

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Studies in the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament  
in the Americas of the Twentieth Century

By DOUGLAS A. KNIGHT, Nashville, TN

*Sources and studies:* M. I. AGUILAR, *The History and Politics of Latin American Theology*, 1–3 (London: SCM 2007–2008). – G. AICHELE e.a., *The Postmodern Bible* (The Bible and Culture Collective; New Haven/London: Yale University 1995). – B. ALBREKTSON, *History and the Gods: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (ConBOT 1; Lund: Gleerup 1967). – R. ALTER/F. KERMODE (eds.), *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard UP 1987). – W. F. ALBRIGHT, *The Archaeology of Palestine* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books 1949); *The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim*, AASOR 12 (1930–1931); 13 (1931–1932) 55–127; *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins 1940; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1957); “New Light on Early Recensions of the Hebrew Bible”, *BASOR* 140 (1955) 27–33. – F. R. AMES/C. W. MILLER (eds.), *Foster Biblical Scholarship: Essays in Honor of Kent Harold Richards* (SBLBSNA 24; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature/Leiden: Brill 2010). – P. R. ANDIÑACH, “Liberation in Latin American Biblical Hermeneutics”, in: BOER/SEGOVIA (eds.), *The Future of the Biblical Past* (2012), 137–147. – H. AVALOS/S. J. MELCHER/J. SCHIPPER (eds.), *This Abled Body: Rethinking Disabilities in Biblical Studies* (SBLSS 55; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2007). – A. BACH, *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University 1997). – R. C. BAILEY, “Academic Biblical Interpretation among African Americans in the United States”, in: WIMBUSH (ed.), *African Americans and the Bible* (2000), 696–711. – R. C. BAILEY (ed.), *Yet with a Steady Beat: Contemporary U.S. Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation* (SBLSS 42; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2003). – R. C. BAILEY/T. B. LIEW/F. F. SEGOVIA (eds.), *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism* (SBLSS 57; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2009). – J. BARR, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress 1999); *Old and New in Interpretation: A Study of the Two Testaments* (London: SCM 1966); *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: Oxford University 1961). – F. BARTH (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget 1969). – R. N. BELLAH, “Civil Religion in America”, *Daedalus* 96 (1967) 1–21. – F. C. BLACK, “Reading the Bible in ‘Our Home and Native Land’”, in: BOER/SEGOVIA (eds.), *The Future of the Biblical Past* (2012), 239–262. – R. BOER (ed.), *Tracking “The Tribes of Yahweh”: On the Trail of a Classic* (JSOT.S 351; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2002). – R. BOER/F. F. SEGOVIA (eds.), *The Future of the Biblical Past: Envisioning Biblical Studies on a Global Key* (SBLSS 66; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2012). – A. F. BOTTA/P. R. ANDIÑACH (eds.), *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation* (SBLSS 59; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature 2009). – J. BRIGHT, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon 1967); *Early Israel in Recent History Writing: A Study in Method* (SBTh 19; London: SCM 1956); *A History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster 1959; 4<sup>th</sup> edn., with introduction and appendix by W. P. Brown (Louisville: Westminster John Knox 2000)). – M. J. BROWN, *Blackening of the Bible: The Aims of African American Biblical Scholarship* (Harrisburg, PA/London/New York: Trinity Press International 2004). – J. P. BYRD, “The ‘New World’ of North America and Canada – and the Globalization of Critical Biblical Scholarship”, in: HBOT, III/1 (2013), 171–202; *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War: The Bible and the American Revolution* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University 2013). – A. D. CALLAHAN, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven/London: Yale University 2006). – B. S. CHILDS, *Biblical*



## 1. Introduction

Twentieth-century scholarship on the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament in the Americas has proceeded, for the most, in the larger context of international scholarship, but in certain settings more provincial or parochial dimensions have also been evident. Most academic journals and books in the field have been available without respect to national borders, although the language in which each is written can limit some persons' access to it. For the first two thirds of the century North American scholars generally read German and French and sometimes another modern language or two. Still to the present day, graduate students in Hebrew Bible / Old Testament are widely required to read at least two modern research languages beyond English, although there are indications that proficiency may have waned in some circles during recent decades. Throughout the twentieth century vastly more scholarly works have been translated into English than have English publications been translated into other languages, especially European languages. In some cases this circumstance reflects the more widespread ability of non-English speakers to work with English than of native-English-speakers to read other languages comfortably, but another factor may also be in play. North Americans have readily consumed learning from overseas, and until ca. 1970 books from Germany, France, England, and Scandinavia belonged to the core curriculum of North American biblical students to a much greater extent than was the reverse the case. North Americans tended during the period 1900–1970 to look to Europe for their scholarly heritage. However, the last third of the century witnessed a dramatic shift in this respect, as we will discuss shortly.

Yet, while embedded in international scholarly discussions, Americans have often approached the academic undertaking in distinctive ways, and this essay aims to identify those characteristic elements in American biblical scholarship from ca. 1900 forward. To be sure, their contributions to historiography, philology, exegesis, archaeology, religious history, social history, cultural studies, and more belong to the larger international discussions in these areas. Yet in what respects does the scholarship of the Americas – North America and Latin America – differ noticeably from the approaches and results of research elsewhere? An obvious obstacle to answering this question lies in the very diversity present in American biblical scholarship, which in turn reflects the demographic variety of the individual scholars' origins. In fact this lack of homogeneity – in starting points, in goals, in working methods, in identities – constitutes a major feature of the cultures of the Americas, and its effect on scholarship should not be surprising.

## 2. Location and Culture

### 2.1. *Ethnicity and Location*

The great ethnic diversity found in the Americas accounts for many of the differences in perspective and agenda among the peoples, which in turn is reflected in their cultures, including the interpretation of classic and canonical texts such

as the Bible. First, however, the relatively recent shift in the understanding of "ethnicity" must be noted since it is especially evident among Americans. While Herodotus famously considered three factors essential to a people's or nation's identity – common blood or ancestor, common language, and common religion – Norwegian anthropologist F. Barth's seminal essay in 1969 led to a fundamental rethinking of the category of ethnicity, which he describes as a far more complex and ambiguous category than Herodotus and others had thought. Social groups are fluid, dynamic, and unstable, and stereotypical or essentialist classifications of actual people rarely survive scrutiny. In addition, how a group understands itself can vary substantially from how they are described by others, whether by their neighbors or by scholars; such a distinction is expressed in the emic/etic division in anthropology. Complicating the analysis even further is the recent research into DNA, which can reveal ties among distant ancestors that may no longer be evident or operative in today's social groups.

The Americas display such complexities as much as any region on the globe, and it has had a wide-ranging effect on the political and economic lives of people as well as on the intellectual pursuits of scholars. Until ca. 1500 the northern and southern continents of America were inhabited by indigenous peoples, but beginning in the sixteenth century they became overrun by conquerors and immigrants from Europe. The Spanish and Portuguese conquistadores invaded South America, while the early colonizers and explorers of North America stemmed mainly from Spain, England, and France. Other European immigrants have come in waves from colonial times until the present. The large numbers of Africans in the Americas entered for the most part by force as enslaved persons. Aside from the Filipinos who came starting in the sixteenth century, most of the Asian immigrants to the Western Hemisphere arrived in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And the process continues to unfold, not only from other parts of the world to the Americas but also internally within the Americas as well. In the United States alone during 2010, over one million legal immigrants arrived, and many others entered the country without official visas – which has in itself become a major legal and political issue for many in the country.

The result of these five centuries of immigration from all directions is an ethnically diverse, multicultural, multilingual, and often conflictual accumulation of peoples. Dividing simply between the immigrants and the indigenous is now inadequate because of the considerable intermarriage and intermixing that have occurred over the generations. Individuals tend to associate themselves with some specific group or groups, which in turn lends them personal and social identity. From this circumstance springs the methodological concept of situated reading, that is, that persons read and interpret texts informed by perspectives and principles basic to the group(s) in which they are situated and with which they identify.<sup>1</sup> Diversities of many sorts have played a key role throughout the history

<sup>1</sup> A good example is Segovia/Tolbert, *Reading from This Place* (1995), which discusses and exhibits the variations in biblical interpretations possible among groups within the United States (vol. 1) and among groups within the international community (vol. 2). The situation changed even further as the end of the twentieth century approached and North America's influence in the world needed to yield to the increased prominence, both economically and politically, of countries in east and south

of the Americas, accounting for the varied readings as well as many of the new methods in biblical criticism that appeared from the 1970s until the present, as will be discussed below.

## 2.2. Religiosity

As is evident in Byrd's descriptions of biblical scholarship in North America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,<sup>2</sup> religiosity has been a defining part of American cultures not only during those centuries but in fact from the pilgrim period forward. Religious convictions, coupled with cultural and personal propensities, appear in the controversies over slavery, over science, and over critical scholarship at various points during this history. Such religious sentiments continue with full vigor throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries as well, not only in private expressions of faith but also in public debates and political controversies. This picture of religiosity is significant for our purposes because biblical scholarship, especially in North America, has been conducted within the context of cultural attitudes that range from suspicion, hostility, and anti-intellectualism to curiosity, support, and affirmation. While the public has an appetite for the findings and opinions of biblical scholars, the media feed this taste with at times sensationalist news reports – archaeological discoveries, contentious issues among researchers, and scholarly positions that many in the wider public find objectionable if not even scandalous. More so than is probably the case in any other country, biblical scholars in the United States are frequently approached by journalists to comment on such contemporary issues as race, poverty, environmentalism, economic practices, voting rights, medical ethics, biomedical research, labor rights, health-care access, and many more topics. The effect on scholarship takes several forms: Scholars have the chance to affect public discussion and even legislative action; at the same time they are also held accountable for their opinions, as many who have lost their employment over contentious issues know well, especially in more conservative religious institutions; and contemporary social issues, such as the status of women, sexual orientation, the racial divides, immigration, and poverty, have also emerged as topics that can be investigated in biblical antiquity as well.<sup>3</sup>

Statistics from surveys in the early twenty-first century provide a comparative picture of religiosity in the Americas and other international contexts. In a Gallup survey of 114 countries in 2009, interviewees were asked the question, "Is religion an important part of your daily life?" Of the respondents in the United States, 65 percent said that religion was important to them. In Canada, however, only 42 percent responded Yes to this question. At 73 percent Mexi-

Asia; for the effects on biblical studies see Boer/Segovia, *The Future of the Biblical Past* (2012). Patte, *Global Bible Commentary* (2004), shows the effects of ethnicity and social location on the reading of a range of biblical texts.

<sup>2</sup> Byrd, *The 'New World' of North America and Canada* (2013); and *Sacred Scripture, Sacred War* (2013).

