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OF TEN modern biblical scholars believe that a literary approach to Scripture is a fairly recent development, especially compared to historical approaches. Yet in the early nineteenth century most biblical scholars would have realized that their historical sensitivity was being shaped by their careful attention to literary distinctives. As scholars engaged in textual criticism and literary interpretation, they had to grappled with the obvious differences between ancient civilizations and their own. Using the basic principles of philology, they clearly recognized that words may have different meanings in different contexts. This sensitivity to literary context naturally produced a more nuanced approach to historical contexts as well. At Princeton Theological Seminary in the early nineteenth century, it was the prodigious philological talents of the youthful Joseph Addison Alexander which led to his later insights into the nature of biblical history, and laid the foundation for his student and colleague, William Henry Green, to develop the outlines of a distinctively Reformed biblical theology.

The development of biblical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary prior to Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949) has been a neglected subject. 1

1 Cf. Tremper Longman III, Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) 5. Longman points out that even the early church fathers utilized certain literary principles, but agrees with the general principle that literary approaches are a recent development (13-15); cf. Erland Ryken, How to Read the Bible as Literature (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 11.


Richard B. Gaffin, for instance, in a statement that ignores the theological work being done as early as the 1850s by Alexander (1809–1860) and Green (1825–1900), suggests that "Vos's work in biblical theology is largely without direct antecedents and indicates the originality with which he wrestled with the matter of biblical interpretation in the Reformed tradition." Yet the pages of the *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* from the 1840s throughout the 1870s reveal that Alexander and Green had been developing an understanding of salvation history that clearly foreshadows Vos' later work. Gaffin claims that Vos was the first to give "pointed, systematic attention to the doctrinal or positive theological significance of the fact that redemptive revelation comes as an organically unfolding historical process." This states the case a bit too strongly. Instead, what is unique to Vos is the methodological unification of the Princeton Old Testament tradition with the federal theology of Reformed orthodoxy in the concept of the covenant.

Three main foci appear in the contours of the theological approach to the Old Testament which Alexander, Green and Vos developed. First was an emphasis on reading the text as it has come down to us. This literary method was articulated in stark contrast to the documentary hypothesis which was gaining prominence in most nineteenth-century biblical scholarship. Second, the canon was seen as the proper context for interpreting Scripture. The Old Testament, and indeed the entire Bible, is a unit, and all biblical interpretation must start from this point. Finally, the chief distinguishing mark of the old Princeton school is the centrality of redemptive history. The Bible shows forth the history of God's salvation—the unfolding of the plan of redemption. Alexander was the first at Princeton to glean theological insights from the structure of Biblical history. Green refined and developed Alexander's insight, but both viewed Christ as the center of both the Old and New Testaments. Vos brought his predecessors' work to new heights; he combined their insights with traditional federal theology to connect the redemptive plan of God with the flow of history in the person and work of Christ.

I. Old Testament Studies at Princeton


* Gaffin, "Introduction," xv

It would be less anachronistic to say, "philological."
professor of Oriental and Biblical Literature (1822-1840), teaching Old Testament for more than a decade. He travelled to Germany in 1823, studying for two years with the leading theologians and biblical critics of Europe, and quickly became one of the finest biblical scholars and exegetes on the American Continent.7

But while Hodge (professor from 1822-78) was an adequate Old Testament professor for the 1820s and 30s, American interest in biblical scholarship was growing, and Princeton recognized the need for a specialist who could keep up with the leading critics in the States and on the continent. They found such a “formidable biblical scholar” in 1834 in the youthful Joseph Addison Alexander (professor from 1834-60), the son of Princeton’s first professor, Archibald Alexander.8 Largely indebted to E. W. Hengstenberg for his general approach, Alexander’s innovative studies in biblical history presented a blend of confessional theology and careful, critical scholarship.9 His successor, William Henry Green (professor from 1851-1900), continued and expanded his mentor’s work, and was widely acknowledged by the academic world as the finest (and eventually only) conservative voice in Old Testament studies.10 Both of these men interacted extensively with German critical scholarship, appropriating its insights while spurning the rationalistic philosophy which they believed had crept into even the best German thinkers.

Geerhardus Vos (professor from 1893-1932) built upon the foundation laid by Alexander and Green, but the rest of the Princeton Old Testament scholars spent most of their time battling liberal criticism, exerting little effort in developing the positive theological approach of their predecessors. Whereas the new trends in scholarship were appropriated, refined, and put to work creatively on behalf of Reformed theology in the nineteenth century, the later Old Testament professors, with the exception of Vos, combatted

8 James H. Moorhead, “Joseph Addison Alexander: Common Sense, Romanticism and Biblical Criticism at Princeton,” JPH 53 (1975) 52. In 1830 there would have been fewer than a half dozen men who could have claimed to be Hodge’s superior. Even as late as the early 1850s Harvard’s George Noyes (1798-1868) was one of the few proponents of radical German scholars such as D. F. Strauss, while Andover’s moderate critics, Moses Stuart (1790-1852) and Edward Robinson (1794-1863) generally tended to agree with the Princetonians in following the confessional Germans such as E. W. Hengstenberg. It was not until the 1870s that liberal critical views on the Old Testament became prominent in America. For the development of biblical scholarship in New England (omitting all reference to Princeton) see Jerry Wayne Brown, The Rise of Biblical Criticism in America, 1800–1870: The New England Scholars (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1960).
critical scholarship almost exclusively. The original theological work of Alexander, Green and Vos was largely ignored for twenty years after Vos' death, and even then, only he was revived in confessional Reformed circles. In the 1970s Brevard Childs recognized the significance of some of Green's literary contributions, but only Marion Taylor's recent volume has raised Alexander and Green from anonymity.

While the term "old testament theology" was not widely used at Princeton until the 1890s, the foundation and framework for Old Testament studies laid by Charles Hodge, J. A. Alexander and W. H. Green was inherently theological, emphasizing the flow of the history of special revelation. For the Princeton men, Scripture could never be conceived of in a purely objective, descriptive manner. The Bible's normative character informed their work in an all-encompassing manner. They insisted that the scholar's presuppositions determined his approach to the text, yet their emphasis on rigorous academic study led these scholars to master their disciplines, and their constant interaction with the critical studies of their European and American colleagues challenged them to respond carefully. They critiqued evangelicals for being too superficial with the text and ignoring the human element of Scripture, but blasted liberals for taking too lightly the Bible's own claims for its supernatural origin.

II. Joseph Addison Alexander

Joseph Addison Alexander was a precocious child who had mastered more than a dozen languages by the age of eighteen. His philological talents, interestingly enough, were not originally focused on Scripture, but the literature of Arabia, Persia, France, Spain, etc. His early writings include studies of "The Persian Poets," "Greece in 1827," and stories such as "The Jewess of Damascus," which were published in the various literary magazines of the early republic. His conversion at age twenty directed his scholarship more towards biblical studies, but his love for literary endeavors is demonstrated in his attainment of at least six more languages before his death.

