

The Old Testament "Folk Canon" and Christian Education

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I. THE OLD TESTAMENT AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The task of distinguishing the respective provinces of education and biblical studies within Christian thought can easily degenerate into a debate as to which field "owns" which. Is Christian education a sub-field of biblical studies or vice versa? Where do these fields fit into the whole scheme of Christian studies? If, as Eleanor Daniel states, "The Bible is the chief textbook for Christian education,"¹ then logically, the Old Testament is a chief textbook for Christian education. What do the Old Testament and Christian education have to say to each other? Could one argue that Old Testament studies are a part of the field of Christian education? Christian education is certainly concerned with teaching the Bible and the Old Testament is part of the Bible. The issue focuses on a rather practical curriculum question: "How much time will be given to various portions of Scripture?"²

James Michael Lee avers that "The Bible is essentially a religious instruction book and not primarily a theological treatise."³ He goes on to argue that "The overwhelming preponderance of the major figures depicted in the Bible were primarily religious educators and not principally theologians."⁴ He sees the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament missionary, Paul, as religious educators.⁵

While agreement with Lee's view may seem reasonable, there are problems with such a reductionism if it seeks to argue further that biblical thinkers were "nothing but" educators. This is a problem parallel to that noted by C. S. Lewis, when he states that:

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make a choice...let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.⁶

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Problems with Lee's view may stem from his understanding of revelation as a dimension of religion. Lee's enthusiasm for the socio-scientific approach to Christian education⁷ creates problems for a transcendent revelation that begins with God rather than man. Note his statements:

...it must be underscored that revelation is not theology. Revelation is a dimension of religion—or more accurately, revelation is one of the most indispensable underpinnings and more pervasive groundings of religion. Theology simply explores revelation from a cognitive and scientific perspective. Because revelation is primarily religious rather than theological, and because revelation is ultimately instructional in purpose and texture, one can legitimately conclude that revelation enjoys a greater natural relationship to religious instruction than theology.⁸

By virtue of the fact that the Bible is not primarily a theological treatise, it is unnecessary to the task of religious instruction that theology always be present when teaching the Bible.⁹

In contrast to Lee, it must be recognized that any attempt to separate Christian education from theology will have the result of reducing Christian education to facts and techniques. How is it possible to teach the Bible outside of theological commitments? True Christian education must give credence to the basic theological presupposition that revelation begins with God.¹⁰

Recognizably, it is easy for educators to call everything education.¹¹ It is true that all human interactions—conversation, eating together, recreation, worship—have an educational dimension. Education, particularly in its moral aspects, is always taking place within human community and if it is not organized or planned it will by necessity proceed as it does by default. At minimum, all human societies have an interest in perpetuating themselves along certain lines.

So whatever else we might mean by “moral education,” we mean at least that sort of pedagogical relation between one generation and a second, such that the second can become pedagogue-parent-provider for a third, and so on.¹²

Concerning the Old Testament, Walter Brueggemann makes a parallel point when he states: “Every community that wants to last beyond a single generation must concern itself with education.”¹³ And since the Old Testament is the product of a community that lasted over centuries, it has obviously been concerned with education. Brueggemann notes, however, that the fields of Old Testament studies and education have had little to say to each other. He notes that the secondary literature concerning the

interrelationship of these two fields of study is "surprisingly limited."¹⁴

What place then does the Old Testament have in the Christian community and particularly within the field of Christian education?

II. THE "FOLK CANON"

The use of the Old Testament within the church is limited by the existence of a "folk canon." The term "folk canon" refers to the books commonly used within the Christian community which constitute a subset of the standard Old and New Testament canon of 66 books. This "folk canon" is a taken-for-granted phenomenon parallel to the term "folk theology" which refers to theological concepts in common implicit use among clergy and laity alike. The communal and implicit nature of the "folk canon" keeps it from critical analysis. It is propagated by the respect which exists for traditions within churches and among groups of people. In the same way that "Mrs. Smith" now "owns" the fourth pew on the right, "Pastor Jones" never preaches from Leviticus or Obadiah or Titus. Generally the New Testament is accorded a higher place within the "folk canon" than the Old Testament. In certain denominational traditions, some canonical books are seen as more important than others.