<sup>3</sup> For more discussion, see Knight, *Politics and Biblical Scholarship in the United States* (2010).

cans indicated a higher level of religiosity than United States residents, and between both of these countries were the Chileans and Argentinians. Most of the rest of South and Central America showed percentages in the 80s; for example, Panama and Guatemala are both at 88 percent. In contrast, responses in many of the European countries, the breeding ground of most biblical scholarship through the nineteenth century, approximated levels closer to that of Canada, a number of them considerably lower.<sup>4</sup> Two other surveys investigated the extent to which respondents believed in the existence of a God or a spirit or life force. One sponsored by the European Commission reports the findings of a survey conducted in 2005 among Europeans: 52 percent believed there is a God, and 27 percent envisaged some type of spirit or life force; a greater proportion of the countries in Eastern Europe have a lower-than-average percentage than do Western European nations.<sup>5</sup> In the United States, 92 percent of those interviewed in a 2007 survey by the Pew Research Center responded that they "believe in God or a universal spirit".<sup>6</sup> Two changes in the overall religious picture have recently emerged, according to a 2012 survey by the Pew Research Center: For the first time in modern United States history the proportion of the number of Protestants has declined to less than half the population – 48 percent; the drop occurred among white adults, mainstream and evangelical alike, but not among minorities.<sup>7</sup> Second, the number of persons in the United States not affiliated with traditional religious groups increased from 15.3 percent to 19.6 percent during the period 2007–2012.<sup>8</sup> The twentieth century, on the whole, showed a markedly higher level of religiosity than is evident after the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Of the numerous other questions in such surveys, one in particular has direct bearing on the place of the Bible in United States culture. Recognizing that the interviewees belonged to a variety of different faith traditions, the Pew Research Center asked for each person's view of Scripture, be it the Bible, the Torah, the Koran, or another "Holy Scripture" venerated in one's religion. It is noteworthy that the responses from the general population were almost evenly divided in three categories: 33 percent held their Scripture to be literally the word of God, another 27 percent considered it the word of God but not literally so, and 28 percent thought it was written not by God but by humans. In addition, 35 per-

<sup>4</sup> Gallup, "Religiosity Highest in World's Poorest Nations", <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/142727/religiosity-highest-world-poorest-nations.aspx#2>> (10 Nov. 2012). Quite similar findings appear in other polls, e.g. that of the Pew Research Center, "The American – Western European Values Gap", Complete Report (released 17 Nov. 2011 and updated 29 Feb. 2012), <<http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/11/17/the-american-western-european-values-gap>> (16 Oct. 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Special Eurobarometer 225 (June 2005), "Social Values, Science, and Technology", <[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_225\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_225_report_en.pdf)> (16 Oct. 2012), 9–11.

<sup>6</sup> Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Beliefs and Practices: Diverse and Politically Relevant", Report 2 (June 2008), <<http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>> (27 Sept. 2012), 26–30.

<sup>7</sup> Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life, "'Nones' on the Rise: One-in-Five Adults Have No Religious Affiliation", Full Report (Oct. 2012), <<http://www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx>> (25 Oct. 2012), 13–15, 41–63.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 9–15.

cent indicated they read their Scripture at least once a week outside of religious services, while 45 percent said they read it seldom or never.<sup>9</sup>

Different surveys may, for a variety of reasons, report different numbers on these issues, but the picture is largely the same: the Americas have long been among the most religious areas in the world, even though the significance of religion for many in North America seems to be declining in recent years. The nature of United States religiosity may, though, be rather distinctive. Adopting a phrase from Jean-Jacques Rousseau<sup>10</sup> and drawing on statements by the country's founders and former presidents, sociologist R. Bellah characterized the form of religion in the United States as a type of "civil religion", according to which religious symbols and expressions have become incorporated into the rhetoric of politicians and legislators while, at the same time, religious persons often express their beliefs with a patriotic fervor. In Bellah's words:

Behind the civil religion at every point lie Biblical archetypes: Exodus, Chosen People, Promised Land, New Jerusalem, Sacrificial Death and Rebirth. But it is also genuinely American and genuinely new. It has its own prophets and its own martyrs, its own sacred events and sacred places, its own solemn rituals and symbols. It is concerned that America be a society as perfectly in accord with the will of God as men can make it, and a light to all the nations.<sup>11</sup>

Civil religion does not denote an established or state religion, which is forbidden by the United States Constitution and by court cases, but it represents the often intricate and subtle, though sometimes also blatant and contentious, manner in which religion and politics are intertwined in popular culture as well as in electoral politics.

Nowhere do researchers and teachers in biblical studies work in a vacuum, disconnected from social, political, and religious forces around them. Not all scholars will share their culture's sentiments, but they cannot be unaffected by them even if they themselves are not affiliated with religious groups. During the twentieth century, religiosity in the United States has promoted scholarly work on the Hebrew Bible just as it has at times also challenged it by questioning its aims and legitimacy, especially when the positions of biblical scholars seem to run counter – for example, on issues of evolution, civil rights, poverty, abortion, sexual orientation, and environment – to the opinions held by certain religious believers. Conservative issues such as biblical inerrancy and authority appear in the press as they do also in the home and the classroom, and scholars have to be prepared to deal with the polemics. Two distinctively North American movements that we will discuss shortly, Biblical Theology and Biblical Archaeology, also bear the marks of this religiosity, just as their demise was effected in part by an appeal to a broader, more inclusive approach to both Bible and archaeology.

<sup>9</sup> Pew Research Center, "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey: Religious Beliefs and Practices" (2008), 30–31, 49.

<sup>10</sup> J. J. ROUSSEAU, *The Social Contract*, Book 4, Chapter 8.

<sup>11</sup> Bellah, *Civil Religion* (1967), 18. Sasson, *On Choosing Models for Recreating Israelite Pre-monarchic History* (1981), 12–13, draws attention to the influential nineteenth-century American historian G. BANCROFT, whose ten-volume *History of the United States* (1854–1882) was crafted in line with key moments in Israel's history.

### 3. Sociology of Knowledge and Scholarship

Several learned societies have emerged in the Americas to advance biblical scholarship. The Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) is currently the world's largest association of scholars devoted to biblical and cognate studies. It was founded in 1880 as the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis (the name was shortened to its present form in 1962), and by the end of that first year there were 44 members in total, virtually all from the northeastern region of the United States. By its centennial in 1980 the number of members had increased to approximately 5,000, and even further to more than 8,700 in 2012. Another radical change is the makeup along lines of race and gender (the following percentages are based on the profiles completed by members): starting as an all-male, all-white organization, the SBL membership in 2012 was 23 percent women and, in terms of ethnicity or race, 7 percent Asian, 4 percent African American, 3 percent Hispanic or Latino/a, 82 percent white, and 5 percent other. The membership in 2012 represented all regions of North America, and approximately 30 percent of the members stemmed from some 60 countries other than the United States; 60 members were from Latin America. The SBL originally held its meetings in the northeastern states, normally in New York City. It first convened in June 1880 with 18 persons in attendance to hear and discuss six papers.<sup>12</sup> By comparison, the 2010 annual meeting in Atlanta had 4,795 members in attendance, of whom 1,878 (not unique but total) made presentations. This staggering increase in 130 years is due not only to the role of religion in American life but – just as significantly – also to the support shown by universities, colleges, private foundations, donors, and governmental programs for the academic study of antiquity and the history of the Bible's reception to the present.<sup>13</sup>

Other professional societies have complemented the work of the SBL. Established in 1842 as one of the oldest learned societies in the United States, the American Oriental Society (AOS) encompasses a much broader region of study, from western to eastern Asia. Some of its membership overlaps with that of the SBL, especially among those who focus on ancient Near Eastern studies and archaeology. In 1900, the SBL together with the AOS and the Archaeological Institute of America (AIA) founded the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR), which has become the foremost American professional society of archaeologists and historians of the Levant. Membership by 2012 totaled 1,600, of whom roughly one quarter came from outside the United States and approximately 10 percent of them from Canada. About 90 universities, colleges, and seminaries counted as institutional members. Attendance at the annual meetings of ASOR grew to almost 1,000 by 2012, with almost one third from outside North America; ca. 450 separate (unique) presenters delivered papers. The ASOR and SBL have a long history of cooperation in projects, publications, and meetings. Another sister so-

<sup>12</sup> Information about the first two meetings in 1880 derives from the proceedings first published in the Fiftieth Anniversary Number of the *JBL* 50 (1931) xxiv, xlvi–xlix.

<sup>13</sup> For further description of the history of the SBL, see Saunders, *Searching the Scriptures* (1982); and especially for the period since ca. 1970, see Tucker, *The Modern (and Postmodern?) Society of Biblical Literature* (2010).

ciety, the Association of Biblical Instructors in American Colleges and Secondary Schools, originated in 1909; its name was changed in 1922 to the National Association of Biblical Instructors, with its acronym (NABI, Hebrew for "prophet") carrying special significance for biblical scholars. A more radical change occurred in 1963 when NABI was renamed the American Academy of Religion to reflect its expansion to all fields in the study of religion, not only biblical studies. With a membership approaching 10,000 in 2010, the AAR complements the SBL with methodological and substantive discussions and research of mutual interest. Yet another organization with overlapping membership and purpose is the Catholic Biblical Association of America, founded in 1936. In 1969, the SBL joined six other professional societies to organize the Council on the Study of Religion, which publishes *Religious Studies Review*. There are a number of additional groups reflecting various interests or regional identities, and some of them plan their annual meetings to coincide with those of the SBL. Also indicative of SBL's range of involvement, since 1929 the Society has been a member of the American Council of Learned Societies, the prestigious assemblage of learned societies in the humanities and related social sciences.

In Canada, a professional society was formed in 1933 to "stimulate the critical investigation of the classical biblical literatures, together with other related literature, by the exchange of scholarly research both in published form and in public forum", as stated in the constitution of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies / Société canadienne des Études bibliques. At the time not many Canadian scholars could travel to SBL meetings, especially due to financial constraints from the Depression. CSBS members have resided predominately in Canada, in addition to some Canadian scholars dwelling elsewhere. The founding membership of 46 in 1933 expanded to some 330 by the end of 2012, and they stem now from across Canada rather than just mainly from Ontario and Québec. At the start there was a significant difference between the generations, as John Macpherson noted in his presidential retrospective in 1966: "although most of the older members of 1933 had been trained abroad, several of their younger colleagues were representatives of the first generation of Canadian-trained Biblical scholars. Another stimulus doubtless derived from the pioneer nature of the project itself. This was the first Canadian interconfessional scholarly society concerned with the religious sciences, deliberately aiming from the outset to be national in scope".<sup>14</sup> The Society began publishing *The Bulletin* in 1935 with a few scholarly papers often included, but a "lack of outlets for Canadian scholarly work" persisted through the War years and for some time thereafter.<sup>15</sup> In 1939 a Canadian section of the SBL was inaugurated at the instigation of thirty-three CSBS members, and the two groups continued co-existence if not co-operation until the Canadian section in SBL was closed in 1977. A sign of the close linkage among North American scholars, several Canadians served as presidents of SBL: Shirley Jackson Case (1926), T. J. Meek (1944), William A. Irwin (1958), R. B. Y. Scott (1960), Frederick V. Winnett (1964), Frank W. Beare (1969), and Harry M. Orlinsky (1970). Canadians were thus in leadership positions at the time of the Society's reform and the consti-

<sup>14</sup> Macpherson, *A History of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies* (1967), 2–3.

