Part A

Purpose, History, and Problems of a Literary History of the Old Testament

I. Why Do We Need a Literary History of the Old Testament?

1. The Task

A literary history is an attempt to present and interpret literary works not simply in themselves but in their various contexts, linkages, and historical developments.[1] This task, despite the brevity of its description, presents both problems and possibilities for the writing of a history of literature. Quite rightly, discussion among literary scholars points out that the synthetic process of writing a literary history often includes at least a partial neglect of the individual works: "We must admit that most literary histories are *either* social history, histories of the thought revealed in the literature, *or* more or less chronologically ordered impressions and judgments of individual works".[2] According to Wellek and Warren we cannot have simultaneously a systematizing, literary-historical overview of various works from different periods and a book that also takes appropriate account of each individual work. Accordingly, in the end Wellek decided to abandon the project of a literary history altogether.[3] David Perkins also, in his book on the theory of literature, *Is Literary History Possible?* is inclined to answer the question in the title in the negative.[4] At the same time it is obvious that historical arrangements of particular works within their literary-historical contexts can indeed be advantageous for understanding them. In addition, a literary-historical overview as such—apart from the question of individual

works—is a legitimate task, and one that furthers understanding, even if it is done at the cost of an abbreviated presentation of its constituent parts.

These discussions may here be set aside as they concern non-biblical literatures. But in regard to the Old Testament it is obvious that the multiple points of contact between its texts make it extraordinarily apt for literary-historical examination. In fact, the Old Testament presents itself—in its various canonical arrangements and in different ways (see below, A.I.5)—as a literary history.[5]

But how should we approach the project of a literary history of the Old Testament as a critical, scholarly discipline?

This can be regarded as an attempt to bring together anew the previous sub-disciplines in Old Testament scholarship—not as a substitute for an existing sub-discipline, but as an augmentation of it. The closest relationship, in terms of fields of inquiry, is of course with the discipline of introduction, but the latter is seen, on the one hand, as integrally combined with elements of a history of Israel and a theology of the Old Testament (namely the discussion of the theological concepts in the Old Testament writings in their particular historical settings), while on the other hand—unlike the introductory discipline—a literary history does not follow the sequence of the canon, but that of Israel's history.

Thus the texts of the Bible are first considered historically: they stem from particular eras and address particular periods, initially their own. But precisely in the case of the Bible the texts are also read anew in changing times, and they continue to be embellished by means of subsequent literary additions.[6] This process is highly significant for theology, a process to which we also owe the fact that we know the Old Testament at all: without the process of continual copying and expansion of the texts, the original editions would quickly have rotted away. Under normal conditions ancient scrolls did not survive for more than about two hundred years.

In accordance with this circumstance, a literary history of the Old Testament must treat not only the presumed primary figures in the Old Testament texts in their historical context of origin, but also their received images during the whole period during which the Old Testament was created. The book of Isaiah, for example, is relevant to nearly all epochs of Old Testament literary history—not only because it grew to its present form from the eighth to the second centuries B.C.E. and therefore combines texts from various historical situations, but also because its oldest components have been continually read and interpreted anew.[7] The historical view of the Old Testament literature may thus not be restricted to single-point investigations and orderings of individual pericopes. In addition—in some sense from a resultative point of view—it must consider how the traditional *and* the

redactional parts of texts were understood together in the various phases of its literary growth and transmission?

The project of a history of Old Testament literature, with its historical perspective, grows out of the claims of Romanticism against the Enlightenment and refuses to consider the Bible as a picture book illustrating eternal truths. Yet it also moves beyond the implicit basic convictions of Romanticism by declining to adopt the latter's mania for origins and models of decadence. Instead, it attempts to understand its biblical object in a historically appropriate manner.

> Posing questions historically also requires an awareness of factors beyond those of a mere history of events, including economic- and social-historical as well as geographical determinants of historical processes, similar to the propositions of the *école des annales*.[8]
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> Ultimately we should also resist the widespread tendency in attempts at historical contextualization of the Old Testament literature whereby its texts are regarded primarily as literary *reflections* of historical constellations—in terms of the history of philosophy, affirming Max Weber over against Karl Marx[9] Texts not only reflect historical experiences but to the contrary also possess the power to move history. Coming to terms with the fall of Judah in the Babylonian period and the origin of ancient Judaism as a religiously-determined *ethnos* is one example of such a process that cannot be plausibly explained in the absence of a corresponding basis in tradition.[10] On the other hand, the recent proposal that judgment prophecy must, historically speaking, be interpreted as *vaticinia ex eventu* in light of the Balaam inscription from Tel Deir Alla,[11] for example, is not necessarily convincing: *ex nihilo nihil fit*.[12] Without an anchor for a prophecy of judgment in statements or texts before their historical fulfillment, we do not have a comprehensive historical explanation of their origin. This does not exclude, however, but rather includes the possibility that in fact we may expect to find many prophetic texts whose perspective on the future was literarily construed *ex post facto*. Thus, for example, a major portion of the prophetic oracles against the nations directed at Israel's and Judah's Transjordanian neighbors does in fact give the impression that the intent was to rationalize their fall after the fact through judgment oracles.

A literary history of the Old Testament is not simply another introduction to the Old Testament, shaped historically rather than canonically. Rather, it broadens the traditional historical questions about the texts in

various ways. Beyond the origins of Old Testament books and texts, it asks in particular how these are, on the one hand, located within historical strands of tradition, and on the other hand how they relate to presumably contemporary literary conversation partners in the Old Testament. Thus it must clarify both the diachronic and the synchronic linkages and references of a text. In doing so it attempts both to sharpen the profile of particular theological positions in the Old Testament by comparing them to competing positions, and also to reconstruct and clarify the theological-historical developments. It should already be noted here that the sketches of the development of the literary history of the Old Testament given in sections B to G are not always in a position to offer sufficient material bases for their claims. Literary-historical reconstruction of the Old Testament is not so new that such claims need to be substantiated for each step, as will be evident in the next section, but until now it has not been pursued intensively enough. At the same time, some more or less clear perspectives will emerge that will enable us to present the literary-historical connections among the Old Testament texts and writings in their historical contexts.

2. *History of Scholarship*

The literary-historical approach to the Old Testament is nothing new. What is its history of scholarship, and what possibilities and problems have been encountered to this point?[13]

Literary-historical inquiry presumes the beginnings of historical-critical research on the Old Testament and thus the awareness of the divergence between the Bible's self-presentation and historical reconstruction. Thus as early as 1670 Baruch Spinoza, in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, advocated for the necessity of literary-historical criticism of the Old Testament, since it presents the national and natural development of the spirit of the Hebrew people. Beginnings of literary-historical-critical investigation can be found also in the work of Richard Simon, Richard Lowth, Johann Gottfried Herder, and others.[14] However, in the decisive period of biblical criticism associated especially with the name of Julius Wellhausen, the reconstruction of the Old Testament's literary history remained closely tied to the biblical evidence, and—despite the vehement protest of Hermann Hupfeld in 1844 ("the sole and only correct name of the discipline [i.e. introduction] in its present sense is therefore history of the sacred scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, or biblical literature, as R. Simon called it,")[15]—no real literary-historical subdiscipline developed within Old Testament scholarship.

A proper literary history of the Old Testament, thus designated and the product of methodical reflection, was first presented by Ernst H. Meier in his 1856 history of the poetic national literature of the Hebrews; however, this was regarded altogether as the work of an outsider and received scarcely any recognition.[16] That fate, and the fact that this literary history was the work of someone who was not an Old Testament scholar but an ancient Near Eastern scholar, can certainly be seen as a prophetic sign pointing to the almost complete marginalization of the literary-historical field in later Old Testament scholarship. In accord with his times, Meier approached the history of Old Testament literature firmly in terms of the question of a Hebrew "national" literature.[17] For him Hebrew literature, which he described more or less according to the Bible's depiction, fell into three epochs, a "preparatory epoch from Moses to the beginning of the kingship," which "described the emergence of the Hebrew state," a second epoch extending from "the creation of the kingship to the end of the exile," when "the national spirit achieved its true flowering," and a third epoch from "the beginning of the Persian period into the Maccabean era," this being also the period of "perfection and decline."[18]

Still closer to the biblical picture of the literary history of the Old Testament was the two-volume work of Julius Fürst, which was originally intended to include the New Testament as well but in the end extended only to the treatment of the early Persian period.[19] Fürst followed the older documentary hypothesis in Pentateuch research; for him the Psalms are Davidic and the Proverbs originated with Solomon. The prophets, in this literary history, are essentially responsible for their entire books. But older source material has also been reworked in all these Old Testament writings. Therefore, for long stretches Fürst's literary history reads like a description of the older materials that had entered into the biblical books.

The two-volume work of David Cassel was much more organized according to formal points of view.[20] The outline is not primarily chronological, but attempts to sort material according to genre. Cassel distinguished poetic, prophetic, legal, and historical literature. But his literary-historical description is carried out only for the first two of these groups, while—in the nature of the material—only the prophetic literature is truly differentiated historically. Cassel also noted the contextual interconnectedness of the Hebrew Bible in its historical contexts, but as a rule considered the Bible as the giving, and not the receiving part for explaining parallels in ancient Near Eastern texts.

Julius Wellhausen, who revolutionized historical biblical criticism with his late dating of the Priestly document, did not give the title "literary

history" to any of his books, and yet both his *Prolegomena* and individual paragraphs of his *Israelitischen und jüdischen Geschichte* contain features of a literary-historical approach.[21] One may argue that it was Wellhausen's historical-synthetic presentation of the results of biblical criticism that assured its success within Old Testament scholarship.

The well-known synthesis by Eduard Reuss saw itself programmatically as a continuation of the biblical criticism thus far achieved, especially after Karl Heinrich Graf, Julius Wellhausen, and Abraham Kuenen.[22] "For the best that has been done thus far is called a historical-critical introduction to the Old Testament; it is not the house itself but only a statistical report of the preparatory work in the construction shack and the workshop."[23] Reuss's own depiction is chronologically ordered and classifies the history of the literature somewhat schematically in four epochs, the "era of the heroes," the "era of the prophets," the "era of the priests," and the "era of the scribes."[24] Nevertheless, Reuss gave an indication of what would shape the presentations of the literary history of the Old Testament for several decades. He found in the hymns, such as the Song of Deborah, the pre-national beginnings of the Old Testament literature that were then continued by the great authors of the monarchical period, such as the Yahwist or Isaiah, and ended especially with the Priestly and legal literature of the post-exilic period. This three-step schema—individual ancient poetic texts as beginnings of literary history, the classical prophets and the early authors of the sources of the Pentateuch as the culmination, and the laws as the final notes—in some sense reflected the literary-critical "common sense" of the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth.

Gerrit Wildeboer's literary history appeared in 1893 in Dutch; two years later it was translated into German.[25] This was a broader synthetic overview of the origins of the Old Testament literature following the revolutions in Pentateuch research brought about by Reuss, Kuenen, and Wellhausen, which were likewise of great importance for the overall picture of the literature of ancient Israel and its history. Wildeboer asserted in his introduction: "If we want to correctly understand the value and significance of the history of Israel's literature we must above all be penetrated by the truth that not only was it post-exilic Judaism that transmitted this literature to us, but also that the authors of a major part of it are to be sought in that same period and, finally, that the transmission of older writings did not take place without alterations that were often quite extensive."[26] This statements sounds as if it would be programmatic for the work as a whole, but in its execution Wildeboer's book remained largely the prisoner of contemporary researchers' proposals for dating. Moreover, Wildeboer profited very little from the

literary-critical field as such: his description seems over long stretches to be a chronologically-arranged introduction to the Old Testament.

We then find a brief description of Old Testament literary history in the work of Emil Kautzsch, first as an appendix to his translation of the Old Testament, then "not without some original hesitations" as a separate publication.[27] This work divides the literary history into periods according to domestic political caesurae in the history of Israel ("the pre-monarchical era," "the period of the undivided monarchy," "the period of the divided kingdom to the destruction of Samaria," "from the destruction of Samaria to the exile," "the time of the exile," "the post-exilic period").[28] Despite its brevity, this book determined the starting point for literary-historical discussion to a certain degree for years afterward. At the same time, the fact that Kautzsch's presentation was conceived as a short appendix was indicative of the shadowy existence of the literary-historical field in German-language scholarship; likewise, the later literary-historical projects of Hermann Gunkel, Karl Budde, and Johannes Hempel appeared as parts of overarching presentations or series (Hermann Gunkel, "Die orientalischen Literaturen," in *Die Kultur der Gegenwart*, I/7; Karl Budde, *Die Litteraturen des Ostens in Einzeldarstellungen*, vol. 7; Johannes Hempel in *Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft*)—that is, they were generated in some sense by initiatives foreign to the subject itself.