The "folk canon," which often does not include some sections of the New Testament, is content to leave out most of the Old Testament. The Old Testament "folk canon" is often comprised of Genesis, narrative materials up to the end of Esther, Psalms, the occasional proverb, the "Christmas" sections of the prophets (courtesy of Handel), and, for those of an eschatological bent, additional sections from the prophets. Little attempt is made to see a holistic picture. Context is of low priority. Further, an undue literal emphasis on the words themselves removes from the reader and interpreter the responsibility of hearing God's Spirit speaking through the whole.¹⁵

"Folk canon" is built on a fundamental assumption that the canonical process still continues. Not only is the "folk canon" reduced as described above but it is often increased by the addition of various denominational publications and popularist writings. For the average churchgoer and many pastors the creed of their denomination or the writings of their "official theologians" will be awarded a more important place in the "folk canon" than would the book of Haggai or Numbers. At base the "folk canon" is an expression of individualism¹⁶ which reserves the right to determine the content of the canon.

Several factors seem to contribute to this "folk canon" phenomenon:

1. *The publication of the New Testament by itself or the New Testament with the Psalms without including the entire Old Testament reflects an attitude which subordinates the Old Testament.*

It is not to be denied that there are some evangelistic advantages to this arrangement when working with new Christians or pagans. However,

there still exists the implication that the Old Testament is not necessary. The publication of “Red Letter” editions also heightens the New Testament emphasis.¹⁷

2. *There is a lack of a systematic lectionary reading plan in public worship in many churches.*

The use of a formal reading plan is apparently viewed as too liturgical. Where scriptures are regularly read the repetition of the familiar is often the order of the day. This is not surprising in light of the fact that the choice of hymns also follows the tendency toward the familiar. Despite the supposed commitment to spontaneity and extemporaneity in worship, the continued use of familiar scriptures and hymns¹⁸ is accepted. Because of this some evangelical churches become as ritualistic as their more liturgical neighbors.

Locke E. Bowman sees significant advantages in the use of the lectionary to integrate the instructional (including worship) program of the church:

The educative effect could be truly noteworthy, with all these elements working in concert: family reading and discussion; public worship and homiletic effort; back-home reflection on the day’s preaching after church attendance.¹⁹

Bowman maintains that the systematic and balanced use of scripture in worship through the lectionary does not happen because it takes advance planning²⁰ and because

We are so protective of our right of individual choice that even the liturgical bodies can sometimes be cavalier about the chosen weekly reading. Priests, ministers, rectors, deans—they all decide to preach now and then “outside the lectionary,” or to allow the reading to be subordinate to their own selected themes for sermonizing.²¹

Systematic lectionary reading covering the entire canon would contribute to increased familiarity with the Old Testament.

3. *There is a lack of preaching from the Old Testament.*

Many pastors seem to find it difficult to preach from the Old Testament since larger contexts are usually necessary and that tends to take more effort and understanding.²² This lack may be a result of the following issue.

4. *Some college and seminary requirements in biblical studies tend to favor the New Testament in the process of ministerial preparation.*

For example, a seminary may have requirements in Greek but not in

Hebrew. Similarly, the biblical studies requirements may tend to emphasize the New Testament.^{23, 24}

5. *There is also a bias toward the New Testament in the curricular choices of the Sunday School program.*

The following chart gives some idea of the allocation of calendar quarters to the study of various parts of the canon.

<i>Curriculum</i>	<i>O.T.</i>	<i>N.T.</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
Nazarene ²⁵	3	7	2	12
Scripture Press ²⁶	16	24		40
Southern Baptist ²⁷	18	18		36
Standard (International) ²⁸	10.5	13.5		24

It should be acknowledged that even though the Old Testament is not granted as much room in the quarterly Sunday School curriculum, the fact that it is included on a systematic basis provides a better chance that regular exposure to Old Testament content will take place. Of course, many churches choose their own curricular patterns and this may either aid or hinder Old Testament understanding depending on the choices made. An alternative plan of note is the United Methodist *Genesis to Revelation* series which allots 14 out of 24 quarters to the Old Testament.²⁹

6. *There exists a general atmosphere of confusion with regard to the more esoteric passages of the Old Testament.*

Included in this confusion would be the apocalyptic passages of Ezekiel and Daniel as well as the prophetic materials in general. Also subject to confusion are detailed dietary and cultic codes such as those found in Exodus and Leviticus. In addition, passages from the wisdom literature and the genealogical and historical records may also cause misunderstanding.