<sup>15</sup> Moir, *A History of Biblical Studies in Canada* (1982), 69–70.

tutional revision in 1969. Also of significance was the formation in 1943 of the Association catholique des études bibliques au Canada, which has since then held annual conferences on a variety of biblical subjects and has encouraged the rise of a new generation of Roman Catholic biblical scholars.<sup>16</sup>

The role and impact of these learned societies are not to be underestimated. They have fostered biblical studies in the Americas and beyond through their meetings, projects, and publications, both journals and books. For example, the SBL's flagship journal, the *Journal of Biblical Literature*,<sup>17</sup> has been published since 1881, increasing its size from eleven articles and 212 pages in that first year to 47 articles and 832 pages in 2010. The essays are peer-reviewed through a blind process by an editorial board. While book reviews have long been included in the printed issues, many of the more recent reviews and bibliographical essays have appeared in supplementary volumes in the series *Critical Review of Books in Religion* (1988–1998) and in *Review of Biblical Literature* (since 1999), the latter also available in digital form on the SBL website.

This remarkable increase in participation and activity within SBL circles did not occur as a steady and gradual process. Rather, a radical turn taken in the late 1960s redefined the Society and, with it, the nature of biblical studies in North America, which in turn has had an impact on international scholarship. The lead-up to this shift is chronicled by E. W. Saunders under the rubric "Shaking the Foundations",<sup>18</sup> in which he points to several influential factors: the Holocaust and post-Holocaust scrutiny; geopolitical engagements and realignments following World War II; social and political developments, especially the Civil Rights Movement in the United States; the discovery of documents at Qumran, Nag Hammadi, and elsewhere; and the contributions and debates involving a whole generation of biblical scholars. Saunders's characterization of the SBL during the decades from 1945 to 1967 is relevant, in fact, for all of the preceding decades as well: "It was essentially an east coast establishment based in New York City consisting of a small staff of officers and a regional attendance at the meetings".<sup>19</sup> In his Presidential Address to the SBL on 29 December 1941, three weeks after the United States entered the War, Julian Morgenstern had issued a stern rebuke to the Society for its staid structure and ways, and he urged it to "arouse itself from its long lethargy and become once again alert and progressive".<sup>20</sup> Some significant steps in reorganization were taken after the conclusion of the War, but the most radical shift away from traditional ways occurred in 1968 – a challenge somewhat akin to the assault in the society at large on cultural and political authority in response to both the Vietnam war and systemic racism.

Dissatisfaction with the SBL's seeming indifference to newer research methods and issues instigated a group of younger scholars to act, among them Robert W. Funk, Robert A. Kraft, Norman E. Wagner, James M. Robinson, Brevard

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 79–90, for more details about the two Canadian societies.

<sup>17</sup> From 1881 through 1888 the periodical bore the title *Journal of the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis*.

<sup>18</sup> Saunders, *Searching the Scriptures* (1982), 41–55.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 41.

<sup>20</sup> Morgenstern, *The Society of Biblical Literature* (1942), 9.

S. Childs, Walter Harrelson, Kendrick Grobel, Helmut Koester, and George W. MacRae, with support from a number of more senior scholars. Having secured appointment to key SBL committees or tasks, they proceeded to reorganize the Society in its structure, meetings, publications, and research groups. As a consequence, vitality and participation began a dramatic leap forward, as did also membership – from 2,679 in 1967 to nearly twice that size by the time of the Centennial Meeting in 1980. No longer would the meetings take on “the club atmosphere where each knew the other on a personal basis”.<sup>21</sup> Several of Morgenstern’s criticisms in 1941 were addressed directly: that the SBL had “mired itself in a steadily deepening rut”, was not “an altogether efficient organization”, and held annual meetings that “fail to stimulate as they should and to not a few of our members seem even empty and boring”.<sup>22</sup> The radical reforms Morgenstern had desired came in 1968. As the SBL continued to expand over the following years, one would eventually hear individual members complain about the oversized, excessively complex character of later plenary meetings, but there is little disagreement that the Society has greatly enhanced the field of biblical studies through all the activities it has organized and sponsored during the last third of the twentieth century.

The reorganization initiated after 1968 focused heavily on SBL’s publishing program. The founding of Scholars Press in 1974 through the actions of SBL and AAR and under the leadership of Robert W. Funk, New Testament scholar and director of the press until 1980, followed the principle of “scholars publishing for scholars”. Members were recruited or volunteered to edit series, review manuscripts, serve on publications committees, and assist in the production process. Many of the books at the outset were printed from “camera-ready copy” and sold for surprisingly low prices at the time, such as US\$2.00 or \$3.00 each. The SBL Dissertation Series was among the first new endeavors, complementing the SBL Monograph Series, which then became an outlet for more senior scholars. It was said that the Dissertation Series served to make the careers of more junior biblical scholars than was accomplished by any other publishing vehicle, and at the same time this series put into wide circulation many studies that otherwise may have had little chance to contribute to scholarly discussions. By 2010 over twenty distinct series were actively producing monographs in the areas of ancient Near Eastern studies, archaeology, early Judaism, early Christianity, history of research, Septuagint, Philo, textual criticism, literature of the ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman world, women’s studies, and global perspectives. In conjunction with SBL’s 1980 Centennial, four series on the role of the Bible and the history of biblical scholarship were initiated: *Biblical Scholarship in North America* (ed. K. H. Richards), *The Bible and Its Modern Interpreters* (ed. D. A. Knight), *Biblical Scholarship in Confessional Perspectives* (eds. A. Y. Collins, K. H. Richards, and G. M. Tucker), and *The Bible in American Culture* (eds. E. S. Gaustad and W. Harrelson). *Semeia*, “an experimental journal devoted to the exploration of new and emergent areas and methods of biblical criticism”,<sup>23</sup> was

<sup>21</sup> Saunders, *Searching the Scriptures* (1982), 46.

<sup>22</sup> Morgenstern, *The Society of Biblical Literature* (1942), 6–8.

<sup>23</sup> This self-description is included on the inside front cover of *Semeia* issues.

founded by Funk in 1974 and continued until its ninety-first issue in 2002, and over the course of those three decades it became the primary organ in the Americas for introducing and exploring a wide range of new methods and issues in biblical studies. The total number of books published by SBL until 1970 was slight; from ca. 1970 to 2010, however, approximately 950 books appeared in print. In addition, a total of 625 journal issues were published from the founding of SBL in 1880 until 2010. In 2010 the annual publication budget exceeded one million United States dollars, and the revenues were nearly that high as well.

Yet numbers do not tell the whole story, though they are indicative of an unprecedented level of activity. More importantly, the SBL fostered a new surge in enthusiasm and vitality within biblical studies that many colleagues attending from outside North America found to be exceptional. The takeover of leadership in the late 1960s led to an explosion of interest as more and more members participated in the meetings through delivering papers. In particular, the decision by SBL to form regional groups – at present a total of eleven – throughout the United States had an enormous impact on the Society’s vitality because their annual meetings offered more intimate settings for members, from graduate students to seasoned scholars, to present and discuss their work. In the process younger scholars found a convenient entrée to the much larger world of national and international collegial connections, and many also moved into leadership roles in the general SBL.<sup>24</sup> The Society also looked beyond its traditional North American habitat. In 1983 it instituted the SBL International Meetings with its first gathering in Salamanca, Spain. Each year since then it has reconvened in different cities, usually in Europe but also in Australia, South Africa, Israel, New Zealand, and Singapore. The 2011 meeting in London had 972 attendees. These conferences were especially effective in drawing those residing in the respective areas to the international meeting to meet with others from around the globe, which in turn provided the opportunity for attendees to broaden their perspectives and collegial range.

The SBL was also instrumental in the formation of research groups focusing on various literary corpora. The International Organization of Septuagint and Cognate Studies (IOSCS) came into existence in 1968 with a journal and annual meetings for specialists in Septuagintal and related research. In 1972 the International Organization for Masoretic Studies was initiated at the instigation of Harry M. Orlinsky. The text-critical seminars for both Hebrew and Greek texts augmented the work of international groups, especially in the wake of the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls and the Nag Hammadi library. A research section on the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic literature has long been studying texts outside the Jewish and Protestant canons. And in a project that would prove to be essential to virtually all who study biblical and extrabiblical antiquity, the SBL was instrumental, beginning in the late 1970s, in fostering computer-assisted research capabilities – from the development of Hebrew and Greek computer fonts to the building of digital libraries of ancient resources often inaccessible and

<sup>24</sup> Saunders, *Searching the Scriptures* (1982), 73–76, details the initial resistance to expanding the Society’s activities beyond the northeastern area of the United States, and he shows the gradual and then, after 1968, rapid move toward regional inclusivity.

difficult to search and manipulate. Such ground-breaking work has changed the ways in which scholars work, teach, and publish.

One further consequence of the reorganization that began in 1968 has considerable significance for the nature of biblical scholarship in the Americas, especially in North America. While several joint projects had appeared earlier, the reorganized SBL intentionally established and supported collaborative research among its members, setting aside times at the annual meetings of the Society for these groups to convene and advance their joint research. Scholars in the humanities, including biblical studies, have traditionally conducted their work separately from each other and then reported their results in published form or in conferences, but now the new leaders of SBL encouraged specialists to join with each other in developing working-groups on specific subjects or methods. As stated in James M. Robinson's initial announcement in 1970, the Committee on Research and Publications aimed "to concentrate its activity upon long-range, basic team research which can be better organized through a learned society than through individual initiative alone".<sup>25</sup> A structure featuring three types of program units emerged and remains to this day roughly similar in form and purpose: 1) *consultations* with a term of only a few years to give parties a chance to explore the viability of and interest in a subject; 2) *sections*, of longer duration, also focused on a specific subject but usually with one session open for unsolicited papers and another session organized by the group to deal with a selected aspect of the subject; and 3) *seminars*, also with a multi-year term, requiring active participation by members working on a well-defined research project or topic. These groups must apply to the SBL for approval to meet at the Society's annual meetings, and the Program Committee also approves the groups' leaders. Auditors who are not ongoing members of the groups can attend, and usually these program units conclude with one or more collaborative publications. By way of example of the vitality of these collaborative sessions, the annual SBL meeting in 2010 included a total of 162 such program units, up from 92 in 2001, on topics in Hebrew Bible, New Testament, early Judaism, and cognate studies.<sup>26</sup>

Several reasons stand out to explain this level of activity in biblical studies, especially in the United States since 1968. First, as described above, religion in general and the Bible in particular have long played leading roles in American life, and this public and political interest feeds scholarly efforts to increase the understanding of biblical antiquity. Second, the constraints set by the United States Constitution and courts against state establishment of religion have not inhibited but actually freed religious inquiry as well as religious expression. At the same time, the secular and humanistic study of history and culture, including the Bible's influences for both good and ill, has flourished. Third, the remarkable diversity – racial, ethnic, ideological, cultural – among the American population has given voice to a wide range of perspectives and interpretations on biblical traditions. And fourth, institutions of higher education have readily incorporated biblical studies in their curricula. Seminaries and private universities and colleges

<sup>25</sup> Cited in Saunders, *Searching the Scriptures* (1982), 60 n. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Two successive executive directors of the SBL, Kent Harold Richards and John F. Kutsko, together with their staff kindly provided most of the statistics cited above.

have long offered courses on the Bible, and state universities since the 1960s have been legally permitted to support such teaching and research so long as it is not confessional in character or intent. In the United States alone there are approximately 4,500 institutions of postsecondary education, very many of them small colleges scattered throughout the country, and in all likelihood most of them offer at least one course on the Bible. American biblical scholars in SBL and related learned societies stem primarily from these institutions of higher education.

