, Procksch adds, the God of the Old Testament is identical with the God of Christ and Christ’s relationship to ancient Israel finds its counterpart in his relationship to the Israel of the New Covenant. Procksch divides his treatment into two main parts—the world of history and the world of ideas, i.e. history and theology respectively. His theological section (Part B) treats in succession: (I)-God and the world (including sections on revelation and creation), (II)-God and people (with sections on election, cultic forms, the law and righteousness, and the Messianic hope), and (III)-God and man. Procksch’s insight into the concepts of truth and faith will be considered later (i.e. section C).

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2 *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. A. W. Heathcote, Philip J. Alecock (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1958). Jacob finds the three dominant themes of the Old Testament to be God’s presence, his action (man is treated in this second section), and his final triumph (i.e. redemption and eschatology).

3 *An Outline of Old Testament Theology*, trans. S. Neuijen (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958). The second part of Vriezen’s work unfolds the three themes—God, man, and the relationship between the two (i.e. redemption and ethics), with a closing section on God’s rule in Old Testament times and beyond. The unique aspect of Vriezen’s work is his first part where he assesses the problems which face the scholar who wrestles with the meaning and the abiding value of the Old Testament. A similar format to the above works is followed by J. Barton Payne, *The Theology of the Older Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1962), who, like Vriezen, has introductory chapters on the history and nature of Old Testament theology, but from an entirely different perspective than Vriezen.

4 *Theologie des Allen Testaments* (Gütersloh: C. Bertalsmann, 1950).