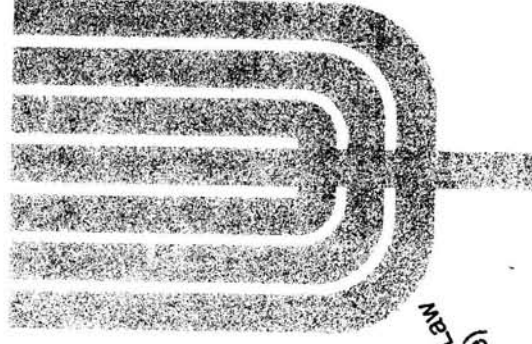


Toward an Old Testament Theology

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Definition and Method

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Chapter 4

The Connections Across Historical Epochs of Emerging Themes in Old Testament Theology

Whenever biblical theologians have identified some key terms or category as a theological center for organizing the developing theology of either or both testaments (as we have also done here), immediately they are confronted with the mass of diverse emphases in Scripture. For some, it is more than a diversity of subject matter. The multiplicity of ideas amounts to nothing less than contradictions and reversals of opinion between the successive writers of Scripture. Even when the text is treated fairly in its final canonical shape,¹ the

¹We shall avoid the discussion that belongs to OT introduction or to the history of Israelite religion, viz., the process in the formation of that text, the results of literary criticism, and tradition-historical criticism. Suffice it here to say that evangelicals do believe in and utilize higher criticism, form criticism, etc. What they cannot agree with is the use of imaginary or hypothetical sources (Chronicles and Kings refer to many *real* sources, cf. Luke 1:1-4) and philosophical or sociological presuppositions which cannot stand the test when applied to epigraphical materials uncovered by the archaeologists of comparable age, style, and character as the biblical texts since the antiquity and authorship of many of the excavated texts are secure on other grounds! Cf. W. C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Present State of Old Testament Studies," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 18(1975): 69-79.

issue of diversity still remains; and the goal of reaching a unified theology appears hopelessly impossible.

Nevertheless, even after the more prejudicial evaluations have been cared for by an objective type of higher criticism, four key tension points remain as symbols of the fact that the OT appears to contain a variety of viewpoints rather than a single integrated theme. If bridges could be built across these high walls, perhaps there would be hope for the whole project of writing an OT theology with a central focal point. The four crucial connections are:

1. Prepatriarchal "Blessing" and Patriarchal "Promise"
2. Patriarchal "Promise" and Mosaic "Law"
3. Premonarchical "Deuteronomism" and Davidic "Promise"
4. Sapiential "Creation Theology" and Prophetic "Promise"

No matter whatever else needs to be done by way of prolegomena to biblical theology, the varying emphases of these eras will need to preempt any other discussion. A plausible solution to these admittedly tricky connections would contribute a major portion to the type of OT theology attempted here.

PREPATRIARCHAL "BLESSING" AND PATRIARCHAL "PROMISE"

There seems to be little doubt that the key motif of the creation narratives was the "blessing" of God on the creatures of the sea and air (Gen. 1:22) and on man and woman (v. 28). Nor was the explanation of that blessing difficult either; it was both a *capacity* and a *result*, to summarize Pedersen.² God's creation was to be prolific and bountiful on the earth.

This divine blessing was continued in Genesis 5:2 and after the Flood in Genesis 9:1. But blessing was present even apart from the use of the word "to bless" or the formula: "And God blessed them saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.'" As Claus Westermann correctly argued, blessing is implied in what he called the *Heilsschilderung* ("portrayal of salvation").³ It is our contention that

²Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1926-40), p. 182.

³Claus Westermann, "The Way of Promise Through the Old Testament," *The Old Testament and Christian Faith*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 208-9.

such *Heilsschilderungen* are also present in prepatriarchal passages such as Genesis 3:15 and 9:27. Thus blessing is found in concept, formula, and divine acts.