As might be expected from one whose background was strong in Presbyterianism and philology, Alexander treated the Scriptures as the result of...
divine inspiration yet equally the product of human authors. Therefore, his insistence on viewing each text as a whole was closely bound to his understanding of the canon as the repository of salvation history. For the purpose of clarity, we will separate his articulation of salvation history from the others, because this idea was certainly the predominant one, permeating every aspect of his thought. 16

1. Salvation History

Alexander’s primary contribution to the Princeton theology lay in his understanding of the historical Scriptures as providing the structure of biblical revelation. 17 While this emphasis could lead him to depreciate the non-historical books of the Bible, 18 it also helped him to see that the historical Scriptures “sustain a peculiar and unique relation to the other parts of Scripture. They constitute the frame work into which the others are inserted . . . the thread on which the other parts are strung.” 19 Decrying both the conservative tendency to treat biblical history as an undifferentiated whole, as well as the liberal practice of viewing it as “a compilation of detached and independent narratives,” Alexander insisted that while inspiration provides unity to the history, it does not vitiate the individuality of the various histories. 20

James H. Moorhead has argued that Alexander’s historical consciousness was an intrusion of “Romanticism” into an otherwise “Enlightenment” mindset, which caused perpetual dilemmas in his theological studies. 21 This analysis falls short in two ways. First, it ignores the roots of historical consciousness in the literary and philological studies of the day—studies which were just as common among realists as among romantics. Second, it unfortunately assumes that the caricature of common sense realism was also the reality. The philosophical framework provided by realism did not exclude the idea of historical development, especially since Reformed confessionalism remained the dominant paradigm within which realism had to operate at Princeton. This is seen in Alexander’s emphasis that “whoever cannot be convinced of the reality of inspiration” cannot accept an early date for the

17 See Taylor, Old Testament, 153-162, for a different angle on this subject.
18 Alexander, “The Historical Scriptures,” BRPR 26 (1854) 484. Yet Alexander also insisted that the historical cannot be allowed to dominate the rest of Scripture, and elsewhere placed high value on the importance of the prophetic word, “On the Correspondence between Prophecy and History,” BRPR 25 (1853) 290-1.
19 Ibid., 484.
20 Ibid., 490.
book of Isaiah. It is the reader’s standpoint that determines how he approaches the text, and this standpoint is dependent upon spiritual factors as much as upon rational ones. This is the standard Princeton conception of the need for the subjective work of the Holy Spirit in order to understand the objective Word of God. Certainly Alexander and his colleagues at Princeton were unaware of any tension between his views and those of the rest of the faculty.

Alexander treated biblical history as one “grand organic whole” focused on the “fulfillment of one grand design.” Refusing to follow the historical-critical school which denied the unity of the Bible, he claimed that there indeed is a “common relation to a common centre” found in the Scripture. He believed that the center could be found by looking at the whole of biblical history from several points of view “sufficiently distinct and distant to ensure a view of all the phases and distinguishable aspects, which are necessary to a full and clear impression of the object.” He selected three such points: 1) the flow of Biblical history as a whole; 2) the particular histories in their own uniqueness, “yet without losing sight of their organic unity”; and 3) the “leading actors” of Biblical history. The only aspect which he fully worked out in published form was the first, the flow of Biblical history, yet he claimed that the other two would also wind up pointing to the Messiah as the center of history.

The object of sacred history, according to Alexander is not to discuss the history of Israel per se, but the history of Israel in so far as they are “the chosen people of Jehovah.” By seeing the history of Israel primarily as redemptive history, inextricable from its fulfillment in Christ, Alexander was able to unite the histories of the Old and New Testaments, positing the incarnation as the “chronological and moral centre, to which all other events must be referred, and by which their significance must be determined.” This is the “primary epoch,” the turning point of history. Christ himself is the one who unifies Old and New in his own person. Acknowledging the overarching plan of God over history, Alexander recognized that Old Testament institutions, such as the ceremonial law and the tabernacle, functioned as types of Christ and the gospel.

Alexander conceived of Biblical history as an outline of epochs, following some of the periodization approaches being developed in Germany. The

22 Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1902) 65.
25 Ibid., 491.
26 Ibid., 491-4.
major division in Old Testament history is the giving of the "onerous restric-
tions of the complicated ceremonial system introduced by Moses."29 During
the patriarchal period God dealt with his people on the basis of theophany,
afterwards he dealt with them under the form of the theocracy. Alexander
was quick to recognize that theophanies still happened from time to time
after Moses, but argues that theophany and theocracy are the basic ways
in which God related to his people before and after the Law was given. 30

Center = Incarnation

I. Old Testament

A. Theophany
   1. Primeval
      a) Fall
      b) Flood
   2. Patriarchal
      a) Call of Abraham
      b) Migration to Egypt

B. Theocracy
   1. Mosaic
      a) Exodus
      b) Conquest
      c) Judges
   2. Davidic
      a) Undivided Monarchy
      b) Divided Kingdom
      c) Residuary Kingdom
   3. Foreign Domination (subdivided into Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian,
      etc., through the Idumean period)

II. New Testament

Schema 1 31

Alexander's treatment of the flow of biblical history reads rather woodenly
at times, compared to modern approaches, but in his day he was at the
cutting edge of a more dynamic reading which saw individual texts in light
of the whole, as well as the whole in light of individual texts.

2. Literary Analysis

While Alexander approached the Scriptures as a whole, reading each
text in light of the context of both the Old and New Testaments,32 he also
paid careful attention to the theological and literary structure of particular
texts. Alexander admitted that this side of interpretation—understanding
the "primary design of the several books of Scripture, and the class of

30 Ibid., 495-6.
31 Ibid., 493-502.
32 Ibid., 490.
readers for whom they were immediately intended”—was often neglected by conservative interpreters. He attempted to remedy that fault by analyzing the book of Genesis for its literary design and audience. Genesis, he claimed, was not intended as a “journal of events recorded at the time of their occurrence, and intended merely to preserve their memory for its own sake,” nor was it “designed to answer scientific, or even general historical purposes.” Rather, Genesis was designed to prepare the readers (Israel) for the Law, and to introduce them to their ancestry and special relationship to God.

