

Preface

THERE ARE AS MANY ways of doing theological interpretation of the Old Testament as there are people who take up the task. Only a few years ago one could not have anticipated the present ferment and energy in Old Testament theological interpretation, because we had arrived at something of a stalemate between the major German models of the twentieth century that dominated the field. In the wake of that stalemate, however, came a variety of fresh initiatives that have evoked new interpretive possibilities. Among the new initiatives have been the fresh importance of social-scientific methods, the emergence of new voices from beyond the old guild of white males, a turn from the critical to the canonical, and a new engagement between Jewish and Gentile readers.

These essays reflect over time my effort to make a contribution to the ongoing conversation. Because these articles have been generated ad hoc over time, it will not surprise that there is some repetition of the accents of my work. Each of these essays was a contribution to a *Festschrift* volume. For readers who may not know the term *Festschrift*, it is a combination of two German words, *Fest* meaning “festive celebration” and *Schrift*, “writing.” Thus such a volume is a celebrative writing, characteristically offered as a tribute to a senior scholar on his/her sixtieth, sixty-fifth, or seventieth birthday as a salute from other colleagues in the field. One does not initiate a contribution to such a volume, but is on occasion invited to participate. I have been fortunate to be invited to make such contributions, the substance of which is evident here. I have been glad to have been invited to join in honoring such senior, major scholars, each of whom has made a formative contribution to our common work and has been a generative influence on my own work. The warrant for reprinting

such articles is that a volume that is a *Festschrift* is usually quite expensive and so has only limited circulation. Consequently such articles are often unnoticed or “buried” in such a volume. In each case I have tried to offer a contribution that is congruent with the major interests of the honoree of the volume. It is a distinct honor to travel in the train of such distinguished scholars who have shaped our discipline and my own work in the discipline. Such an assignment provides occasion to make a programmatic statement; or more often it is an opportunity to focus on a more narrow subject and to give it more leisurely attention. It is also an opportunity to reflect on one’s academic rootage and the great debts owed to predecessors.

It is impossible for me to overstate the heavy lifting that K. C. Hanson at Cascade Books has done on this collection of essays (as with other of my publications) to make it useful and coherent. I am grateful to him and his colleagues at Wipf and Stock for their continuing attentiveness to my work.

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