7. *Related to this confusion is a belief that only the clergy class can interpret the scriptures and these esoteric OT scriptures in particular.*

Leon McKenzie points out that in many cases the "scribal caste" also determines the content of educational programs in the church³⁰—a content which is biased toward the "theological" areas of study rather than the life application areas.³¹ This bias helps to maintain the view that "theological" issues are more important than life issues and that within the church those who are adept in the "theological sciences" are the only ones capable of interpreting scripture.

8. *The continued use of the King James Version which often expresses*

*the text in obscure language maintains the idea that a “priestly class” is necessary to interpret the text.*³²

Some commentaries serve primarily to correct the problems of the KJV—many of which have since been elucidated by the newer translations. KJV biblical helps and tools may serve to maintain the idea that the whole point of biblical study and instruction is to understand the KJV and not, as should be the case, to hear what the word of God has to say. Newer translations such as RSV, NASB and NIV, and those who use them may be viewed as a threat to the “priestly KJV class” since one of its important functions has been to explicate the KJV. As long as this class holds the key to understanding “true” scripture, and demonstrates the ability to speak and pray in Elizabethan English, the assumption that an ordinary “unlettered” lay person can encounter truth in the Old Testament will not be encouraged.

III. PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE “FOLK CANON”

The use of the Old Testament is at base a theological issue. And, the development of a “folk canon” is rooted in theological presuppositions, some of which follow:

1. *The New Testament is more important than the Old Testament.*

Obviously it could be argued that for a Christian, marooned on a desert island or behind the Iron Curtain, the New Testament is better than nothing. Or, if the Bible is unavailable in a language, it is better to translate and print the New Testament first. However, ignoring these extremes, is this presupposition true? The presupposition is true in the sense that the New Testament tells of Christ and his specific nature and work in the world and those facts are more important than any particular facts that the Old Testament offers. This argument could, however, be carried to its logical conclusion by arguing that if the New Testament is adequate to salvation, why not just the Gospel of John and then why not just John 3:16? Nevertheless, if the goal is not simply salvation but education then the New Testament becomes incomprehensible without the Old. Yes, salvation is the most important aspect of Bible study, but if salvation would be communicated to another generation then education is essential to the task. Without the salvation understanding afforded by the Old Testament, salvation would soon cease to be a possibility. At issue here is the “how” versus the “why.” “How” will certainly get someone into heaven but “why” is essential to keeping him on the way there.

What is needed is honesty in the use of the Bible. As John Bright states:

...there are many of our people who never heard of Marcion and who would be horrified to learn of the company they are in but who nevertheless use the Old Testament in a distinctly Marcionist manner. Formally, and no doubt sincerely, they hail it as

a canonical Scripture; but in practice they relegate it to a subordinate position, if they do not effectively exclude it from use altogether.³³

2. *Dispensationalism provides the hermeneutical key to interpreting the Old Testament.*

Evangelicalism has been significantly influenced by a dispensationalism which over-emphasizes the law/Old Testament and grace/New Testament split. Millard J. Erickson notes that dispensationalism has become "virtually the official theology of fundamentalism."³⁴ This dispensationalism is linked directly with a premillennial view and has been promoted widely through the Scofield Bible.³⁵ Dispensationalism affects the way in which the Old Testament is viewed and used. The strong eschatological emphasis of dispensationalism results in an over-use of the apocalyptic and prophetic passages in the attempt to explain the end times. It is thus easy for the average churchgoer to see major sections of the Old Testament as comprehensible only to those who are specialists in "prophecy." W. T. Purkiser alludes to this low view of the Old Testament when he says in the context of a discussion of dispensationalism "...that any interpretation which places much of the Bible outside the use of Christians ought to be suspect from the outset."³⁶

