A table of contents for *Scripture* can be found here:

We have examined a few aspects of the teaching of the two writers on creation and the work of Christ. Close similarities of concept and argument appeared and at no point has it proved necessary to depart far from a Jewish framework of thought. Dr Dodd holds in his second volume on St John (with J. A. T. Robinson, van Unnik and others) that the tradition lying behind the Fourth Gospel is palestinian and primitive. It seems that it is not possible to use this criterion to distinguish between the tradition used and the theology which forms it into its final shape.

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JUDAH AND TAMAR (Gen. 38)

All will agree that the story of Judah and Tamar is one of the narratives in the Old Testament that cause surprise and even scandal to the average Christian reader of the Bible. True, he will not fail to take cognizance of the artistic excellence of the story, so remarkable for its striking interplay of the various human passions, which gives to the whole account an ever-fresh actuality ; he will also appreciate it for the element of human interest that comes to full play in it. But despite all this he will also quite naturally ask : What is the place of this story in the Bible which is the record of the history of salvation ? Does it possess what one might term its *eigentlichen Zeugnischarakter*,[1] its specific character as a witness to God and the realisation of His salvific designs for mankind ? If it does, what is it ? Before these questions can be satisfactorily answered, we have to study the whole story closely and moreover must also trace its genesis.

As every reader will admit without hesitation, the story as it stands now is an insertion into the Joseph-cycle, and the reason for it is undoubtedly the redactor's intention to preserve a tradition concerning the ancestor of the royal tribe of Judah, and his wife Tamar, the great ancestress of king David (cf. Ruth 4:12, 18–22).[2] The account begins

[1] cf. G. von Rad : *Das erste Buch Mose* [5] (Das AT Deutsch 2/4), Göttingen, 1958, p. 30.
[2] cf. G. von Rad : op. cit., p. 312. We may here note in passing that the Joseph-cycle presupposes that Judah was all the time living with his brothers, and there is question of his separation from them. These conflicting details only bear witness on the one hand to the complexity of the traditions embodied in Gen. 37–50 and on the other, to the absence of all preoccupations in the redactors to eliminate all differences and thus harmonize the various traditions they had at their disposal.

with the mention of Judah's separation from his brothers, his descent into the regions of the Shephelah where the Canaanites had their settlements and his marriage with the daughter of a Canaanite (vv. 1-2). Three sons are born of this marriage, and with the mention of Tamar, the wife of Er the first-born (v. 6), the stage is set for the whole drama. Tamar's husband died a premature death, which meant for the story-tellers in Israel that Yahweh had slain him as punishment for some sin or other (v. 7).

As Er had no issue, Judah asked his second son Onan to ' perform the duty of a brother-in-law ' [1] and ' raise up offspring ' to his deceased brother (v. 8). Here we have a reference to a well-known custom of the ancients, namely, the levirate marriage [2]; according to Israelite law, when a man dies without issue, his brother should go to the widow and ' perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his brother who is dead ' (Dt. 25:5-6).[3] This obligation was so sacrosant that if the brother concerned refused to fulfil it, he was to be publicly humiliated and disinherited (Dt. 25:7-10).[4] In the light of this usage we can easily understand the horror with which the biblical writers view Onan's action which was obviously motivated by extreme selfishness (vv. 9-10)[5]. According to the levirate law it now remained for Judah's third son Shelah to take Tamar to wife, but the father-in-law, associating ill-luck or some sort of diabolical influence with his daughter-in-law (cf. Tob. 3:7-9, 8:9-10), adduced the lame excuse that his third son was too young and postponed the marriage indefinitely. But the shrewd daughter-in-law understood without difficulty the reason for Judah's strange behaviour and decided to take the law into her own hands.