Alexander insisted that the book of Genesis was “carefully constructed... with constant reference to a specific purpose.” Rejecting the fragmenting tendency of the documentary hypothesis, he allowed that Genesis may well contain ancient oral or written traditions which the author incorporated into the text, but it still formed a literary unit. Chastising traditional evangelical moralism along with liberal critics, he utterly rejected both the “old familiar doctrine, that the patriarchal history was recorded for the moral improvement of mankind,” as well as the critical claim that the patriarchal history was merely the history of the Hebrew race, embellished with grand stories of fictitious patriarchs. While treating the former more kindly than the latter, he declared that “it must be rejected as decisively, though not so contemptuously, as the others.” The Genesis narrative was designed to teach theology, not morals. Why else did the author refrain from censoring even the most despicable actions of the patriarchs?

Hence, the purpose of the patriarchal narrative must be found not in the patriarchs, but in “God himself, [and] the execution of his purposes, with which they are only, as it were, accidentally connected.” The book is showing Israel who they are, and why God has entered into a covenantal...
relationship with them. Within this purpose, Alexander delineates three basic designs that can be seen in the text: 1) that God had selected them as the heirs of the promises made to Adam, Noah, and Abraham; 2) that to be the chosen people was "proved to be real by manifest tokens of the divine presence and protection, often granted to them at the expense of others"; 3) that the divine choice was not based upon the intrinsic strength of the people, but upon the sovereignty and providence of God. In this way God chose Israel "not for their own sakes, but for a far higher purpose." Hence the "weakness and corruption of the chosen vessels" shows that it is God's purposes which are at work, in spite of their transgressions. Further, the inclusion of the genealogies of other tribes was given as a reminder to Israel that they had a common ancestry with the rest of mankind and were not to think too highly of themselves. Following a typological theme, Alexander showed that this pointed Israel to God's higher plan, which results even in the salvation of the gentiles. Alexander suggested that understanding this theological structure helps the reader to see the outline of the author's intent, and allows the text to explain itself.

In a later article, Alexander turned to the first eleven chapters of Genesis, which he treated as an introduction to the patriarchal history. Abraham cannot be comprehended apart from his ancestors, who cannot be understood without reference to the fall, which itself is inexplicable without the creation account. Hence the creation is given, not for scientific reasons, but for a theological purpose. Alexander speculated on the different creation stories by noting the "rhythmical and strophical" arrangement of the first narrative, identifying it probably as an ancient oral tradition, and the prosaic amplification of the creation of man in Genesis two, which he suggested could be a commentary on chapter one, written by Moses himself. Insisting upon the historical accuracy of the creation account, he refused to bind himself to any particular theory of the harmonization of Scripture with science, declaring that as long as the divine authority of Scripture is not impaired, any scientific explanation "not intrinsically absurd or impossible" is acceptable. Following the conservative exegetical tradition, Alexander pointed out that to deny the historicity of these early chapters of Genesis is to cast doubt upon the historicity of the whole. Therefore, the fall is also seen as true history, but due to his Christocentrism, Alexander's placed his chief emphasis upon the protoevangelium. He saw three different gradations of meaning to the cryptic phrase, "seed of the woman." It is alternately the whole human race as opposed to devils, Christ as opposed to Satan, and redeemed humanity as opposed to apostate humanity.

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Ibid., 34-35.
Ibid., 36-7.
Ibid., 38-9.
Ibid., 94.
Ibid., 98-100. The importance of typology for the Princetonians will be explored later.
Alexander insisted that the Bible is the word of God and must be read as such. He saw the very structure of the Bible as a key to its interpretation. In order to understand the whole, one must understand each part, and vice versa. While it is a human book, due to its inspired nature the Bible is not to be subjected to ordinary critical methods (which would include the possibility that it is false), rather, we are simply to "interpret and illustrate it." There is room, however, for careful study. Taylor correctly summarizes Alexander's hermeneutic, which insisted that:

the Scriptures should be interpreted as the words of man (hence the general principles of interpreting literature and language were to be applied to the interpretation of Scripture) and as the Word of God (hence the phenomena of revelation, inspiration and prophecy had to be taken into account in interpretation).

Marian Ann Taylor suggests that Alexander was never able to bring together the two worlds of Princeton orthodoxy and "enlightened" scholarship, a conclusion that seems to follow Moorhead's misunderstanding of Princeton orthodoxy. In fact, Alexander had little difficulty in reconciling historical progression with orthodoxy. Still less did he encounter opposition from the "stodgy" Charles Hodge or other members of the Princeton faculty. What appears to be exercising Alexander's commentators is how he could have such a good understanding of history without abandoning Reformed orthodoxy. It is inconceivable for them that a confessional framework could provide a "healthy" environment for academic inquiry.

Alexander recognized the value of German and English romantic insights, but he nevertheless clung firmly to the realism of his confessional environment. It would be a parody of both realism and romanticism to say that the former excluded historical understanding or that the latter excluded confessional orthodoxy. Rather, while both were dominant cultural forces, at least at Princeton they were not the ultimate foundations of thought. Here, realism was circumscribed by the limits of Reformed confessionalism. This enabled Alexander to appropriate scholarship from a foreign philosophical paradigm and incorporate it into his own.

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58 Ibid., 488-9.
60 Taylor (1988), 159-162, 166.
62 See H. G. Alexander's *The Life of Joseph Addison Alexander*, for a sympathetic treatment of his uncle. It is quite possible to put alternative constructs on the "romantic" versus "common sense" model of interpretation, especially considering the tastes of nineteenth-century American genteel society. Literary and historical sensitivity was not absent from realism, but recent studies have suggested that realism was not as dominant as has been previously suggested. See Darryl G. Hart, "The Princeton Mind in the Modern World and the Common sense of J. Gresham Machen," *WTJ* 46 (1984) 1-25; Mark Noll has argued that at least in
project would be further developed by his student and colleague, William Henry Green.

III. William Henry Green

William Henry Green was a master of walking the middle road. In the same breath he would both castigate the German liberals and chide his fellow evangelicals. His constant warnings to readers not to ignore the human aspect and the diversity in Scripture indicate that the late twentieth-century tendency to read the Bible as if it were written 15 years ago is nothing new. His was a voice that commanded respect. His scholarship was impeccable, and his acquaintance with the literature in his field was masterful. Even his foes, while rejecting Green's conservative views, acknowledged that he was a worthy opponent. His understanding of historical development was acquired from his mentor, Joseph Addison Alexander, and he combined that with an acquaintance with the budding field of Old Testament Theology. The rise of this branch of theology had already turned toward the "History of Religions" school by 1853, as is indicated by some of his criticisms, but Green was always ready and willing to appropriate the insights, though not the ideology, of the new method. By the early 1870s however, American scholars had begun to accept the new ideology. Green was beleaguered on many fronts, and chose to spend most of his time working on critical issues, rather than continue the ground-breaking work which he had inherited from Alexander. It is the early Green who worked on historical revelation and redemptive history, but the later Green who came up with significant breakthroughs in literary endeavors.