Thus many Christians, including some within the Holiness movement,³⁷ think in terms of dispensations and tend to view themselves as now under grace not law. Many promote a literal interpretation of the Bible which curiously, according to Erickson, results in a typological and allegorical interpretation of historical and prophetic passages.³⁸

3. *There is an assumption in the use of a "folk canon" that events that happened centuries ago are not of consequence now.*

Simply put, this is a low view of history. Kenneth Hamilton has clearly argued the dangers of always choosing the "new"³⁹ and it may be that the labels "old" and "new" as applied to the biblical testaments are unfortunate. What does a Christian who is now a "new creature," living a life where "all things have been made new" need with an "old" testament?^{40, 41}

4. *It is possible to understand scripture from a moralistic and atomistic point of view.*

A lesson from history may elucidate this point. James C. Wilhoit describes how the Bible was used by the American Sunday School Union (ASSU) in an attempt to meet the pluralism of the nineteenth century. The ASSU developed a series of Bible questions in a catechetical style. Wilhoit notes clearly that the emphasis of the ASSU questions was upon observation with less (little) concern for interpretation and application. The ASSU took pains to avoid taking controversial theological positions by emphasizing the character traits exemplified in Scripture.

The Union's focus on behaviorally defined character traits, as opposed to a well integrated Christian lifestyle, grows out of their conviction and desire to find a content that transcended denominational differences. The Union had learned that diverse Christian groups were far more agreed upon Christian folkways than on theology. The focus on behavior and reticence to probe the text's rich meaning belie the ASSU's quest to be neutral. It also highlights what the Union perceived to be the essence of Christianity. Certainly in the 1820s the ASSU operated as if the common denominator shared by all Christians were certain character traits.⁴²

Wilhoit cites two Old Testament examples which illustrate the moralizing and "ahistorical" use of scripture. In the case of Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 30) the student was asked, "What, then, do you think is the danger of those who neglect the Savior?" and, in the case of Barzillai and David (2 Samuel 17 and 19), "How should the aged be treated?"⁴³ These examples, though extreme, point out the consequences of ignoring the context as well as the theological and canonical reasons for including these passages within scripture.⁴⁴

Wilhoit concludes that this particular attempt at providing a Bible curriculum "came with a price": "bad habits in Bible study," "little regard for context," using the Bible to illustrate "moral" points already decided, and "a rather atomistic approach to the Bible."⁴⁵ This latter point deserves further discussion. The only way that the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, is going to "make sense" to the average churchgoer is for there to be a big picture. Preaching styles and Sunday School curriculum which continue to be "atomistic" will be counter-productive to the whole purpose of the church's educational endeavor. Wilhoit says that the "atomistic" ...approach to the Scriptures leaves students with a bizarre view of the Bible and a few bare facts about the text.

Meaningful learning demands that students be able to relate the details of the text to some comprehensive big ideas. The big ideas of the Christian faith are controversial and often avoided. But without such a framework Christian education will not promote either long term learning or the development of a well-integrated world and life view.⁴⁶

5. Scripture is only concerned with the work of Christ.

The "folk canon" tends to rest on a monistic view of Christ. While orthodox Christianity always affirms the person and work of Jesus Christ, there is a danger of Christomonism. In this view, only those passages which point to Christ are binding upon the contemporary Christian. G. Ernest Wright has clearly set down the dangers of a Christomonism in which the trinitarian relations of Christ are lost.⁴⁷ He states:

In classic Christian theology Christology had generally dealt with the divine and human natures of Christ and with his work of atonement and reconciliation. In the Bible, however, there is never a question of discussing Christ in and of himself; he is defined in the context of God's action in the world. Christology is clearly relational.⁴⁸

This Christomonism easily leads to an inadequate view of the nature of God. It is not necessary here to provide a detailed summary of Wright's argument. He concludes, however, with a discussion of the canon in which he states:

It is impossible to consider the actual meaning of canon apart from a survey of the reigning theology of a given people at a given time. The canon within the Scripture will be those portions of the literature which are conceived best to express what the theology believed to be most important and relevant for the particular era. The remainder of the Bible will be partially ignored, partially reinterpreted in the light of a theology's central interpretive position, and partially held in tension with what was deemed of central importance.⁴⁹

This view would also argue that there is an adequate understanding of the gospel available in the New Testament. Again the answer here is equivocal. If minimum understanding is being considered then there is an adequate gospel in the New Testament.⁵⁰ For example, however, if there were a desire for a more complete explanation of the details in Hebrews, the Old Testament would be irreplaceable.