#### 4. History of Biblical Scholarship in the Americas since 1900

Due to the multiplicity of its contexts and approaches, the history of scholarship of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament in the Americas does not lend itself to easy or clear periodization for the first two thirds of the twentieth century, although it does so for the final stage, 1968–2000. Several new critical methods emerged in this latter period, even while the traditional approaches from earlier in the century continued to hold sway among certain groups to the present. On the other hand, the first two thirds of the twentieth century witnessed more continuity than change in comparison to the last third. Still, enough distinctiveness is evident to warrant a division into three periods of biblical scholarship: 1900–1940, 1940–1968, and 1968–2000 and beyond.

##### 4.1. *The Period from 1900 to 1940*

The study of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament in North America in the early twentieth century proceeded under two strong influences – European scholarship on the one hand and conservative religious traditions on the other. Three controversies during this period, all rooted in the nineteenth century, provide insight into the biblical scholarship of the time. The first involved conservative Christian beliefs, a continuation of cultural proclivities reaching back to early colonial times, as described by Byrd. It had reached a climax of sorts in the controversy between Charles A. Briggs on the one side and Archibald Alexander Hodge, Benjamin Warfield, and other conservative apologists on the other over the place of biblical scholarship in the Christian church, in particular the question of whether the critical approach stemming especially from Europe undermined religious belief in the sanctity and authority of the Bible. Briggs, the Edward Robinson Professor of Biblical Theology at Union Theological Seminary, had tried to walk a fine line between practicing higher criticism of the Bible and affirming the divine authority of Scripture. But because he allowed for certain critical positions (e.g., attributing authorship of biblical books to others than those traditionally associated with them, such as Moses or Isaiah), he was investigated, tried, and convicted of "heresy" in 1893 in a Presbyterian Church court. Other scholars of the Hebrew Bible faced similar opposition and distrust. The controversy did not abate in the course the twentieth century – on the one side antagonism toward critical scholarship, on the other side skepticism or dismissal



of conservative and fundamentalist religion, and thus insufficient conversations between the two camps. To be sure, the situation is much more complex than this picture of polar opposites suggests; scholars and non-specialists position themselves all along the spectrum between two extremes, or form some distinctive combination of elements not easily placed on the spectrum. The point, at any rate, is that no consensus prevails about the place of critical scholarship and the role of religious belief in the United States. As described by Moir, Canada during the early twentieth century underwent a similar though not identical conflict between modernism and fundamentalism.<sup>27</sup>

A second controversy became even more widely known than the Briggs-affair. In 1925 John T. Scopes, a public school teacher, was tried and convicted of violating a state law that forbade teachers "to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals". The case, popularly known as the Scopes Monkey Trial, drew national attention to the small community of Dayton, Tennessee, and in 1960 it eventuated in the well-known movie *Inherit the Wind*. The controversy was less between critical scholarship and conservative religion and more a cultural rebuke of the theory of evolution advanced by Charles Darwin. Not until 1968 did the United States Supreme Court rule that such state laws were unconstitutional, yet other cases have continued until present times to appear in other states. Surprisingly, a poll taken in 2010 showed that 40 percent of the United States population believed that God created humans in their present form, while another 38 percent could accept some form of the notion of evolution if God was regarded as guiding the process.<sup>28</sup> Without explicitly opposing biblical scholarship, this climate of opinion has posed obstacles to the efforts of academics to increase understanding of the Hebrew Bible. In fact, the evolution vs. creationism conflict has, if anything, become considerably more political in the course of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

The third controversy goes even more explicitly to the heart of biblical interpretation. In 1895 and 1898 a group of some two dozen women, headed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, published *The Woman's Bible*, in which they took issue with a wide range of texts in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament that in their view denigrated women – texts that dealt explicitly with women or in which "women are made prominent by exclusion". A few in the group were familiar with Hebrew or Greek; others focused on historical and textual evidence; and others contributed in varying ways to writing the commentary. Reference was made occasionally to the writings of biblical scholars. The result was a set of observations and interpretations that were poignant, passionate, radical, often scathing, and sometimes humorous. On the whole the book amounted to an indictment both of specific biblical texts and of biblical interpreters, including the ancient and modern societies that fostered the disparagement of women.<sup>29</sup> *The Woman's*

<sup>27</sup> Moir, *A History of Biblical Studies in Canada* (1982), 7–66.

<sup>28</sup> Gallup, "Evolution, Creationism, Intelligent Design," <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/21814/evolution-creationism-intelligent-design.aspx>> (4 Dec. 2012).

<sup>29</sup> There was considerable precedent for women commenting on biblical passages, as is evident in Taylor/Weir, *Let Her Speak for Herself* (2006), which compiles excerpts of numerous nineteenth-cen-

*Bible* elicited a storm of protest from religious circles, although many individuals also spoke out in support of it. The National American Woman Suffrage Association, meeting in 1896, even passed a resolution distancing itself from the book, apparently on the grounds that it might retard the process of gaining suffrage for women. Despite – or perhaps because of – the public debate, virtually no biblical scholars at that time engaged its provocative interpretations of individual texts or its overall critique of the bias against women found in the Bible and in its reception history. *The Woman's Bible* lay virtually dormant for some seventy-five years until it reemerged in the feminist biblical scholarship of the final decades of the twentieth century. The number of women in the profession during that intervening period was also very low. In 1992, almost a century after the 1895 publication, a comparable volume by a new group of women scholars, the *Women's Bible Commentary*, edited by C. A. Newsom and S. H. Ringe, appeared, marking further contributions by feminists to the kinds of issues engaged by Stanton and her colleagues.

Biblical scholarship in the period 1900–1940 played out against the social, political, and religious background that fostered these controversies. Other factors, especially World War I and the Great Depression, weighed heavily during this period as well. But to what extent did the study of the Hebrew Bible in North America take a distinctive direction, different from the research found elsewhere? To a great extent, the answer is: only minimally. European biblical scholarship, in particular that from Germany and England, was imported and incorporated into the research and publications of North American scholars, a number of whom had studied at European universities or spent research leaves in connection with colleagues there. Briggs himself, the controversial proponent of biblical criticism until his death in 1918, had studied for three years in Berlin under Isaak A. Dorner and Ernst W. Hengstenberg. This indebtedness to German scholarship persisted despite the widespread popular repudiation of most things German during the time of World War I, just as would later be the case during World War II as well. North American scholars, parallel to their counterparts in Europe, pursued historical, comparative, text-critical, philological, and exegetical questions. Their ranks included both established specialists as well as newcomers whose influence would continue for several more decades: Henry Preserved Smith, German-born Paul Haupt, Morris Jastrow, Jr., George Barton, William H. P. Hatch, Charles A. Briggs, J. M. Powis Smith, Hinckley G. Mitchell, C. C. Torrey, A. T. E. Olmstead, Charles Foster Kent, George Foot Moore, Theophile James Meek, Frederick V. Winnett, R. B. Y. Scott, William Ewart Staples, W. G. Jordan, William Andrew Irwin, James A. Montgomery, Max L. Margolis, Theodor H. Gaster, J. Coert Rylaarsdam, George E. Mendenhall, Samuel L. Terrien, and Cyrus H. Gordon – to name just some of the prominent scholars. Most were located at universities such as the University of Pennsylvania, founded in the eighteenth century at the instigation of Benjamin Franklin, which has one of the oldest and most distinguished programs in Semitic studies, including biblical studies, in the Americas. Gordon

tury women authors. Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness* (1993), 138–166, traces centuries of biblical criticism by women, including the nineteenth-century writings of Sarah Moore Grimké, her sister Angelina, Stanton, and others.

has provided an overview of its personnel and contributions, based heavily on his own first-hand experiences after becoming a student there in 1924. In Canada, research during this early part of the twentieth century centered mainly at the University of Toronto, especially in its Department of Orientals in University College under the leadership of James Frederick McCurdy, sometimes called “the father of biblical studies in Canada”.<sup>30</sup>

The early decades of the twentieth century saw the appearance of the Social Gospel movement in North America, led by Walter Rauschenbusch and others and rooted in part in the British movement of Christian Socialism from the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Social Gospel movement, combined with the [University of] “Chicago School” of sociology from that period, prompted an interest in the social contexts of biblical religion, signaling a turn from the typical historical-critical, exegetical style inherited from European researchers. R. W. Funk in fact considered it the “watershed” of American biblical scholarship, although it was pursued then more in New Testament studies than in scholarship on the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament.<sup>31</sup> Drawing on the American pragmatism of William James and the analysis of social processes by the early sociologists, biblical scholars sought to understand the communities of ancient Israel as well as first-century Christianity. One was Louis Wallis, whose 1912 study represented – in his words – the “pure science” of the new field of sociology, which led him to engage in comparative study of kinship, economics, religion, and the prophetic attention to justice. He noted that the Chicago scholar Shailer Mathews, writing in 1895, was apparently the first to use the term “biblical sociology”, and Wallis drew attention to a handful of other publications prior to his own, several by American scholars, devoted to the social history of ancient Israel.<sup>32</sup> Wallis operated under notions current in his time regarding nomadism, social groups, and religious history. His work was followed by several other surveys of Israelite society, all of which were more descriptive than analytical and thus fell short of the systematic sociological study of Israel undertaken later in the twentieth century.

