

Eastern College



Office of the President:

December 9, 1981

Mr. James Buckwalter
100 Oakdale Avenue
Trooper, Pa. 19403

Dear Mr. Buckwalter:

It has come to my attention that your daughter Virginia, in her course "The Nature and Meaning of the Old Testament", has been disturbed by statements made by her professor Dr. Thomas McDaniel with regard to the Bible as the Word of God. Since both I personally, and with me Eastern College, are deeply committed to the Scriptures as the final, authoritative Word of God, I am very concerned about the kind of perceptions your daughter, and perhaps other students, are receiving. Therefore I have personally looked into the matter and spoken with Dr. McDaniel about this concern.

I have known Tom for several years, and have never known a person more deeply committed to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and to the final authority of the Bible as the Word of God. I have just received a letter from the pastor of a church in Massachusetts, where Dr. McDaniel did a weekend Bible Conference on the theme "Missions from the Old Testament." The pastor wrote that he had "never heard the Christian message presented any better in the Old Testament." An earlier letter from a church in Virginia, where Dr. McDaniel had done a Bible Study series, testified that several "fence-straddlers" in that church had committed their lives to Jesus Christ because of the clarity and power with which they heard the Good News through the teaching and preaching of Tom McDaniel.

Having spoken with Tom about his course, it is clear that one of his major objectives is to help students understand and hear the Word of God in the Old Testament in light of the fullest and final revelation of God's Word in Jesus Christ. In light of that final revelation, as mediated to us in the New Testament, it is clear that God's self-revelation is progressive (see Hebrews 1:1), and that the hearing and understanding of God's Word by His people, as expressed by the prophets and scribes and priests in the history of Israel, is at times characterized by the fact that all human beings, even God's special prophets and apostles (as Paul says in II Corinthians 4:7) carry the glory of God's revelation in "earthen vessels", that we know "in part", that we "see in a mirror, dimly" (I Cor. 13:12). From many statements which Jesus makes it is clear that his revelation of God and His purposes for His creation go beyond that perceived in the previous redemptive history (see Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount", Matthew 5). So where God's people in the Old Testament perceived God to demand the violent destruction of Israel's enemies, Jesus commands us to love our enemies. Even within the Old Testament there is tension

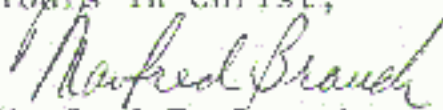
between various understandings of God's will. In Leviticus and Numbers, the various sacrificial rituals are clearly perceived as ordained by God. Yet some of the prophets thunder against the sacrificial cult and proclaim that God does not desire the blood of sacrifices. Yet in spite of these inner tensions, Jesus points His Jewish listeners to the Old Testament Scriptures as "Those which testify of me", and the sacrificial cult is proclaimed as in some sense pointing forward to the ultimate and final sacrifice of God's Son on Calvary's cross.

It is Dr. McDaniel's burden to help students grasp the divine mystery of holy Scripture, namely, that in the paradox of the intermingling of human words and divine words, the Word of God breaks through into our human brokenness and sinfulness to reclaim us for God. That is the glory of our Bible, and at Eastern we are committed to it.

Dr. McDaniel expressed the hope that Virginia would feel free to speak with him about her concerns. He is a deeply sensitive and caring person, who wants nothing more than to be involved in students' growth in faith.

As we celebrate in this special season once again His coming into the midst of our human story, may you and yours know, in all things, His transforming and upholding love.

Yours in Christ,


Manfred T. Brauch
Acting President

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P.S. You may know Sandra D. Vailerschamp, a member of your congregation at Church of the Saviour. She has taken Dr. McDaniel's Old Testament course and may be able to share her own perceptions with you and Virginia.