The goal of keeping the gospel simple and uncomplicated is certainly worthy, particularly in working with children or doing evangelistic work in a variety of circumstances. Yet to see the Old Testament as the source of complexity is tantamount to saying that British history complicates United States history. The Old Testament is a source of explanation essential to the Christian faith particularly in its communal and historic aspects.

6. *The function of "folk canon" and its correlated "priestly class" of definers and interpreters is a denial of the "priesthood of every believer" doctrine.*

Arising from the reformation⁵¹ this hard-won doctrine is continually in danger of being ignored and denied. If the church would indeed be the church, particularly in its educative functions, the involvement and effort of every believer is necessary. As Jim Wilhoit states:

A balanced concept of the priesthood of all believers will affirm the personal spiritual responsibility of all Christians, their right and duty to minister in Christ's name, and the truth that one does not abide in Christ apart from abiding in the body of Christ, the church.⁵² . . . The priesthood of all believers places training for responsible action and stewardship at the heart of the church's educational ministry: if each person is spiritually responsible before Christ, then each must be equipped to act responsibly.⁵³

It is the responsibility of the church to teach all believers why and how to interpret scripture. To assume that only the ministerial leaders should interpret scripture is not to present an adequate view of discipleship.

IV. POSITIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

What then needs to happen if Old Testament studies and Christian education are to assume their rightful place within the faith community? What action needs to be taken?

1. *There must be honesty in the use of Scripture.*

If the church is committed to the entire canon, then preachers, teachers, curriculum designers and liturgists must include the broad perspective of Scripture within sermons, Bible studies, curricula and worship programming. To give lip-service to the whole canon and then use only part of it is dishonest and confusing to churchgoers.

2. *To implement this honesty, the complexity of inspiration and authority must be faced.*

The Bible contains various types of literature and cannot be treated in the same way throughout. 1 Corinthians 13 is not of a piece with Ezra 2. Radically different types of literature must be recognized as such and people must be taught how to understand the differences.

3. *A proper understanding of the complexity of inspiration will require seeing Scripture as a whole and avoiding atomistic interpretations.*

The faithful and the newcomers are both in desperate need of seeing Scripture in the broad scope. What does the Bible say? What does the Old Testament seek to communicate? These are the questions that need to be foremost in the minds of preachers and teachers. The broad contexts of Scripture must always be made clear. Locke Bowman cites how, during a discussion of King Saul, he was asked by a faithful churchgoer of many years, "Now when did his name get changed to Paul?" He answered the question as gently as he could. He states:

And from that moment on, I worked to help that Bible class get

a sense of the Biblical centuries and how the story unfolds, B.C. and A.D. When the chronology begins to take shape in a learner's mind, and the books of the Bible are henceforth studied in relation to the flow of time, everything changes. It is a new and creative act for the learner, to construct the history into a sequence with proper spacing between events along the way.⁵⁴

Not only must the whole Bible be made clear historically but also theologically. The great themes of creation, man, sin, covenant, God, redemption and hope must be elucidated and applied to contemporary society. There is great need for "life-related" Bible teaching which helps the churchgoer to make sense out of the biblical text.⁵⁵

4. *Old Testament studies must maintain a significant interest in Christian education and homiletics.*

If the Old Testament is to survive as a viable field as far as homiletics and education is concerned, there must be much stronger commitment on the part of biblical scholars to involve themselves with making the fruits of their research available to non-specialists. Great strides in biblical scholarship are useless if, in the end, the minds and hearts of the people are not changed. As Lee writes:

...the firstfruits of this magnificent scholarship seem to be restricted to the biblical specialists in a manner not entirely unlike the way in which the whole Bible itself was restricted to the clergy in pre-Reformation Europe.⁵⁶