If the project of a literary history of the Old Testament never became central to the field, nevertheless in the history of scholarship it is inextricably linked with the name of Hermann Gunkel, who undertook the broadest, most original, and—relatively speaking—the most consequential efforts at its further development, even though in his own time he was only able to publish a brief sketch of fifty pages as a substantially developed presentation.[29] The field of form criticism, developed to a significant extent by him (though he did not call it that: Blum 2006, 85) played a special role: Gunkel conceived the literary history of the Old Testament as a history of its genres.[30] Behind this was the idea that the Old Testament texts in general rest on oral pre-stages and that the intellectual history of ancient Israel was to be reconstructed by means of describing the genres of its theological discourses. Essentially, Gunkel's method of literary criticism was interested not in the texts themselves but in the shaping elements behind them. Literary criticism as genre criticism sought the respective "Sitze im Leben" of genres and thus, at least in Gunkel's opinion, opened a window into Israel's religious and intellectual life. This methodological program was associated, in Gunkel's work, with an outline of the history of ancient Israel's literature that reveals a characteristic weighting. Gunkel distinguished three epochs: first he described "popular literature before the appearance of the great

writers (to ca. 750)"[31]; this was followed by "the great authorial personalities (ca. 750–540),"[32] and finally "the imitators."[33] With this division Gunkel reproduced the separation, practiced especially in the nineteenth century, between pre-exilic, prophetic "Hebraism" and post-exilic, historical "Judaism." The religious geniuses to whom the great intellectual projects of the Old Testament can be traced belonged to the period between Isaiah and Deutero-Isaiah; after that there were only "epigones." Gunkel's proposal was not received favorably in his own time, which may have contributed to the continued shadowy existence of the literary-historical field he researched.[34] Apparently it was the relationship of the question of genres to the authorial personalities, which was unclear to those who studied his work, that for Gunkel enhanced the focus on genre, but that for his readers (as may be concluded from the reviews) put too much emphasis on it.

Karl Budde's presentation of literary history was conceived for a broader audience.[35] But Budde did not get beyond a summary of the results of a common introduction to the Old Testament; his book is a conclusion to his own work on the history of origins and does not mark a new beginning in scholarship.

In the English-speaking world, Harlan Creelman presented a chronological introduction to the Old Testament in 1917. Its claim to innovation was, indeed, comparatively modest: it was addressed to a broad audience and abandoned almost any ambition to offer its own historical judgment. Rather, it presents itself as a synthesis of previous research on the Old Testament. The overall view of Creelman's book was restricted very much to a critical perspective on the historical allocation of the biblical texts.

The introduction written in 1919 by Johannes Meinhold, which was frequently republished, was not conceived as a literary history but *de facto* it was more than the usual introduction, since it both discussed the literature of the Old Testament according to eras—and not according to the canonical sequence—and in addition it offered individual sections describing the historical epochs.

The literary-historical work of Julius A. Bewer was quite influential.[36] Bewer was a German-born Old Testament professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York who brought to American scholarship some important insights of German-language historical biblical criticism and genre research.

Perhaps the best known and most fully developed presentation of a literary history in twentieth-century German-language scholarship was the work of Johannes Hempel.[37] It was divided into an introductory chapter, "Premises" (1–23), which treated the history of scholarship in introduction to the Bible with special emphasis on Wellhausen as well as cultural-geographical

determinants, and two major sections, "Forms" (24–101) and "The Course of History" (102–94). These last two clearly revealed the influence of Gunkel: the object of study was first approached in form-critical terms and only thereafter in terms of literary criticism. Hempel first treated the genres of Old Testament literature and their history, then the concrete texts in their historical sequence. What is noteworthy in Hempel's work is his conviction about the cultural-historical interweaving of the Old Testament: "The Israelite literature is to a great extent only understandable as part of 'ancient Near Eastern world literature.'"[38] But despite all the energy and innovative spirit that imbue this project it did not become constitutive for the genre: Old Testament literary-historical criticism still remained a marginal activity.

We should also mention, from the mid-twentieth century, the work of Adolphe Lods.[39] Lods asserted at the beginning of his presentation that the literary-critical field had long endured a shadowy existence within Old Testament scholarship.[40] He identified three essential reasons for this. First, the "composite character of the books themselves"[41] represented an elementary problem that was further exacerbated by the fact that scholarship was often only able to reconstruct the development of these books in uncertain fashion.[42] Ultimately, he pointed out, "we possess only minimal fragments of this literature."[43] However, according to Lods these aspects should not mislead us into abandoning the literary-historical questions, since it was inadequate simply to analyze the "composite character of the books themselves" in literary-critical fashion; the literary development of the Old Testament books must also be reconstructed synthetically. As regards the uncertainties in literary-historical reconstruction, Lods also emphasized that despite all difficulties in detail the fundamental information was altogether discoverable, and even the fragmentary character of ancient Hebrew literature was not basically different from that of Greek or Latin literature.

In literary-critical terms Lods was influenced by Wellhausen, in regard to religious history by Gressmann; accordingly he followed the documentary hypothesis in Wellhausen's version and emphasized the religious-historical contextualization of the ancient Hebrew literature. Three essential uniquenesses in Lod's presentation should be emphasized: for one thing, we are struck by the late starting point. Although keeping an eye on early poetic fragments and oral traditions, Lods began with the Assyrian period. In this he is remarkably modern, since recent scholarship finds that only from this point on was there a writing culture in ancient Israel that was developed enough to be able to produce longer texts. Then Lods's work, at least in some areas, clearly reveals an effort to describe intertextual influences. Thus, for example, he treats separately the prophetic influences on some additions to J or E.[44] Finally, we find in his work some broad discussions of parallel

phenomena from ancient Near Eastern literature. Lods's book thus pointed clearly toward the future, but as a French Protestant Lods did not find much of a hearing in his own country or outside it.

From the beginning of the 1950s until the 1980s there was still greater silence on the project of a history of Old Testament literature. Klaus Koch was able to write in 1964 that "the project of a literary history died unsung and in silence with the death of Gunkel and today is completely forgotten."[45] The concept of literary history scarcely appeared and there were no new syntheses—and this in a period that is regarded, at least in German-language Protestant theology, as a time when Old Testament scholarship flourished.[46] A number of factors are probably responsible for this, though it remains striking: for one, literary-historical questions were at that time of marginal interest even within literary scholarship. Thus, for example, Hans Robert Jauss said in his introductory lecture at Constance in 1967:

> Literary history has in our time fallen more and more into disrepute, and by no means undeservedly so. The history of this honorable discipline unmistakably sketches a path of constant decline over the last 150 years. The high point of its contributions as a whole was in the early nineteenth century. To write the history of a national literature was seen in the times of Gervinus and Scherer, De Sanctis and Lanson as the crowning life achievement of a philologist. . . . This high-altitude path is a distant memory today. Literary history, as it has come down to us, endures only a miserable existence in the intellectual life of the present.[47]

In vogue, instead, was "work-immanent interpretation," for example in Emil Staigers's sense.[48] In addition, German-language Protestant theology clearly lay, together with biblical scholarship in general, under the influence of dialectical theology, for which literary-historical questions were of lesser interest. Finally, we should point out that after World War II a number of introductions to the Old Testament appeared in which the internal, apparently historically-inspired structure, especially as regards the prophetic books, deviated only slightly from the canonical structure of the Old Testament, so that they could easily serve at the same time as functional equivalents to literary-historical presentations.[49] Even the epoch-making theology of Gerhard von Rad,[50] characterized in an early review as a higher sort of introduction, could be located, with some reservation, in this category.[51] Thus no particular need for a literary history as such was perceived.

However, this procedure in the organization of introductions to the Old Testament was possible and conceivable only as long as one could count on

a broad agreement about presentation of the Bible and the course of Israel's history. In particular, the historical books Genesis to 2 Kings were regarded, especially in the epochal sequence of patriarchs, Exodus, occupation of the Land, period of the judges, and the monarchy, as fundamentally reliable, so that in this area introduction and literary history could run parallel. The prophets had to be slightly regrouped, especially as regards the location of the three "great" prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel in their historical times, while the Writings in general could be interpreted as the expression of post-exilic piety and theology. This harmonizing view of the Bible and literary history, which is also reflected in the proposed relationship of the Bible and the history of Israel, could be described, with Manfred Weippert, as "sub-Deuteronomistic."[52] Probably it is precisely this model of agreement, today regarded as so problematic at least in European biblical scholarship, that accounts in part for the flourishing of Old Testament research between 1950 and 1980.

Norman K. Gottwald's socio-historical interpretation of the Old Testament constituted a certain exception among the modified literary-historical introductions.[53] It is true that he made an effort at a historical presentation of the Old Testament literature, with a broadly sketched depiction of the pre-state traditions, but his presentation was subject to a certain biblicism and at the same time, because of some unconventional elements in his theoretical framework, its influence has been limited.

It was not until 1989 that a genuine literary history was again attempted. Georg Fohrer's brief book named his predecessors but judged them inadequate: "However, there was a lack especially of form criticism, which investigates the forms of discourse and genres, tradition criticism, which inquires about the pre-history of the writings, and redaction criticism, which concerns itself with the editing and revision of the written tradition."[54] For Fohrer the previous proposals were methodologically too one-sided, too literary-critical in their direction—to the exclusion of the other exegetical methods. It is true that this accusation is formulated very broadly, but it is not wholly inaccurate. At the same time, we may ask whether this names the most important problem in the history of the discipline of "literary history of the Old Testament." Fohrer's criticism was aimed solely at the deficiencies in the method of historical allocation of biblical texts presented by the works he criticized, but he did not formulate any fundamentally different requirements for a "literary history of the Old Testament" than for the discipline of an "introduction to the Old Testament". Correspondingly, his literary history remained a chronologically arranged introduction and did not clarify any diachronic or synchronic textual relationships.

Not long after Fohrer's book, Otto Kaiser published his article on Old Testament literary history in the *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*.[55] For him the "literary history of the Old Testament" constitutes the "necessary companion to analytical introduction studies, which adopts its results and presents them in the organic context of the political, social, cultural, and especially the religious history of Israel and early Judaism."[56] It is all the more astonishing that Kaiser did not develop this program in his material sketch but essentially gave a short summary of an introduction to the Old Testament following the ordering of the biblical canon. Likewise in his collected volume, which has the concept of literary history in its title, he concerns himself essentially with questions of introductory scholarship.[57]

The long-desired project of a literary history not only of the Old Testament, but of the entire Christian Bible, has been attempted by the Biblische Enzyklopädie, whose publication began in 1996 and is being translated into English.[58] On the Old Testament side it is edited by Walter Dietrich. It does not, however, make prominent use of the term of "literary history."

> This is a series conceived in twelve volumes, nine of them devoted to the times and literature of the Old Testament, three to those of the New Testament. The various volumes are structured on a unified basic scheme: first, the biblical picture of the era to be discussed is given, and then is followed by an attempt at historical reconstruction of the period as well as a presentation of literature of the time, concluding with the question of the theological contribution. This very organization of the material shows that the interaction between history and its presentation in the Bible is the focus of the Biblische Enzyklopädie: it begins with the biblical presentation of history and compares it with historical findings, considered both in terms of literary criticism and of theology.
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> On historical questions the volumes of the Biblische Enzyklopädie—corresponding to the state of research, which is especially fluid in this area—offer a broad representation of the recent results of biblical criticism, archaeology, and ancient Near Eastern studies, a process that, however, does not lead to altogether compatible interpretations. For Lemche what the Bible says about the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, or about Moses, is not history but fiction, "lovely stories"[59] that in Lemche's opinion were created in the "fifth, fourth, or even the third century,"[60] that is, a full millennium later than the time in which the Bible locates them. Schoors, on the other hand, dates the beginnings of the patriarchal history to the eighth century,[61] while Dietrich proposes origins for "parts of the

patriarchal history, and in any case for the Moses story" before the early monarchical period; "for the primeval history and certainly for Sinai" he believes that pre-state primary forms are "scarcely to be excluded."[62] The readers of the Biblische Enzyklopädie are thus confronted with some problems of coherence. While these certainly reflect the disparity of the present state of discussion, their arguments are not related to one another within the series.

The division into epochs proposed by the volumes of the Biblische Enzyklopädie presents a rough historical timeline that essentially follows the Bible's own portrait of history and thus—at least as regards this sequence of epochs—insinuates a fundamental correspondence between the Bible and history. But this is just what is under discussion: are, for example, the patriarchal era and the period of the judges really two successive epochs, as the Bible has it, or are these not, especially in historical terms, to be seen as two portrayals of the same time period from different points of view?

One should also ask, especially if one puts so much weight on the question of the origins of the biblical literature, whether the weighting of the epochal division is correctly balanced: six of nine Old Testament volumes treat the pre-exilic period. In light of the evidence that there is a not a single book of the Bible that has come down to us in its pre-exilic form, we should be astonished at the relative dismissal of the Persian period, which is treated in only a single volume, even though this should perhaps be seen as the most important epoch of literary activity in the Old Testament.

The Biblische Enzyklopädie is a project that is indeed timely, but the "sub-Deuteronomistic" outline overall and the somewhat fragmentary agreement of the various volumes seems questionable.

Most recently the brief proposal by Christoph Levin should be mentioned.[63] This volume presents itself as an integrative literary, religious, and theological history. Levin's creed is that the Old Testament is a literary document of early Judaism containing documents from the pre-Persian period only in "fragments." The brevity of the presentation and the comprehensive scope, however, make it impossible for this little book to clearly evaluate the mutual literary-historical influences among the various positions in the Old Testament.

From this overview of the history of research we can see that the project of a literary history of the Old Testament has not, on the one hand, been very frequently attempted.[64] On the other hand, most of these projects have attempted little more than an introduction to the Old Testament in

historical rather than canonical order. But by that very fact such a presentation misses its genuine literary-historical-critical point: what is the material relationship of contemporary texts and writings in their historical context? Do they refer to one another? What positions develop from which literary-historical materials? A literary history of the Old Testament only makes sense if it yields some additional value beyond the discussions within the discipline of introductory studies, which are in themselves entirely legitimate but have a different perspective.