The time of the shearing of the flock was an occasion for rejoicing

[1] The Hebrew text here uses a special verb (ybm) which literally means to consummate the dead brother's marriage ; cf. L. Koehler-W. Baumgartner : *Lexicon in VT libros*, Leiden, 1953, p. 359. The word also recurs in the Ugaritic literature in the epithet *ybmt limm* predicated of Anat ; cf. C. H. Gordon : *Ugaritic Manual*, Rome, 1955, p. 270, no. 789.

[2] This custom is very well attested by the ancient codes ; thus, according to the Middle Assyrian Laws (A, no. 33), when a woman's husband dies without issue, ' her father-in-law shall marry her to the son of his choice . . . or if he wishes, he may give her in marriage to her father-in-law ' (*ANET*, p. 196b) ; according to the Hittite Laws (no. 193), the deceased one's brother shall be the first to take his wife, and then, his father ; if the father dies, ' one of his brother's sons shall take the wife whom he had. There shall be no punishment' (*ANET*, p. 196b). Among the Hittites marriage bet-ween near relatives was forbidden and was even punishable by law, but the case men-tioned in no. 193 is an exception to the rule, and hence the explicit statement that there shall be no punishment ; cf. O. Gurney : *The Hittites* (Penguin Books), London, 1954, pp. 101-2.   [3] cf. S. R. Driver : *Deuteronomy* (ICC), Edinburgh, 1951, pp. 282-3.

[4] cf. S. R. Driver : op. cit., pp. 283-4.

[5] It should be carefully noted that the sacred authors do not have in mind that particular species of sin which is now known as Onanism.

and feasting in ancient Israel (cf. Gen. 31:19, 1 Sam. 25:4–8 and 36, 2 Sam. 13:23–9), and when Tamar found out that her father-in-law was going up to Timnach to shear his sheep, she disguised herself as a sacred prostitute [1] and succeeded in seducing him ; she moreover managed to get from him, no doubt with the intention of later on using them as the trump card, his staff, signet and cord (vv. 13–19). [2]

With the spread of the news that Tamar played the harlot and with the mention of Judah's extreme preoccupation to mete out to her the most terrible punishment for her misbehaviour (v. 24), [3] the story reaches the climax ; the clever daughter-in-law now plays her trump card, and the father-in-law is forced to confess : ' She was more righteous [4] than I . . .' (vv. 25–6). The sacred authors do not tell us anything more about this unusual and valiant woman who could even outwit her father-in-law, but they smoothly bring the whole story to a close with the account of the birth of the twins Perez and Zerah (vv. 27–30).

The last part of the story, we must never forget, is aetiological in character and it is in fact a precious clue to the right understanding of

[1] From the O.T. it is amply clear that in Israelite circles where religious syncretism had gained ground, there were also sacred prostitutes who were known by the technical term *qdšh* (cf. Dt. 23: 18–19, 1 Kgs. 14:24, 22:47, 15:12, 2 Kgs. 23:7, Hos. 4:14) ; the danger from them was such that the sages thought it fit to give warnings to the younger folk, and fragments of their admonitions are preserved in Prov. 5:1–23, 6:20–35, 7:1–27. For a study of these texts, cf. G. Bostroem : *Proverbiastudien. Die Weisheit und das fremde Weib in Spr. 1–9*, Lund, 1935. According to this author, in Prov. 1–9 the figure of wisdom who invites people to come to her stands as the counterpart of the sacred prostitute who invites men to approach her and thus render homage to the goddess of sex and love. cf. too B. Gemser : *Spruche Salomos* (Handbuch zum AT 1/16), Tubingen, 1963. H. Ringgren–W. Zimmerli : *Spruche Prediger* (Das AT Deutsch 16/1), Göttingen, 1962. In the story it is said that Tamar changed her widow's dress before she set out to trap her father-in-law, but we do not know what exactly was the dress of widows in ancient Israel ; from the explicit mention of the veil it is clear that the widows went about unveiled while the unmarried and those whose marriage was arranged used to veil themselves in the presence of men (cf. Gen. 24:65). The Assyrian laws speak in detail of the women wearing the veil (cf. *ANET*, p. 183b).