Two avenues which are available for biblical scholars to affect the people in the pew are Christian education and homiletics. If those using these two avenues are uninformed by the experts in Old Testament, only confusion will result. The problem is how to get the knowledge available to biblical scholars into the hands, minds and hearts of teachers and preachers⁵⁷ in a comprehensible manner. Bright has argued that preaching is a process of translation. He states:

To proclaim the biblical word without translation, it matters not how accurately, is to run the risk of speaking a foreign language. And the gospel *will* be preached in the vernacular—that is, if Pentecost be come.⁵⁸

Thus, there is a need for all those involved in the hermeneutical process—archeologist, historian, linguist, translator, editor, preacher, minister, teacher—to continually be reminded that the whole point of Bible study is not erudition but living life. There is little room for

arrogance in biblical studies. The hermeneutical task is not done until the child and the elderly lady with limited education understand.

Mary C. Boys has defined religious education as

...the making accessible of the traditions of religious communities and the making manifest of the intrinsic connection between tradition and transformation.⁵⁹

The transformational goal of hermeneutics must never be forgotten. If people are not changed by the power of the gospel which is partially a product of encounter with the Word, then the church is wasting its time in maintaining the tradition.

5. Keeping canon, heremeneutics and theology together is essential.

As noted above, Wright has argued that the "folk canon" is always a reflection of the "reigning theology."⁶⁰ To assume that the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, can be used "atheologically" is questionable. The educational implications of canonical process must always be kept in mind.⁶¹ Brueggemann emphasizes in a most helpful way the epistemological concerns of the three major sections of the Old Testament canon.⁶² He argues for the respective roles of the three sections and that they should not be ignored or collapsed into one another.⁶³ There is place for all three styles:

Torah	ethos	Torah of the priest	certitude
Prophets	pathos	word of the prophet	freshness
Writings	logos	counsel of the wise	hunch ⁶⁴ , ⁶⁵

Tendencies to settle for one style of communication must be thwarted in the attempt to keep the canon broad and whole. Here, Brueggemann eloquently states, is "a commonality in the tradition which expresses the consensus, breaks the consensus, and broods over the hiddenness."⁶⁶

6. There needs to be a clear distinction between knowing and knowledge.

Too often the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament material, has been used as a source of moral anecdotes with little if any concern for the historical and theological contexts of the passages being used. The Bible, and the Old Testament as a whole, needs to be recognized as a transformational book. Michael Henderson has described the problem of knowledge without truth and information without application.⁶⁷ He writes: "...it is not really possible to know the truth directly without knowing Christ in a personal way."⁶⁸ Similarly Parker J. Palmer has argued for truth in spiritual education as opposed to objectivist knowledge.⁶⁹ The dangers of knowledge without knowing are most clearly and eloquently described by Dwayne E. Huebner. Using the Old Testament atomistically is using knowledge without knowing.

Knowledge is the fallout from the knowing process. Knowledge is form separated from life. It stands by itself, removed from the vitality and dynamics of life, from the spirit. It becomes part of life only when it is brought once again into the knowing process of an individual. Until then it is dead. To bring knowledge to life, to enliven it, it must be brought into the living form of the human being, into the form that is a form of the transcendent. If the student is brought into the deadness of inert knowledge, the student is also deadened, alienated from the vitality that co-creates the worlds of self and others. By enlivening knowledge, the student is also empowered.... Knowledge that falls out from the modes of knowing, that becomes alienated from openness, love, and hope, risks becoming idolatrous.⁷⁰

Teaching the Old Testament must be done with care since the goal is knowing, not knowledge. Or, as Palmer defines it, "To teach is to create a space in which obedience is practiced."⁷¹

7. The Old Testament may be the only means by which some will come to know Christ.

The Old Testament opens styles of thinking and knowing which may not be available through the New Testament and particularly through much of western philosophy and theology. Although this point cannot be explored deeply here, it should be noted that understandings of history, man, time, and even God, available in Western culture may differ significantly from that common in some other cultures. Gordon Olson has commented on the value of a more biblically-oriented theology in the process of communicating the gospel cross-culturally.⁷² Again this is a translation issue. How can the gospel best be translated into the cultural patterns of a particular culture? It may be that the Old Testament offers some advantages in its unique approaches to theology.⁷³