Archaeology of the Southern Levant piqued interest in the Americas ever since Edward Robinson conducted his surveys of that region in 1838 and 1852, identifying more than one hundred biblical sites.<sup>33</sup> While archaeologists usually launched their excavations from bases in various universities or religious entities, in 1900 there was a move in North America to formalize the discipline with the creation of a learned society devoted to the archaeological investigation of the Middle East – the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR). As noted above, the SBL, AOS, and AIA collaborated to bring the ASOR into existence, and throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century it has been the

<sup>30</sup> Moir, *A History of Biblical Studies in Canada* (1982), 25.

<sup>31</sup> Funk, *Watershed* (1976); see also Pedan/Stone, *Chicago School* (1996); and Hynes, *Shirley Jackson Case and the Chicago School* (1981). In addition, Funk (7) ventured that “the organization and development of the early biblical faculty at Chicago is paradigmatic for that remapping of the contours of biblical study which has affected the shape and course of that scholarship down to the present day”.

<sup>32</sup> Wallis, *Sociological Study* (1912), ix, 299.

<sup>33</sup> See Byrd, *The ‘New World’ of North America and Canada* (2013), 180–181; and for a biography, Williams, *The Times and Life of Edward Robinson* (1999), especially 207–261.

premier North American society to promote and publish archaeological work in the larger region, with special focus on the Southern Levant. In founding this society North Americans joined other national groups devoted to archaeology of the Levant and the wider region – British, German, French, and others including, of course, local Jordanian, Syrian, Cypriot, Egyptian, and similar centers. ASOR expanded its operations by opening archaeological schools or institutes in various settings: Jerusalem (1900), Baghdad (1923), Amman (1968), Nicosia (1978), and Carthage (1970s), as well as affiliating with the American Research Center in Egypt. Complementing the United States-based ASOR, the American Schools of Oriental Research in Canada was established in 1990 to support Canadian archaeological projects and researchers in the Near East. Throughout its existence ASOR has not only sponsored a wide variety of field projects in the region but has also promoted archaeological literacy among biblical scholars and the wider public.

The Jerusalem School, in particular, was a hub of archaeological excavations and innovations during the 1920s and 1930s, in large part because of its collegial associations with leaders of expeditions based in European institutions. Much of its impact owes to the work of William Foxwell Albright, director of the Jerusalem School in 1920–29 and again in 1933–36. He organized educational programs and working field trips for residents at the School as a means of promoting knowledge of historical geography, and he also became intimately involved in digs as well. Perhaps his greatest achievement, one that had an enormous impact on the field, came during his years as director of the excavation at Tell Beit Mirsim in 1926–32. Drawing on the work of Clarence S. Fisher and others, Albright classified the site’s pottery remains and organized them into a chronological sequence, dating them relative to each other if not with respect to absolute dates. His finds ranged from the Early Bronze period to the Iron Age.<sup>34</sup> The result of this painstaking effort was a ceramic typology and chronology that became a standard resource for generations of archaeologists of the land of Israel, which in turn influenced the efforts to date many of the biblical texts.

#### 4.2. *The Period from 1940 to 1968*

American biblical criticism of the first four decades of the twentieth century had largely carried forward the conventional methods of historical criticism derived from European scholarship, even despite differences in the intellectual and cultural climates. In his Presidential Address to the SBL in December 1941, however, J. Morgenstern saw a different present and future because of the war that had by then fully engulfed the region. Germany, in his view, was “the cradle of biblical science. There it was born and tenderly nourished for over one hundred years”. But by 1941, he noted, both the Old and New Testaments were “discredited and spiritually proscribed”, which meant that “in Germany biblical science is doomed”. In this “atmosphere of hostility toward the Bible” and

<sup>34</sup> Albright, *The Excavation of Tell Beit Mirsim*, *AASOR*, 12 (1930–1931) and 13 (1931–1932), 55–127.

... with the consequent disorganization of academic life, biblical science must soon be stifled and must inevitably succumb. Our friends and fellow-workers, not only in Germany but also in the occupied countries, will be, of this we may be sadly certain, for the present stage of biblical science at least, the last generation of Bible scholars.... It follows from all this that, for the present and the immediate future, America, i.e. the United States and Canada, must become the major center of biblical research, and that here Bible studies must be fostered wisely and devotedly, if biblical science is to endure and progress despite the present world-cataclysm. How prepared are we for this responsibility?<sup>35</sup>

This ominous prediction, as legitimate as it may have seemed from outside Europe at that moment, was eventually found to have been miscalculated since scholarship on the Hebrew Bible continued in Europe during the 1940s and recovered substantially during the 1950s and 1960s, both in Germany and in other European countries. It is, nonetheless, a revealing indication of the North American ethos that one of its foremost scholars felt that the weight of biblical scholarship had shifted to North American shoulders.

Morgenstern also set the problem in more intellectual terms. According to him, the "techniques of documentary analysis of the OT are being increasingly outmoded", and the tenets of the Documentary Hypothesis as well as those of form criticism were "becoming more and more subject to question".<sup>36</sup> This observation is reminiscent of the assessment rendered by G. von Rad only three years prior when, speaking of Hexateuchal research at the time, he asserted: "*Man wird nicht sagen können, daß die theologische Erforschung des Hexateuchs sich in unseren Tagen in einer Krise befindet. Viel eher ließe sich behaupten, daß ein Stillstand eingetreten ist, den mancher mit einer gewissen Sorge wahrnimmt. Was ist nun zu tun?*"<sup>37</sup> Morgenstern did not call for a traditio-historical study of the literature as did von Rad, but rather for more attention to the "ideas, institutions and movements which [the biblical documents] mirror, especially when coordinated with the unfolding historical picture". He perceived the tension to lie primarily between "biblical science" (his term) and archaeology, the latter having met with such exceptional results in the preceding decades that it threatened to overwhelm the valid and significant work of biblical criticism. What was instead needed was "a friendly and constructive synthesis of biblical science and archaeology".<sup>38</sup> To a considerable extent this challenge became the central focus for numerous American scholars during the next quarter century in the movements known as "Biblical Archaeology" and its cousin, "Biblical Theology".<sup>39</sup>

The previous year had seen the publication of a book that laid out the rudiments of this movement, Albright's *From the Stone Age to Christianity*. Expressing more theological conservatism than he had displayed in his earlier archaeological writings, this son of Methodist missionaries to Chile sought to develop what he called an "organismic philosophy of history", by which he meant that cultures can be viewed as wholes that assume distinctive characteristics, evolve

<sup>35</sup> Morgenstern, *The Society of Biblical Literature* (1942), 4–5.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* 1–2.

<sup>37</sup> von Rad, *Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuch* (1938), 1.

<sup>38</sup> Morgenstern, *The Society of Biblical Literature* (1942), 2–3.

<sup>39</sup> The two are not identical but are intertwined, the one emphasizing more archaeological evidence and the other focusing more on theological interpretations.

over long spans of time, and can come to a conclusion and be replaced by new cultural forms. Focusing on the southern Levant, he described six distinct stages throughout the sweep of history from the Paleolithic to modern times, the pinnacle for him being the period from 400 BCE to 700 CE: "the Graeco-Roman civilization of the time of Christ represented the closest approach to a rational unified culture that the world has yet seen and may justly be taken as the culmination of a long period of relatively steady evolution".<sup>40</sup> Albright displayed a confidence that his data, much of it from archaeology, gave him license to make grand judgments about cultures and periods, as in this tendentious pronouncement about the "charismatic age" of early Israel: "Thus the Canaanites, with their orgiastic nature-worship, their cult of fertility in the form of serpent symbols and sensuous nudity, and their gross mythology, were replaced by Israel, with its pastoral simplicity and purity of life, its lofty monotheism, and its severe code of ethics".<sup>41</sup> He found ethical monotheism in the time of Moses, threats to the "pristine purity" of Yahwism during the monarchic period, necessary interventions by the prophets to sustain Yahwistic morality until the "pure ethical monotheism of Deutero-Isaiah", and finally the coming of Jesus and the "integrated organismic pattern" of Christianity.<sup>42</sup>

A prolific writer, Albright was not an advocate of biblical literalism or inerrancy, both of which have long been amply evident among Christian apologists in America. He was convinced, however, that the biblical account of much of Israel's history, e.g. the periods of the ancestors, the exodus, and Joshua's conquest, is historically reliable and that archaeology has delivered the material proof. In a later book he spoke of a "dovetailing between archaeological and literary evidence" leading to the possibility of fixing dates with considerable certainty. For example, he paired the statement that the battle between Barak and Sisera was fought "at Taanach by Megiddo's waters" (Judg 5:19) with the archaeological evidence about the occupation of the two sites and their pottery remains, and he then concluded that the battle and the Song of Deborah should be dated to ca. 1125 BCE.<sup>43</sup> As suggested by J. M. Sasson, Albright's confidence in such historicity "feeds on the centrality of the Bible in the American vision, a vision that cuts across creed, color, and gender. Albright himself puts it bluntly in his writing. 'In the center of history', he wrote in his autobiographical notes, 'stands the Bible'".<sup>44</sup>

This certainty about archaeological findings and their capacity to corroborate biblical details became typical of the Biblical Archaeology Movement, and with it the more confessionally inclined Biblical Theology Movement. J. Bright, student of Albright at The Johns Hopkins University, emphasized the historical side through his widely used *A History of Israel*, which he intended as a resource not just for students of the Bible but also for the church. He engaged the issue of historicity in a shorter publication, *Early Israel in Recent History Writing*, focusing his critique especially on M. Noth's analyses of the books of Genesis through

<sup>40</sup> Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (1940), 121.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 281.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 301, 329, 401.

<sup>43</sup> Albright, *Archaeology of Palestine* (1949), 117–118.

<sup>44</sup> Sasson, *Albright as an Orientalist* (1993), 6.

Joshua. For Bright, archaeology may fall short of being able to provide irrefragable proof of details in the biblical narrative, but external evidence can tip the “balance of probability” in favor of the veracity of the biblical stories. He occasionally used popular oral traditions from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century North America to advocate that oral traditions in ancient Israel could similarly preserve memories of real events and processes. Noth, as might be expected, responded firmly: “what is scientifically at stake is not whether we use ‘external evidence’ but whether we have ‘external evidence’”, which he doubted to be much the case.<sup>45</sup>

Another prominent member of the “Albright School” was the accomplished archaeologist G. E. Wright. While Bright was especially interested in the historical side of Biblical Archaeology, Wright turned to religion and theology. In both *God Who Acts* and *The Book of the Acts of God*, Wright argued that the Hebrew Bible relates grand actions by the divine on behalf of the Israelites, such as the call of Abraham, the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, the giving of the law, the conquest of the land, and the establishment of the monarchy. To his mind, these actions not only indicate the nature of the biblical God but also reveal the character of the biblical literature – as narrative traditions that the Israelites recited in cultic settings and retold among themselves. These divine acts are so central to the Hebrew Bible, in his view, that he had trouble fitting the wisdom tradition into the picture, and he consequently charged that there was a “pagan source of wisdom in which society and the Divine work in history played no real role”. Bright’s position was similar: wisdom material was “only peripherally” related to and even questioned the historically oriented core of the Old Testament.<sup>46</sup> Wright’s notions seem on the surface extremely close to von Rad’s idea of *Heilsgeschichte*, which was being developed during this same period.<sup>47</sup> The difference, though, is notable: Wright seemed to be treating these divine “acts” as actual events that the ancient Israelites were remembering, whereas von Rad regarded them more as traditions believed and continuously retold by the Israelites but not necessarily as empirical, provable occurrences.

