

The Present State Of Old Testament Studies

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As published in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* Volume 18, Page 69
The Evangelical Theological Society, Spring, 1975

The discipline of Old Testament Studies with all of its supporting philological, archaeological, historical, and literary technicians is poised on the brink of a new era which contains, like many of the prophet's messages, both a promise and a threat. While the previous three or four decades have dealt kindly with our discipline with an overwhelming harvest of exciting and profitable advances, we are currently also witnessing a quiet changing of the guard which may possess some ominous implications for a discipline flushed with recent successes. Such nestors of the field as William Foxwell Albright, H. H. Rowley, G. Ernest Wright, Martin Noth, Nelson Glueck, Roland de Vaux, E. J. Young, O. T. Allis, Paul Lapp, and James Muilenburg have completed their work.

What they accomplished in their lifetime can be called nothing short of an intellectual revolution. From the bondage of a Darwinian developmentalism and a Hegelian dialectical movement in history they, for the most part, moved the discipline to the exhilarating freedom of a new methodology for Biblical study which stressed the use of real data and tools instead of imaginary sources or unsupported broad hypotheses.

Internally, the Biblical text was given its fair chance to speak as one of the witnesses to the reality it professed to describe. Of course this text was subjected to those proper scrutinies derived from the sciences of textual criticism, morphology, syntax, lexicography, and form criticism.

But the gains made by these investigations were not without the immense advantages garnered from a multitude of external controls. Archaeology, especially with the results gathered from ceramic typology, stratigraphy, and epigraphy, was well in the vanguard setting the pace for Old Testament scholars to follow. In the area of textual study,¹ new ground was broken with the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls materials and the Hebrew University project of *Textus*. For syntactical, lexicographical, and morphological advances, one may point to the staggering amount of evidence supplied by the Ugaritic documents. Some of the features found in Ugaritic and now observed in Biblical Hebrew are: a strikingly similar poetic structure, parallel pairs of words,² the enclitic *mem*, the asseverative use of *lamed*, the meaning of the prepositions *beth* and *lamed* as "from," and the double-duty particles which are found only in one stich but exert the same force in the parallel stich. The application of some of these observations can already be seen in such suggestive, if not debatable, works as Mitchell Dahood's *Psalms* I-III, in *The Anchor Bible* series (1966-70); H. J. van Dijk's *Ezekiel's Prophecy on Tyre* (1968) and Kevin J. Cathcart's *Nahum in Light of Northwest Semitic* (1973). And by now, it is routine practice to observe that parts of the Biblical text utilized fixed textual patterns. The Vassal Treaty form as used in the second millennium B.C. by the Hittites has been observed in Exodus 20, Joshua 24 and the entirety of Deuteronomy. Elsewhere the structure of various Near Eastern hymns,

1. See now the convenient work by Ralph W. Klein, *Textual Criticism of the Old Testament: From the Septuagint to Qumran*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974.

2. See now Mitchell Dahood's 609 parallel pairs of words in "Ugaritic-Hebrew Parallel Pairs," in Loren Fisher (ed.), *Ras Shamra Parallels*, I, Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1972, 71-382.

laments, proverbial and wisdom types, dynastic apologies, and prophetic literature all exhibit models to a greater or lesser degree.

All of this and more has given the discipline a fresh lease on life, a plethora of data and a host of fresh candidates to perpetuate the field. However, evangelicals must not confuse activity with direction and a clear sense of purpose. Indeed, there are already some disquieting sounds on the horizon. Each of these problems can be used to describe just where we presently are. Consequently, this paper will attempt to respond to a selected number of these issues with a summons aimed particularly at the evangelical wing of Old Testament studies to redirect their traditional focus from the somewhat overworked fields of Old Testament Introduction and Surveys of Old Testament history, geography, archaeology and biography to those areas where we have made our least spectacular gains!