V. CONCLUSION

For either Old Testament studies or Christian education to assert independence from the other or from other fields of theological study is to limit their respective impact. These two fields need each other. Responsible Old Testament scholars must not denigrate the means of communicating truth provided by Christian education. They must seek to make their wisdom palatable to those unlearned in the intricacies of Old Testament linguistics or history. And Christian educators must not ignore the contribution of the whole Old Testament to the vision of God's movement in history. Let Christian educators not opt for the easy way out of the hard questions but stand together with learners and scholars before the truth in awe and humility.⁷⁴

Let Old Testament scholars and Christian educators alike remember

that their fields—including personnel, content and technique—are not the focus of the educational process. God “is the subject of education.”⁷⁵ And obedience is essential to true education. Brueggemann argues that there is no “preobedience knowledge of God.”⁷⁶ To know God then is to balance his commandments with his presence. Both fields need to resist “a legalism that reduces God to Torah and...a romanticism that wants God without Torah.”⁷⁷

Notes

1. Eleanor Daniel, John W. Wade and Charles Gresham, *Introduction to Christian Education* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing, 1980), p. 78.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 82-83.
3. James Michael Lee, “Religious Education and the Bible: A Religious Educationist’s View,” in *Biblical Themes in Religious Education*, ed. Joseph S. Marino (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1983), p. 3.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
5. *Ibid.*
6. C. S. Lewis, *The Best of C. S. Lewis* (New York: Iversen Associates, 1969), p. 440.
7. See Harold W. Burgess, *An Invitation to Religious Education* (Mishawaka, Indiana: Religious Education Press, 1975), pp. 127-165.
8. Lee, “Religious Education and the Bible,” p. 5.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
10. See W. T. Purkiser, Richard S. Taylor and Willard H. Taylor, *God, Man, and Salvation* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1977), pp. 36-37, who cite Edward J. Young, Abraham Heschel and Ludwig Kohler in support of their position.
11. To include, however, every purpose and every activity under the label “education” makes education so vague as to diminish its value as a descriptive term. To be useful to any meaningful discussion the “activity” of education needs an intentional dimension [see Sara P. Little, “Religious Instruction,” in *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education*, ed. Jack L. Seymour and Donald E. Miller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), p. 44] to fulfil its proper function. Education requires conscious intent toward a certain goal. The intentionality within Christian education is theological.
12. James E. McClellan, *Philosophy of Education* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 162.
13. Walter Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), p. 1.
14. *Ibid.*
15. James Michael Lee, however, goes too far in his opinion concerning this extreme literalism: “It is erroneous to regard the Bible as the word of God. To claim

that the Bible is the word of God is to restrict God's revelation both to the verbal dimensions of reality and to the Bible itself" (Lee, "Religious Education and the Bible," p. 9). He goes on to state that: "The ontic error of regarding the Bible as the word of God quite naturally gives birth to the pedagogical error of making a false and lifeless idol of biblical words qua words....One debilitating consequence concerns the all too frequent endowment of biblical words qua words with a halo effect in which all religious instruction is reduced to the verbal...religious instruction...tends to become reduced to linguistic content and prowess" (Ibid., p. 10).

16. See Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), for a study of the problems of relativism and individualism in values.

17. While I was in England, I talked with a New Testament scholar, a senior lecturer with a Ph.D. in N.T., who was quite astonished to hear of the existence of a "Red Letter Edition."

18. Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate! Church Music in the Evangelical Tradition* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Hope Publishing, 1981), p. 255.

19. Locke E. Bowman, Jr., *Teaching Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 168.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 166.

22. John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 162.

23. Note that it is possible to graduate from Asbury Theological Seminary with only 3 credits in Old Testament out of the 90 required for the M.Div. (see ATS Catalog, 1987-1988, p. 20.)

24. See also Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament*, p. 75.

25. *The Enduring Word Adult Student* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, Fall 1986), p. 111.