The Biblical Archaeology and Biblical Theology Movements found great appeal among scholars as well as the interested public in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, especially in Christian circles. However, both were for many effectively laid to rest by the end of the 1960s and early 1970s because of responses and new developments on several fronts, much of it from other North American scholars. Biblical Archaeology came under severe attack for its historicity claims, for example by T. L. Thompson and J. Van Seters, both focused on the so-called ancestral period, and later by others dealing with other periods. Furthermore, its celebration of monumental archaeology as a sign of ancient Israel’s preeminence in the region became undercut by the introduction of the methods of “New Archaeology”, which employed interdisciplinary means to uncover all

<sup>45</sup> Noth, *Der Beitrag der Archäologie zur Geschichte Israels* (1960), 271 n. 1; see also his *As One Historian to Another* (1961), as well as the discussion in Knight, *Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel* (2006), 148–151.

<sup>46</sup> Wright, *God Who Acts* (1952), 104; Bright, *Authority* (1967), 136.

<sup>47</sup> See especially von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, 1–2 (1957/60).

possible evidence of the past, most of it not products of Israel’s powerful and elite leaders.<sup>48</sup>

Biblical Theology, for its part, took a devastating blow first with J. Barr’s seminal linguistic study, *The Semantics of Biblical Language*, which demonstrated the illegitimacy of attributing too much theological weight to specific words and concepts as was typical in the Movement, and he also challenged the effort to synthesize a theological “unity” in the Bible, the Old and New Testaments.<sup>49</sup> Then B. Albrektson pointed out the obvious – that, contrary to the thesis of Biblical Theology’s advocates, there was nothing distinctive or unique about Israel’s belief in a “God who acts”, for many if not most other ancient Near Eastern cultures also envisioned their gods acting in history on behalf of their adherents. And finally, in his 1970 book B. S. Childs shifted the agenda – at least for himself and some others – when he assessed the causes of the Movement’s erosion and then proposed that biblical theology should instead be conducted from within the context of the canon of the Christian church. Childs thereafter produced several studies developing a theological structure that pointedly took both Testaments into consideration, shifting the emphasis from historical criticism of the biblical text to a canon criticism that attends both to the process of canonization and also to the postbiblical history of the Bible’s interpretation and significance as canonized scripture. In a much later volume, *The Concept of Biblical Theology*, Barr evaluated this and other efforts to devise a biblical theology, which he found to have been used in confusingly divergent ways over the years, and he concluded that the subject may continue to be useful if it remains open to the history of religion, to Jewish interpretations and thought, and to social and cultural settings during the biblical periods.

Albright also made an impact on epigraphy, orthography, and paleography, not the least though his influence on two other doctoral students, F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, who together authored two joint dissertations, *Early Hebrew Orthography* and *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry*. Drawing on their reconstruction of early orthographic patterns they identified in Northwest Semitic languages, they analyzed specific poetic texts (Exod 15:1–18; Gen 49:1–27; Deut 33:2–29; and 2 Sam 22:5–51 = Ps 18) and declared them to be dated, respectively, in the twelfth-tenth centuries BCE, the late period of the Judges, the eleventh-tenth centuries, and the ninth-eighth centuries. The confidence with which they pronounced these dates, much like Albright’s dating of the Song of Deborah to ca. 1125 BCE as noted above, is not untypical of this period in American scholarship when biblical texts were readily connected with specific early points in time. In contrast, many recent scholars, inclining toward the Persian or Hellenistic periods for the finalization if not even the composition of the biblical texts, have become more reluctant to venture specific dates and definitive interpretations due to the paucity and indeterminacy of the “evidence”. Both Cross and Freedman built on their early work in different ways – Cross in his investigations

<sup>48</sup> See Dever, *Syro-Palestinian and Biblical Archaeology* (1985), especially 36–53. He indicates that the excavation at Gezer in 1966 was the first to use an interdisciplinary team in the Southern Levant.

<sup>49</sup> See also Barr, *Old and New in Interpretation* (1966).

of the early epics and myths as windows on Canaanite and Israelite religions,<sup>50</sup> and Freedman in his further studies of early poetry.<sup>51</sup>

Cross's theory of local texts is another distinctive American biblical contribution to the history of the text of the Hebrew Bible. Following a lead from Albright, he proposed three different locales where the various text traditions developed – Babylon, Palestine, and Egypt. The Qumran and the Samaritan texts arose in the Palestinian context, while Egypt was the provenance of the Septuagint. The Proto-Massoretic text, on the other hand, stemmed from the Jewish community in Babylon. These three text families emerged slowly during the period from the fifth to the first centuries BCE, and only later did they come into contact with each other.<sup>52</sup> This theory has proved useful in explaining some of the textual differences, but it has also been subjected to refinement and criticism by other textual historians.

Biblical research in Canada during this period ran somewhat parallel to that in the United States. However, it also bears distinctive features due on the one hand to the presence of the two dominant cultures, one Anglophone and the other Francophone, each with a different origin and history, and on the other hand to the ongoing existence of the "First Nations", the indigenous peoples in the country. This diversity has affected Canadians in ways that are not always acknowledged or appreciated outside Canada; they make of the country not a "melting pot", as is typically claimed for the United States, but a population that is pronouncedly multicultural.<sup>53</sup> Even in this situation, many Canadian scholars have functioned in ways comparable to their counterparts in the United States, for example by studying at similar institutions in North America as well as in Europe. They published in the same venues and attended SBL and ASOR meetings in common. But Canadians also aligned with each other, as evident especially in the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies, in existence since 1933. The quarter century after 1940 saw another momentous change following the issuance in 1943 of the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* by Pope Pius XII. It encouraged Roman Catholic scholars to engage more in the study of the Bible, and critical work began to take hold among them in both French- and English-speaking sections of Canada. Universities supported this research, and the Université du Québec à Montréal opened a Ph.D. program in biblical studies. Throughout this period and later, the study of ancient languages became a trademark of much of Canadian scholarship. During the 1960s, the rise of numerous university departments of religious studies with more of a secular than religious approach to the study of religion marked a crucial shift quite similar to that which was occurring at the same time in the United States.<sup>54</sup> Canadian scholars during these years and to the present have made distinctive contributions, such as F. V. Winnett's SBL

<sup>50</sup> See also the wide-ranging essays in Miller/Hanson/McBride, *Ancient Israelite Religion* (1987).

<sup>51</sup> For example, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (1973); and Freedman, *Pottery, Poetry, and Prophecy* (1980).

<sup>52</sup> Albright, *New Light on Early Recensions of the Hebrew Bible* (1955); Cross, *The Contribution of the Qumran Discoveries to the Study of the Biblical Text* (1966); and essays in Cross/Talmon, *Qumran and the History of the Biblical Text* (1975).

<sup>53</sup> Black, *Reading the Bible in "Our Home and Native Land"* (2012).

<sup>54</sup> Moir, *A History of Biblical Studies in Canada* (1982), 79–97.

presidential address in 1964, in which he proposed dating much of the J source of Genesis to the postexilic period, thus presaging the work of later critics who argued for late dates of Pentateuchal sources; R. C. Culley's focus on narrative and poetic literary style; and P. C. Craigie's studies on Ugarit, the prophets, and war. In addition, a number of Canadians have made their contributions to the study of the Hebrew Bible while residing in the United States, such as J. Van Seters who has written on comparative historiography and the Pentateuch; G. N. Knoppers who has researched both the Deuteronomistic History and the books of Chronicles; S. M. Olyan who has studied the cult and social inequality; and B. M. Levinson who has contributed to the understanding of biblical law.

The quarter century of North American biblical scholarship from 1940 to c. 1968 thus saw considerable activity and innovation, and much of its results continued to thrive in the following period as well – so much so that its later echoes seem at times to be connected more to the later developments than to this period prior to 1968. Nonetheless, the year 1968 marked a dividing line, and the distinctive innovations that followed could scarcely have been anticipated in preceding periods.

#### 4.3. *The Period from 1968 to the Beginning of the Twenty-first Century*

As noted above in the discussion of the sociology of knowledge and scholarship in the Americas, momentous changes occurred in the 1960s and, particularly and symbolically, in 1968. Against the background of assassinations, the Civil Rights Movement, the war in Vietnam, student unrest, new musical forms, and progressive literary publications, scholarship in the humanities experienced a sea change, and biblical scholarship followed when it did not in fact lead some of these transformations. The Society of Biblical Literature altered its very way of functioning as it opened its doors to new ideas and new populations, resulting in a resurgent interest that was felt throughout the membership and the institution itself. Historical-critical methods gave way to a variety of novel methods, and underrepresented groups were encouraged to become scholars and contribute their own perspectives to the growing stock of critical approaches to the Bible. To be sure, many of the earlier methods and notions continued to be present, but the addition of new ways of thinking inevitably changed the landscape of scholarship.<sup>55</sup> Most of these innovations did not stem exclusively from American scholars, as other chapters in the present volume indicate; here we call attention primarily to contributions that are, if not unique, then at least prominently advocated by scholars in the Western Hemisphere.

One of the first new methods to draw on the cultural unrest was feminist hermeneutics. The women's suffragette movement had begun in the mid-nineteenth century, and Stanton's *The Women's Bible* (1895–98) sought to promote the rights of women by drawing attention to the parts of the Bible that were especially problematic in their portrayal of women. In the early 1970s issues regarding the

<sup>55</sup> The *Postmodern Bible* (G. Aichele e.a.; 1995) exhibits as well as advances these developments.

views and status of women in the Hebrew Bible again came to the fore, as they did in disciplines such as literary studies, philosophy, sociology, legal studies, and political studies. One of the very first biblical scholars to publish on the subject was P. Tribble, in her essay "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation", and its programmatic statement anticipates issues that subsequent feminist scholars were to pursue, albeit often with different starting-points and conclusions:

Let me not be misunderstood: I know that Hebrew literature comes from a male dominated society. I know that biblical religion is patriarchal, and I understand the adverse effects of that religion for women. I know also the dangers of eisegesis. Nevertheless, I affirm that the intentionality of biblical faith, as distinguished from a general description of biblical religion, is neither to create nor to perpetuate patriarchy but rather to function as salvation for both women and men. The Women's Movement errs when it dismisses the Bible as inconsequential or condemns it as enslaving. In rejecting Scripture women ironically accept male chauvinistic interpretations and thereby capitulate to the very view they are protesting. But there is another way: to reread (not rewrite) the Bible without the blinders of Israelite men or of Paul, Barth, Bonhoeffer, and a host of others. The hermeneutical challenge is to translate biblical faith without sexism.<sup>56</sup>

In her article Tribble calls special attention to the feminine imagery of YHWH in the Hebrew Bible, and comments on several key elements in Genesis 2–3, such as the generic rather than only a gender-exclusive meaning of *'ādām*, the equality intended by the word "helper" (*'ezer*), the independence and intelligence of the woman in the conversation with the snake in Genesis 3 in contrast with the man who is "belly-oriented", ... "passive, brutish, and inept", and the nature of the curses not as mandates but as descriptions of an alienated and discordant state of being.<sup>57</sup> She then comments on the liberating and affirming aspects in the Song of Songs, which depicts a strong woman and mutuality between the partners. Tribble subsequently expanded this article to a widely read book, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality*, in which she examines several other examples: *reḥem* ("womb") as metaphor, feminine images and YHWH, again on Genesis 2–3 and the Song of Songs, and finally the story of Ruth.