[2] From the findings of archaeology it is clear that the staff, etc., formed part of the paraphernalia of men in antiquity, and in Israel they were no doubt *das Zeichen des Wohlhabenden, des feinen Herrn* (G. von Rad : op. cit., p. 315). For a detailed discussion, cf. K. Galling : Siegel, *Biblisches Reallexikon*, cols. 481–90 (for reproductions, cf. cols. 485–6). cf. too *ANEP*, nos. 240, 265 and 276–8.

[3] The punishment customary in ancient Israel for this sort of misbehaviour was death by stoning (cf. Num. 20:16, Dt. 22:23–4), and only in the case of the priest's daughter who played the harlot was death at the stake prescribed as punishment (cf. Lev. 21:9). On this text, cf. M. Noth : *Das dritte Buch Mose* (Das AT Deutsch 6), Göttingen, 1962, p. 135).

[4] In Judah's exclamation there comes to expression a typical aspect of Israel's conception of justice or righteousness : Tamar has in point of fact fulfilled her obligation to perpetuate the family of her deceased husband, and consequently she was more righteous than her father-in-law whose action would have eliminated a family from Israel. cf. G. von Rad : *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, B. I, München, 1962, p. 386.

the narrative as well as to its correct interpretation. The name Perez is explained in the light of the Hebrew verb *prs*, to break through, to make a breach, etc.; the name Zerah is connected with the root *zrh* which, in the Semitic tongues, means scarlet, bright red, etc., and it is then interpreted as a derivative of it. Here we have then a simple play on words, an etymological pun, which is one of the most salient features of popular stories.[1] Let us now see how this story came into being and gained admittance to the deposit of Israel's sacral traditions concerning her ancestors.

The allusion to Judah's ' going down ' to the areas inhabited by the Canaanites evidently points to the various migrations, in the period prior to the establishment of the monarchy, of the mighty and vigorous tribe of Judah [2] which had been in fact the leader of the Israelite tribes in the south of Palestine.[3] The territory occupied by this tribe is known as the hill country of Judah (cf. Josh. 11:21, 20:7, 21:11) and at times also as the wilderness of Judah (cf. Judg. 1:16) ; while the first name denoted the mountainous regions to the south of Jerusalem, the second designated the land sloping down to the Dead Sea which served as the natural boundary on the eastern extremity of the Judahite territory. The area occupied by the tribe was thus circumscribed in the north by the Jebusite city of Jerusalem and by the other Canaanite city-states in its vicinity, and in the east, by the Dead Sea, and in the south it extended as far as the city of Hebron. This peculiar geographical situation of the sturdy tribe of Judah certainly made its expansion to the north very difficult and any movement to the east impossible, and consequently it began to move southwards and westwards.

The mountainous regions south of Judah's territory were occupied by the Calebites,[4] the Othnielites (cf. Josh. 15:15–19. Judg. 1:11–13), the Qenites,[5] the Jerahmeelites (cf. 1 Sam. 27:10, 30:29) and finally

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[1] cf. G. von Rad : ' Der Anfang der Geschichtsschreibung im alten Israel ', *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament*, München, 1958, pp. 148–54.

[2] It is of course taken for granted that Judah was an Israelite tribe ; most of the critics are agreed upon this point, but among those who deny it we may mention T. H. Robinson who strongly argues that Judah was a purely Canaanite tribe dwelling in Hebron which, because of the pressure from the Philistines, made common cause with the Israelite tribes and thus came in the course of time to be regarded as part of Israel (cf. *History of Israel*, I, Oxford, 1932, pp. 169–70). This theory, failing to take into account the unanimous tradition of the O.T., must be regarded as improbable and consequently untenable.

[3] For a detailed study, cf. M. Noth : ' Die Ansiedlung des Stammes Juda auf dem Boden Palästinas ', *PJB* 30 (1934) pp. 31–47. Noth (art. cit., p. 31 n.) dismisses as *unbegründet* Robinson's view mentioned in the previous note.