26. *Adult Scope and Sequence* (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, 1980-1990), back cover.

27. *Bible Book Study for Adult Teachers* (Nashville: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Spring 1985), p. 9.

28. *Standard Lesson Commentary*, vol. 35 (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1987), p. 2.

29. *1986-1987 Planbook* (Nashville: Graded Press, 1986), p. 77.

30. Leon McKenzie, *The Religious Education of Adults* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1982), pp. 58-63.

31. Ibid., p. 67.

32. Illustrating the obscurity of the KJV language should not be needed in the present context.

33. Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament*, p. 74.

34. Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 109.

35. W. Ralph Thompson, "Eschatology," in *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, vol. 2, ed. Charles W. Carter (Grand Rapids: Zondervan/Francis and Taylor Press, 1988), p. 109.

- 1983), p. 1120; W. T. Purkiser, *Exploring Our Christian Faith* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1960), p. 551; Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, p. 114.
36. W. T. Purkiser, *Exploring Our Christian Faith*, p. 552.
37. *Ibid.*, Purkiser notes that "It is odd that these men [Darby and Scofield], who as Calvinists have so ardently opposed the doctrine of entire sanctification, should have had such influence in the holiness movement."
38. Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology*, pp. 115-117.
39. Kenneth Hamilton, *What's New in Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1968), pp. 11-23.
40. Cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17.
41. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, pp. 27, 51, 58, 59-60.
42. James C. Wilhoit, "The Bible Goes to Sunday School: An Historical Response to Pluralism," *Religious Education* 82 (Summer 1987):401-402.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 402.
44. Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education*.
45. Wilhoit, "The Bible Goes to Sunday School," pp. 403-404.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 404.
47. G. Ernest Wright, *The Old Testament and Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 13.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
50. See presupposition 1 above.
51. Daniel, *Introduction to Christian Education*, p. 39.
52. Jim Wilhoit, *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1986) pp. 15-16.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
54. Bowman, *Teaching Today*, p. 53.
55. Howard Mayes and James, *Can I Help It If They Don't Learn?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1977), is a helpful book on this point.
56. Lee, "Religious Education and the Bible," p. 3.
57. Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament*, pp. 209-210 states: "No hermeneutic can be accounted satisfactory that does not allow the preacher to operate with any and all Old Testament texts and to bring them to word in their Christian significance, yet without in any way twisting or departing from their plain sense. A hermeneutic that silences part of the Old Testament, or enables us to hear only the easy parts, or arbitrarily imposes meaning upon the text, or uses it as a vehicle for a sermon the content of which is really drawn from the New Testament, will not do."
58. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
59. Mary C. Boys, *Biblical Interpretation in Religious Education* (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1980), p. 283.

60. Wright, *The Old Testament and Theology*, p. 13.
61. Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education*, p. 15.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
65. Note parallels to typologies of Paul E. Johnson, *Psychology of Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1959), pp. 137-142 (mystic, prophet, priest, intellectual); and McClellan, *Philosophy of Education*, p. 143 (*docere*, to teach; *dicere*, to say; *ducere*, to lead).
66. Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education*, p. 109.
67. D. Michael Henderson, "Christian Education: Instructional Theology," in *A Centemporary Wesleyan Theology*, vol. 2, ed. Charles W. Carter (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan/Francis Asbury Press, 1983), pp. 848-854.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 851.
69. Parker J. Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983).
70. Dwayne E. Huebner, "Spirituality and Knowing," in *Learning and Teaching the Ways of Knowing*, ed. Elliot Eisner (Chicago: National Society for the Study of Education, 1985), pp. 172-173.
71. Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known*, p. 88.
72. Gordon Olson, "The Advantages of Biblical Theology in Third-World Theological Education," excerpted in *Nairobi Evangelical School of Theology Bulletin* 2(June 1987), pp. 3-7.
73. See Robin Hortin, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science" *Africa* 37(1967)1:50-71 and 2:155-187, for an excellent discussion of the African mind in contrast to western "scientific" thought which may be of help in the consideration of the Old Testament within non-Western cultures.
74. Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known*, pp. 57-60.
75. Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education*, p. 116.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
77. *Ibid.*, p. 116.