3. Place within Theology

The application of the concept of a literary history to the Bible, which is also known of other ancient Near Eastern literatures,[65] follows from a particular basic theological conviction rooted in the beginnings of historical-critical biblical scholarship in the early modern period: that the Bible is literature like every other ancient literature and therefore is to be interpreted in the same way, without the application of any special sacred hermeneutics.[66] This means that the status of the Bible as Sacred Scripture, grounded in its reception history, must not separate it from the critical approaches of reason. Instead, it can and must be investigated with those approaches, precisely with a theological rationale, namely in order for interpreters to associate a *general* claim to truth with these writings and do not wish them to remain in the status of special literature accessible only to a particular group. Thus the declaration that the Bible is literature is not associated with an anti-theological impulse; on the contrary, it is not a matter of "degrading" the Bible from Sacred Scripture to literature, but rather of locating its status as Sacred Scripture in it's the texts themselves.[67]

Add to this the self-presentation of the Old Testament as literary history, which we have already mentioned and which deserves to be exegetically and theologically evaluated. Gerhard von Rad probably reckoned most seriously and thorouhgly with this unique characteristic of the Old Testament. He represented the conviction that the most adequate form of a theology of the Old Testament was a narrative one that re-tells the biblical story.[68] A literary history of the Old Testament can augment the theological retelling of the Old Testament especially by clarifying the discussions internal to the Bible itself. The question becomes more and more urgent precisely in a scholarly discourse that is indebted to von Rad in many ways, but also goes beyond him, especially in the question of the fundamentally salvation-historical shaping of the Old Testament, which no longer is seen as an overall or even prevalent characteristic of the biblical texts. In the current situation it needs therefore to be asked, what, on the one hand, were the Old Testament texts'

own and distinct theological concepts, and how, on the other hand, is their plurality structured within the Old Testament itself.

4. The Old Testament as a Segment of the Literature of Ancient Israel

A literary history using the textual material of the Old Testament differs substantially, not in method but in its object, from other corresponding approaches to non-biblical literature such as, for example, a history of German literature. The reason for this is that the Old Testament does not comprehend the total literary heritage of ancient Israel, but only the part of it that on the basis of particular selection and/or reinterpretation has become the "Hebrew Bible" or the "Old Testament."[69] It is scarcely possible to determine the quantitative relationship between this subsequent canonical entity and the former literature of ancient Israel, but it is indisputable that a more extensive body of literature existed. We may think, comparatively, of the numerous ancient writings outside Israel of whose existence we know for certain only through mentions of or quotations from them by various authors.

The surviving epigraphic text material, despite its fragmentary nature, if we include Israel's and Judah's trans-Jordanian neighbors, yields a very good idea of what we ought to imagine.[70] Perhaps most impressive, if still hard to understand, is the "Book of Balaam,"[71] a portion of which has been retained in a wall inscription in Deir Alla, located east of the Jordan river. Its *incipit*, "*spr*," indicates that this text was originally a scroll. The Mesha inscription is based on excerpts from annals and thus witnesses to the existence of an interpretive writing culture.[72] The Siloam inscription is also probably an excerpt, as seen from the lack of a dedication and the omission of the names of the sponsors of the building.[73] A piece of lyric poetry survived on a bronze bottle from Ammon reading:

> The work of Amminadab, King of the Ammonites,
> Son of Hassil'il, King of the Ammonites,
> Son of Amminadab, King of the Ammonites:
> the vineyard and orchard and the terrace walls and a water reservoir.
> May he rejoice and be glad for many days and years to come.[74]

We might, of course, hesitate to speak of "literature" in these examples, since the concept of "literature" implies a certain quantitative extent as well as a qualitative level in the texts in question. But on the basis of these

findings, which, given the material of what is written, do not necessarily attest to very extensive inscriptions, one may with good justification suppose that other and more extensive writings on papyrus and parchment existed in ancient Israel. These, with few exceptions, have not survived, but that other texts once existed is more probable than that they did not exist.[75] Indeed, the Old Testament itself mentions a few sources that are at least not entirely fictional. Thus, for example, we find allusions to (1) the Book of the Wars of Yhwh, Numbers 21:14; (2) the Book of the Upright [Jashar] (*yšr*), Joshua 10:13; 2 Samuel 1:18;[76] (3) the Book of the Song [or Jashar] (*šyr*), 1 Kings 8:53a (LXX); (4) the Book of the Acts of Solomon, 1 Kings 11:41; (5) the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel, 1 Kings 14:19; (6) the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah, 1 Kings 14:29.[77] The Book of the "Upright" and that of the "Song" are probably identical: the determinate title "of the Song," in itself hard to understand, probably arose from a mistaken writing of *yšr*, "upright" as *šyr*, "song."[78] We can sincerely doubt, in light of the modest cultural-historical development of ancient Judah at that time, that there was a Book of the Acts of Solomon. In any case, however, the reference to such a book makes it clear that in the Books of the Annals of the Kings of Judah and Israel there was probably nothing said about Solomon.

There were very likely other pre-exilic writings that did not survive or that were even deliberately set aside, especially after the catastrophe of Jerusalem in 587 b.c.e. We should especially mention prophetic traditions about salvation; we cannot exclude the possibility that they also existed in written form, even if scholars such as Kratz suggest that early written forms of prophecy is a special feature of judgment oracles.[79] In support, the Neo-Assyrian evidence show that pure salvation oracles could be written down as well, although this did not lead to the phenomenon of an enduring tradition process of scribal prophecy as in Israel.[80] One may even suggest that the striking form-critical similarity between the oracles of salvation in Deutero-Isaiah and the Neo-Assyrian prophecies nearly a hundred years earlier (which could scarcely have been accessible any longer after the fall of the Neo-Assyrian empire),[81] prompt us to conclude that there were prophecies of salvation in monarchical Judah of the Neo-Assyrian type, and that these strongly influenced the prophecy of Deutero-Isaiah. After the writing of Isaiah 40–55, this text could then have replaced the older ones in the schools.

Thus the literary history of the Old Testament covers only a segment of the history of ancient Hebrew literature and this segment can only be described *ex post*: the literary history of the Old Testament treats those texts that survived as texts available for use in the Jerusalem Temple school that later were recognized as Sacred Scripture. Unlike, for example, a history of English literature, the Old Testament constitutes a corpus that is disparate

in many regards and yet is to some extent coherent with regard to its content and especially to its history of reception. We can go so far as to say that the literary history of the Old Testament simultaneously documents the theological history of its texts, which managed to prevail as the "orthodox" ones. The literary history of the Old Testament does not directly reflect Israel's religious history, which can be reconstructed adequately in broad strokes, better on account of non-textual, archaeological evidence of than biblical evidence.[82] The difference between the perspectives of the Old Testament and Israel's religious history as a whole shows its theologically differentiated interpretation, which was subject to certain criteria of selection.

The Jewish texts from the middle Persian period preserved in Elephantine in Egypt, in contrast, with their partially polytheistic piety and the mention of a separate temple, offer an example of a religious-historical extension of the monarchical period: the beginnings of the colony go back, in all probability, to the sixth, perhaps even the seventh century B.C.E. The conditions of the pre-exilic period are apparently preserved "better" here than in the Judaism of the motherland.[83]

A literary-historical approach to the Old Testament thus opens a window to the most elite segments of religious reality in ancient Israel, the world of the priests, wisdom teachers, and others adept at writing. Correspondingly, in this book the religious-sociological level of the official state cult is given the greatest significance, while elements of the family, local, and regional cults that functioned non-literally especially in the pre-Persian period play a role only insofar as they were received within the framework of the official cult to which the Bible witnesses in large degree.

5. Hebrew Bibles and Old Testaments

There is no such a thing as *the* Old Testament nor *the* Hebrew Bible; Jewish and Christian traditions recognize different organizations of the biblical books. In addition, the Christian tradition accepts different numbers of books in the different canons of the various confessions and churches.

Hebrew Bibles—in the sense of Judaism's Sacred Scripture—in the usual standard order consist of three parts: Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim, abbreviated as Tanakh. The Torah contains the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Nevi'im include the books of Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, as well as the Book of the Twelve Prophets. Finally, the Ketuvim is made up of the books of Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes (Qoheleth), Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, and 1–2 Chronicles. The following subdivisions are commonly used within the Nevi'im and

Ketuvim: Joshua to Kings are taken together as the so-called "former prophets," Isaiah to Malachi as the "latter prophets." Within the Ketuvim, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, and Esther make up the so-called "Megilloth," that is, the five "scrolls" assigned to particular feasts—something that, however, is only attested since the sixth century C.E. Ruth is for Shavuot, Song of Songs for Passover, Ecclesiastes for Sukkoth, Lamentations for the Ninth of Ab, and Esther for Purim.

But deviations in the order of books are attested in the manuscript tradition of Hebrew Bibles (Beckwith 1985; Brandt 2001). What remain constant are the three canonical sections of Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim and the numbers of books contained in them. If we calculate the number of possible variations within these two constants we arrive at 120 for the five books of the Torah, 40,320 for the eight books of the Nevi'im (if, with ancient custom, we count the twelve minor prophets as a single book), and about forty million for the Ketuvim.

The tradition, however, did not come close to exhausting these possibilities. The Torah always has the same sequence. At least nine variations are attested for the Nevi'im, but all of them occur in the latter prophets (Isaiah – Malachi). Since Genesis to Kings represents a narrative, chronologically-arranged presentation, it is therefore materially fixed. For the Ketuvim the order is rather fluid, with at least seventy different arrangements attested.

> The most important variants in the Nevi'im are found in the Babylonian Talmud (*b.B. Bat*. 14b-15a), which has the four books of the prophets in the sequence Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Twelve Prophets. This is founded on a theological consideration: Jeremiah is "all judgment," Ezekiel "half judgment, half consolation," and Isaiah is "all consolation." Of course, even a rapid reading of these books quickly shows that this is not an accurate summary: all three of the major prophetic books contain statements of judgment *and* salvation and to that extent are all "half judgment, half consolation." But why did the Babylonian Talmud arrive at this order? The answer is obvious if we consider the length of these four prophetic books: Jeremiah has 21,835 words, Ezekiel 18,730, Isaiah 16,392, and the Twelve Prophets 14,355. The arrangement in the Babylonian Talmud is thus clearly motivated by the size of the books, and the theological explanation represents a later rationalization of this arrangement by length.
>
> In the Ketuvim the ordering sometimes varies greatly. At this point the following examples must suffice: the Codex Aleppo and the Codex Petropolitanus (B19A), two of the most important

ancient manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, from the years 950 and 1008 c.e., place Chronicles at the very beginning of the Ketuvim. Apparently Chronicles, which offers a broad narrative of the establishment of the Temple cult under David and Solomon, was thus understood as a "historical" introduction to the Psalms. The present standard ordering, on the other hand, places Chronicles at the very end of the Ketuvim, so that the important statement of a new exodus in 2 Chronicles 36:23b ("Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him! Let him go up") closes the Tanakh.

As regards the Christian Old Testament, we must distinguish according to the different confessions. In current Protestant editions of the Bible the structure is as follows: the "historical books" are placed first under a single rubric: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther. Then come the "poetic books": Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs. Finally there are the "prophetic books" of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

This Old Testament thus also has a threefold division, but of a different nature the Hebrew Bible. The first heading combines the Torah and the Former Prophets as "historical books," but the books of Ruth, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, which are also narrative, are placed there also. The second section ("poetic books") contains an important selection from the Ketuvim: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs. The third part ("prophetic books") contains the Latter Prophets of the Hebrew Bible (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets), but also Lamentations, which according to the Greek tradition was written by Jeremiah, and the book of Daniel, whose origins belong in the Maccabean period and that, probably for that reason, was not included in the Hebrew canonical section of Nevi'im, which had already been closed, and so had to be placed in the Hebrew Bible as a prophetic book among the Ketuvim.