The obvious link between Genesis 1-11 and the patriarchal era is one that the text itself makes in its fivefold repetition of the "blessing" given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. Both Zimmerli⁴ and Blythin⁵ noted this association of "blessing" with the theme of "promise" in the patriarchal record. However, they did not carry back their observations to Genesis 1-11 as we have, nor did they notice that this emphasis fell just where the two epochs met in the canon: Genesis 12:1ff. The earlier epoch had ended with the query: What now could be done for the nations at large who were more and more alienated from God who had made them and blessed them with such proliferation? And the answer was in the form of another blessing. God introduced a Semite by the name of Abraham. In him all the families of the earth would find blessing. Indeed, the verb "to bless" appears 82 times in the patriarchal narratives. Thus the verbal and conceptual transition was smooth, continuous, and intentional.

But there is more. The blessing was pointedly continued from father to son in varying situations, e.g., Isaac was blessed because of his father (Gen. 26:24). Even the formula of blessing observed in the creation narratives appeared again: "I am El Shaddai, be fruitful and multiply! A nation and a community of nations shall come from you" (Gen. 35:11).

Connected with the concept of "blessing" was the idea of being successful in a venture or being made prosperous by God. The verb *šālāh* (*hišlāh*), "make prosperous, bring success," was used in Genesis 24:21,40,42,56 in parallelism with *bārak*, "to bless" (Gen. 24:1,27,31). It was God's indication that His favor was upon the patriarchs—everything they attempted succeeded. Consequently, we feel confident in associating these two concepts of "blessing" and "promise" across the two eras. While there exists no distinctive Hebrew verb or noun for "promise," the root *bārak* in the intensive form of the Hebrew verb served admirably well for the time being. Meanwhile, God continued to announce His acts of future deliverance even as He graciously supplied mankind and all of creation with the capacity and results of success right then and there.

Both promise and blessing were so closely intertwined that

⁴Walther Zimmerli, "Promise and Fulfillment," *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann, 2nd ed. (Richmond: John Knox, 1969), pp. 90-93.

⁵Islwyn Blythin, "The Patriarchs and the Promise," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 21(1968): 72.

many scholars began to look for ways to segregate their origins and concerns. But there has never been a secure demonstration of their dichotomization, much less a scholarly consensus. On the basis of the results of traditio-historical criticism, scholars (beginning with Albrecht Alt) have alleged that each patriarch originally had his own separate clan god: "The Shield of Abraham," "The Fear [or 'Kinsman' as W. F. Albright wanted it] of Isaac," and "The Mighty One of Jacob." For Alt, "the choosing of Abraham and his descendants [had] originally nothing to do with Yahweh and his choosing of Israel, but [went] back to the religion of the gods of the Father."⁶ Thus there were two choosings (the patriarchs and Israel) and several gods (the three "clan gods" of the patriarchs and Israel's Yahweh). Likewise, linked to these divine choosings were the promises of these gods which invariably focused on two matters: the increase of the patriarchs' posterity and their possession of the land of Canaan. But again, Alt divides the whole and awards the patriarchs the first promise and declares the second an editorial retrojection back to patriarchal times subsequent to Israel's entry into the land.⁷

While Martin Noth⁸ asserted that both the promise of land and the promise of progeny were very old, he did, however, assign to Jacob and not Abraham the greater prominence in this era. Likewise von Rad⁹ agreed. For him the twofold promise was very old and went back to the time of the patriarchs. Only the later Israelite understanding of the promise of land was different from what the patriarchs understood it to be. For them, explained von Rad, it had an immediate and direct fulfillment as they settled in the land; but it later came to mean a final return under Joshua after a departure from the land.

Nevertheless, a deep tendency still persisted in modern scholarship to associate "blessing" passages solely with the concerns of progeny and wealth—perhaps this was even a vestigial rudiment of Canaanite society and religion—while "promise" passages focused on concern for the land.¹⁰

But neither the promise nor the blessing were syncretistically

⁶Albrecht Alt, "The God of the Fathers," *Essays on Old Testament History and Religion*, trans. R. A. Wilson (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968), p. 82.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

⁸Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. B. W. Anderson (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), pp. 54-58, 79-115, 147-56.