some areas, Princeton's confessional Reformed hermeneutic allowed for a more nuanced interpretation in the antebellum era than both liberals and conservatives, who were more heavily influenced by the realist model, "The Civil War in the History of Theology," (Paper presented at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, October 13-16, 1994) 39-43.
1. The Place of Old Testament Theology

Enthusiasts of modern biblical theology should be forewarned that the definition and approach to biblical theology that was prevalent in Green's day was a far cry from the modern scene. The idea of "biblical theology" developed first among those who argued for a rationalistic biblical theology, entirely different from (and generally opposed to) systematic "church" theology. In 1853, while reviewing Gustav R. Oehler's Prolegomena zur Theologie des Alten Testaments, Green acknowledged a difference in method and point of departure between biblical theology and systematics—what he called "church theology"—but claimed that the results of both should be essentially the same. Naturally, the church's faith and biblical teachings should "entirely harmonize." "The theologian who undertakes to exhibit in systematic order the truths of Scripture, would have to go over exactly the same ground... as he who aims at presenting the belief of the Church." In fact, it would be better to combine the two. Scripture and the Confession of Faith should be studied in conjunction, he asserted, because their teachings are identical. But it is important to recognize that the church's standards are such only insofar as they accurately represent the Bible, and therefore, the distinction between biblical and systematic theology should be maintained. The difference between biblical and systematic theology in practice, said Green, is often unfortunately all too real. For this reason, it is important at all times, but particularly in times of theological crisis, to go back and study the faith of the Bible.

The Bible is a unit, yet its parts may be studied separately if the whole is kept in view. Repudiating a mechanical view of inspiration, Green encouraged the study of the "peculiarities" of style, emphasis, and position "in the scheme of revelation." Like Alexander, Green insisted that we must recognize that God is saying something by using various writers and styles, yet he delved another step deeper than his mentor had. Green recognized that scholarship must attempt to understand and appreciate the religion of the Old Testament as it was practiced in its own day. "Sufficient attention has not been paid to its significance and its value to those who lived while the former dispensation lasted." All too often we import foreign ideas, either ideas from the New Testament or ideas from our modern world. The believing interpreter frequently reads too much backwards.

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Oehler developed this into his Theology of the Old Testament (English trans.: Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1873), a moderately conservative work which bears some resemblance to Vos' later Biblical Theology, in his attempt to show how the covenant is the "basis of the Old Testament religion" (45).


Ibid., 106.
from the New to the Old, while the unbelieving interpreter "deals with the
religion of Israel as [he] does with those of the heathen world." 59

Green admitted that both views contain elements of truth. The history
of religions school was right to see that the religious nature of the Hebrews
was the same as other peoples. The interpreter who sees everything as a
shadow of the future denies the reality of the Jewish institutions for the
present. They were "designed for, and... adapted to the then pressing
wants of those to whom it was given." But the unbelieving interpreter
rejects the "supernatural character and objective truth of the Jewish reli-
gion." The key to the Jewish religion is that here, and only here, has God
"revealed the remedy" which humanity's religious nature seeks. Therefore,
we must attempt to understand the Old Testament in its own light, which
both precludes the idea that Hebrew rites were simply borrowed from
pagan ceremonies, and includes their belief that God had revealed himself
to them. 60

The believing interpreter also comes in for criticism. Green bemoaned the
tendency among Christians to read the Old Testament as "one homoge-
nous mass, from the whole of which thus blended, the system of truth is
drawn." The proof-text method does violence to the very character of
Scripture as progressive revelation, and systematic theology winds up the
loser, because "no adequate conception is gained of the truths of the former
economy, as a body, in their relation to the more fully unfolded, or more
plainly established truths of the New." 61 Certainly the seeds of New Testa-
ment doctrine may be found in the Old Testament, but to "confound those
seeds with the perfect growth which sprang from them" is absurd. Old Testa-
ment revelations, while clear and glorious in their own day, look partial and
imperfect in the light of successive revelation, "and it casts no imputation
on the wisdom or the goodness of their divine author that they were so." If
we recognize that God was working out his plan of redemption in history,
then we will start to see the true relation between the two economies. 62

Yet while insisting that the Old Testament be studied on its own merits,
Green rejected the idea that the Old could be studied in isolation from the
New. They are a unit. He recognized that the unbelieving scholar could not
accept this "backwards" road travelling from New to Old, because they
have no faith in the sovereign plan and purpose of God. For them the Old
Testament is solely a product of the Jewish religion which Christianity has
(perhaps wrongly) appropriated. 63

59 Ibid., 109-10.
60 Ibid., 110-2.
62 Ibid., 118.
But without Christ, the Old Testament has no purpose. "History, prophecy, and legislation all require a key to unlock their enigmas. The theocracy, the ceremonial law, the social state, the very worship of the ancient Hebrews, all these are inchoate, and unless prospective in their bearing, worthless." Green insists that the whole system of the Old Testament becomes meaningless unless it is pointing to a fulfillment. The very fact that Israel was a shadow of what was to come requires that it have true light, but not full light. Hence Green accepted a fully Christocentric center to the entire Bible, because it is in him that the anticipatory element of Old Testament revelation comes to fulfillment.

2. The Structure of the Old Testament

Green rarely used the phrase "redemptive history," but the concept of God's progressive unfolding of salvation is the dominant theme of his theological work on the Old Testament. "The gradual communication of divine truth" must be fully understood when we approach the Scriptures. Everything centers around the person and work of Christ, yet must also be seen in its own organic growth. In his inaugural address, Green followed Alexander's emphasis on the dynamic movement of history as God revealed himself and his plan in the living fabric of time and space, but he articulated a different governing principle: the law of Moses.

Because he saw the fundamental event of the Old Testament in the giving of the Mosaic Law, Green emphasized the discontinuity between the old and new economies. Although both are equally genuine and authoritative, the old dispensation was provisional and preparatory, while the new was permanent and superior in dignity; "the one typical and ceremonial, the other spiritual and substantial; the one designed and adapted to teach the need and excite the desire of what could be fully supplied only by the other." Yet at the same time, both were intended for moral and spiritual ends, not material or temporal ones. While the new supersedes the old, it does not abolish its authority but rather establishes it. In fact, the new was designed to complete the old, and therefore depends upon its continuing authority.

Green admitted that the Old Testament was not neglected in his day—rather, the Old Testament "in itself" was neglected. Deploiring the dearth

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64 Ibid., 646-9. Green here acknowledges that in a sense, the present Church is but a shadow of "the glorious change that yet awaits her and the humblest of her faithful children." Usually, however, he speaks of shadow and fulfillment in speaking of the Old Testament and New Testament.

