

* Smart, James D., The Interpretation of Scripture (Phila. Westminster Press) 1961

After pointing out that "the idea of development was in the air early in the nineteenth century and began to be applied as a principle of explanation to all manner of phenomena" (p. 248) and that "A schema was superimposed upon the Old Testament by which Israelites were depicted in their slow but sure growth from the lowest forms of religion to the highest" (p. 249) and that "The supreme achievements of prophetic religion were explained not as the product of revelation but as the end result of a natural historical process" (p. 250), Smart states:

p. 250 Such a viewpoint is a historical curiosity in the mid-twentieth century. We are only too acutely aware that the natural course of development in religion and morals both for individuals and nations is as often downward as upward. No Old Testament historian of today would any longer be attracted by the old schema, since for him the history of Israel's religion follows a zigzag line, with primitive and highly developed forms of religion side by side in most periods. But it was convincing to an earlier day and contributed heavily to the triumph of historicism. Today the viewpoint of the prophets themselves is taken more seriously - that moral and spiritual progress in Israel was directly dependent upon the relation of the nation to God.

p. 271 It is not surprising that, wherever scholars retained their conviction that the Bible is before all else the source of the church's knowledge of God, there was dissatisfaction with such an order. But so firm was the grip of historicism on men's minds that it took years, and many severe shocks, for this dissatisfaction to bear fruit. One of the first to see the inner logic of this historical method and to recognize the drastic consequences of a pure historicism for the Christian faith was Ernst Troeltsch. His writings were important in preparing the way for a new development.

p. 302 But now, thanks to Wilhelm Dilthey in the nineteenth century and R. G. Collingswood in the twentieth, we have a new approach to history. Because we participate in the same stream of history of which the men and events of the past were a part, they are alive in us and we can relive their experiences, thereby discovering the meaning of the events for them.

* Dr. James D. Smart was born in Alton, Ontario. He now (1949) lives in Philadelphia. On the staff of the Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, he is the hard-working editor in chief of the Board's extensive new curriculum for the Christian education of children and young people. (From a paste up article in the front of his book A Promise to Keep, The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, 1949)

James D. Smart, Professor of Biblical Interpretation, Union Theological Seminary, N. Y. (1962)