⁹Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1962), 1:168ff.

¹⁰See for example Blythin, "Patriarchs," p. 70.

created ad hoc out of the cultural experiences or imitations of other religions surrounding Israel. The repeated claim of the patriarchs was that the promises were given by divine revelations, revelations which generally began with 'āmar YHWH or wayyō'mer YHWH (Gen. 12:1; 13:14; 18:13; 31:3). Neither were these blessings, as it was alleged, individual and immediate while in contradistinction the promises were corporate and future in nature. Rather, together the blessing-promises were addressed to those descendants of the present and future in the whole line of believers who had a historical representative individual (e.g., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) as an earnest, or token, of what God would do in the immediate and distant future. Yet all the descendants were corporately included in the blessing and promise. All attempts to divide blessing-promise expose the artificiality and subjectivity of these schemes, for the text in its present canonical shape shouts "no" to every such artifice.

Hence we conclude that the generous word of God was realized in His "blessing" to man in both eras: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7; 12:1-3; 35:11) and in His promise and the various portrayals of salvation (*Heilsschilderungen*) in both eras, also: a seed, race, land, blessing to all nations, kings, etc. (Gen. 3:15; 9:27; 12:2-3; 15; 17). Some scholarly protestations to the contrary only prove the general reliability of this link.

PATRIARCHAL "PROMISE" AND MOSAIC "LAW"

Even more serious was the disjuncture that appeared between law and promise. Here some believed that even the apostle Paul and the writer of Hebrews could be cited among the detractors to the unity of law and promise, if not the sheer facts of the OT text itself. But the connections once again were so clear at several points that the patriarchal materials were unfairly suspected of receiving more retrojections of material from that grandest moment of them all—the moment of nation-making at the deliverance from Egypt.

Take, for example, the formula of self-prediction or self-revelation found in Exodus 20:2 (and about 125 times in the rest of the OT): "I am Yahweh thy God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt." A similar formula existed in Genesis 15:7: "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans." They were too similar in form, it was alleged, to be independent of each other. So what type of dependence was assigned? The priority of Exodus 20:2! But why not the reverse pattern—especially since the text claimed that pattern? Cannot a text be innocent until proven guilty? Or must we always presume since it is religious or early in time it is suspect?

Likewise the indications of a divine epiphany and the aspects of awe and dread that surrounded Abraham's reception of the covenant in Genesis 15:17 similarly greeted Israel when the covenant was delivered from Sinai in Exodus 19:18. The smoke, fire pot, and flaming torch of Genesis 15 were matched by the smoke, kiln, and fire of Exodus 19. The texts read:

And it came to pass that when the sun went down and it was dark,
behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between the
pieces.
—Genesis 15:17

And mount Sinai was wrapped altogether in smoke because
Yahweh descended on it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended
like the smoke of a kiln.
—Exodus 19:18

Likewise the patriarchal phrase "the God of my/thy father" continued into the Mosaic age. In God's call of Moses, He said:

I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,
and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to
look on God.
—Exodus 3:6

When Israel was delivered from Pharaoh, the people sang:

Yahweh is my strength and my song,
and He has become my salvation.
This is my God, and I will praise Him;
The God of my father, and I will exalt Him.
—Exodus 15:2

And prior to Moses' meeting with his father-in-law, Jethro, his son Eliezer is named with this explanation that followed his name:

For the God of my father was my help
and delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh.
—Exodus 18:4

One need only compare the same formula in Genesis 26:24; 28:13; and 32:10.

What God did at the Exodus was directly related—to take the present canon's claim—to God's remembering His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exod. 2:24; 3:13, 15-16; 4:5; 6:3, 5, 8). The promise of the land became more prominent for the moment—He had sworn to give it to the fathers (Exod. 6:4, 8; 13:5, 11; 32:13; 33:1; Num. 10:29; 11:12; 14:23; 32:11). But the other elements of the ancient "blessing" were also evident: Exodus 1:7, 9 has a sevenfold stress (to count the expressions) on the amazing and rapid increase of Israel to the chagrin of the Egyptians. Moreover, there was the "firstborn," God's "son," in Exodus 4:22, who continued the theme of

the "seed" as well. Thus the writer of Exodus saw fulfillment of parts of the ancient promise of blessing delivered to the patriarchs. The covenant had not been forgotten.