Roman Catholic editions of the Bible have the same general structure, but they include seven additional books. Tobit and Judith are placed after Nehemiah, Esther is followed by the books of the Maccabees, and Wisdom of Solomon and Jesus Sirach are placed after the Song of Songs, while Lamentations is followed by Baruch. In addition, Esther and Daniel are several chapters longer (the so-called "Additions to Esther and Daniel"). The greater extent of the Old Testament in Roman Catholic Bibles is due to the fact that the Roman Catholic Church, at the Council of Trent in 1545, canonized the

Vulgate, with its more extensive collection of books, as Sacred Scripture—a decision which was made as part of the Counter-Reformation. This conciliar decision, incidentally, is the sole canonical decree in Judaism and Christianity—in other words, only the Roman Catholic Church has fixed its Bible, by means of an authoritative decision, as containing a certain number of books. The greater extent of the Vulgate Old Testament rests in turn on the so-called Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament.[84] From it comes also the difference in sequence between Christian and Jewish Bibles:[85]

Hebrew Bible	**Septuagint**
Torah ("Law")	*Historical Books*
Genesis	Genesis
Exodus	Exodus
Leviticus	Leviticus
Numbers	Numbers
Deuteronomy	Deuteronomy
Nevi'im ("Prophets")	
Joshua	Joshua
Judges	Judges
Ruth	
Samuel	1–4 Kings
Kings	
	1–2 Chronicles
	Ezra-Nehemiah
	Esther
	Judith
	Tobit
	1–4 Maccabees
Isaiah	
Jeremiah	

Ezekiel	
Book of the Twelve (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)	
Ketuvim ("Writings")	*Poetic Books*
Psalms	Psalms
Job	Proverbs
Proverbs	Qoheleth
Ruth	Song of Songs
Song of Songs	Job
Qoheleth	Wisdom
Lamentations	Sirach
Esther	Psalms of Solomon
Daniel	
Ezra-Nehemiah	
Chronicles	
	Prophetic Books
	Book of the Twelve (Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)
	Isaiah
	Jeremiah
	Baruch
	Lamentations
	Letter of Jeremiah
	Ezekiel
	Daniel

As in the Hebrew tradition, we must also differentiate within the Greek tradition according to its manuscripts. As regards the sequence of books in

the major LXX manuscripts we may observe the following details: common to the great codices א (Sinaiticus), A (Alexandrinus), and B (Vaticanus) is that, for one thing, they place Ruth, according to its setting a quite fitting location, between Judges and 1 Samuel and, in addition, they follow Genesis–Kings not with the *corpus propheticum*, but with Chronicles. Apart from that, א, A, and B go their separate ways: in א and B Chronicles are followed by Ezra–Nehemiah; א then continues with Esther, Tobit, Judith, and 1–4 Maccabees, thus establishing a great historiographical corpus from Creation to the Maccabees. In s there then follow the prophets and the remaining writings. B follows Chronicles–Esther–Nehemiah with Psalms, Proverbs, Qoheleth, Song of Songs, Job, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach, Esther, Judith, and Tobit, putting the prophets in the final position. In A, Ezra–Nehemiah are separated from Chronicles; there Genesis–Kings + Chronicles are followed by the prophetic books and then the remaining writings. The LXX thus reveals a certain effort to put the historical traditions together and order them chronologically. This is especially marked in א, but B's ordering also seems to have been formulated according to this principle, since the historical presentations in Genesis–Kings + Chronicles–Ezra–Nehemiah are followed first of all by the books of "David" (Psalms) and "Solomon" (Proverbs, Qoheleth, Song of Songs and, interrupted by Job, Wisdom of Solomon). Then come Sirach, Esther, Judith, Tobit, and finally the books of the prophets. Chronological considerations seem also to have determined the internal ordering of the prophets: Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah, and following them the other "minor prophets," are placed before Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, which in the LXX is also counted among the prophets. The placing of the "minor" prophets before the "great" ones also has the effect of bringing Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, with their messianic prophecies, and especially Daniel, with its vision of the Son of Man in chapter 7, closer to the New Testament that follows.

The Protestant churches, with their humanistically-motivated approach to the Hebrew Bible, demanded that only the originally Hebrew books in the Old Testament canon should be retained, and placed the remaining books of the Septuagint and Vulgate Old Testament among the so-called Apocrypha or deuterocanonical books, which, while worth reading, are to be subordinated to the other scriptures in theological rank and value.[86]

Beyond the larger canon of the Old Testament in the Roman Catholic Church, there are the still more extensive canons of the Eastern churches, especially Ethiopian Christianity, which also include Enoch and Jubilees in their Old Testament.

The following presentation will concentrate on the Hebrew Old Testament in its standard order and will give only summary treatment to the other

writings in more extensive canonical collections, which stem primarily from the Hellenistic period.

6. *The Problem of an "Original Text" of the Old Testament*

Since the Qumran discoveries in particular it has become clear that the common image of an "original text" of the Hebrew Bible, established at the canonization of each of its books, must be thoroughly reconsidered.[87] The biblical manuscripts in Qumran as well as the ancient versions reveal a highly diversified tradition of differing forms of texts of the same biblical books, so that we must first of all agree with Blum that "there are, in effect, as many final forms as there are textual witnesses"[88]—*the* biblical text does not exist anywhere, certainly not established in one particular textual witness. The diversity of the textual tradition around the turn of the era can perhaps be imagined as something like the current existence of numerous translations of the Bible alongside one another: they are recognizably editions of the same books, but they are not always identical in their wording and arrangement.

In any case we must restrain ourselves from projecting the single-version, letter-for-letter fidelity of the textual tradition in the rabbinic period onto the Old Testament of previous times. The fact that the multiplicity of texts after 70 C.E. attested in Qumran gave way to a standard consonantal text, as witnessed by the Masoretic manuscripts from the early Middle Ages, is not due to any particular magisterial decision but rather, if not exclusively then primarily, to the fact that the (Pharisaic-) Rabbinic school, the normative strand of tradition in Judaism after the Jewish War, used and preserved what is now known as the Masoretic textual tradition.

However, we should not be deceived by the divergent traditions found in Qumran. Van der Woude in particular has quite rightly pointed out that the conditions in Qumran cannot be generally assumed for Judaism before 70 C.E.[89] The texts found in Masada and Wadi Murabba'at do not attest to the same multiplicity as those at Qumran;[90] rather, they reveal a consonantal text belonging to the proto-Masoretic textual tradition, and the Greek scroll of the Twelve Prophets from Naḥal Ḥever, which should be dated to the second half of the first century B.C.E., already reveals a revision of the LXX in a proto-Masoretic direction.[91] This means, however, that *alongside* the multiplicity of the text attested in Qumran we can also perceive a tendency in pre-70 C.E. Judaism that exercised pressure toward a standardized text of the Bible. Van der Woude believes that, especially in the Second Temple in Jerusalem, a relatively unified textual tradition was preserved, namely that of the

later Masoretes.[92] Thus we can retain the idea of an "original text" of the Hebrew Bible in another sense: there was never a pure canonical form of the biblical text, since the establishment of the canon apparently did not mean preserving the literal text in every respect, but there were proto-Masoretic forms of the later standard text that were shaped and handed on by groups in the Second Temple period that played a definitive role in the origins of the Hebrew Bible.

Text-critical scholarship has clearly perceived that in a number of biblical books such as Joshua, Samuel–Kings, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel the Hebrew *Vorlage* that remains perceptible through the Septuagint is closer to this proto-standard text than the later Hebrew editions of these books that developed subsequently.[93] Correspondingly, the boundaries between literary criticism of prior stages and text-critical scholarship have become quite fluid.

7. Old Testament Literary History and Criticism within the Field of Old Testament Study

Where should we locate the project of a literary history of the Old Testament within Old Testament scholarship? It is customary to distinguish three sub-disciplines within the latter: history of Israel, introduction to the Old Testament, and theology of the Old Testament. During the twentieth century, each of these fields has been documented by multiple textbooks.[94] Alongside these there were also presentations of Israel's religious history, traditionally understood as a historical supplement to the theology of the Old Testament,[95] but more recently intended to serve as a substitute for it,[96] a proposal that has neither been successful in this form nor deserves to be.[97] However, the religious history of Israel in its traditional dimensions has achieved an eminently more elevated significance within the interplay of the sub-disciplines of Old Testament scholarship. In the last thirty years, on the one hand, there have been numerous new or newly revealed archaeological discoveries in the Levant.[98] On the other hand the historical evaluation of the Old Testament writings has changed dramatically within the study of Old Testament introduction, partly in correlation to the archaeological finds.[99] It has thus become clear that we must depict the image of the religion(s) of ancient Israel very differently from what is portrayed in the Bible and in the rationalizing paraphrases of traditional biblical scholarship that have followed its lead.[100]

Contrasting with the increased significance of the religious-historical approach is a strange lack of clarity in the division of labor among the three traditional sub-disciplines named above. The model often followed in the

past, taking the history of Israel and introduction studies as preliminary disciplines in aid of a theology of the Old Testament as the synthetic major discipline, has run into difficulties since the epoch-making *Theology of the Old Testament* by Gerhard von Rad,[101] namely as regards the possibility of a synthesis of theology of the Old Testament. This has occurred primarily because von Rad's abandonment of any attempt at systematizion other than "retelling" for the presentation of a theology of the Old Testament has either been accepted or other types of solutions have proved less persuasive. The abandonment of a systematic presentation—which led in von Rad's major work, especially within his disciplinary context, to a highly appealing result—in some sense brought about the greatest crisis in the sub-discipline "theology of the Old Testament" since its origins because, when understood in this way, it could no longer be distinguished in principle from introductory studies.[102] An added problem was the discovery of theology (and thus, simultaneously, theolog*ies*) *within* the Old Testament.[103] This made the business of a unified theology of the Old Testament throughout its historical development much more difficult and presented it with quite new difficulties that cannot be regarded as having since been surmounted, not even in a preliminary sense.

It remains to be seen how these intra-Old Testament difficulties in the organization of the sub-disciplines will be resolved. Since the ensemble of Old Testament scholarship remains in an unsettled state, the project of an Old Testament literary history, not a new project but newly of interest, can, on the one hand, profit from this situation, since the construction of syntheses is not exclusively claimed by other sub-disciplines (nor should it be). On the other hand, however, the other sub-disciplines can expect to profit from an Old Testament literary history, since it makes suggestions for a historical overview of the literary and theological relationships among the Old Testament texts and books, but from a new perspective.

8. Bases, Conditions, Possibilities, and Limitations of Historical Reconstruction

The Old Testament is not a book, but a library, and the "books" in this library are not books in the modern sense, traceable to one single author for each.[104] In accordance with ancient Near Eastern practice, the "books" of the Old Testament represent the literature of traditions, not of authors.[105] This circumstance was acknowledged within the Bible itself and was made an explicit topic. A particularly clear example is found in the narrative in Jeremiah 36, which speaks of the preparation of a second scroll containing the words of Jeremiah, after King Jehoiakim had burned the first scroll:

"Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to the secretary Baruch son of Neriah, who wrote on it at Jeremiah's dictation all the words of the scroll that King Jehoiakim of Judah had burned in the fire; *and many similar words were added to them*." (Jer 36:32) The passive formulation does not, of course, exclude the possibility that these "similar words" were those of Jeremiah, but it clearly opens the horizon for continuations post-Jeremiah. Thus we can discover in the book of Jeremiah itself that it is not the work of Jeremiah alone, but was later continued at considerable length by others.

A similar example of the process of ongoing writing that is made explicit in the Bible is in Isa 16:13-14. After a lament on the suffering of the neighboring people of Moab we find the following final note: "This was the word that the Lord spoke concerning Moab in the past." Then follows a clarification: "But now the Lord says: In three years, like the years of a hired worker, the glory of Moab will be brought into contempt, in spite of all its great multitude; and those who survive will be very few and feeble." Thus Isa 16:13-14 attempts to judge Moab from an altered cultural-historical context, seeing it no longer empathetically but critically. That this verse is a continuation of the writing is clear from the combination of closing signature (16:13) and new interpretation (16:14).

Corresponding to these findings, the first author of a biblical book who is known to us by name appears only around 180 b.c.e. in the person of Jesus Sirach (Sir 50:27-29). We can observe the beginnings of an authorial self-awareness some decades earlier, in the use of "I" by Qoheleth.[106] Of course, a number of Old Testament books are attributed to particular persons in their respective *Incipits*, their introductory verses, but these are not historical attributions to authors; they are statements of the authority to whom the traditions presented in the book are to be traced.[107] Thus also the writing scene in Jeremiah 36—however legendary it may or may not be—presents the situation in such a way that we are led to understand that Jeremiah himself did not write a single word of his own book. The "words of Jeremiah" in the book of Jeremiah were not written down by the "author" Jeremiah, but by his secretary, Baruch. Thus Jeremiah is not the author; he is the authority for his book.[108]

Overall, the texts of the Old Testament—setting aside for the moment the probable oral stages in the different spheres of tradition[109]—were created over a period of about eight hundred years.

> Finkelstein and Silberman and Schniedewind place a one-sidedly exceptional literary-historical accent on the pre-exilic period for the genesis of Old Testament texts.[110] Of course, the seventh century b.c.e. played a particularly important role in the literary formation

of the Old Testament, but it is impossible to argue that it was essentially already complete before or during this epoch. Historical-critical biblical scholarship has assembled enough evidence to show that the Old Testament books in their present form were clearly influenced by the theology of the Judaism of the Persian and Hellenistic periods,[111] which does not exclude the incorporation of older materials. At the same time, however, the discipline has made it clear that the decisive formative processes for the Old Testament literature belong to a later period than the seventh century B.C.E.

The earliest texts of the Old Testament retained in a fixed literary form probably come from the early monarchical period—though their oral prehistory may be a great deal older.[112] The most recent (datable) texts are found in the book of Daniel, from the Maccabean era, in the chronological notes in the historical books (especially Genesis 5 and 11, cf. Ex 12:40 and 1Kgs 6:1), in a few possibly Hasmonean psalms, and in the Masoretic material in the book of Jeremiah (cf. Jer 33:14-26). We get the impression from the writings found at Qumran that the Old Testament existed in its essentially "finished" form around 100 B.C.E., not yet as regards its literal shape, but probably in its content.[113] In any case it is clear that the great majority of the books of the Old Testament are composite literature that grew over a long period into their current textual state. No book of the Old Testament has been retained in its pre-exilic, monarchical-period form. The Old Testament as we have it is the product of Persian-period and Hellenistic Judaism.

How can these preliminary literary stages of Old Testament books be reconstructed within the period framed by their earliest and latest possible datings? Old Testament scholarship has developed a subtle set of instruments for this purpose that cannot be described in detail here, but some remarks on selected problems are in order.[114] First we should say that no Old Testament texts have survived from the Old Testament period. Even the earliest biblical manuscripts from Qumran are later than the latest additions to the Hebrew Bible.[115] In addition, most of the biblical writings from Qumran have survived only in a very fragmentary condition. The oldest complete textual witness for the Old Testament remains the Codex Petropolitanus (B 19A) from the year 1008 C.E.