Regretfully one must begin by acknowledging a large measure of truth in the indictment given by G. Ernest Wright. He wrote:

One of the most striking characteristics of the conservative wings of the church during this century has been the weakness of their biblical scholarship ... With occasional exceptions for which one was grateful, biblical, especially Old Testament, articles and reviews simply did not measure up to the standard set by the editors for theological discussions generally. There is no word sufficiently eloquent to describe this weakness other than to say that it is pitiable. The rare exceptions only proved the rule.³

Admittedly, much has changed even in the half decade that has expired since the late G. Ernest Wright wrote this comment. The huge increase in student enrollment at evangelical theological seminaries and the immense success scored in popular theological writings have fired the imaginations of even the most inept judges of history. But the practice of exegetical theology in the classroom, in the pulpit and on the printed page still lags far behind the depth of our fervent commitment to the text in theory. Far too many discussions of the text have been satisfied to merely survey the concepts and characters without pausing to let the text say what it wants to say. Too many sins have been committed in the classroom in the name of acquainting the student with an overview of individual books of the Bible or yielding to the pressure to reduce the intensity of exegesis in favor of ever-new "practical" courses being added to the [impractical?] theoretical areas, while the pulpit and printer yield to what the people expect of their pastor or wish to buy.

Nothing would relieve this problem more effectively for the classroom and pastor's study than the development of a method for expediting exegetical theology. Such a method is currently being introduced under various labels at several evangelical centers of theological learning; it needs to be further refined and encouraged.

3. G. Ernest Wright, "Historical Knowledge and Revelation," in *Translating and Understanding the Old Testament* (ed. by H. T. Frank and W. L. Reed), Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970, p. 296.

I propose to call such a method “Syntactical Theological Analysis” rather than the older “Grammatical-Historical Analysis.” This new method requires the scholar, pastor, or student to segment the smaller units of Biblical text under consideration in the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek (and the original languages are to be preferred) into paragraphs for prose or strophes for poetry. Within each of the paragraph or strophic units, it next seeks to identify the theme line or topic sentence of that unit which schematically is written out on one line starting from a margin. Then the remaining sentences, clauses, or phrases of the paragraph or strophe are indented according to their order of subordination to the theme line by observing the grammatical and syntactical signals supplied by the writer of the text. Depending on whether these phrases, clauses, or sentences appear in the text before or after the topic sentence or theme line, they are indented so as to line up with the word to which they are grammatically linked with an arrow pointed down (when the subordination appears textually ahead of the theme line) or an arrow pointed up to the modified word (when the clause or phrase follows the topic sentence in the order of the text).

Under such an analysis, much more is now involved in exegesis than parsing verbs, identifying parts of speech, doing comparative lexicography in the Biblical versions and in the cognate languages, identifying types of sentences or functions of verbs. A Syntactical Theological Analysis includes all of these concerns, but it insists that true Biblical scholarship, if it is to enjoy the authoritative support for its teaching it hopes to have, must resolutely abide with the single meaning of the text that that original writer gave to it. And these meanings are not to be derived in an atomistic ploy by isolating a word or two which might conveniently serve as a peg on which to foist one’s own private ideas. To locate an author’s meaning, one must observe how the author used his words and how he joined the seams of his thought together. Focusing more on the total syntactical structure will definitely force the student of the Scriptures to ask the proper questions. Any exegesis which concludes its work after it has located the passage historically, parsed the verbs and identified other unusual grammatical forms is an abomination. It has stopped 40 yards short of the goal line.

Others have said in effect, a plague on both of the preceding methods; we depend on the Holy Spirit to directly lead us into all truth about all passages. The writer wrote “better than they knew,” so why should we limit our study and results. But, should Old Testament scholarship opt for a banishment of the author under the evangelical guise that the divine author had the human authors write “better than they knew”⁴ or under the current existential fad that meaning can be divided into what a “text meant” and what a “text means”⁵ to me personally, it will suffer irreparable damage. In the former case, rather than magnifying the greatness of God’s revelation, it only introduces multiple senses for the same set of linguistic symbols which finally results in nonsense and a loss of respect for Scripture. Likewise in the latter opinion, the “New

4. See the counter-argument of this writer in “The Eschatological Hermeneutics of ‘Evangelicalism’: Promise *Theology*,” *JETS*, 1970, pp. 93-96. Also compare Moses Stuart, *Hints on the Interpretation of the Prophecy*, 2nd ed., Andover: Allen, Morrill and Wardwell, 1842, pp. 43-60.