But the continuity of the narrative itself was not the problem troubling most theologians. It was the nature of the materials in the two covenants. Sinai imposed commands, demands, and obligations whereas the Genesis materials seemed to reflect the gifts of blessing and promise. That was the troublesome contrast. How could the two covenants be related in content?

In a widely received study of the literary structure of the Hexateuch, Gerhard von Rad¹¹ pointed to the credo of Deuteronomy 26:5-9—and similar credos such as Joshua 24:16-18—with its confession restricted to the patriarchal beginnings, the oppression in Egypt, the deliverance from Egypt, and the wilderness wanderings and entrance into Canaan as the heart of the first six books of the canon. The most striking feature is that the events of Sinai, indeed the heart of the Pentateuch, are not included in the credo. Von Rad drew the conclusion, then, that the Sinai events belonged to a separate—even if it were old—tradition and a separate history unconnected to the Exodus or wilderness experience. Only later during the Exile did the so-called Yahwist dare to link law and gospel. Otherwise, Sinai was a cultic legend of doubtful historicity and an intrusion which separated the Kadesh materials in Exodus 17 from their continuation in Numbers 10.

However, there was a strong voice of dissent.¹² Most significant of all was the clear association of the Exodus with Sinai in Exodus 19:3-8 and 20:2-17. In fact, if the total context of two of the credo passages were considered (much less the total context of Deuteronomy 26), they, too, linked the deliverance from Egypt with an appeal to accede to the demands of the Sinaitic covenant—Joshua 24 and 1 Samuel 12.¹³ Consequently, Sinai must not be cut off from the history or theology of the Exodus or the promise.

But the problem still remained. How were the demands of Exodus 20—Numbers 10 to be integrated, if at all, with the blessings of promises of the preceding ages? Perhaps an approach might best

¹¹Gerhard von Rad, *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. T. Dickson (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1966), pp. 1-26.

¹²See the summary of these views in Herbert B. Huffmon, "The Exodus, Sinai, and the Credo," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 27 (1965): 102-3, nn. 6-10.

¹³Joshua 24:25 refers to statutes, ordinances, and witnesses (vv. 22, 27) and oaths of acceptance (vv. 16, 21); so argued J. A. Thompson, "The Cultic Credo and the Sinai Tradition," *The Reformed Theological Review* 27 (1968): 53-64.

be made by noting the connection in the patriarchal era between command, promise, and blessing. The command form came in both as an imperative and a prohibition. According to P. V. Premsagar¹⁴ the list from Genesis would read as follows:

- 12:1 "Go from your own country,"
- 13:14 "Lift up your eyes and look"
- 15:1 "Do not be afraid"
- 15:9 "Bring me a heifer"
- 17:1 "Walk before me and be perfect"
- 22:2 "Take your son, your only son . . . and go"
- 26:2 "Do not go down to Egypt, but stay in this country"
- 26:24 "Fear not"
- 31:3 "Go back to the land of your fathers"
- 35:11 "Be fruitful and multiply."

Here, however, command preceded promise and blessing. At Sinai it was an implication and a natural response to the grace of God manifested in the promise, especially the portrayal of salvation in the Exodus itself. For Abraham obedience was not a condition of the covenant. Yet the duty of obedience was particularly stressed in Genesis 22:18 and 26:5: "Because you have obeyed My voice . . . and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." So it was as Hebrews 11:8 put it: "By faith Abraham . . . obeyed." Faith had to be joined to works to demonstrate its effectiveness and authenticity.