65 Green, "History of the Old Covenant," 458.


67 Green, "The Relation of the Old to the New Dispensation," 635.

68 Ibid., 636-8.
of literature on the "theology and religion of the former dispensation" as well as the atrocious interpretations of the Old Testament prevalent in his day. Green emphasized the diversity of Scripture and a more nuanced approach to its multiformity. We must not expect a "tame uniformity" from divine revelation. If God's creation is made more beautiful by its diversity, why should we expect his word to be any different? Both find their unity in the purpose and plan of their source and author. There is a development, an unfolding, of God's revelation which adapts and inspires human agents for the fulfillment of his own "fixed ends." Here is where Green brought together his view of historical development and God's foreordaining purposes. God works in the ebb and flow of history, in the dynamic reality of time and space to accomplish his eternal plan. These are not contradictory, but complementary elements of the whole. This willingness of Reformed confessionalists to be content with complexity frustrates the interpreters of the old Princeton school. The Princetonians were willing to join historical development to God's eternal decrees, simply posit the sovereignty of God, and get on with their research.  

The Scripture's organic structure includes every event, person and institution, indeed every statement contained therein. The test of any proposed scheme of Scripture's plan is whether it adequately harmonizes all the details. The goal is to uncover the principle which actually underlies the Scripture, and to avoid imposing a foreign scheme. External criteria have generally been used to find the Old Testament structure—such as the distinction between "legal, historical, poetical, and prophetical" books, or the Hebrew division between law, prophets and writings. But the true structure must take into account internal factors as well, and can only be understood when each particular part is seen in relation to the purpose of the whole—not merely based on external factors. In light of this, Green suggests that there are two methods of analyzing the Old Testament. The scholar may start either from the beginning or the end of the Old Testament. The first approach will trace the development and growth of Israel's religion, the second will view the fully developed organism, and can examine the special functions which each part performs in the whole.

Green recognized that the true history of Israel starts with the giving of the Mosaic Law. Whereas Alexander saw the giving of the Law as the crucial turning point in Israel's history, Green argues that the Mosaic law is the "true beginning of the Old Testament," because there is "nothing

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70 Here is where Van's insights will be crucial, as he follows the seventeenth-century Federal theologians in bringing the elements of historical development and the eternal decrees together in the idea of the covenant. Such nuances are sometimes lacking in the earlier scholars.
71 Green, "The Structure of the Old Testament," 188.
72 Ibid., 188.
73 Ibid., 171-2.
antecedent to this to which we can attribute organic completeness." The primeval and patriarchal periods are not given full treatment, and the little that is given does not attempt to show the fullness of "the circle of truth which had up to that time been revealed, the institutions established among them, or the dealing of God with respect to them." Rather, we learn only those things which "may serve to explain the condition of things when the covenant of God with Israel came to be formed." The whole book of Genesis is merely an attempt to demonstrate the foundations of the Mosaic era, not to explicate the previous eras themselves. No part of Genesis can "form a distinct division of the Old Testament. It is . . . [but] the preparation of the soil into which the seed of the Mosaic laws and institutions was to be cast." 77 Taking issue with the traditional threefold division of the Old Testament into Law, Prophets and Writings, Green attempted to define a structure which included internal as well as external grounds:

1. The Pentateuch or law of Moses, the basis of the whole.
2. Its providential application and expansion in the historical books.
3. Its subjective appropriation and expansion in the poetical books.
4. Its objective enforcement and expansion in the prophetical books.

Schema 28

The law of Moses, then, is Green's starting point for the organic structure of the Old Testament. This law "shaped the history of Israel; while the history added confirmation and enlargement to the law."77 But Green was sensitive enough to the distinction between the text of Scripture and the history it portrays to distinguish between them. So while the canon of the Old Testament contains four parts, its history is divided into three great periods, those of the commonwealth, the kingdom, and the foreign domination. The six poetical books bring the law of God into the domain of feeling and reflection, whether through the lyrical books of Psalms, Song of Solomon, and Lamentations, or through the wisdom literature of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job, which show "the identity of wisdom and the fear of the Lord, or the observance of his law."78 The prophets were raised up to expound the Law, enforce its denunciations, and make God's will and purpose known, functions which later scholars have seen to constitute the covenantal lawsuit.79 Hence, Green took Alexander's basic insights and rooted them in the Mosaic Law as the fundamental impulse behind the whole history of Israel.

Green's second principle views the Old Testament from its goal and end, namely, its fulfillment in Christ. Here the unity of the historical, prophetical,

75 Ibid., 173-4.
76 Ibid., 177.
77 Ibid., 172-5. Note the dialectical understanding which Green has of the law's relation to history. While insisting that the written code of the Pentateuch was given at Sinai, the interchange between the Law and history of Israel was a dynamic one, each shaping the other.
78 Ibid., 176.
79 Ibid., 175-7.
and poetical books is seen as they converge into "one common centre and end." In this way all of redemptive history can be seen in relation to Christ:

He thus becomes in our classification and structural arrangement what he is in actual fact, the end of the whole, the controlling, forming principle of all, so that the meaning of every part is to be estimated from its relationship to him, and is only then apprehended as it should be when that relation becomes known . . . Everything in the Old Testament tends to Christ and is to be estimated from him. Everything in the New Testament unfolds from Christ, and is likewise to be estimated from him. In fact this method pursued in other fields will give unity and consistency to all our knowledge by making Christ the sum and centre of the whole, of whom and through whom and to whom are all things.

This method allows us to see the end toward which the Hebrews were being prepared. Types and prophecies functioned as preparations so that the Jews would recognize the fulfillment when it came. For example, the sacrifices taught Israel the doctrine of vicarious atonement, while the prophet Isaiah told them that the Messiah would be the ultimate sin-offering. In this way the law was expounded and clarified through the prophetic word. While Green rarely used the phrases "redemptive history" or "progressive revelation," these concepts function as the very foundation of his understanding of the Old Testament.

Green saw redemptive history as a cyclical ebb and flow of revelation and "digestion." Each era when God is doing great things, when types and prophecies abound, is followed by an interval when the people are to learn and apply this. But inevitably they fall into decline. This cycle is not endlessly repetitious, but rather each new cycle brings a fresh and distinctive character and quality. He enunciated a triple division of the major cycles of biblical history:

1. From the call of Abraham to the death of Joshua
2. From the period of the Judges to the death of Solomon
3. From the division of the kingdoms to the close of the OT

Schema 3

Each period is characterized by redemptive activity, followed by a period when Israel is to apply what God has said on the basis of what he has done. Invariably Israel fails to obey, and receives the penalty of their sin. Green recognized the presence of epicycles as well, such as the flow of the whole book of Judges.