Not all later feminist interpreters followed Tribble in her effort to reinterpret the biblical text or find in it liberating dimensions for women; others took an approach closer to Stanton's forceful repudiation of texts regarded as unacceptable or brutal depictions of women. On the whole, the years since the early 1970s have witnessed a wide array of feminist studies of biblical materials, an effort pursued in many different cultures now and not just by North American scholars. The historian G. Lerner sought the roots of patriarchy in early ancient Near Eastern times and maintained that it was socially constructed and that it should, therefore, be possible for "women and men to free their minds from patriarchal thought and practice and at last to build a world free of dominance and hierarchy, a world that is truly human".<sup>58</sup> Drawing on her archaeological work, C. L. Meyers directed attention away from the biblical text and to the everyday lives of ancient Israelite women, whom she found to be much more crucial contribu-

<sup>56</sup> Tribble, *Depatriarchalizing* (1973), 31.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* 35–42.

<sup>58</sup> Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986), 229.

tors to society than the male-dominated and elite-oriented texts of the Hebrew Bible would have us believe. R. J. Weems focused on the prophets' use of specific metaphors, especially that of marriage, to argue that violence used in punishment in the Hebrew Bible can have severe after-effects: "Not only does the image of the promiscuous wife have the potential to reinforce violence against women. It also has the potential to exclude whole segments of the population from hearing and responding to the biblical message", especially when as in Hosea 2 the husband rages brutally against his faithless wife, parallel to God's punishing actions against Israel.<sup>59</sup> And G. A. Yee includes other "wicked women" – Eve, the two sisters in Ezekiel 16 and 23, the foreign woman in Proverbs 7, as well as Gomer in Hosea – in her argument that "the focus on gender and the sexism embedded in the symbolizations of woman as evil masked sexism's complex interlinkages with classism, racism, colonialism, heterosexism, and so forth".<sup>60</sup> Such studies of the status of women in ancient Israel as well as the portrayal of women in the Hebrew Bible and its ongoing effect on later readers will only proliferate in coming years.

As the feminist movement was getting underway, a second distinctive method and emphasis emerged from Latin America. Until this point, biblical scholarship in this vast region received little notice as the Bible served mainly the spiritual needs of the wider population, and most written material about the Bible was largely didactic or devotional in nature. In 1971 G. Gutiérrez published *Teología de la liberación* (English translation in 1973, *A Theology of Liberation*). A Peruvian theologian and Dominican priest, Gutiérrez joined the wave of protest throughout the Latin American continent aimed at the gross inequality of wealth and power, and he along with numerous "revolutionary priests" targeted especially the long-running complicity of the Roman Catholic Church with the system backed by the political and economic elites. During the 1960s many bishops took a stand of resistance to the injustices, advocating publicly on behalf of the masses of poor and often risking personal harm to themselves. The 1968 conference of bishops at Medellín resulted in a statement expressing solidarity with the oppressed, criticism of the basis of the capitalistic system, affirmation of a more socialistic arrangement to reconcile justice with private ownership, and encouragement of grass-roots organizations of believers and justice workers. Liberation, thus, could assume a radical, revolutionary form, and Gutiérrez stressed the absolute necessity of the Church's support of reform. He based his argument distinctly on traditions from the Hebrew Bible, in particular creation, exodus, covenant, and eschatological promises, but for him "the Exodus experience is paradigmatic",<sup>61</sup> a point elaborated later in the studies of Exodus by J. Pixley and J. S. Croatto. In a compelling interpretation of Job, Gutiérrez read the book in terms of the suffering of the poor, who constituted the majority of the Latin American population. Another significant study came from Mexican J. P. Miranda, who studied in Germany and Rome before returning to his home country to

<sup>59</sup> Weems, *Battered Love* (1995), 115–16, 45–52.

<sup>60</sup> Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve* (2003), 164.

<sup>61</sup> Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation* (1973), 159; see 153–168 for his discussion of the Hebrew Bible.

teach and work with the poor. His book *Marx y la biblia: Crítica a la filosofía de la opresión* (1971; English translation in 1974, *Marx and the Bible*) appeared the same year as that of Gutiérrez and drew much more heavily than the latter on the Hebrew Bible to make the point that to know Yahweh is to do justice. Other Latin American scholars have continued this direction in their own work.<sup>62</sup> Liberation theology and liberation ethics have been appropriated from this context and inserted deliberately, though not always with full appreciation of its Latin American roots, in other justice movements and methods, including feminism, race and minority studies, critique of poverty, and ecology.<sup>63</sup>

The third method to emerge in the 1970s is the analysis of society, whether in the form of historical sociology, social history, historical anthropology, Marxist analysis, or other approaches. One of the first studies to appear was the article co-authored in 1976 by F. S. Frick and N. K. Gottwald, "The Social World of Ancient Israel". After sketching the pedigree of the social studies of biblical materials – W. R. Smith, J. Wellhausen, M. Weber, the Social Gospel movement and the "Chicago School" (discussed above), form criticism, M. Noth, A. Causse, J. Pedersen, A. Alt, and W. F. Albright – they note the paucity of current work in this field and the general disregard for sociological analysis until just prior to their article.<sup>64</sup> In this same period, in 1975, a continuing, collaborative group called The Social World of Ancient Israel began to meet in the Society of Biblical Literature, followed later by various other groups devoted to such analysis. This early call for new work on Israel's society was answered in 1979 with the publication of Gottwald's magnum opus, *The Tribes of Yahweh*. Focusing on the period 1250–1050 BCE, Gottwald scrutinized the textual records, Israel's social units, the question of pastoral nomadism, socioeconomic morphemes, and the notion of tribe. Based in part on a proposal raised by G. E. Mendenhall, he argued that Israel arose as a peasant uprising against Canaanite city-states and that the peasants who then settled in the highland areas formed an egalitarian society to cope with their environmental, political, and economic circumstances. The Yahwistic religion, in his view, was a "societal 'feedback' servomechanism". As much as the book was later criticized in certain circles, it more than any other single effort initiated a still-ongoing study of society through all of Israel's history, not just during its early phase.<sup>65</sup> Few studies now disregard the social context and social history, and they generally take into consideration the larger societal structure, not just an isolated setting. Two monograph series attending greatly to social history began in the 1990s, one primarily in the United States and the other in Europe: the Library of Ancient Israel (ed. D. A. Knight, published at Westminster John

<sup>62</sup> See Aguilar, *The History and Politics of Latin American Theology* (2007/08); Andiñach, *Liberation in Latin American Biblical Hermeneutics* (2012); Pixley, *Liberating the Bible* (2012); and Schwantes, *Das Recht der Armen* (1977). A bibliography of Latin American and Caribbean publications on the Bible is now available online: *Bibliografía Bíblica Latino-Americana*.

<sup>63</sup> For compilations of examples showing the influence of liberation theology, see Gottwald, *The Bible and Liberation* (1983); and Botta/Andiñach, *The Bible and the Hermeneutics of Liberation* (2009).

<sup>64</sup> Gottwald's *The Hebrew Bible in Its Social World and in Ours* (1993) contains multiple additional sociological and sociohistorical studies by him.

<sup>65</sup> For several review essays, see Boer, *Tracking "The Tribes of Yahweh"* (2002).

Knox Press) and *Biblische Enzyklopädie* (ed. W. Dietrich and W. Stegemann, published at Verlag W. Kohlhammer and, in English translation, by the Society of Biblical Literature). The former is organized according to areas of study (e.g., societal organization, politics, religion, literacy, law, ethnicity, economics, material culture, leadership, canon formation), and the latter follows a chronological structure with each volume treating a separate period and juxtaposing the literary texts with the material, historical, and social evidence.

The fourth method from this decade has its roots in the Presidential Address delivered by James Muilenburg at the Society of Biblical Literature meeting in 1968 and published in 1969, "Form Criticism and Beyond". Muilenburg acknowledged both the benefits and inadequacies of Hermann Gunkel's form-critical method and then proposed a new turn to stylistics or aesthetic criticism or, to use his term, "rhetorical criticism". His "canon", as he called it, was this: "a responsible and proper articulation of the words in their linguistic patterns and in their precise formulations will reveal to us the texture and fabric of the writer's thought, not only what it is that he thinks, but as he thinks it".<sup>66</sup> He then drew attention to a variety of compositional techniques in Hebrew narratives and poetry: repetitions, strophes, particles, rhetorical questions, keywords, and more. Yet as he stressed at the end of the article, his point was not to abandon or replace form criticism but to supplement it with more attention to a piece's literary features. A flood of literary studies followed over the following years, many of them disregarding Muilenburg's admonition that form criticism not be ignored. Often this new literary criticism (not to be confused with source criticism) was presented as an alternative to historical criticism, which was judged to be over-confident of its findings and distracting from the reader's experience with the text. But in general this new appreciation of stylistic details led to a focus on not just *what* the text means but *how* it means. A student of Muilenburg, P. Tribble laid out the methodological details in her *Rhetorical Criticism*, using the book of Jonah to illustrate her points. Canadian scholar R. C. Culley was especially influential with his various studies of narrative and oral traditions.<sup>67</sup> An overview of all the books of the Bible in terms of their literary character, with articles by many scholars, is found in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (1987), edited by R. Alter and F. Kermode.

Discrimination and oppression along ethnic and racial lines have been a blight on the history of the Americas, and their impact has also reached biblical scholarship. Broadly, African American experience in the United States and elsewhere in the Americas began with forced relocation from Africa and centuries of enslavement. Later in the United States, Jim Crow laws inscribed a second-class status on African Americans along with Asian and Latino/a Americans by largely barring them from access to economic advancement, adequate education, and proper health care, and often even targeting them for incarceration. Each of these groups resisted repressive measures over the course of their histories; among the better known are the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the resistance ef-

<sup>66</sup> Muilenburg, *Form Criticism and Beyond* (1969), 7.