[4] The Calebites who were part of the Qenite tribe (cf. Num. 32:12. Josh. 14:6 and 14) were in possession of the city of Hebron which occupied a place of prominence in the south (cf. Josh. 14:6–15, 15:13–19. cf. Dt. 1:36 ; Num. 13:6).

[5] In Gen. 4:1–16 Cain (Qain) is represented as the eponymous ancestor of the Qenites who lived in the south-west of Hebron (cf. Josh. 15:55–7 ; 1 Sam. 27:10, 30:29).

by the tribe of Simeon (cf. Josh. 19:1–9. cf. 15:21–32 ; Judg. 1:3–4 and 17) which in the course of time lost its identity and became absorbed into the tribe of Judah. But as far as our study is concerned, Judah's expansion in the direction of the west is more important. The southern parts of the coastal area were in the hands of the Philistines, the occupation of whose territory was beyond the power of the Judahites. But there was ample scope for migration into the Shephelah, the country between the mountains proper and the coastal plain, where there were only relatively few Canaanite cities. Judah was not slow in taking note of the possibility it had of expanding westwards. So gradually various Judahite families moved into the Shephelah and settled down there.

This settlement in a region thoroughly Canaanite brought the Judahites into close contact with the indigenous population, and the new-comers not only entered into peaceful and friendly relations with the natives but also, without any scruple about the holy race becoming mixed with the peoples of the land (cf. Ez. 9:2), contracted marriages with them and thus gradually incorporated Canaanite families into their own tribe. And the story of Judah's going down to the Shephelah and of taking to wife a Canaanite's daughter is but a reminiscence of this historical experience of the tribe of Judah, in the obscure period. subsequent to the occupation of Palestine and prior to the tribe's rise to prominence in the age of king David. Gen. 38 therefore embodies a piece of tribal history which is now inseparably bound up with various narrative elements.[1]

The experience of the tribe of Judah : peaceful co-existence with the previous inhabitants of the land and the gradual absorption of these into the Israelite population, was not an isolated incident in Israel's history after the settlement in Canaan, and the Old Testament itself affords a large range of evidence for this process which had already begun in the age of the wanderings in the wilderness. Thus a mixed multitude (cf. Ex. 12:38), a numerous rabble (cf. Num. 11:4), including no doubt slaves belonging to the different families of Asiatics who had settled down in the Nile Delta and were also being forced to do hard labour,[2] and even Egyptians, came out of Egypt with the Israelites and gradually lost their identity. Moreover Moses' father-in-law was a Midianite and his clan joined Israel in the wilderness (cf. Num.

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[1] In this representation of the experiences of the tribe in terms of individuals we have an instance of the influence of the primitive conception of corporate personality upon the story-tellers in ancient Israel ; cf. the judicious remarks of O. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*,[2] Tübingen, 1956, pp. 42–3. It is certainly impossible to extricate the narrative elements from the elements of tribal history in the story as it stands now.

[2] cf. M. Noth : *Das zweite Buch Mose* (Das AT Deutsch 5), Göttingen, 1959, p. 77.

10:29–32), and at a later period his descendants lived in their midst (cf. Judg. 1:16, 4:11).

Leaving aside other scattered traces of evidence we come to Josh 9.[1] According to the tradition preserved here, the Gibeonites entered into an alliance with the Israelites and came to be incorporated into the Israelite tribal confederation. True they were counted as slaves in some circles (cf. vv. 21 and 27) and even as an alien group (cf. 2 Sam. 21:1–9), but they too were absorbed into Israel ; so much so that the shrine at Gibeon became a favourite sanctuary of the people of Israel before the erection of the temple (cf. 1 Kgs. 3:4–15),[2] and according to the Chronicler, the Tabernacle too came to be fixed there for a time (cf. 1 Chr. 16:39). We may now bring to a close our consideration with the mention of Josh. 24 which, in all probability, is the record of the treaty between the Israelites and the Canaanite population of Shekem who thus also came to be incorporated into the sacred confederation of Israel.[3]