51 Green relies a great deal on typology, seeing it as one of the chief forms of God's early communication of the Messiah's coming. "Persons, facts, and institutions" can function as types representing who the Messiah will be and what he will do.
52 Green, "The Structure of the Old Testament," 188.
Green pointed out that this second principle results in a complementary schema to the first, as the Law remains the foundation on which is built the edifice of the rest of the canon. The Scriptures are an organic unity, and hence cannot be meticulously divided, but rather, the different parts may serve various functions in different connections. Figure 3 displays historical divisions, whereas figure 2 presents canonical divisions. It is these three historical periods which are addressed by the fourfold division of the canon.

Ultimately, these three cyclical periods illustrated for Green the three offices of Christ: Priest (Abraham through Joshua), King (Judges through Solomon)—yet the erection of the temple indicates the continuity of the priestly function—and Prophet (the Divided Monarchy and Exile—though the rebuilding of the temple and the “favour of the Persian monarch” still foreshadow the Priestly and Kingly offices). Joining Alexander in his appreciation for the typologies of Fairbairn and Hengstenberg, Green’s typological interpretation rested upon the conviction that nothing in Scripture is an accident. Since God is the ultimate author of the whole of Scripture, this threefold structure is intentionally embedded in the Old Testament.

While Hengstenberg simply pointed to individual passages for types and prophecies, Green saw that “types and prophecies of Christ together complete the entire sum of the Old Testament... Everything has its lesson, and that lesson is Christ.” Still, Green cautioned, this is not to say that the Hebrews understood these types in the same degree throughout their history. There is a progression, not only in the revelation which God gave, but correspondingly in the understanding of what the types and prophecies signified. There is even a progression in the “style of instruction” as prophecy increasingly replaces types as the history of Israel develops. Further, the ebb and flow of revelation show that not only were there advances in understanding but also declensions.

3. Canonical and Literary Method

Not only does the Old Testament as a whole have a structural unity, but each book demonstrates a coherence and internal structure as well. Taylor
shows that Green understood the literary nature of the Old Testament. "His proposed methodology assumes that the biblical texts are literature and not simply a collection of truths." His rejection of the proof-text method led him to articulate a fully-developed literary method in approaching the Bible.

Green recognized the unity of the Old Testament as a canon, and also the unity of each book as an organic whole, within an organic whole. Yet, in his view, this uniformity is not "same" or simple. The parts have diverse functions which all contribute to the purpose of the whole. When examining a particular book of the Old Testament, three questions must be asked: 1) what is the constitution of the book itself? 2) what place does it hold, what function does it fulfill in relation to the division of books in which it finds itself? 3) what relation does it have to the Old Testament as a whole? 

Even the Psalms, whose authors lived within a range of nearly a thousand years, must be viewed as a unit, because "the form and compass of each book is authoritative as well as its contents." This is seen in the fivefold structure of the Psalms that shows a literary structure that parallels the five books of the Law.

This "comprehensive" literary approach is best illustrated in his book The Unity of the Book of Genesis, in which he blasts the documentary hypothesis, attempting to show that Genesis is a "continuous work of a single writer." In 1895 this book focused on the toledot formula ("these are the generations of...") which, he claims, is the "essential, and the real basis of the whole... the skeleton or framework of the history itself." The literary structure of the book shows so much intentionality, he argues, that it necessitates unity of authorship. While acknowledging the likelihood of previously existing documents and traditions, as his mentor had fifty years before, Green used the toledot formula as the key to the literary unity of the book sixty years before the rest of the scholarly world.

Green's impact on the world of academic Old Testament scholarship was slight, yet his approach is receiving some notice today. As Taylor states:

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94 Quoted in Taylor, Old Testament, 212. His remarks that Green's arguments are "most important, for they submerge an approach to the study of Genesis which has only recently been "discovered" by post-critical OT scholars." She insists that "the significance of Green's insights regarding the intentional literary shaping in the book of Genesis should not be disparaged." Yet in his day, his argument was lost because he insisted on unity of authorship. She states that "it is only recently post-critical exegetes that has almost unwittingly attached itself to the genuine insights of Green regarding the literary nature of the OT texts which grew out of his 'comprehensive' hermeneutical approach," (213). See implies, however, that his theological and confessional interests are separable from his "academic" theological insights. I would suggest, however, that Green's literary and canonical approach grew out of his belief in the unity of Scripture, which was rooted in his Reformed confessionalism.
95 Green, The Unity of the Book of Genesis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901) 2-46.
At a time in the history of OT scholarship when a diachronic . . . approach to the biblical texts was being developed, Green's sensitivity to the literary shape of each book and his interest in the relationship between various canonical books seems very refreshing . . . Green's genuine insights regarding the intentional literary shaping present in OT literature were never fully appreciated by his contemporaries, yet in retrospect they constitute what was Green's most "enduring" contribution to the field of OT studies.  

Taylor has difficulty understanding how, from the basis of Common Sense Realism, Green articulated an approach based on a presuppositional foundation: "Against those who advocated a scientific and objective approach to the study of the OT . . . Green believed that such objectivity was impossible."97 Taylor may overstate the case somewhat, but it does bring into question the nature of the "objectivity" taught at old Princeton. Perhaps the extreme evidentialism which sometimes arises from their pens is the anomaly, and the understanding of history and literature is more prevalent than some have suggested.

IV. Geerhardus Vos98

Taylor argues that at least in the public sphere, the death of Green marked the end of an era in Old Testament studies at Princeton. New weapons would have to be found, because by 1900, Green was philosophically and theologically a dinosaur. Those who attempted to carry on his work in conservative circles could match his energy in refuting the critics, but lost his vision for a comprehensive understanding of salvation history. One of his students carried on that vision, but perhaps due to "the weightiness of his lectures" and his "patient methodical style of scholarship" was

96 Taylor, Old Testament, 214.
97 Ibid., 250. And such so-called "objectivists" as Hodge and Warfield never raised a finger! On the other hand, Green's notions of having "reverence for what is sacred, some respect for historical testimony and some regard for the dictates of common sense," (quoted in ibid.) could have been penned by either Hodge or Warfield. Far from an anomalous situation, Reformed confessionalism has generally assimilated the insights of other perspectives owing to its confidence in the inspiration of Scripture, and the doctrine of common grace. Cf. D. G. Hart, Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in America (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) 37-43, who argues that the Princeton doctrine of inspiration allowed them "to explore fully the human aspects of the Bible's formation and reception" (43).
largely ignored in his own day, and promptly forgotten. Yet Geerhardus Vos carried on the tradition at Princeton, adding a fresh influence from his Dutch Reformed background.

