

2004 Biblical Theology in Outline – The vitality of the Word of God. For detail see List of Publications below.

[Key terms: Biblical theology – biblical interpretation – biblical history – biblical critique - relevance of the Bible]

That the Bible presents immense problems to the laity is hardly an overstatement. Believers are caught between the doctrinal assumption that the Bible is God's eternal Word which cannot contain errors, and their own observation that there are obscure, contradictory and highly problematic passages in the Bible. They may discover that there exists a wide variety of faith assumptions in the Bible which do not always dovetail with each other. There are texts which do not seem to reflect a loving God, for instance the hatred of enemies in the Psalms, the genocidal attitude of Israel towards the original inhabitants of Palestine, the legitimation of patriarchal dominance, or the imperial claims of Israelite kings (Ps 2). Some of these assumptions are ethically untenable from a Christian perspective and offensive to modern sensitivities.

With the historical approach to biblical interpretation that I have developed in *Theology of the Biblical Witness* (see above), these phenomena sort themselves out and begin to make sense. I was concerned, however, that the scholarly character of the book would not be accessible to the educated laity. So I wrote a simplified version with the aim of distributing it more widely. It has the same chapters but in a simple non-technical language. Experience so far suggests that lay readers, lay preachers and first year students, but also ministers in the field who battle with biblical interpretation, can benefit greatly from this book.