5. Krister Stendahl, “Biblical Theology,” *IDB*, I, pp. 419-20.

Hermeneutic” or the existential neo-orthodox exegete fails no better. E. D. Hirsch’s argument in his *Validity in Interpretation* remains unanswerable by all except those who restore the author to his rightful place. Neither will it do to appeal to God as a higher author, for as Paul argued in I Corinthians 2:6–16, no one knows the mind of God except those to whom the Lord has specifically revealed his word: the apostles and prophets who wrote our Scriptures. Old Testament studies must penetrate every barrier that would separate us from the authorial meaning.

A second crisis for Old Testament studies is being fomented in Old Testament Biblical Theology. The decade of the seventies opened on the dour note contained in Brevard S. Childs’ *Biblical Theology in Crisis*.⁶ Horace Hummel added his bit to the cause by saying” ‘Biblical Theology’ is dead and IOVC [*The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*, Abingdon Press, 1971] is its witness.”⁷ Of course, both of these men were referring to a special method of study within the discipline itself called the Biblical Theology Movement. But strange as it may seem, the very discipline within Old Testament studies which by its very name and commission was charged with the task of synthesizing all the concepts which marked the lines of continuity or unity in the text and identifying those items which were destined for an obsolescence and hence a discontinuity with the New Testament or even part of the Old Testament has so far fallen far short of its objectives.

The Walther Eichrodt “structural” model which employed the “covenant” as its organizing scheme was declared to be too “systematic” to treat all the variegated themes and history of Israel.⁸ Gerhard von Rad’s “traditio-historical” or “diachronic” model segmented the discipline into a number of theologies which emphasized the different ways Israel retold her “history of salvation” in new situations. And so it has gone with all the more recent entries in the field.⁹ The estimate of Bernhard W. Anderson is accurate:

...Up to the present, no theologian has presented a work which clearly and convincingly shows how the methodological problem can be resolved or transcended in a new approach to the subject matter. The plain truth is that the theological tides of the 60’s have moved scholarship away from the era of neo-orthodoxy or “biblical theology” and, therefore, the theological task must be undertaken anew.¹⁰

This hiatus of leadership in this realm again supplies Evangelicals with an unprecedented opportunity to move in to do what has eluded others. Furthermore, exegetical theology remains

6. Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970.

7. Horace D. Hummel, “Major Book Review,” *Interpretation*, 26 (1972), p. 341.

8. In this same category belong the theologies of Th. Vriezen and van Imschoot.

9. One could list the Lexicographical Theologies of Kittle’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* and George A. K. Knight. See Gerhard Hasel. *Old Testament Theology. Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972, Chapter 1 for a brief description of five major and recent methods of doing Old Testament Theology.

10. Bernhard W. Anderson, “Current Trends in the Old Testament Field,” *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*. 63 (1970). p. 25.

incomplete and barren in its results without the proper input of that understanding of the center or unity of theology that chronologically and historically *preceded* the text under investigation. We propose to call this phenomena the “Analogy of Scripture.” It may be defined as the accumulation and the progress of revelation on the central theme or concept of the Old Testament which is antecedent to any specified text and which theology therefore “informs”¹¹ that text as well as supplies the background or available Biblical teaching against which this new revelation was given. Caution must be exercised to sharply contrast the “Analogy of Scripture” with the “Analogy of Faith.”¹² While the latter may legitimately be employed in Systematic theology, it would be disastrous if introduced as part of the exegetical procedure.