The conservative Dutch tradition from which Vos came had also been strongly influenced by Hengstenberg, but had a separate path of development, largely due to two opposing factors: The Netherlands’ proximity to Germany and the relative strength of traditional Calvinism. The conservative reaction led by Abraham Kuyper in the late 1870s paralleled a moderate decline of Dutch liberalism, but most OT scholarship in the Gereformeerde Kerk contented itself with battling the eminent liberal OT scholar Abraham Kuenen (1828-1891). Nonetheless, the exposure to an environment which emphasized constructive scholarship, which Vos would have received during his stay at the Free University of Amsterdam, doubtlessly had an impact.

Adding this emphasis to the insights and approaches of his forebears in the OT department at Princeton, Vos wove their conception of redemptive history together with traditional covenant theology. Further, he applied these principles to the study of the New Testament as well as the Old. Therefore, while Joseph Addison Alexander should be considered the father of Reformed OT theology, Gaffin properly names Vos as “the father of a Reformed biblical theology.”

1. The Idea of Biblical Theology

Vos defined biblical theology as: “the exhibition of the organic progress of supernatural revelation in its historic continuity and multiformity.” He stated that biblical theology properly fits under the heading of exegetical theology, and that its distinguishing character is that “it discusses both the form and contents of revelation from the point of view of the revealing activity of God Himself.” Hence the connection between history and revelation must be understood before the question of method can be fully addressed.

Revelation, according to Vos, is God’s own interpretation of His redemptive acts in history. Supernatural revelation has come to us in a historical progression, because revelation itself, “is not something completed by a single act all at once, but is a history with its own law of organic development.”

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103 Ibid., 6-7.
104 Ibid., 8.
Redemption, as well, could not help but be historically successive, because it is procured for man in history and mediated through the phenomena of history. This redemptive process culminates, and is indeed centered in Jesus Christ. Revelation accompanies the "objective-central" acts of redemption in history (i.e., the incarnation, atonement, resurrection, etc.) and functions as the authoritative interpretation of what God has done. Yet redemption has an aspect which is not accompanied by revelation, namely "subjective-individual" redemption (i.e., regeneration, justification, conversion, etc.).

Vos contended that "act-revelation" and "word-revelation" must never be separated. Rather, in the outworking of redemption, revelation becomes embodied in history. Yet the event is never left uninterpreted. The normal sequence runs: word-event-word. In other words, God declares that he will do something (the prophetic word); then God does it (redemptive event); and finally God interprets what he has done (interpretive word). This sequence allows for the progression of revelation without the depreciation of previous stages. The organic development of revelation displays perfection at every level, dependent upon the progress of redemption.

Far from disappearing in a cloud of theory, historical revelation introduces an eminently practical aspect. "God has not revealed himself in a school, but in the covenant; and the covenant as a communion of life is all-comprehensive, embracing all the conditions and interests of those contracting it." God's revelation has not been given to satisfy man's curiosity, but to fulfill the most "practical religious needs of His people as these emerged in the course of history," namely, salvation and communion with God.

The organic development of revelation has always unfolded as "an internal expansion." The truth of who God is grows not out of external accretions, but from within, as the soteriological purposes of God progress steadily toward the time of Christ. This demonstrates that the unfolding of redemption is truly the renewing of the whole creation. "All OT redemption is but the saving activity of God working toward the realization of this goal, the great supernatural prelude to the Incarnation and the Atonement." Vos credited Johan Gabler with the introduction of modern biblical theology: "Gabler correctly perceived that the specific difference of biblical theology lies in its historical principle of treatment." This treatment, however was informed by the rationalistic principles of Enlightenment philosophy and religion. Emphasizing the fundamentally religious nature of rationalism, in its rejection of the supernatural, Vos criticized it for scoffing at tradition and all authority except reason. The hostility of rationalism to "objective reality" and its dependence on the positivistic theory of evolution made
biblical theology simply a "phenomenology of the religion recorded in the literature of the Bible."\(^{110}\)

Vos suggested that biblical theology could be approached as a science only if the idea of science was properly qualified:

> The modern tendency to transform Biblical Theology into an out-and-out historical science, represented by such men as Wrede, has a certain degree of justification; although, of course, in the form in which it is championed at present, it proposes to make our science a purely naturalistic and secular branch of study, a mere subdivision of the history of religions. But surely we are not reduced to the alternative of following either the old systematizing or the new evolutionary principle of treatment. From the latter we need only learn to place greater emphasis upon the historical nexus of the several types of truth deposited in the Scriptures, without thereby abating in the least our conviction concerning the supernatural genesis and growth of the body to which they belong.\(^{111}\)

Vos articulated four special emphases which, in his mind, would keep biblical theology from degenerating into a mere historical science: 1) the objective character of revelation; 2) the subordination of the historical character of the truth to its revealed nature—sacred history is the means to revelation, and not an end in itself; 3) the dependency of biblical theology on the truthfulness of the Scripture as a whole, and reliance upon God's infallible interpretation of redemptive history (i.e., revelation);\(^{112}\) and 4) the term "theology" must be understood in the primitive sense of the knowledge of God. For this reason, Vos suggested that "History of Revelation" would be a more appropriate name for the discipline called "Biblical Theology."\(^{113}\)

Our goal in studying this history is to "enter into the outlook" of the recipients of divine revelation so that we might see the "elements of truth as presented to them." Like Alexander and Green before him, Vos insisted that we must not import our dogmas, based on the finished product of revelation though they be, into the minds of these original recipients.\(^{114}\)

Vos repudiated the idea that biblical theology was somehow superior to systematics. Both disciplines "make the truth deposited in Scripture undergo a transformation."\(^{115}\) It is impossible and undesirable to go back to the Bible without the reflection of the church.\(^{116}\) The chief difference between the two is methodological: dogmatic theology is systematic and logical, whereas biblical theology is purely historical. "In other words, Systematic..."\(^{117}\)

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\(^{110}\) Ibid., 9-11.


\(^{112}\) Cf. Biblical Theology, 11-14, where Vos makes his case even more stringently.


\(^{114}\) Vos, Biblical Theology, 16.

\(^{115}\) Ibid., 15-6.

Theology endeavors to construct a circle, biblical theology seeks to reproduce a line.” Biblical theology can assist dogmatics by showing that true religion is based on objective knowledge of revealed truth; by demonstrating that the great doctrines of the faith do not depend on proof-texts, but upon the very organic stem of revelation; and by keeping dogmatics firmly rooted in the “soil of divine realities from which it must draw all its strength and power to develop beyond what it has already attained.”

2. The Idea of Covenant

Vos reintroduced the covenant’s centrality to Reformed biblical theology. Following the lead of the federal theology developed during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, he showed that covenant theology brought the eternal decrees and the organic flow of history together in Christ. Still, in the Old Princeton tradition, he used the best of contemporary scholarship to buttress his confessional theology. His approach to the controversy over berith and diatheke holds a central position in his conception of redemptive history. The covenant functions as Vos’ governing hermeneutical principle. Tracing the successive “Berith-makings” in Scripture provides the general outlines of the various epochs in historical revelation. These three aspects, reformed orthodoxy, contemporary biblical scholarship, and the epochal character of historical revelation as outlined by Alexander and Green formed the contours of Vos’ discussion of covenant.