Against the background of these traditions the story of Judah's expansion into the Canaanite territories and the tribe's absorption of the local population become quite understandable and appear to be wholly in accordance with what transpired after Israel's occupation of the promised land. And further evidence of this process is preserved in the genealogical tables in 1 Chr. 2 and 4.[4] The section 1 Chr. 2:3–4 recapitulates Gen. 38 ; and 1 Chr. 4:1, with its mention of the five sons of Judah, serves as the transition to the lists of names in ch. 4 which, together with ch. 2, has to be considered as a detailed catalogue of the different settlements of the Judahite families and of the various non-Israelite elements absorbed by them. According to the Chronicler, in the western regions of the hill country of Judah there was a mixed Judahite-Canaanite population which was considered as the progeny of Shelah, and in the north were the descendants of Hezron, Judah's grandson through the line of Perez. The Calebite-Judahite clans had their settlements in the eastern sector, and finally in the areas in the south there were also other Calebite tribes. The conclusion to be drawn

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[1] cf. J. Bright : *A History of Israel*, Philadelphia, 1959, p. 122. It would be most instructive to compare this author's remarks with those of M. Noth : *Das Buch Josua* [2] (Handbuch zum AT 7), Tübingen, 1953, p. 53.

[2] cf. M. Noth : *Könige* (Biblischer Kommentar IX/1), Neukirchen, 1964, pp. 49–50.

[3] cf. J. Bright : op. cit., p. 123. M. Noth : Op. cit. (n. 19), p. 139. According to Noth Josh. 24 is the record of a *vermutlich regelmassig wiederholten kultischen Akt*, and not purely *eine ätiologische Erzählung* in spite of the mention of the stone. But this cultic act which was repeated regularly by tribes of the amphictyony could very well draw its origin from an actual happening of the remote past.

[4] For a detailed discussion, cf. M. Noth, ' Eine siedlungsgeographische Liste in 1 Chr. 2 und 4 ', *ZDPV* 55, 1932, pp. 97–124. The date of these lists is not quite certain ; for the various surmises, cf. J Bright : op. cit., p. 123, n. 62.

from this list of settlements, which certainly is a witness to the tribal traditions going back to the pre-monarchic period, is that the highly active tribe of Judah did penetrate into the territories held by the Canaanites and also absorb into itself the non-Israelite clans dwelling there. We are therefore on safe ground when we understand Gen. 38 as a piece of tribal history.

Shelah, Judah's third son to whom Tamar had lawful claims but who nonetheless was denied to her by her father-in-law, is again mentioned in Num. 26:20 where he appears as the head of a Judahite family, viz. the Shelahites ; the tradition embodied here is fragmentary,[1] but it must be understood as part of the large complex of tribal history preserved in Gen. 38 and 1 Chr. 4:21-3.

This part of our study will not be complete without a few remarks about the origin of the story in Gen. 38. Once we admit that Gen. 38 is a fragment of tribal history, how are we to account for its literary provenance ? We must in all likelihood conclude that the story of the clever daughter-in-law who outwitted her unjust and heartless father-in-law originated among the kindred tribes of Perez and Zerah as a piece of folklore,[2] and the ultimate motive for the elaboration of this story would seem to have been their eagerness to extol their racial purity : they are a pure race because there is no alien blood in their veins.[3] Moreover, they also wanted to make themselves known as clever and shrewd, and for this purpose nothing better could be found than the story of the trick their great ancestress played on her father-in-law. In the course of time there ensued rivalries between the two tribes of Perez and Zerah and the former succeeded in supplanting the latter ; this fact best explains the aetiological section with which Gen. 38 comes to a close (vv. 27-30). Perez and Zerah are therefore the eponymous ancestors of the two non-Israelite tribes that claimed descent from the heroine Tamar.