It accords with this state of the material evidence that reconstructions of prior stages of the text must for the most part be founded on internal arguments. Traditionally, Old Testament literary criticism discusses different stages of growth of the biblical books primarily on the basis of observation of doublets, breaks, tensions, and contradictions in the text.[116] But solely formal, text-immanent procedures have proved inadequate. They

are in danger of privileging literary-aesthetic ideals from the foundational period of historical-critical biblical scholarship (for example, the text-genetic evaluation of literary redundancies must not be done mechanically, but is a process to be tested in historical perspective).[117] In addition to this is a consideration based on a calculation of probabilities: even if we may suppose that the reconstruction of a prior literary stage has an 80 percent probability, this rate declines for Stage II to 64 percent, for Stage III to 51.2 percent, and by Stage IV the value falls below 50 percent, that is, the reconstruction becomes arbitrary.[118] Therefore linguistic observations must be supplemented by theological-conceptual considerations in reconstructing prior literary stages, that is, literary criticism must be coupled with theological-historical reflection. In the textbooks this is discussed with regard to the independence of the exegetical methods, which in itself is an obvious aspect of exegetical work but in practice is often neglected.[119] For a presentation of the history of Old Testament literature, it is also of crucial importance to give material weight to the final stages of literary development. That, of course, does not mean evaluating theological positions in the Old Testament from current perspectives; material weighting means identifying theological positions in the Old Testament that have proved themselves historically to be shaping factors for the inner-biblical discussion.

Finally, we may point to the important function of the archaeology in the Levant as a test: the quantitiy of the epigraphic and especially the iconographic primary evidence for Israelite religion, especially from the last thirty years, reveals, in its historical arrangement, certain possibilities and limits to what can and cannot be imagined for a particular epoch in literary and theological history.[120] It is obvious that a literary history cannot be written on the basis of archaeology; non-textual material is silent, and epigraphic evidence is too minimal[121]—but neither can a literary history be written without taking into account the cultural-historical framework set by archaeology.

9. Recent Trends in Old Testament Research and Their Consequences for a Literary History of the Old Testament

At the present time we can observe a certain upheaval in Old Testament scholarship that is significant for a literary-historical approach and is occasioned especially by three factors. First is the view of the cultural circumstances of the origins of the Old Testament writings, particularly from a cultural- and religious-historical point of view, which has been substantially altered by new archaeological findings (see A.I.7 above). In addition, inspired not least by new religious-historical insights—especially in the study of the

historical books, prophecy, but also the Writings, particularly the Psalms—new perspectives on the historical genesis of these books have emerged, distinguishing today's scholarship greatly from the customary assumptions of twentieth-century Old Testament scholarship.[122] Finally, theology as a whole has become more pluralistic. In particular the strong influence of dialectical theology has declined. In the middle of the twentieth century it led much of Old Testament scholarship astray into religious-historical projections onto Israel and its neighbors of the fundamental distinction between revealed and natural theology. The decline of its influence has made some less biased views of the literary and archaeological findings possible in ancient Israel, though of course the biases of these views may be described by future scholars.

The framing presuppositions for an overall picture of a history of the literature of the Old Testament now beginning to emerge are not new discoveries. The problematic represented by the Old Testament, as essentially a document of the ancient Judaism of the Persian and Hellenistic period, has been well known since the nineteenth century. It measures Israel's history by the central religious concepts of monotheism, covenant, and law, which because of their overwhelming importance have been placed by the biblical authors at the beginning of Israel's history. This important difference between biblical and historical Israel, however, has only been approached with adequate seriousness in scholarship in recent years. Some forerunners have proved more a hindrance than a help to the discussion, by addressing the problem only in partial ways and using extremely late dating schemes.[123] Nevertheless, the most recent Old Testament scholarship appears again here and there to be in danger of distancing itself from historical probabilities through simplistic dichotomizing between the pre-exilic and post-exilic periods, between earlier polytheism and later monotheism, between ancient Israel and Judaism,[124] between natural religion and revealed religion, and similar pairings. But that Old Testament scholarship has changed fundamentally is not altered by these dangers.

Changing perspectives in Pentateuch research have played a special part in this upheaval.[125] Well into the twentieth century, the documentary hypothesis was amazingly successful, according to which there was a successive interweaving of the three sources J, E, and P, all of which presented much of the same content but as literary phenomena arose independently of one another. Ultimately this success can only be explained by the fact that this hypothesis relied both in an elementary and quite exclusive way on the initial observations of historical biblical criticism—the alternation between Yhwh/Elohim and the discovery of textual doublets—and enjoyed the benefits of long-enduring familiarity to biblical scholars. In fact, however, the documentary hypothesis implied a number of basic assumptions that, when

regarded in a clear light, are extraordinarily problematic. First of all, its thesis was based on the conviction that the overarching syntheses stood at the beginning of the construction of the tradition: the "Yahwist" located by Wellhausen in the monarchical period and since von Rad even regarded as belonging to the "Solomonic" reign is supposed to contain a description of history extending from creation to the conquest of the Land. This thesis postulates an unique case within the Old Testament tradition: for the Former Prophets (Joshua–2 Kings) as well as the Later Prophets (Isaiah–Malachi), as well as for the Writings, it is assumed without question that their final shape and outline is different from the concept of their earliest components. In the Pentateuch, according to the documentary hypothesis, things are supposed to be fundamentally different. The recognition that this is not the case has emerged slowly among scholars only in the wake of Blum's influential studies on the composition of the patriarchal history and the Pentateuch.[126] The latter have evoked some consensus at least in some strands of European scholarship to the extent that for the literary beginnings of the Pentateuch we should probably reckon with sources with a limited literary horizon, which only in the (exilic or) early post-exilic period were embedded in comprehensive contexts.[127]

Thus we can see today, and in a strand of research that is no longer only marginal, a "farewell to the Yahwist,"[128] a movement that seeks to explain the composition of the Pentateuch without a pre-Priestly master narrative, particularly one which already would have provided a link between the patriarchs and the Exodus. Of course, it is not yet certain whether this approach will prove enduring. But for many alternative new models it is also obvious that the great salvation-historical blueprints in the Pentateuch do not lie at the beginnings of the construction of the tradition but arose only toward the end. The same is true for the credo-type summaries of salvation history which were so important for Gerhard von Rad's interpretation of the sources of the Pentateuch.[129] Israel's religion(s) in the monarchical period can thus no longer be interpreted according to the paradigm of discontinuity between Israel and its neighboring cultures so common in the wake of von Rad. The latter showed Israel as believing in the one God who could not be pictured,[130] a God who revealed himself in history, while the neighboring religions divinized the course of nature through polytheistic extrapolation.[131] The most recent studies of the Pentateuch not only make it possible, but even positively compel us to depict Israel's pre-exilic religious history within that of the Near East,[132] though here also we should warn against the danger of axiomatically leveling it into its Near Eastern contexts.

In the realm of prophecy we can observe a similar upheaval, even though it seems less obvious.[133] Classic scholarship described the prophets

as spiritually-gifted individual geniuses who presented their addressees with the will of God, directly conveyed to them and sometimes imposed on them, without condition or compromise. This prophetic image was derived by exegetes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through a distinction between original prophetic sayings and secondary additions. The exegesis of the prophetic books consisted essentially of cleaning the "genuine" textual material from its "non-genuine" additions, resulting in the presentation of the prophets as religious geniuses.

In terms of intellectual history, this classic image of the prophets was inspired primarily by idealism and romanticism. It dominated the nineteenth century and was substantially advanced by Wellhausen's late dating of the law after the prophets (*lex post prophetas*), which freed the prophets from the burden of being interpreters of the law. The fundamental characterization of the prophets' message as not from this world was very useful to dialectical theology, which extended the notion of the prophets as religious geniuses into the twentieth century. The isolated status of prophecy as its central characteristic still appears clearly in the epochal *Theology of the Old Testament* by Gerhard von Rad.[134] According to von Rad prophecy cannot be associated with the other ideas of faith within Israel, and therefore he treated it separately from all other traditions in a second volume.

However, alongside this classical strand of research there were other early voices that deliberately inquired not only about the prophets and their "genuine" words, but about the secondary additions as such, seeking to make them plausible as interpretive work carried out within the Bible.[135] This direction of inquiry—the so-called redaction-critical approach[136]—achieved its breakthrough in Old Testament scholarship especially in Walter Zimmerli's commentary on Ezekiel[137]. Today it is among the dominant approaches in prophets research. It deliberately no longer inquires exclusively about the prophets' proclamation, but also investigates the different accents and directions conveyed in their books, which belong to the literary post-history of the prophetic sayings written there.

Prophets research in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries could be described as a process that reduced the texts attributed by the books' superscriptions to the prophet behind them to a literary body whose content was "critically" supported (often based on questionable standards), but nevertheless was in accordance with self-witness of the book—the portion of the book of Isaiah that comes from "Isaiah," the book of Jeremiah from "Jeremiah," etc. In contrast, today the weight has shifted from the prophets to their books, from their sayings to the texts of the books. The prophetic books have taken on increased significance as entities conveying meaning *as books*, and no longer as merely accidental collections of so-called "smaller

units," in which the ongoing theological value was found. In this regard we can, in fact, speak of a paradigm shift in prophets research, even though the inquiry into original prophetic sayings must retain some importance.

The exegetical concentration on the passages in the prophetic books that have customarily been regarded as non-genuine makes it more and more clear that these are not only glosses and textual errors, but in many if not most cases are to be interpreted as later interpretations of existing textual materials that themselves convey meaning. We should therefore regard the "expanders" not as amateur glossators but as scribal redactors who in their turn could be seen as "prophets." For one thing, their scribal activity reveals an astonishing innovative talent for the subject. Furthermore, in their anonymous subordination to the figures who gave their names to the books on which they worked they reveal themselves by their own self-concept to be people who worked prophetically.

Prophecy is thus increasingly seen as a collective and long-term phenomenon, and no longer as bound to a particular point in time and an individual genius, and it is again being taken seriously as written prophecy. Not all prophecy was originally oral; large parts of the prophetic books never existed except in written form.[138] For individual prophetic books such as Joel, Jonah, or Malachi we may even suggest that they are entirely attributable to scribal activity. Behind them there is probably no individual prophetic figure whose written proclamation formed the basis for the further redactional history of the book. Instead, these books appear to be altogether the products of scribal prophetic tradents.

Finally, it is helpful to confront the upheavals in the most recent research on the Psalms. From a literary-critical point of view the dating of the Psalms remains notoriously in dispute. But recent Psalms scholarship has been able to show how thoroughly the Psalter has been shaped into a theological book.[139] This does not exclude, but rather includes, the idea that older individual psalms originally used in the cult of the First and/or Second Temple have made their way into the book. But in its existing form the Psalter is a carefully structured literary whole whose *Sitz im Leben* is to be sought more in the scribal studio than in worship. Something comparable may be observed in the Wisdom literature in the narrow sense, for example in Proverbs.[140]

In summary—despite all the reservations one must have about such slogan-like characterizations—we may observe the following tendencies in the most recent research on the Old Testament, especially when focusing on the European discussions:

1. The assumption of a salvation-historical shaping of Israel's religion from the beginning is untenable in its classic form. In particular, the hypothesis of a "Yahwist" that is so important as its foundation is unable to bear this weight.[141]
2. "Sub-Deuteronomistic" interpretations of the Old Testament that are based on a fundamental agreement between the sequence of epochs in biblical and historical Israel must be critically questioned.[142]
3. From a religious-historical perspective we can observe a certain (renewed) convergence in the description of Israel's monarchical-period religion(s) and neighboring religions.
4. In contrast to traditional ideas, the exilic and post-exilic periods are clearly being emphasized more as crucial phases in the formation of the Old Testament literature.
5. The "religious geniuses" so blithely proposed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are no longer believed to monopolize literary production in the Old Testament. Instead, it is apparent that the Old Testament literature, over broad stretches, is the literature of scribal interpretation.[143]

II. Language, Writing, Books, and Literary Production in Ancient Israel

1. Language and Writing

The Hebrew Bible (with Aramaic passages found in Ezra-Nehemiah and in Daniel; cf. also Jer 10:11) essentially falls into two subsections that can be called "Classical/Standard Biblical Hebrew" and "Late Biblical Hebrew."[144] What is here called "classical biblical Hebrew" is essentially the language of the Torah and the Priestly and/or Deuteronomistic redacted literature in Genesis–2 Kings. "Late biblical Hebrew" can be found especially in Chronicles literature as well as Esther and Daniel, though these go their own way in some specific respects. The distinction between "classical biblical Hebrew" and "late biblical Hebrew" is essentially based on a comparison of biblical texts with two extra-biblical text corpora, namely the royal inscriptions and the Qumran literature.[145] "Classical biblical Hebrew" is a language of the

learned, closely connected with the "Judahite-Hebrew" of the monarchical period and preserving it in a more and more Aramaic-speaking environment.[146] In accordance with its character as a language of scholars, "classical biblical Hebrew" has a relatively homogeneous form. "Late biblical Hebrew" can, in turn, be described as a further development of "classical biblical Hebrew." Contrary to the opinion frequently expressed that the transition from classical to late biblical Hebrew took place during the exile,[147] in view of newer research on Genesis–Kings we must instead presume that the most important biblical texts for "late biblical Hebrew" can scarcely be located earlier than 400 B.C.E.[148] In any case, the Hebrew of biblical texts is not solely determined by their chronology. Instead, the choice of language also indicates conceptual closeness to or distance from normative core traditions in the Torah: the books of Job or Qoheleth use a Hebrew that does not conform to the Torah because of their theological dissidence, while late Joshua or Judges texts can be closely paralleled with the classical biblical Hebrew of the Torah and the older parts of those same books.[149]

Hebrew, like Aramaic, is written in an alphabet of twenty-two characters. Inscriptions demonstrate that by the ninth century B.C.E. onward the direction of writing (from right to left) had been established. This is likewise an indication that longer texts requiring such conventions only existed from this point onward. Until the third century B.C.E. the old Hebrew script—in itself richly varied—was in use; it could also be used occasionally in later periods, by the Samaritans for example. Some Qumran manuscripts are also written in old Hebrew, though these are only biblical manuscripts from the Torah and the book of Job, which was understood to be from the patriarchal era. The quadratic (Aramaic) writing probably began to spread as a result of the use of Aramaic for governmental documents in the Persian period. Its oldest attestation is in the inscription of *Iraq el-Emir* east of the Jordan (third century B.C.E.). Prior stages of this process can be observed in the texts from Elephantine.[150] In Qumran only a few scrolls (Torah and Job) were written in an archaic style, and sometimes the Tetragrammaton was written in old Hebrew script; otherwise quadratic writing predominated.