Rather than utilizing the New Testament or the subsequent Old Testament revelations to interpret (or even worse still, to reinterpret) the old material—an act of abandonment of the author and ultimately an act of flouting the divine authority inherent in each text—we urge evangelical interpreters to note those allusions and that deliberate employment of accumulating technical theological terms already present in the Bible available up to the time of the writing of this new Old Testament text. To argue for a *sensus plenior*,¹³ a fuller, deeper or secondary theological sense, which arises either from the principal divine author of Scripture or from the totality of revelation in general and the New Testament in particular—especially a meaning which eluded the human author in the act of giving the Old Testament text—is to make nonsense out of revelation and to lead Christ’s Church into the neo-orthodox confusion between illumination and revelation.

But even if we grant a decided advantage to our exegesis in the use of an “Analogy of Scripture,” the question still lingers: is there an inner unity which binds together the various Old Testament themes, concepts and books into an orderly and progressive theme, plan, or theology? And to ask the most crucial and sensitive question of all: were the writers of the Old Testament consciously

11. A happy phrase found in John Bright, *Authority of the Old Testament*, Nashville, Abingdon, 1967, pp. 143, 170.

12. The “Analogy or Rule of Faith” is a collection of the fundamental doctrines of the faith from the chief and most evident chapters of Scripture without any special interest in temporal considerations. (Usually based incorrectly off the word “faith” in Romans 12:6b which means one’s personal faith and not “doctrine” in that passage.)

13. This term was introduced by Andres Fernandez, “Hermeneutica,” *Institutiones Biblicae*, Rome, 1925; 2nd ed., 1927. The three outstanding exponents of this view are J. Coppens. *Les Harmonies des Deux Testaments: Essai sur les Divers Sens de l’Ecriture et sur l’Unite de la Revelation*. Tourrai-Paris, 1948; 2nd ed., 1944; , “Levels of Meaning in the Bible,” *Concilium*, 10 (1967), 62–9; P. Benoit, “La Plentitude de Sens des Livres Saints,” *RB*, 67 (1960), 161–96; and R. E. Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture*, Baltimore: 1955;— , “The Problem of *Sensus Plenior*,” *ETL*, 53 (1967), 460–69. Opponents to this view are: B. Vawter, “The Fuller Sense: Some Considerations,” *CBQ* 26 (1964), 85–96; R. Bierberg, “Does Sacred Scripture have a *Sensus Plenior*?” *CBQ* 10 (1948), 182–95; J. M. Robinson, “Scripture and Theological Method. A Protestant Study of *Sensus Plenior*,” *CBQ* 27 (1965), 6–27.

aware of such a center, key, or plan as they continued to add to the historical stream of revelation?

Certainly every Old Testament student is aware by now of the danger of imposing over Scripture an arbitrarily devised *ab extra* grid or theological framework. But why has current scholarship swung in the opposite direction of concluding that the texts themselves (as seen in the truth-intention of the original authors) do not suggest such a conscious center? We have argued elsewhere¹⁴ that the theme of the “promise,” with all of its unfolding fullness of content, was precisely that center which the *authors* of Scripture *consciously* propagated and for which we so desperately grope.

Until this problem is solved for each interpreter, the interests and results of systematic theology or an uncontrolled subjectivism will continue to prematurely mother and dictate the exegetical range of meanings for any and all Old Testament passages. This will deliver a lethal blow to either the processes of validating an interpretation or to the divine authority invested in the text themselves.

Closely related to the two concerns involved in syntactical and theological analysis is a third: the relation of the Old Testament to the New Testament. High on this field’s priority list must be the need for a completely new textbook on “Old Testament Ethics” which will tackle among other issues, the law/gospel tension from a fresh exegetical standpoint in both testaments. We believe C. E. B. Cranfield’s article in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* (vol. 17, 1964) entitled “St. Paul and the Law” has done much to clear the air.¹⁵ Nothing hinders Christians from using the Old Testament more than a feeling it is inferior in its ethical precepts or absolvescent in its doctrine because of its association with the law.