The association of Tamar with Judah, the ancestor of the Judahites, presents no difficulty, provided we bear in mind the tribe's migrations and its success in absorbing the Canaanite population. Among the Canaanite clans thus absorbed were those of Perez and Zerah which, as

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[1] However, there can be no doubt about its great antiquity ; according to G. von Rad the catalogue in Num. 26:19-20 hails in all likelihood from the period before the institution of the monarchy (cf. op. cit., (n. 1), p. 316).

[2] The motive here is commonplace and typical ; cf. O. Eissfeldt, op. cit., pp. 43-4. cf. too I. Engnell, *Gamla Testamentet. En traditionshistorisk Inledning*, I, Stockholm, 1945, pp. 97-100.

[3] A very good parallel to this is the story of Lot and his daughters in Gen. 19:30-8 which was coined by the Moabites and the Ammonites, on the basis of popular etymology, with a view to extolling their racial purity ; this point is well brought out by G. von Rad in his commentary ; cf. op. cit., pp. 190-1.

a result of this process of incorporation, were in a position to claim Judah as their own ancestor. And in point of fact they did count themselves as his progeny after their absorption into the tribe of Judah, but thereby they also took for granted that he was the very father-in-law who was outwitted by their clever mother. In this way there came into being the story of Judah and Tamar which, like so many other popular narratives in the Old Testament, was handed down orally for a long time by the story-tellers in Israel, and was finally committed to writing. We may not be far from the truth if we conjecture that several cycles of stories about Judah and Tamar, comparable of course to the Jacob-Laban cycles or the Jacob-Esau cycles, were current among the Israelites, but the Old Testament has preserved only one story from the Judah-Tamar cycles and it has now become Sacred Scripture.

Now that the story of Judah and Tamar is part of Holy Scripture, the very inspired word of God, it must necessarily possess a salvation-historical significance and bear witness in its own way to the realisation of God's salvific designs for mankind. What can this significance be ? What is the precise nature of the story's witness to God and His salvific designs ?

The history of the patriarchs as recorded in the various cycles of traditions preserved in the Pentateuch is primarily a history of the promises that Yahweh, the true God who by His own gracious initiative set in motion the history of salvation, made to them. The object of these promises which were repeatedly renewed was twofold, namely, the possession of the land of Canaan and a numerous posterity (cf. Gen. 12:1-3, 7:13 and 15-17, 15:18-21, 17:4-8, 18:18, 22:17-18, 26:4, 28:14-15, 35:11-12).[1] To the theologians in Israel the divine promises seemed so important that they viewed them as the very core of salvation-history.[2] In fact, the various stories about the patriarchs in some way or other, if not explicitly, at least implicitly, develop the theme of the divine promises and their fulfilment in the history of the people of Israel ; and this interpretation of the chosen nation's history in terms of Yahweh's promises and their infallible fulfilment also helps us to grasp the theological significance of the story of Judah and Tamar.

What Gen. 38 narrates is simply the story of the birth of children to Judah, the great ancestor of the tribe for which God had special designs. True, human malice and wickedness seem to come in the way of the accomplishment of these designs. Thus Onan's action and Judah's

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[1] cf. G. von Rad ; op. cit., pp. 137-9. id.: op. cit. (n. 11), pp. 179-89.

[2] Adopting an expression of G. von Rad we may say that the theme of promise and fulfilment gives *die Aetiologie aller Aetiologien Israels* (cf. ' Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch ', *Gesam. Studien* [2], p. 73).

unwillingness to let Shelah take Tamar to wife go counter to the plans of God, and similarly the ravages of death appear as an impediment. But nevertheless Yahweh's plans are realised in the most unexpected and mysterious fashion : children are born to Judah in spite of all appearances to the contrary. The history of salvation thus makes headway despite the fact that the actual course of events, to all human calculations, hinder and even frustrate it. The birth of children to Judah is therefore an event with a salvation-historical significance, for it is but the accomplishment of the promise of a large progeny ; and inasmuch as the story of Judah and Tamar thus illustrates a salvation-historical theme, it acquires a special salvation-historical significance and bears witness in its own way to the realisation of God's salvific designs for mankind.[1]