Let it also be affirmed that if the promise was a gift from God, so was the law likewise regarded. The psalmists celebrated this point of view (Pss. 1:2; 19:7-11; 40:8; 119). Moses expressed this, too, when he asked Israel rhetorically, "What nation has God so near to them as the Lord your God?" or "What nation has statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?" (Deut. 4:7-8). Israel's response was repeated three times: "All that the Lord has spoken we will do" (Exod. 19:8; 24:3,7). Rather than rebuking them for "rashly" accepting so stringent terms when promise and blessing were available, the Lord responded:

They have spoken well all that they said. Would that they always had such a mind to fear Me and to observe all My commandments so that it might be well with them and with their children forever! —Deuteronomy 5:28-29

Finally, promise did not oppose God's law for the following reasons: (1) Both the promise and the law were initiated by the same

¹⁴P. V. Premsagar, "Theology of Promise in the Patriarchal Narratives," *Indian Journal of Theology* 23(1974): 121.

covenant-making God; (2) Far from being a legalistic code or a hypothetical means of earning one's salvation, the law was a means of maintaining fellowship with Yahweh—not the grounds of establishing it; (3) The same law that demanded a standard of holy living equal to the character of God Himself also made provision for failure under that law by forgiveness and atonement of sin; and (4) The context of every and any demand of the law was the atmosphere of grace: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt." This is an event which even the patriarch Abraham was vaguely aware of from Genesis 15:13-14: "Your descendants will be aliens living in a land that is not theirs . . . slaves . . . held in oppression for 400 years . . . after which they shall come out with great possessions." Naturally some will disregard this as a later harmonizing detail projected back to smooth out the transition, but the text must remain innocent until proven guilty by better criteria than the subjective imposition of value judgments. Such objections, in lieu of any proof, merely prove that the stumbling block, found not only in prophetic literature but elsewhere, continues to be the biblical claim to be able to predict events before they take place.

PREMONARCHICAL "DEUTERONOMISM" AND DAVIDIC "PROMISE"

The central text for the Davidic period is 2 Samuel 7. But rather than coming as a brand-new interruption in the history of revelation, it carefully rehearsed the old affirmations made in the promise and at Sinai and gave them a continuing significance in David's administration. Some of these features in 2 Samuel 7 were:

- 9: "I will make you a great name" (Gen. 12:2, et al.)
- 10: "I will appoint a place for Israel and plant them" (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 11:24f.)
- 12: "I will set up your seed after you" (Gen. 17:7-10,19)
- 14: "He will be My son" (Exod. 4:22)
- 23-24: "I will be to you for a God and you shall be to Me for a people" (Gen. 17:7-8; 28:21; Exod. 6:7; 29:45; Lev. 11:45; 22:33; 25:38; 26:12,44,45; Num. 15:41; Deut. 4:20; 29:12-13, et al.—two parts of the tripartite formula).

Even the same peculiar plural Hebrew verb in 2 Samuel 7:23 was a clear allusion to the identical question in Deuteronomy 4:7-8: "Who is like thy people, like Israel, one nation in the earth . . . whom Elohim have gone?" Thus the Davidic covenant tended to absorb the older promises made to Israel.

But how does the Davidic blessing of 2 Samuel 7 fit—if at

all—the theology of the “deuteronomistic historian”? The deuteronomistic type of materials usually included injunctions about “keeping” God’s “statutes, commandments, and judgments,” walking “in the ways of Yahweh,” and doing “that which is right in the eyes of Yahweh,” “with all your heart and all your soul.” Most biblical scholars now agree with the conclusion formulated in 1943 by Martin Noth:¹⁵ The OT books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings evidence an astonishingly unified design. The standard or norm for judging Israel’s history during the conquest, settlement of the land, the judges, monarchy, and divided monarchy was Deuteronomy 5-30 to which Deuteronomy 1-4 was added as a later introduction.¹⁶

The structure of this unified history breathed the hopes and threats of Deuteronomy. It emerged especially in the editorial comments on the selected historical events and personages or in well-placed speeches by the leading actors of that history: Joshua 1:11-15; Joshua 23; 1 Samuel 12; 1 Kings 8:14-61. Often the writer interposed his own assessment where he did not have a speech to summarize the theology of the times, e.g., Joshua 12; Judges 2:11-23; and 2 Kings 17:7-23.