How long can Old Testament scholars look the other way, or even worse still, aid and abet this type of thinking while simultaneously decrying the fruit of situational ethics? The reality of the moral law of God as a textually distinguishable feature from other realms of Old Testament legislation and the relevance and priority of that moral law for the proper ordering of a believer’s life-style is constantly found in the wisdom books, prophets, Jesus, and Paul.¹⁶

14. W. C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Centre of Old Testament Theology: The Promise,” *Themeros*, 10 (1974), 1–10. Contrast the excellent article, but with different results, by Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Problem of the Center in the Old Testament Debate,” *ZAW*, 86 (1974), 65–82.

15. The last substantial but critically marred work that appeared in the field was W. S. Bruce, *The Ethics of the Old Testament*. 2nd ed., Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1909. One would do better to use William Brenton Green, Jr., “The Ethics of the Old Testament,” (originally published in 1929, but now in) *Classical Evangelical Essays in Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. by W. C. Kaiser, Jr., Grand Rapids: Bakers, 1972, p. 207-36. Note also the fine article in this last anthology by Chalmers Martin, “Imprecations in the Psalms,” p. 113-32.

16. See our detailed argument in “The Weightier and Lighter Matters of the Law: Moses, Jesus and Paul” in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill*

There is a priority of the internal response to God over any and all external requirements of religion in the Old Testament. There is also a universality of appeal and purpose in the message which outstripped a mere nationalistic prejudice. And there is a humane regard inculcated which included everything from one's enemy to his wife. All the published suggestions to the contrary cannot upset the text's own point of view.¹⁷ Indeed, there are areas of discontinuity between the testaments, but they are not on the levels of error versus truth, law versus grace, external versus internal, and material and national versus spiritual and universal; rather, they are those of anticipation versus realization, historical-empirical versus eschatological-eternal, and the provisional versus the everlasting.

Similarly, Christian preaching from the Old Testament must be subjected to a more searching analysis. Two recent works have been especially stimulating even though they leave much room for further work: Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Old Testament and the Proclamation of the Gospel*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973) and Foster R. McCurley, Jr., *Proclaiming the Promise: Christian Preaching from the Old Testament*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974).

The Achtemeier work urges the preacher of an Old Testament text to pair off a New Testament text with each Old Testament text, much as B. S. Childs had already argued in his *Biblical Theology in Crisis*. But this tends to run away from the Old Testament meaning in favor of a salvagable New Testament message or it unjustly imports the future into God's activity and communication in the Old Testament. In other words, it tends to use the "Analogy of Faith" as an exegetical device when it should be using the "Analogy of Scripture." McCurley, on the other hand, has properly stressed the centrality of God's promise in all its multi-faceted developments; however, he tends to give the texts a depth of meaning unknown to the original authors and further suggests there are a number of different levels of meanings.

Both writers have attempted to deal with the question which most exegesis classes leave for the homileticians and which homileticians in turn assume the exegetes have already treated: the "jump" from the "then" of the texts to the "now" of the congregation.¹⁸ Everyone must strive at this point to avoid a mere B.C. description of a situation or personality; this is sheer historicism. Equally dangerous, because of the opposite error, are all forms of psychologizing, moralizing,

C. Tenhey Presented by his Former Students, (ed. by Gerald F. Hawthorne), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975, Chpt. xi. Also note my chpt. III "The Law of the Lord" in *The Old Testament in Contemporary Preaching*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973.

17. Some of the recent literature on Old Testament ethics is: Arthur Lewis, "Jehovah's International Love," *JETS*, 15 (1972), 87-92. The survey of Robert Davidson in "Some Aspects of the Old Testament Contribution to the Pattern of Christian Ethics," *S.J.T.*, 12 (1959), pp. 373-87 is excellent. See the bibliography given by Walter Kornfeld, "Old Testament Ethics," in *Sacramentum Mundi*, IV (Karl Rahner, ed.), Herder & Herder, 1969, p. 282. James Crenshaw and John Willis (eds). *Essays on Old Testament Ethics*, NY: Ktav, 1974.