In antiquity Hebrew texts were unpunctuated; only a few vowel letters (*matres lectionis*) appear in ancient Hebrew inscriptions, and mainly in the final position of the word. In Qumran, by contrast, they are very common and can also stand for short vowels within the word. The punctuation familiar today is the work of the Masoretes of the fifth to tenth centuries C.E. The customary Tiberian pointing was used interlinearly, while the Babylonian pointing, only familiar to in scholarship since the nineteenth century, was supralinear.

2. Material Aspects of Literary Production

For historical inquiry about the origins of the Old Testament writings it is necessary to imagine the possibilities and conditions for the production of books and literature in the ancient world. Sources for this inquiry are information from the Old Testament (cf., for example, Ezekiel 1–3; Jeremiah 36) as well as the epigraphic evidence from Old Testament times and finally, and especially prominent, the scrolls from Qumran.[151] Despite the caution that must be exercised due to the lack of contemporary Old Testament textual evidence, we can say that books were commonly written in the form of scrolls (cf. Isa 34:4).[152] The codex, bound at the spine, appeared only in the Christian era. Writing was done on papyrus or parchment; papyrus was cheaper and was accordingly used most frequently. For longer texts—in the Qumran text the book of Isaiah fills a scroll eight meters long—only parchment was appropriate, since papyrus could not be rolled to any extent because of its brittle nature. From a purely technical standpoint much longer scrolls were possible; these may in some cases have extended to twenty-five meters.[153] The scrolls were made up of individual sheets sewn together and divided into columns before being written on (cf. Jer 36:23). When the scroll was read, only the column actually being read needed to be made visible, while the preceding and following content could remain rolled up.

In the Qumran trove the text is not in *scriptio continua*, but has spaces between words. There are also divisional marks such as longer spaces within the lines, *alinea* (indentation at the beginning of a new line), space at the end of lines, and blank lines, all serving to structure the text into sense units.[154]

3. Socio-literary Aspects of the Production and Reception of Literature

For an understanding of the literary-historical emergence of the Old Testament it is indispensable to envision the circumstances: the texts were produced and received within a comparatively narrow circle that was adequately familiar with reading and writing and existed within a largely illiterate society.[155] Comparable material from Greece and Egypt points in the same direction.[156] Although the ability to read and write was restricted to a small portion of the population, the existence of a professional class of writers attests that the remainder of the people were not entirely illiterate. We should, rather, make a distinction: there is no precise boundary between literacy and illiteracy; the mastery of reading and writing was, then as now,

a gradual process. A little note attesting to the delivery of goods like those appearing, for example, in the Samarian ostraca could undoubtedly be deciphered by a broader circle than the Siloam inscription or a prophetic book.

Contrary to the witness of the Old Testament itself, which asserts that some small sections of the Pentateuch were written by Moses (cf. Exod 17:14; 24:4; 34:28; Num 33:2), it appears that writing and scribal culture only developed in Israel from the ninth century B.C.E. (in Judah from the eighth century B.C.E.) to such an extent that we can reckon with the production of extensive literary works: "Hebrew literature, however, first flowered only in this period [i.e., the century from 850–750]."[157] This is indicated, in addition to general findings on the cultural-historical development of Israel and Judah that can be associated with scribal culture, by the historical distribution of old Hebrew inscriptions.[158] While there is no statistical basis on which to ground the assumption, nevertheless the distribution of inscriptions is related to the rise of literacy.

Numbers of Inscriptions in Israel[159]

Tenth century	4	inscriptions
Ninth century	18	inscriptions
Eighth century, first half	16	inscriptions
Eighth century, second half	129	inscriptions
Seventh century, first half	50	inscriptions
Seventh century, second half	52	inscriptions
Sixth century, beginning	65	inscriptions

The newly-discovered abecedary from Tel Zayit can be dated to the late tenth century B.C.E. and is claimed by those who excavated the site as testimony to the establishment of schools in this period as a consequence of the increasing bureaucratization of Judah.[160] Whether it suffices to correct this general picture in fundamental ways remains questionable at the moment. The opposite conclusion, that the lack of *Hebrew* inscriptions in the Persian period should cause us to think that the Old Testament was essentially created in the pre-exilic period,[161] has all the historical probabilities against it. Of course the inscriptions of the Persian period were composed in the *lingua franca* of the time, namely Aramaic, but their number is materially greater than that of the Hebrew inscriptions.[162] In principle, the numerical total of the Persian-period inscriptions is further confirmation of the importance of the Persian epoch for the origins of the Old Testament literature rather than a refutation of it. In any case, the statistical findings must be interpreted

with caution since most of the written texts from this period were inscribed on materials that have not survived the intervening centuries (papyrus in particular), and the surviving inscriptions, especially the ostraca, only fragmentarily reflect the writing culture. At the same time, the overall impression is significant, especially since it parallels two further observations.

For one thing, we should mention the fact that *written* prophecy in Israel and Judah appears only when there was the rise of a certain degree of literary culture, namely in the eighth century B.C.E. Wellhausen had already noted that not a single book of Elijah has been handed down, but there is one from Isaiah.[163] Between them lies the rise of a writing culture that included not only this Isaiah, but also Amos or Hosea and/or their tradents.

In addition, the fact that only from this point onward Israel, and somewhat later Judah, are recorded in ancient Near Eastern sources as states converges with the simultaneous rise of literary culture.[164] This in turn lets us conclude to a certain stage of development that includes especially the development of a writing culture.

There is some evidence to the contrary, however: two of the most extensive inscriptions from the geographical area in question, the Mesha Stele[165] and the Balaam inscription from Tel Deir Alla[166] belong to the early period (9th century B.C.E. and 8th/7th centuries B.C.E.), and also—from a geographical point of view—come from the periphery. These findings caution against a too narrow and mechanical coupling of advanced state culture and writing, but in turn they should not be regarded as the sole valid parameters.

It is of further consequence for literary production that the Old Testament books were probably originally composed, as a rule, as separate and unique pieces. Their character as agglutinating interpretive literature points in this direction: it is scarcely imaginable that a multilevel continuous process of writing biblical books—and their different textual witnesses refute any attempts to dispute such a process—could have been carried out, simply from a technical standpoint, if numerous copies of the books had been in circulation.[167] This assumption can be further supported by information from the Old Testament itself. The instruction in Deut 17:18, for example, is significant: "When [the king] has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the Levitical priests." This text does not demand that the king should have *a* copy of the Deuteronomic Law made; rather, it assumes that the copy the king will have made will remain the sole copy alongside the original. Likewise, 2 Chron 17:7-9; Neh 8:1-2; and 2 Macc 2:13-15 can be read similarly as pointing to a very limited circulation of Old Testament books during Old Testament times. 2 Maccabees 2:15 shows that in the second century B.C.E. even the

Jewish community in Alexandria did not possess a complete Bible.[168] The limited spread of biblical writings is not surprising, given that their production was an arduous process and scrolls were correspondingly costly. In the rabbinic period a new scroll of Isaiah would have cost half the annual income of a scribe.[169]

It appears that the Jerusalem Temple played a special role in literary production. We may suppose that the model manuscripts were preserved there, forming the basis for an ongoing process of copying and augmentation.[170] 2 Macc 2:13-15 speaks of a library in Jerusalem founded by Nehemiah; its contents ("the books about the kings and prophets, and the writings of David, and letters of kings about votive offerings"), however—as the striking omission of the Torah may show—were apparently described only eclectically, or in the sense of an "Enneateuch" (in which case the Torah would be the prophecy of Moses) and Later Prophets and Psalms.[171] This would have been the library of the Jerusalem temple. Similarly, the story of the finding of the book in the temple by the priest Hilkiah in 2 Kings 22, as well as 1 Sam 10:25, indicate that the Old Testament imagined a collection of books in the Temple. Its extent is hard to determine. Most libraries in the ancient Near East were selections and contained a modest number of texts.[172] For the temple library in Edfu some thirty-five titles are attested.[173] These libraries were not public, but were reserved to the use of the temple and its schools, so that in the ancient Near East there was often no strict division between library and archives. In addition it seems that there were, though much more rarely, library collections whose purpose was to bring together all the texts that could possibly be assembled. Examples of this sort are Ashurbanipal's library, the library of Alexandria, and probably also that in Qumran. It is difficult to determine the extent of the Jerusalem library: 2 Macc 2:13-15 indicates that it probably contained more than merely what would later be the Old Testament literature. This is further supported by the Qumran writings: it is hard to imagine that the library of Qumran, which extended far beyond the Old Testament, could have been larger than the temple library in Jerusalem.[174]

There is no reason to suppose that there was a homogeneous milieu of Jerusalem scribes. Although the groups responsible for the origins of the Old Testament books were probably very limited and located mainly in Jerusalem, at least from the Persian period onward, they appear to have represented a relatively broad spectrum of theological ideas. At any rate, the sometimes almost contrary profiles of the materials that now stand alongside one another in the biblical books point in that direction.

Our historical knowledge about scribes and scribal schools in ancient Israel is very limited.[175] That there were professional scribes is adequately

attested both by the Bible itself and by surviving seal impressions from the monarchical period onward.[176] See, for example, 2 Sam 8:17; 1 Kgs 4:3; Jeremiah 32, 36, 43, 45 ("Baruch the scribe"); Ezra 7:6, 12-26 ("Ezra . . . a scribe skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord the God of Israel had given"); Neh 13:2-3; Sirach 38–39; Mark 11:27-33; Matthew 23. In the course of history their function shifted more and more toward that of scriptural scholarship, and they became a class that was responsible not only for writing (constantly needed because of the short lifespans of those handing on the texts), but also for the continued interpretation of the texts they produced and preserved (cf. Jer 36:32).[177]

Since August Klostermann it has usually been assumed that the scribes received their education in the schools associated with the temple or the royal palace.[178] However, there is scarcely any mention of these in the Bible (only Sir 51:23; Acts 19:9). Their existence is deduced from cultural-historical analogies, which is not fundamentally problematic in itself.[179] However, it does not seem like a good idea to draw a strict distinction between temple and palace schools: the temple was not an independent institution, but was dependent on the royal court.[180] The Talmudic tradition speaks of 480 schools in Jerusalem, which is probably an exaggeration.[181] But in any case there may well have been a number of schools from the Hellenistic period onward, especially in Jerusalem. We need not necessarily think of separate buildings for such schools; what was central to them was the teacher-pupil relationship (1 Chr 25:8; Prov 5:12-14; Ps 119:99). The students' instruction may have taken place in chambers within the temple or in the teacher's private rooms.[182]

Some scholars consider the very lack of attestation of schools in ancient Israel to be significant and attribute the education of scribes more to the handing on of knowledge within scribal "families." We should probably combine both ideas, as they are not mutually exclusive. This is suggested, for example, by the existence of the Jerusalemite Shaphanide family (cf. 2 Kgs 22:3; Jeremiah 36), which was closely associated with the royal palace and the temple.