Surprisingly enough, Noth did not select 2 Samuel 7 as a major articulation of deuteronomistic thought. Even von Rad tended to treat the history of David in a separate way, claiming that it was “noticeably free from deuteronomistic additions.”¹⁷ He introduced what could have widened into another chasm. He suggested that there were originally two separate blocks of tradition which only in their final incorporation in these books worked into a kind of fusion: the Sinai/Mosaic tradition and the Mount Zion/Davidic tradition.¹⁸

Neither of these wedges reflected accurately the balance of focus of this section. Dennis J. McCarthy¹⁹ adequately demonstrated

¹⁵Martin Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I, Die samme Inden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament*, (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1943). Whether the entire deuteronomistic work represents the time of the Exile is doubtful, but we leave that question to OT introductions to settle since it will not adversely affect our theological inquiries here.

¹⁶The unity of Deuteronomy as a second millennium work is now correctly defended on the basis of striking similarities in form between Deuteronomy and second millennium vassal treaties, e.g., Hittite treaties, cf. Meredith Kline, *Treaty of the Great King* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963).

¹⁷Gerhard von Rad, *Studies in Deuteronomy* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1953), p. 86.

¹⁸Von Rad, *Theology*, 1:334ff.

¹⁹Dennis J. McCarthy, “Second Samuel 7 and the Structure of the Deuteronomistic History,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84(1965): 131-38.

that 2 Samuel 7 did function as another one of the key moments in the history of Israel as theologically reflected in Deuteronomy through Kings. Deuteronomy did more than merely supply the norm for history in his view; it set a pattern for subsequent literary relationships.

According to McCarthy’s fine analysis, three key passages schematically set forth programmatic statements (Deut. 31, Josh. 23, 2 Sam. 7) and six subsequent passages showed how they either worked or failed (two passages going with each of the three programmatic patterns): (Josh. 1, 12; Judg. 2, 1 Sam. 12; and 1 Kings 8, 2 Kings 17). Only the assignment of the centrality of 2 Samuel 7 need be added to this refinement of Noth’s view.

We believe each of the separate emphases of this history—whether it be word-fulfillment,²⁰ repentance,²¹ and observance of the commandments and statutes of the Lord as the key to long life in the land—can be harmonized in one promise. Adding to such a continuum is the clear identification of the Zion/David themes and the Sinai/Moses materials in both Deuteronomy and the Joshua-Kings sequence by Ernest W. Nicholson.²²

In repeating Nicholson’s evidence, we would only reverse the flow of influence; it went from Deuteronomy to David rather than the opposite thesis he developed. Our reason is plain: the canonical shape of the message demands it and has priority until substantial evidence is found to the contrary. These themes may be tabulated as follows:

1. The obligation of David and all kings to follow the “law of Moses” (1 Kings 2:1ff.; 9:4f.).
2. The frequent appeal by Davidic kings to Israel’s election, Exodus, and gift of the promised land (1 Kings 8:16, 20f., 34, 36, 53; cf. Deut. 17:17f.).
3. The constant recognition of Jerusalem as “the place where Yahweh has chosen” (1 Kings 8:16, 44, 48; 11:13, 32; 14:21; 2 Kings 21:7; 23:27; cf. Deut. 12).
4. The importance of “name-theology” (“I will cause My name to dwell there”) for the significance of Jerusalem (1 Kings 8:29; 14:21; 2 Kings 21:7; 23:27; cf. Deut. 12).

²⁰Von Rad, *Studies*, p. 78; *Theology* 1:339f.

²¹Hans Walter Wolff, “The Kerygma of the Deuteronomistic Historical Work,” *The Vitality of Old Testament Traditions*, coauthored by Walter Brueggeman and H. W. Wolff (Atlanta: Knox Press, 1975), pp. 83-100.