18. Achtemeier, *op. cit.*, p. 151; McCurley, *op. cit.*, p. 48ff.

spiritualizing and allegorizing of the text. We would propose to call this “jump” a matter of “principlizing” the points made by the original author.

These principles are formed out of regard for: 1) the single meaning of the author, 2) the theological input from the “analogy of [the antecedent] Scripture,” and now 3) the central point of reference in the passage itself. This focal point of the passage may be epitomized in a summary sentence¹⁹ and then given an outline development consistent with the internal logic of the passage and with all references to proper names deleted unless they be the name of God, or a teaching-eschatological passage involving designated nations, or a passage using historic events as an illustration prior to applying its truth.

Now these matters need more in-depth investigation. How does one bridge the gap between exegesis, narrowly defined (and we believe improperly so) and the proclamation outline? What textual literary forms yield what variety of corresponding sermons? What series of questions lead the exegete to retain the authoritative thrust of the revealed word without lapsing into sheer historicism or uncontrolled subjectivity involving preconceived ideas or imported ones subconsciously recalled from other passages? These are some of the great needs if Old Testament preaching is ever to receive its proper place in the preaching calendar of the Church and if we are ever to hear dynamic and authoritatively compelling presentations of that Old Testament word again.

Another issue which looms on the horizon of Old Testament/New Testament relations is that contained in the challenge of Messianic Judaism. By now, most Bible scholars have come to realize that the future of Israel as a nation must not be handled exegetically in a docetic, dualistic or spiritualized way. How can that issue be a current problem? It is already over 25 years too late to adopt that position!

But what shall Old Testament and New Testament scholars say about the present upswing in Jewish believers in their Messiah and the accompanying questions which are building with them, such as: 1) Does God’s strategy for missions still involve a program which goes “to the *Jews first* and *also* to the Gentiles”? 2) What can a Jewish believer practice in Judaism so as to personally identify with his Jewishness and thereby resist absorption into some other community without denying his new found faith in Messiah? 3) Does Amos 9:11ff. or any Old Testament passage anticipate the advent of the Church or are there clear lines of demarcation between the two so as to set one off into a parenthetical condition from the other? (Here one must consider the plea of Paul in Eph. 2:12–13 where Gentiles who were excluded as “foreigners to the state of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise ... are now brought near through the blood of Christ” or Romans 11:24 where Gentiles are grafted INTO the olive tree of Israel!)

19. See the conclusion to Edward Haller’s article “On the Interpretive Task,” *Interpretation*, 21 (1967), pp. 158-66.

There is enough here to veritably give the Church another experience of Acts 15. However, in this case it is a nice problem to have in that it spells the triumph of grace in the lives of those who have neglected their own Messiah for so long.²⁰

On the periphery of these large issues, one can detect a few additional trends which also call for the specialized services of Old Testament studies. Top among these concerns must be placed the work of Walter Brueggemann, *In Man We trust: The Neglected Side of Biblical Faith* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1972). If I am not mistaken, it appears that neo-orthodoxy is being exchanged for a revitalized, if not chastened, liberalism under the guise of elevating a secular form of religion which claims wisdom theology as its source over a spiritual form of Old Testament theology which is tradition-bound in the older concepts of sin and salvation.

The challenge of this hypothesis is its claim to historically reflect the interests and concerns of the Israelite monarchy under David and Solomon while it exegetes a theology of the secular which is unrelated to the antecedent or subsequent theology of the Old Testament. Clearly, the challenge is this: either relate Wisdom theology to the rest of Old Testament theology or cut bait and recognize a competing but approved mode of thought within the canon! Indeed, there is a clear theology of culture in the wisdom books, but it is not devoid of contact with the organizing center of the Old Testament. The persistent theme of that earlier phrase, "the fear of God/LORD," should be enough to make one pause before wholeheartedly adopting any dichotomies here.