4. Authors and Redactors

In earlier scholarship the distinction between authors and editors or redactors was highly important in discerning the origins of the Old Testament. Its literary substance was thought to come from authors, such as the Yahwist or Isaiah, and that substance was continued in texts by later "expanders" or "theologians," who were traditionally viewed negatively. Bernhard Duhm, for example, put forth the pointed opinion that they carried on their

thinking "with very little authorial skill" and altogether "beneath the prophetic level."[183] While in spite of this they "occasionally" offered "quite significant ideas," it was nevertheless true that "these ideas were not created by those who present them to us; they are the result of the great intellectual history" in which their authors were only "passive participants." Even the important presentation by Herbert Donner defines the redactors simply as mediatory compilers of existing texts.[184] It was only recent redaction-critical research that has been able to show that this image is deficient. Of course, we can perceive a great many text complexes in the Old Testament that are purely compilations. But we will reach faulty conclusions if we limit textual redaction in the Old Testament to such processes: beyond these there are, among other things, broad redactional passages that develop their own concepts and theologies, so that a categorical distinction between author and redactor is often untenable.[185]

John Van Seters has offered an original discussion of the relationship between authors and redactors that is as eccentric as it is occasionally instructive. His conclusion "that there never was in antiquity anything like 'editions' of literary works that were the result of an 'editorial' process, the work of editors or redactors,"[186] is overdrawn and fails to recognize the current discussion among scholars about an objective view of the phenomenon of "redaction" in Old Testament literature.[187] Still, Van Seters rightly points to deficiencies and problems in form-critical and other historical attempts at clearer pictures of some supposed Old Testament "redactions." In a clear view of things Van Seters is not so far from the position he opposes, but he takes a very different perspective on the biblical texts and their genesis. While the redaction-critical research he attacks distinguishes a basic layer and later redactions, he investigates the supposed works within the Bible that he sees as the work of authors he characterizes as ancient historiographers ("Yahwist," "Deuteronomistic History," etc.), and about the traditions they incorporate but that, in his opinion, can no longer be extracted from the text but were "authorially" edited. One should also consider the fact that Van Seters almost exclusively considers the narrative traditions in Genesis–2 Kings and the historical work, as he proposes it, of the Yahwist and the Deuteronomist; he scarcely incorporates any of the literary relationships in prophecy and Psalms in his reflections.

The phenomenon of (authorial or) redactional work on the Old Testament must, in fact, be differentiated. First we must ask how earlier material became part of a particular text. Does it preserve memories of older, likewise oral traditions or traditional material that have entered into it but can no longer be reconstructed as prior levels of text?[188] Or does it edit existing

material that can still be extracted as such from its present context by source-critical methods? In the second case it is helpful in principle to distinguish redactional insertions and editing according to their respective literary horizons: is a particular redactional method directed only at the immediate surrounding context of the insertion, or does it apply to a section of the book, a whole book, or even a sequence of books? In any case these different possibilities must be considered. It is useless to declare that one or the other approach constitutes a general theory, since it is not difficult to demonstrate that in this regard different redactional methods were applied in the writing of the Old Testament. An example of an expansion that influenced only the immediate context is found in 1 Sam 9:9, where it is explained that *r'h*, "seer" is an archaic word for *nby'*, "prophet." The superscriptions of Am 3:1 and 5:1 have a larger section of the book in view: they serve to structure Amos 3–6 as a whole.[189] Isaiah 35, inserted as a bridge text between first and second Isaiah, serves as part of a redaction of the entire book; it is the first step in creating the book of Isaiah as a whole, which was then in process.[190] Perhaps the clearest example of a redactional level that extends over several books, then, is found in the sequence of statements tracing the transfer of Joseph's bones from Egypt to Canaan in Gen 50:25; Exod 13:19; and Josh 24:32; which, thanks to their references forward and backward, are demonstrably unimaginable except as parts of a single literary layer.[191]

5. *The Contemporary Audience for the Old Testament Literature*

For whom were the Old Testament texts and writings composed? This question is very difficult to answer and must in large part remain open. Probably various narratives, sayings, or songs that were later incorporated in the narrative books, the prophets, Psalms, or Proverbs were delivered orally before a variety of audiences before or at the time they were recorded in writing. Publication through reading aloud, for example, is presumed by Hab 2:2: "Then the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it."[192]

But it is by no means the case that the whole Old Testament was intended from the outset or exclusively as oral literature or to be read aloud. This must be emphasized, in particular against the classic form-criticism of Gunkel and his followers. For texts that we may suppose that oral stages existed, we can say scarcely anything more than that it took place. The approach used here can restrict itself to the question of who read the texts

of the Old Testament in their written form, whether they go back to prior oral stages or not. Even though we again cannot arrive at any sure conclusions, we can say with probability that over long stretches the Old Testament literature was written by scribes for scribes—whether these worked at the temple or the palace. In other words, the audience was essentially identical with the authors themselves. This seems especially likely because of the extreme degree of intertextuality in the Old Testament literature, which was evidently addressed to a particularly well-educated group of recipients.[193]

How ought we imagine the process of reading among ancient Israel's scribal class? Psalm 1:2 may give us a clue: the scribe described here "meditates" or, as we should more properly translate the Hebrew verb *hgh*, "mumbles" the Scripture day and night. Of course this is an exaggerated picture, but the reading process pictured here as a meditative "mumbling" is revealing inasmuch as "reading" in this cultural-historical context evidently did not simply mean reading through a text once from beginning to end, but studying it while reading it half aloud. Silent reading was very unusual in antiquity.[194]

This study of Scripture was the indispensable precondition for a scribe's activity: to judge by cultural-historical analogies, they were so embedded in tradition that when they were writing their texts, they did not always—in fact, probably very seldom—have at hand the written works on which they drew and to which they referred. Instead it appears that they were trained as scribes by immersion in classical literature, and that they memorized the essential texts.[195] The texts of the Old Testament were thus very present to the scribes of ancient Israel, but not necessarily in material form and more essentially in their minds. A particularly clear example of a scribal "patchwork" prophecy is found in Jer 49:7-22, which is most easily explained as a combination of several other prophetic passages (Obad 8-9; Jer 49:30, 32; Jer 25:8-11, 15-29; Obad 1-4; Jer 50:13, 40, 44-46; 48:40-41), which the author of Jer 49:7-22 recombined from memory.[196]

The degree to which reading and memorization were linked in Israel's writing culture can, finally, be illustrated by Ostracon III from Lachish, where a military commander boasts of being able to recite a letter from memory as soon as he has read it (ll. 10-13): "Every letter that comes to me, once I have read it, then I can recite it back in its entirety."[197]

6. *Elements of Form-Critical Development*

Even if a literary-historical description of the Old Testament cannot proceed today as Gunkel's once did, his question about the origins and history of the

literary genres is still of enduring value,[198] so long as one does not attempt to use it as a vehicle for obtaining indirect insight into the spiritual and intellectual life of ancient Israel. Current research evaluates a great deal more of the textual material in the Old Testament as having been written from the beginning than was the case fifty years ago. Nevertheless, the traditional conviction in the wake of Gunkel and Scandinavian biblical scholarship in the first half of the twentieth century, that the Old Testament is essentially made up of written oral tradition, still clings to the Old Testament inasmuch as the Old Testament seems to present itself in that way over broad expanses of the text. This is especially evident in the prophetic books and the Psalms. With the possible exception of Haggai, Jonah, and Malachi, the prophetic books appear to be collections of small units that were originally independent prophetic oracles—even if, in terms of literary history, this is only partly the case. We may even speculate whether the "small units" are a product of writing, since (except in the case of the Neo-Assyrian oracles of salvation) they are not clearly attested outside the Bible. It is possible that they are more representative of how people imagined prophets than of the way prophets actually spoke. In addition, we get the initial impression upon reading the Psalms that these texts are songs and prayers. That, too, is not false, but it is inaccurate as a general literary-critical evaluation. Something similar can be said, within the third part of the Hebrew canon, for the books of Proverbs, Lamentations, and Song of Songs. If we look at the historical books we can clearly see that, despite the more or less harmonious chronological and narrative progress from Genesis to 2 Kings, the substance of the tradition presented here also appears, at least, to rest on short narratives: individual pericopes are strung together, but in themselves they often reveal a striking narrative self-sufficiency or semi-autonomy.

Above all it is observations on the intertextual interweaving of many of these pieces, and their dependence on literary context, that make it impossible to conclude that they were originally oral material. But what seems to be historically inaccurate can certainly be the result of a deliberate literary presentation. The Old Testament intends to present itself not so much as a scribal literature but much more as originally oral. The reason for this choice is obvious in view of the respect for antiquity in the ancient world:[199] the Old Testament is intended as traditional, not innovative literature, and if it is innovative, then it does so in traditional garb.

If we look a little more closely at the tradition we can move beyond these general observations. The biblical books are indeed clearly more than (partly constructed) florilegia of small units. Rather, they have experienced numerous thoroughgoing processes of shaping that have further developed their still visible character as collections. Thus there are also points from

which we can see indications of the structuring of innovative genres that were literary from the outset.

Thus, for example, in various prophetic books (or parts thereof), such as Isaiah 1–39, the Septuagint translation of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or Zephaniah we find a comparable organization of the book according to the so-called "three-part eschatological scheme,"[200] which embeds small textual units in larger contexts and serves to establish the genre "prophetic book." The Psalter as a whole is comprehensively structured in terms of the Chronicler's view of history.[201] The individual narratives and narrative cycles in the patriarchal history were shaped in terms of the promises into extended compositions.[202] Impulses leading to the construction of new major literary genres (at least in the Old Testament) seem also to have come from without: Deuteronomy in its form as "loyalty-oath" follows Neo-Assyrian form-critical conventions.[203] The Priestly document may have been inspired by the royal inscriptions of the Persian period. The book of Job seems virtually to rest on a form-critical combination of *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi*[204] and the Babylonian theodicy.[205] It remains difficult to say how much the genre of the Joseph story was influenced by the Egyptian narrative of the two brothers;[206] in any case it is striking that it clearly stands apart from Genesis 12–36 as a well-rounded composition. In its novella form it seems to have influenced the formation of books like Esther, Ruth, Judith, and Tobit.

The formal literary language of the Old Testament is thus largely traditional, but also highly subject to intercultural influences. The overarching processes of formation of the biblical books, in which from time to time multiple "book forms" were layered on top of one another, were not based on spectacular interventions on the surface of the texts.[207] Still, they are perceptible and show an awareness among the Old Testament authors and redactors that both books and parts of books could be the vehicles of theological statements.

Finally, the construction of a canon can be seen as the end point of the form-critical development of the Old Testament literature, though—except for the later New Testament—it remains without a genuine parallel in the ancient world. As we will show later (in part H, sections I and II), there can be no doubt that the canonical and literary histories of the Old Testament are not phenomena that can be separated, certainly not as successive. Instead, they are mutually interactive. The Old Testament canon is an entity that conveys meaning, and its overarching theological perspectives are anchored in corresponding entries that are placed within the text itself, with a deliberate eye toward the canon (cf., e.g., Deut 34:10-12; Josh 1:7-8; Mal 3:22-24; Psalm 1).

III. Methods and Presentation

1. The Cultural Impact of the Ancient Near Eastern Empires and the Periodization of Old Testament Literature

The question of periodization is a matter of widespread discussion in the fields of literary and historical theory.[208] At any rate it should be clear that epochs may not be stylized into quasi-hypostatic entities, nor can we do without the concept of epochs altogether if we are to understand historical or literary-historical processes in broad strokes. Therefore, for an Old Testament literary history the concept of epochs can neither be exalted nor altogether abandoned. Rather, it serves the elementary structuring of its development.[209]

The basic decisions about the reconstructed picture of a history of Old Testament literature are usually discernible from its overall structure: recall, for example, the distinctions chosen by Gunkel, who divided the Old Testament literature into the epochs of popular literature of the early period, that of the great authorial personalities, and that of the epigones. This reveals his high estimation of the literary geniuses from Isaiah to Deutero-Isaiah as the center of his proposed literary-historical triptych.

As easy as it is today to identify the limits of Gunkel's approach, it is equally difficult to go beyond them in any meaningful way without simply producing a new Procrustean bed for the intellectual and spiritual history of ancient Israel. The following consideration, however, seems in order: in accord with the recent sensitivity among Old Testament scholars to religious-historical factors, it seems appropriate to divide up and interpret the Old Testament literature on the basis of a cultural-historical comparison with the contemporary hegemonic powers in the Near East.[210] The Old Testament is to be understood not as a isolated entity, but in the first place as a part of the ancient Near East. This insight justifies the decision to see the first step in a periodization of the Old Testament literature as starting from the cultural impact of the empires of the ancient Near East that were so central in Israel's history, especially from the Assyrian period onward.[211] When looking at the political history from the Assyrian to the Persian empires, it is clear that the military oppression that was still the central element in securing the imperial power of the Assyrian Empire was increasingly substituted with a culturalization of power that secured the existence of a great empire in an alternative fashion.[212] Correspondingly, the foreign rule of the Persians, for example, is regarded much more positively in the Old Testament than

that of the Assyrians, not least, of course, because the culturalization of Persian power was essentially more pluralistic in orientation than the Assyrian propaganda.

Given the widely scattered archaeological findings, there is no doubt of the fundamental possibility of geographically far-reaching cultural contacts in the ancient Near Eastern.[213] The Babylonian Adapa myth is attested in Egyptian Amarna; in Ugarit (northern Syria) people were familiar with the Atrahasis epic; the epic of Gilgamesh was read in Megiddo in northern Israel; and as fragmentary evidence shows, an Aramaic version of the Iranian Behistun inscription was known on the Nile island of Elephantine. Cultural contacts within the ancient Near East were so close that Israel's central position and its almost constant political dependence on various great powers on the Euphrates and the Nile (within the so-called "Fertile Crescent") from the eighth century B.C.E. onward made it not only possible, but highly probable that the then-current basic cultural and religious concepts were known in Israel and interacted with, whether through rejection or acceptance.

However, we should clearly emphasize that the Old Testament literature does not revolve around reactions (positive or negative) to ancient Near Eastern imperial ideologies in historical sequence. Every form of "parallelomania" should therefore be avoided.[214] But some of the crucial literary and theological concepts in the Old Testament can only be adequately described in historical terms if we compare them to their ancient Near Eastern counterparts.