<sup>67</sup> Culley, *Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms* (1967); *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (1976); and *Exploring New Directions* (1985), 168–180.

forts led by Ernesto "Che" Guevara in Latin America and Cesar Chavez in California. The Bible has been an important influence in some of these struggles. As the biblical academy gradually lowered barriers to training, these groups brought distinctive interpretive modes to the guild.

The importance of the Bible in African American religion and culture has been widely acknowledged but until recent times little studied.<sup>68</sup> African American biblical scholars, however, have been scarcely present; by one count there were only nine holding doctorates in Hebrew Bible in 1991, and of them only two were women.<sup>69</sup> The number of African Americans (i.e., those who self-identified as African Americans) has now increased to 4 percent of the total membership of the Society of Biblical Literature. In the years since the 1970s African American interpretation has also developed into both a critical method and a subject of study in its own rights. Growing out of the larger context of African American religious studies, a number of biblical scholars found common ground at conferences and meetings where they could collaborate in ways not possible when isolated in separate universities without a critical mass of similar colleagues, and they produced both anthologies and monographs on the basic task and method of the distinctive field of African American biblical interpretation, deliberately pursuing its own path apart from the course set by European antecedents. *Stony the Road We Trod*, edited by C. H. Felder, includes articles identifying the hermeneutical problems that African American scholars seek to address, including the presence of race and Africans in the Hebrew Bible. In *Yet with a Steady Beat*, edited by R. C. Bailey, eleven more authors continued the discussions with further treatments of specific texts as well as larger issues. In 2004 M. J. Brown devoted a monograph, *Blackening of the Bible*, to tracing the history of African American biblical scholarship, in the process helping to define the key subjects and approaches. The work of womanist scholars, R. J. Weems among them, has focused especially on the situation and perspectives of African American women. Finally, *The Africana Bible*, edited by H. R. Page, Jr., treats in separate chapters all the books of the Hebrew Bible and Apocrypha as well as selected pseudepigraphic writings. The volume does not intend to be a typical commentary on the Bible; instead, each chapter highlights some critical issues in the respective biblical book and identifies parts that have been especially problematic for the African diaspora. This inclusion of the worldwide African diaspora, not just of African Americans, makes its contribution all the more significant.

Biblical criticism by other marginalized groups has also resulted from the changes that occurred during the final third of the twentieth century. Beyond the African American criticism just mentioned, there has been interest in studying Asian American interpretations of the Bible, and an increasing number of Asian American scholars have published on the topic; one example is *The Bible*

<sup>68</sup> For overviews, see Paris, *The Bible and the Black Churches* (1982); Callahan, *The Talking Book* (2006); and the extensive resource book edited by Wimbush, *African Americans and the Bible* (2000).

<sup>69</sup> Bailey, *Yet with a Steady Beat* (2003), 1; Felder, *Stony the Road We Trod* (1991), 1; see also Bailey, *Academic Biblical Interpretation* (2000), including on p. 707 a list of 21 Hebrew Bible specialists as of the date of writing (ca. 2000). The number of African American scholars of the New Testament was only slightly higher.

in *Asian America*, edited by T. B. Liew. Latino/a biblical criticism has also continued, rooted in the early liberation thought described above. Queer readings of the Bible have taken their place alongside other approaches, as evidenced in *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible*, edited by K. Stone, and *Bible Trouble*, edited by T. J. Hornsby and K. Stone. Also in the discussion now are disability studies, which views physical disabilities in light of social and political and not just biological conditions; *This Abled Body*, edited by H. Avalos, S. J. Melcher, and J. Schipper, is one of several studies now bringing these considerations to biblical texts and methodological discussions. Other underrepresented groups have similarly emerged and claimed a place in the enterprise of biblical interpretation. It should not surprise, therefore, that the very subjects of "minorities", "otherness", and "marginalization" have acquired the status of problematics of their own, as is evident in the volumes *Biblical Studies Alternatively: An Introductory Reader*, edited by S. Scholz; and *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, edited by R. C. Bailey, T. B. Liew, and F. F. Segovia.

A further subject of interest is the study of ecology and the Bible. In a widely read article published in 1967, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis", L. White, Jr., addressed the question of humanity's impact on the natural environment. He found the roots of the current ecologic crisis to be largely religious, in particular what he called the "orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature", a posture he attributed not directly to the Bible but to the centuries of misinterpreting biblical traditions about creation and the world.<sup>70</sup> Referencing White's essay, G. M. Tucker delivered his Presidential Address to the SBL in 1996 (published in *JBL* in 1997) on the topic, calling upon biblical scholars to attend more to the question of the Bible's understanding of the environment. The command in Gen 1:28 to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" can easily be misconstrued as legitimizing the exploitation of the earth, and Tucker demonstrated the problems with such a reading. For him, texts such as Job 38–39 and Psalm 104 underscore the limits of human power and knowledge as well as the wonders of nature and the distinctive place of humans in it.<sup>71</sup> In the face of ongoing stress on the environment and further exploitation of natural resources, studies of this kind will likely increase in the future and should link with similar interests elsewhere in the world.

Most of these new methods and approaches from the final third of the twentieth century in the Americas represent a shift away from the historical-critical methods basic to the long history of biblical scholarship. To a substantial extent they issue, whether directly or indirectly, from the cultural upheavals and challenges to authority during the 1960s and later, but just as important a factor has been the spread and upsurge of minorities and other underrepresented populations, including women. Such groups have, with good reason, been dissatisfied with the critical methods they inherited, and their response has taken two general forms: either an ideological-critical suspicion of past biblical studies and the biblical tradition itself or an effort to recover unheard voices in the text and in the cultural context. These two directions – the hermeneutic of suspicion and the

<sup>70</sup> White, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis* (1967), 1207.

<sup>71</sup> See also Tucker, *Ecological Approaches* (2009).



hermeneutic of recovery – are not discreet alternatives, and whether singly or combined they have provided biblical scholars in the Americas with the means to venture into previously uncharted terrain. They also represent the close ties American scholars have had with scholars elsewhere on the globe who apply the methods of postmodernism, ideological criticism, postcolonialism, cultural studies, and related approaches. The distinctive experiences of those living or rooted in the Americas has led to the distinctive contributions from these two continents to the ongoing course of international biblical scholarship.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>72</sup> I express my gratitude to several colleagues who kindly read sections in this essay with which they had special familiarity: Annalisa Azzoni, James P. Byrd, Robert C. Culley, Gary N. Knoppers, Robert A. Kraft, John F. Kutsko, Herbert R. Marbury, Patrick D. Miller, Kent Harold Richards, Jack M. Sasson, Fernando F. Segovia, and Andrew G. Vaughn.

## CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

### Studies in the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament in Africa, Australia / New Zealand and Asia

#### 35.1. The Hebrew Bible / Old Testament Studies in Africa

By HENDRIK BOSMAN, Stellenbosch

*Bibliographies:* K. HOLTER, *Tropical Africa and the Old Testament: A Select and Annotated Bibliography* (University of Oslo / Faculty of Theology: Bibliography Series 6; Oslo 1996). – G. LEMARQUAND, “A Bibliography of the Bible in Africa”, *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends* (eds. G. O. West/M. W. Dube; Leiden: Brill 2000), 639–800.

*Studies:* S. O. ABEGUNDE, *A Philosophy and Method of Translating the Old Testament into Yoruba* (PhD Diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville 1985). – S. O. ABOGUNDIN, “Biblical Research in Africa: The Task ahead”, *African Journal of Biblical Studies* 1 (1986) 7–24. – D. T. ADAMO, *Explorations in African Biblical Studies* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock 2001); *Africa and Africans in the Old Testament*. (Benin City: Justice Jeco Press 2005); idem (ed.), *Biblical Interpretation in African Perspective* (New York: UP of America 2006). – J. O. AKAO, “Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies”, *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa* 8 (2000) 5–7. – C. G. BAETA (ed.), *Christianity in Tropical Africa: Studies Presented and Discussed at the Seventh International Seminar, University of Ghana, April 1965* (Oxford: Oxford UP 1968). – H. L. BOSMAN, “Cartographers, Canons and Cuckoos – Historiography of the Study of the Old Testament”, *Skrif en Kerk* 14 No 2 (1993) 134–145. – J. J. BURDEN, “Are Shem and Ham Blood Brothers? The Relevance of the Old Testament to Africa”, *Old Testament Essays* 1 (1983), 49–72. – D. CHIDESTER, “Dreaming in the Contact Zone: Zulu Dreams, Visions and Religion in Nineteenth Century South Africa”, *JAAR* 76 (2008) 27–53. – R. W. COWLEY, *Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation: A Study in Exegetical Tradition and Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1988). – K. A. DICKSON, “The Old Testament and African Theology”, *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 4 (1973) 31–41; “Continuity and discontinuity between the Old Testament and African life and thought”, in: K. APPIAH-KUBI / S. TORRES (eds.), *African Theology en route* (New York: Orbis 1979), 95–108. – K. A. DICKSON / P. ELLINGWORTH, *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs* (London: Lutterworth Press 1969). – J. A. DRAPER, “The Bible as Poison Onion, Icon and Oracle: Reception of the Printed Sacred Text in Oral and Residual-oral South Africa”, *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 112 (2002) 39–56. – M. DUBE, “Post-Colonial Interpretations”, *DBI K-Z* (ed. J. H. Hayes; Nashville: Abingdon Press 1999), 299–309. – J.-M. ELA, “A Black African Perspective: An African Reading of Exodus”, *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Maryknoll: Orbis 1991), 256–266. – E. M. EZEUGU, “Bible and Culture in African Christianity”, *International Review of Mission* 87 (1998) 25–38. – E. FARISANI, “The Ideologically Biased Used of Ezra-Nehemiah in a Quest for an African Theology of Reconstruction”, *Old Testament Essays* 15 (2002) 628–646. – D. FIENSY, “Using the Nuer culture of Africa in Understanding the Old Testament”, *JSOT* 38 (1987) 73–83. – P. GIFFORD, “The Bible in Africa: A Novel Use in Africa’s New Churches”, *Bulletin of SOAS* 71 (2008) 203–219. – C. T. GILKES, “Colonialism and the Biblical Revolution in Africa”, *The Journal of Religious Thought* 41 (1985) 59–75. – F. W. GOLKA, *The Leopard’s Spots: Biblical and African Wisdom in Proverbs* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1993). – PAULOS MAR GREGORIOS, “Coptic Orthodox Church”, *EncChr* 1, A – D (ed. E. Fahlbusch e.a., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999). – I. HIMBAZA, *Transmettre la Bible: Une Critique exegetique de la traduction de l’AT: Le cas du Rwanda* (Rome: Urbaniana UP 2001); “La recherche