Meanwhile, some of our traditional problems remain with us. The area of Old Testament chronology and historiography have received fresh contributions from Bruce K. Waltke's application of Palestinian artifactual evidence²¹ on the date of the Exodus and Donald J. Wiseman's editing of a work on Ancient Near Eastern Ethnology.²²

The tempo of works on Israelite Religion has also been exhilarated with Georg Fohrer's 1972 Abingdon translation of his 1968 German work leading a number of smaller entries covering everything from studies on specific pantheons²³ of the various nations to facets of Israel's involvement. This may be the harbinger of fact that Old Testament theologies may well fade away and become Old Testament Histories of Religion!

20. See provisionally, Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Hebrew Christianity: It's Theology, History and Philosophy*. Washington, D.C.: Canon Press, n.d., [1974].

21. Bruce K. Waltke, "Palestinian Artifactual Evidence Supporting the Early Date of the Exodus," *Bib. Sac.*, 129 (1972), pp. 3-47.

22. Donald J. Wiseman (ed.), *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1973.

23. For example, there is a survey approach taken in Helmer Riggren's *Religions of the Ancient Near East*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973; a translation of the Swedish 1967 edition.

Finally, the field of Form-criticism continues to be one of the most prolific contributors to recent thought with some helpful insights in literary form if not always helpful in the content or source of that content. Few evangelicals have distinguished themselves in this field. Except for O. T. Allis' epic-making analysis on Isaiah 44:24–28,²⁴ Kline and Kitchen's work on the covenant in Deuteronomy and other Old Testament texts²⁵ and H. Wolf's work on the Apology of David in I Samuel 15 to II Samuel 8,²⁶ this area remains wide-open to evangelicals.

Some real breakthroughs in the analyses of Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs and Lamentations could be made by extensive employment of the emerging insights in this field. The pattern of thought in these books is so repetitious or so stylized that such helps in literary form as supplied by these *gattungen* might prove very suggestive in unravelling the thought of these somewhat enigmatic books.

In a word then, the present state of Old Testament studies is mixed: in a transitional period with a changing of the guard, it is filled with uncertainties of leadership and direction. But if the few signs are any sure indicator of things to come, evangelicals had better decide that the honeymoon is over and if any theological stability is to be brought to the discipline, we had better produce. There is also the optimistic note. It is a most opportune time for evangelicals to break out of our conventional eddies of bantering solely with deficient views of Pentateuchal, Isaianic and Danielian authorship (the points are true, the protests are too much) and to really begin doing some solid and substantial Biblical scholarship.²⁷ There is room enough for all to work side by side and material enough to keep us happily employed until that greatest of all interpreters returns again.

24. O. T. Allis, "The Transcendence of Jehovah, God of Israel: Isaiah 44:24–28," *Biblical and Theological Studies*, pp. 579-634 or in *The Unity of Isaiah*, 1950.

25. Meredith Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp. 196ff and Kenneth Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, Downers Grove, Inter-Varsity Press, 1966.

26. Herbert W. Wolf, "Implications of Form Criticism for Old Testament Studies," *Bib. Sac.*, 127 (1970), pp. 299-307.

27. As this article goes to press, my attention was drawn to a German rejection [that's a switch!!] of the Wellhausen theory by a Dr. Gerhard Maier, *Das Ende der historisch—kritischen Methode*, Theol. Verlag Rolf Brockhaus, 1974. Maier is a member of Peter Beyerhaus' faculty at the Albrecht-Bengel-Haus, University of Tübingen. (The work is 95 pages, DM 9180). Could this be another portent of good things to come?

At the twenty-sixth annual meeting, four Old Testament task forces were set up and society members who have an interest in one or more of these areas are invited to write directly to the following leaders:

1. Post-Exilic History and Prophecy:
G. Lloyd Carr
Gordon College
2. Archaeology and O. T. Historical Research:
Wilbur Fields
Ozark Bible College
3. O. T. Exegesis and Textual Criticism:
Bruce K. Waltke and Don R. Glenn
Dallas Theological Seminary
4. O. T. Biblical Theology and Ethics:
Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.