To choose but a few examples from the presentation that follows: this is especially obvious, for example, in the fundamental idea of Deuteronomy and the tradition that followed it, which clearly borrows from Neo-Assyrian covenant theology that demanded unconditional loyalty from vassals toward the Assyrian monarch and reformulates it toward YHWH.[215] There is a comparable case in the anti-monarchical reception of the legend of the birth of Sargon, drawn from Neo-Assyrian tradition, in Exodus 2.[216]

The exilic interpretations of the Pentateuch's legal traditions may be directed against the Babylonian, monarchical tradition of law; in the Pentateuch the law is revealed by YHWH and promulgated by Moses.[217] The extended depiction of Solomon's building of the temple in 1 Kings 6–8 is to be interpreted against either an Assyrian[218] or a Babylonian background.[219] That kings are primarily temple-builders is a prominent *topos*, especially in Neo-Babylonian royal inscriptions. Furthermore, the evaluation formula in the book of Kings "he did what was right" has its closest parallels in the Neo-Babylonian chronicles.[220]

Similarly context-bound are the Priestly Document and texts allied with it that take up the Persian idea of a peaceful, yet culturally-differentiated

world order, reproducing from an Israelite point of view.[221] Persian influences can also be seen in the idea of a succession of world empires in the older parts of the book of Daniel.[222]

Finally, the Wisdom texts in Proverbs 1–9[223] or in Qoheleth, which are in dialogue with Greek popular philosophy[224] cannot be adequately understood without their Hellenistic background.

Thus the current state of research offers both the possibility and the necessity of interpreting ancient Israelite literature in its ancient Near Eastern context, free from the pseudo-theological limitations of the period of the "Babel-Bible controversy."[225] The originality of the Bible lies not in the immunity of its materials to analogy, but in their interpretations and transformations, none of which can be adequately understood without looking beyond the Bible itself.

2. Historical Contextualization

In the nature of the question itself a literary history of the Old Testament must consider its texts and writings against the background of Israel's history. Accordingly, the individual sections on the epochs of the Old Testament literature will be introduced by brief overviews of the historical backgrounds of each, intended only to point out some elementary framing circumstances of the experiences of that time period; these short remarks cannot manage more than that. The fact that they place a certain accent on political history without attempting to eliminate social- and economic-historical aspects is due to the fact that if not all, at least the central theological positions in Old Testament literature are formulated as "political theologies" (for example, the Jacob traditions, Deuteronomy, the Priestly document, or the prophetic literature).[226] That is, from the Assyrian period onward these theologies were intimately connected with observation of the world events of the time, which often had radical consequences for Israel and Judah.

The methodological problem, that the reconstruction of Israel's history in itself rests at least in part on a critical analysis of the corresponding Old Testament writings and thus appears to present a certain circularity of argument as regards the interaction of history and literature in a particular epoch, must be kept in mind, but it should not be overestimated. In recent scholarship the reconstruction of Israel's history has been comparatively well supported by non-biblical sources and by archaeology, in particular for the historical overlap between Israel's history and the literary history of the Old Testament, which does not begin, in essence, before the eighth century B.C.E., so that from many points of view it is independently demonstrable.

3. Theological Characterization

In accordance with its introductory character, the following presentation of the various literary-historical epochs of the Old Testament is not consistently analytical or deductive in its construction. Instead there is an attempt, prior to the description of the different individual literary-historical positions in an epoch, to sketch a subtle theological characterization of the literary witnesses of that epoch in historical terms. It should be noted that this is not about *religious*-historical findings but about *theological* positions that can be reconstructed from the Old Testament literature and their possible connections and oppositions.

When presenting some basic tenets of the theological character of the individual Old Testament writings, this will necessarily involve an element of anticipation in the argumentation. However, this is not meant to insinuate that prior or even final decisions have been made about them. The advantage of this method is that the various texts from a single epoch can be introduced through a rapid sketch, with the result that they can be interpreted within their literary-historical contexts.

4. Form-, Tradition-, and Social-Critical Distinctions in the Spheres of Tradition

Historical distinctions regarding a text's genesis belong, naturally, in the foreground of a literary-historical description of the Old Testament. But it should not be forgotten that separating different literary layers within a text presents, from among the many possible, significant, or necessary distinctions that could be made, only one of many ways that the Old Testament can be perceived as literature. After all, these texts and books were not only written, expanded, redacted, and edited in different time periods. Their authors also lived in different intellectual and social milieus, even when those milieus, at least from the Persian period onward, may have been very close geographically: the most important location for Old Testament literary production may at that time have been Jerusalem. While the Babylonian and especially the Egyptian diaspora in Alexandria developed as important centers of scribal learning, they are nevertheless of only secondary significance for the origins of the Old Testament itself.

The following presentation attempts to sort the Old Testament texts from each literary-historical epoch—essentially to facilitate understanding—according to their various spheres of transmission. Ideally, cultic,

wisdom, narrative, prophetic, and legal traditions will be distinguished. This distinction is in the first place indicated simply by the respective textual "families" and thus rests on form-critical considerations in the broad sense. But as regards the question of the *Sitz im Leben* of the types of texts that classical scholarship associated with this effort, the highest degree of caution is in order. Since many Old Testament texts cannot (any longer) be regarded as the written records of originally oral units, the conclusion from a particular kind of text (or "genre") to a specific *Sitz im Leben* that lies behind it and to which it belongs is very uncertain. Rather, as a rule we must be content to say that many texts, as authorial products, only reveal their *Sitz im Leben* as a literary construct, and that the original *Sitz im Leben* of a particular genre can only be postulated hypothetically.

The distinction according to spheres of transmission does, however, permit an initial sorting of different tradition-historical channels.[227] Worship, wisdom, annals, prophecy, and law, while they cannot be perfectly distinguished, can be probed here and there for their different basic intellectual assumptions and backgrounds. But it should be kept in mind that in the course of the religious-historical transformations in the seventh to fifth centuries B.C.E., which took place during the rise of monotheism, the materials in these spheres of transmission were increasingly combined, and as a result we will often have to speak of processes of "theologization." In Israel's monarchical period the cult was not yet conceived as the absolute norm for the human world and human behavior. Subtle systems of wisdom and law were responsible in these domains as well. It was only with the turn to monotheism that cultically-imbued traditions were extended in a spiritualizing and universalizing way, also into the traditional spheres of wisdom and law.

Finally, social-historical distinctions must be kept in view. Do the texts in question reflect the official religion, do they mirror local piety, or can they only be understood in the context of family religion?[228] *Mutatis mutandis*, of course, the same is true here as in the case of form-critical questions: obviously ancient Israelite religion expressed itself in various ways in different social circumstances. But the texts of the Old Testament, even if we can still find in them traces of distinguishable social situations, only bear witness to these situations in a fragmented form. Religious expressions from the spheres of local and family religion are found in the Old Testament only in the forms in which they were officially received or rejected. Immediate access to them, though often sought and supposedly found, is in all probability rare.

5. *"Horizontal" and "Vertical" Relationships among Old Testament Texts and Writings*

The particular advantage of a literary-historical approach to the Old Testament over the normal structure of introductions is that it can make its "horizontal" and "vertical" linkages clear.[229] This refers to the question of presumably contemporary literary texts in conversation ("horizontal" relationships) as well as that of temporally sequential works that nevertheless address the same concepts and positions ("vertical" relationships). It will thus be important to regard Old Testament books and texts not only as discrete points but also in their literary and material ties to their Old Testament conversation partners and others within the ancient Near East.

It is well known that Old Testament texts interact with one another in multiple ways, affirming, correcting, or rejecting. But this interaction has by no means been exhaustively treated, and it will continue to occupy scholars for the foreseeable future. We can observe intra-biblical references especially in literary allusions and more or less literal quotations, though these are almost never demonstrable as such: one of the few explicit instances is Daniel 9.[230] The usual method of allusion, not directly introduced but discernible to scribal readers through the choice of words and themes,[231] again in its own way attests the probability of textual production and reception within narrow circles of learned scholars.

In addition, elementary material and linguistic links to ancient Near Eastern literatures show that the inquiry cannot be restricted to the Old Testament: "horizontal" and "vertical" references in Old Testament texts naturally do not stop at the borders of the canon, which in any case were drawn up after the Old Testament existed.

6. *Redaction as Intra-Biblical Reception*

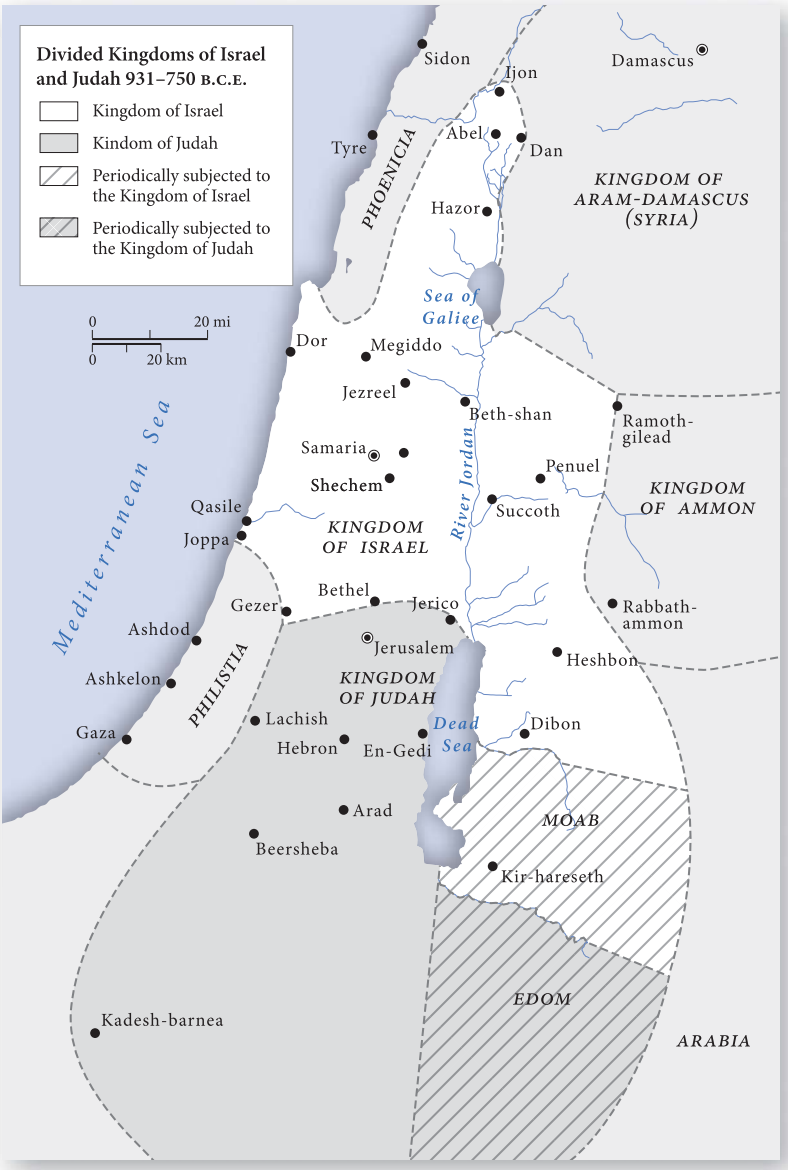
The argument for multiple interactions between the Old Testament texts and writings can be sharpened still further. Old Testament exegesis has, on the one hand, learned to regard the previously despised "expansions" in the biblical books as often being manifestations of intra-biblical scriptural interpretation and, on the other hand, has acknowledged that these "expansions" can be rather extensive texts, in many cases constituting the larger part of a book. Thus it has become ever more obvious that the literary growth of the biblical books was not merely marginal but has shaped their very substance.[232]

The redaction of biblical books was not an uncontrolled process of multiplication of texts but, as a rule, a textually-productive process of intra-biblical *reception and interpretation* of existing textual material. In the Old Testament scriptures, text and commentary are usually combined; it was only after the closing of the canon that interpretation was placed outside the text itself. Redaction criticism can therefore be described as an examination of intra-biblical reception, whose reconstruction can bring to light the intra-biblical theological discourses in all their historical differentiations. Thus the literary-historical approach does not introduce something that is foreign to the books themselves; rather, it clarifies a deep structure that holds them together at the core.

7. Tradition and Memory

In any case, the unique character of the Old Testament texts as traditional literature makes it difficult and often even impossible to assign particular texts and their contents clearly and exclusively to *one* particular period. Many texts contain reworked traditions and memories that are older than themselves but did not exist in a fixed, written form.[233] Committing them to writing was then more than and different from a mere codification of these traditions and memories. Instead, the act of writing was already an initial process of interpretation. In turn, many texts were presupposed by subsequent posterior interpretations and were still regarded as valid in epochs that are sometimes to be located much later than their time of origin. Thus Old Testament texts can be "present" and literarily-historically relevant in the modes of memory, tradition, and reception in different periods.

The dispute between maximalists and minimalists, between "early" and "late" dating is often carried on without regard for these distinctions.[234] Likewise in what follows, since it may appear from some scholarly perspectives as "late-dating," it should be kept in mind that the material treated may as a rule be traditional and older than the textual versions within which it is now embedded. What is critical for the ordering of particular texts and textual complexes in their respective literary-historical locations is their presumably earliest literarily and conceptually identifiable recording.



Divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah 931–750 B.C.E.