²²Ernest W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pp. 107-118.

5. The confidence that Yahweh's word would not "fail" (Josh. 21:45; 23:14; 2 Kings 10:10; cf. Deut. 13:1-5 or 18:15ff.).
6. The constant appearance of prophets (e.g., Nathan, Ahijah the Shilonite, Jehu son of Hanani, Elijah, Elisha) who spoke the unfailing word of the Lord but also taught Israel and Judah "to keep My commandments and My statutes in accordance with all the law which I commanded your fathers and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets" (2 Kings 17:13).

To this list we would add the most significant of all:

7. The promised "rest" of Deuteronomy and Joshua and David's measure of realization of that rest (Josh. 21:43-45; 2 Sam. 7:1,11; 1 Kings 5:4; cf. Deut. 12:8-11).

Clearly, both law and promise were included in this history. In fact, an element of conditionality is raised even in 2 Samuel 7:11-16 and 1 Kings 2:4 as it was already in Deuteronomy 17:18f. The promise was indeed secure, and the Davidic line through which the promise was to come was sure; but whether David and his sons were transmitters or also personal participants in these benefits as realized in their times was not secure, only their life of faith and obedience could determine that.

Thus we conclude that there was neither anomaly nor divergence of theology in the Davidic and historical narratives of the earlier prophetic books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. They originated in the environment of the Mosaic addresses of Deuteronomy, proceeded as Noth and others indicated in the key speeches of Joshua 1,12,23; Judges 2; 1 Samuel 12; and reached a climax in 2 Samuel 7 and its responses in 1 Kings 8 and 2 Kings 17.²³

SAPIENTIAL "CREATION THEOLOGY" AND PROPHEPIC "PROMISE"

For some the most intransigent of all connections is that of wisdom theology and the rest of OT theology. It is so highly individualistic and with so few linking concepts, terms, or formulas with either antecedent or subsequent theology of Israel that most despair of ever unifying it into the rest of OT theology.

²³See the fine summaries of Carl Graesser, Jr. "The Message of the Deuteronomist Historian," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 39(1968): 542-51.

Nevertheless, we believe the key appeared already in Genesis 22:12 as the attitude of a life of faith in Abraham: he "feared God." Such was also the style of living manifested in Joseph (Gen. 42:18), Job (1:8-9; 2:3), and the midwives for the Hebrews in the Egyptian bondage (Exod. 1:15-21). The expression "to fear the Lord God" continued in Exodus 14:31; 20:20; Leviticus 19:14,32; 25:17; Deuteronomy 4:10; 5:26; 6:2,13,24; 8:6; 10:12,20; 13:4; 14:23; 17:19; 28:58; 31:12-13.

In one wisdom book, "the fear of the Lord" quickly assumed the position of motto: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning (*rešit*) of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7). Such a healthy fear prolonged life and yielded the fullness of life (Prov. 10:27; 14:27; 19:23; 22:4) even as the Mosaic law yielded the same fruit from faith, i.e., life (Lev. 18:5). Thus a "path," or as it is said today, a life style, was provided by this attitude of reverence and trust (Prov. 2:19; 5:6; 10:17; 13:14; 15:24). It became a veritable "tree of life" (Prov. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4).

To fear God was "to turn away from evil." If announced positively, then, fearing the Lord was turning to God in a life of faith and trust. Only by such a commitment could one be enabled by the God who created the world to enjoy the otherwise mundane activities of eating, drinking, and earning a living. The wholeness of life, its patterns of meaning, its integration of faith, knowledge, and actions, and its significance were then realized (Eccl. 3:11,14; 5:7; 8:12; 12:13). Otherwise man remained bankrupt and unable to make it all "fit."

The fear of the Lord also was linked with the acquisition of wisdom (Prov. 1:7,29; 2:5; 8:13; 15:33). Since wisdom was a characteristic of God, it was His to share with all who came into a special relationship with Him. Indeed, by wisdom He had created the world (Prov. 3:19-20; 8:22-31); now He would share out of that same wisdom with all who feared Him.