That this was the way in which the believers in Israel interpreted our story is amply vouched for by the traditions contained in Ruth 4:12 and 17–22. The special blessing in 4:12, pronounced on Boaz who took Ruth to wife, is quite significant from the point of view of the theological interpretation of Gen. 38 by later generations. It bears witness to the fact that the believers in Israel had long since understood and interpreted the story of Judah and Tamar in terms of the accomplishment of God's word of promise and had even transformed it into a formula of blessing for new couples.[2]

Furthermore, Gen. 38 also brings to the fore two theological pre-occupations of the J writers, namely, the role women have to play in the history of salvation and the pre-eminence of the tribe of Judah from which king David hailed. The Jahwists' awareness of the part to be played by women finds expression in the very first pages of the tradition represented by them ; thus, sin gains entrance into the world through a woman's activity, but the promise of salvation too is in some way linked with her (cf. Gen. 3:15).[3] And this special significance attached to women, this insistence on the role they have to play in the gradual unfolding of God's salvific designs for mankind, is expressed also in the story of Judah and Tamar, which is nothing but the account of the clever manoeuvres of a valiant woman in order to become a mother, and thus bring to realisation the divine promises to the patriarchs.

The J writers also delight in speaking of the pre-eminence of the tribe of Judah in the history of salvation.[4] Judah is to be the bearer of

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[1] These points are emphasised by G. von Rad in his commentary on Genesis ; cf. op. cit., p. 317.

[2] In other words, the story of Judah and Tamar had become a type in Israel.

[3] cf. H. Cazelles : *Introduction à la Bible*, I, Paris, 1957, p. 358.

[4] cf. H. Cazelles : op. cit., p. 358.

the divine promises and he holds the sceptre till the coming of the one to whom it is rightly due (cf. Gen. 49:10) ; and in his special capacity as the bearer of the promises he must also have a numerous posterity ; but this is realised when children are born to him in the most unexpected manner. Gen. 38, being but the account of this mysterious realisation of the divine promises, serves thus to enhance the unique position of the tribe of Judah which was to give birth to king David (cf. Ruth 4:17–22).

We are now in a position to grasp fully the salvation-historical significance of Gen. 38, and understand the specific nature of its witness to God and the accomplishment of His salvific will. In spite of all appearances to the contrary, in spite of human weakness and malice, God's promises of a large progeny to the patriarchs is fulfilled. This work of fulfilment in which women have to play a prominent part is inseparably bound up with the tribe of Judah which was destined to give to Israel the greatest of all her kings, and to the world at large its Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Mt. 1:2–16).[1] When thus understood in the light of biblical revelation, Gen. 38 becomes meaningful and highly significant ; it is no more the account of a scandalous affair, but the record of a part of salvation-history which has its culmination in the person and work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

LUKE à B.

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[1] cf. G. Gerlemann : *Ruth* (Biblischer Kommentar XVIII/1), Neukirchen, 1960, pp. 36–7.

BOOK REVIEW

Margaret T. Monro, *Enjoying the Wisdom Books.* Longmans, London 1964. pp. vii–xi, 111. 15s

We read in the preface : ' Especially in the case of the Old Testament the greatest need of the biblical movement at present is not more writers on the Bible. . . . .; it is more people who read, at least once, the Bible itself.' But here is another book : can it be justified ? I believe it justifies itself.

The author's aim is straightforward. She hopes to encourage people who are overwhelmed by the sheer bulk of the Bible, and rather fearful of the increasing flood of expertise, to make a start on the Old Testament instead of just thinking that they ought to try.

It is a book for beginners (but if you are not a beginner you will find that it is not beneath your notice), and Miss Monro gives her