But what of wisdom's relationship to the theology that follows it in the writing prophet's era? If the fear-of-the-Lord theme had its inception in the patriarchal theology and continued into Mosaic times, did it continue beyond? Indeed it did! It supplied so many of the concepts used by some of the prophets²⁴ and had such a strong prophetic savor about it that some scholars, without sufficient war-

²⁴J. L. Gresham, "The Influence of the Wise upon Amos: The Doxologies of Amos and Job 5:9-16, 9:5-10," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 79(1967): 42-57.

rant, labeled the concept of wisdom and the fear of the Lord a prophetic reinterpretation of wisdom.²⁵

Many of the prophetic techniques, images, or patterns were common to the wise men: the x + 1 pattern of Amos, "for three . . . yea four" (Amos 1:3,6,9,11,13 et al.); the rhetorical questions centered on natural phenomena (6:12); the cause and effect sequence (3:3-8); the woe oracles (5:18; 6:1); Isaiah's use of the vine allegory (Isa. 5) and the parable of the farmer (28:23-29); Jeremiah's use of the phrase "to take disciplining" (*mûsar*, Jer. 2:30; 5:3; 7:28; 17:23; 32:33; 35:13); and Ezekiel's emphasis on individual punishment (Ezek. 18:1ff.; also Jer. 31:29-30).²⁶

But the place where the promise doctrine of the prophets and wisdom were most directly linked was in the sevenfold spirit prediction of Immanuel in Isaiah 11:1-2.²⁷ This "Shoot" (*hōter*) out of the "root" (*gēza'*) of Jesse, David's father, and "Branch" (*nēser*) was to have:

"the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

As far back as 2 Samuel 14,16, and 20, wisdom was presented as a political virtue. Kings and rulers needed it if they were to rule a people or towns (Prov. 8:14-16). But wisdom also belonged to the character of God and originated in the fear of Him. Therefore, when Isaiah 11:1-10 prophesied that the future government of a Davidic descendant would possess this political virtue of "wisdom" (*hok-mâh*) along with the other wisdom themes of "understanding" (*bînâh*), "counsel" (*'ēšâh*), "might" (*g'êbûrâh*), "knowledge" (*da'at*), and the "fear of the Lord" (*yir'at YHWH*)—"His delight is in the fear of the Lord"—the connection is more than accidental. It is deliberate!

We conclude, then, that it is possible to discern the biblical writers themselves making the connections between the various

²⁵William McKane, *Proverbs* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), p. 348. Also Norman Habel, "The Symbolism of Wisdom in Proverbs 1-9," *Interpretation* 26(1972): 144, n. 24; pp. 143-49.

²⁶For these and other examples, see J. Lindblom, "Wisdom in the Old Testament Prophets," *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East*, eds. M. Noth and D. Winton Thomas (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955), pp. 202f.; David A. Hubbard, "The Wisdom Movement and Israel's Covenant Faith," *Tyndale Bulletin* 17(1966): 8-10.

²⁷This connection is suggested by A. von Roon, "The Relation Between Christ and the Wisdom of God According to Paul," *Novum Testamentum* 16(1974): 207, 212.

blocks of material and sections of Israel's history. Often the linkage was made in a critical speech, pronouncement, or in a repeated refrain that undergirds a whole section. Thus there were major items of continuity; but there were new items associated with familiar reference to the repeated blessing and promise of a seed, a land, a world-wide blessing, a rest, a king, a dynasty, and a God dwelling with His people.

All could be embraced, however, under the one comprehensive blessing called the promise. Such a category was sufficient to encompass a great variety of biblical books, themes, and concepts. In spite of an almost universal chorus to the contrary, the mass of data is neither intractable nor impossible. It does yield up a single theology with a deliberate plan of God. Furthermore, Scripture presents its own key of organization. The OT does possess its own canonical inner unity which binds together the various emphases and longitudinal themes. This is not a hidden inner unity. It lies open and ready for all: The Promise of God.