While Vos believed that Johannes Cocceius was the first to make the covenant the dominant hermeneutical principle in his theology, he traced covenant theology back to the German Reformed Church and particularly the work of Caspar Olevianus and Zacharius Ursinus. Indeed anywhere the issue of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments is debated the concept of covenant cannot be far away. Yet Vos argued that covenant theology was worked out gradually in German-speaking areas and the Netherlands until Cocceius finalized the synthesis of federalism and strict Calvinism. The development of federal theology in Britain paralleled that of the Continent, and took root in the Reformed churches there even before theologians on the Continent finalized their views. Vos’ position challenged the reigning interpretation of the day, and while it may have flaws of its own,

117 Ibid., 24.
118 Vos, “The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology” was originally published as De verbondslur in de Gereformeerde theologie (Grand Rapids: “Democrat” Drukpers, 1891). This original piece of scholarship, completed prior to his appointment to Princeton, challenged the reigning interpretation of seventeenth-century covenant theology and undergirded his integration of the covenant idea into the Princeton doctrine of redemptive history.
119 Vos, Biblical Theology, 16. See Vos’ footnotes in “‘Covenant’ or ‘Testament?’” for the early twentieth century discussion of covenant (AHRB/ 403, 405, 409). The fundamental importance of the Covenant idea was widely accepted, but few scholars had taken seriously the discussions of the old federal theologians.
the fact that this was one of his first published works, and the only historical work of Vos' career, shows how important the covenant was to his thinking.

In its essence, Vos claimed, Reformed theology depends upon the three-fold covenant: that of works, that of redemption, and that of grace. Only if God covenanted with himself to redeem his people could salvation be accomplished. Only then could the covenant of works be fulfilled. Only then could the work of salvation be totally God's. "For the Reformed, therefore, the entire ordo salutis . . . is bound to the mystical union with Christ. There is no gift that has not been earned by Him. Neither is there a gift that is not bestowed by Him." 121

Vos argued that the covenant of redemption does not force the covenant into the scheme of the decrees, but rather is intended to "concentrate it in the Mediator and to demonstrate the unity between the accomplishment and application of salvation in Him." Far from a static, deterministic presentation, federal theology becomes the dynamic connection between the eternal decrees and the flow of redemptive history in the Person and Work of Christ. The Reformed, according to Vos, place the covenant as the foundation of salvation and the guarantee of the historical progress of the church. In this way, the covenant reminds us that salvation is all of God. 122

In dealing with the debate over the meaning of berith, Vos found it patently absurd to conceive of the OT as referring to God making a "contract" with Israel, and he appealed to the universal agreement of Hebrew scholars as evidence of the rectitude of his translation of berith as "covenant." Berith introduces a divine factor into any context where it is used, so that when God makes a berith with his people, "the arrangement must derive its security not from man but from God." Yet while the berith is not contractual, it certainly has a reciprocal character. 123


121 Ibid., 248.

122 Ibid., 251-61.

Diatheke, he admitted, is a much more difficult concept. In some places it clearly means testament (Hebrews 9:16-7), but elsewhere it refers much more closely to the idea of berith (Galatians 3; Hebrews 9:15,18). Vos argued that the author of Hebrews equivocates in the middle of a thought to try to make two points simultaneously. In order to connect the covenant with Christ's death, the author makes a reference to Roman law which, while inconsistent with the usage of diatheke used elsewhere in the epistle, makes the point forcefully. The two usages of diatheke, for Vos, correspond to the goals of the epistle, namely to emphasize the "sovereignty and majesty of God and the monoenergetic divine initiative and prosecution of the work of salvation," and the "covenantal fellowship with God" which lies at the heart of the author's conception of the Christian religion. The author of Hebrews merges these two conceptions of diatheke in the Person and Work of Christ.124

Vos was quick to point out, however, that the old covenant is not supplanted by Christ, but rather is brought to fulfillment in the new diatheke, being embodied in it. Christians partake in the final eternal covenant, delivered in the person of the Son of God, replete with soteriological and eschatological significance. The eschatological Mount Zion has arrived. Not only has Christ redeemed his people, but he has introduced the age to come. The first age has not yet passed away, but the kingdom has been inaugurated in the Person of Christ, so that his people dwell in two ages at once.125 Yet Vos insisted that in Hebrews, this "higher world" is seen even before Christ: "the bond that links the Old and the New Covenant is not a purely evolutionary one...[but] a transcendental bond: the New Covenant in its preexistent, heavenly state reaches back and stretches its eternal wings over the Old," bringing all believers under the one covenant of grace.126 Vos concluded by stating that the writer of Hebrews combines a "profound historical grasp of the organic development of redemption with keen theological insight into the unchanging essence of revealed religion." This blend, he argued, may also be found in the Reformed articulation of federal theology, which plays out in life "the vivid impression of the majesty of God in belief."127

Following Alexander and Green, Vos insisted that the historic progression of God's revelation must be strictly interpreted in accordance with
"the lines of cleavage drawn by the revelation itself." No arbitrary principle is to be accepted, but only the internal structure of the Scripture itself. This structure, as has been seen, is based around the covenant, particularly, the covenant of works and that of grace. All of the berith-makings of the Old Testament and the new diatheke of the New Testament fall within the covenant of grace:

I. Covenant of Works
   A. Pre-Redemptive Special Revelation

II. Covenant of Grace → Key events marking shifts in history
   A. The Mosaic Epoch
      1. The Curses (consequences of disobedience; loss of original status)
      2. From Adam to the Noahian Revelation (degeneration of the race when left on its own)
      3. From Noah to the Patriarchs (relation of the nations to Israel: eventual salvation)
      4. The Patriarchal Period → Calling of Abraham (election of Abraham; presence; promise)
      5. Revelation in the Period of Moses → Exodus (Exodus; Moses, the Name, berith, theocracy, torah)
   B. The Prophetic Epoch
      1. Samuel to the destruction of Israel → Davidic Kingdom (Kingdom; repentance and conversion)
      2. The demise of Israel to the end of the OT → Rise of Babylon (Yahweh, his bond with Israel, sin, eschatology)

Vos' Biblical Theology, while brilliant in its conception, left much unsaid, or even untouched, because it was never completed. Yet the depth of insight which it provides is stimulating. Green had made a similar argument for the subsuming of the pre-Mosaic period under the general rubric of the Mosaic Epoch on literary and theological grounds. But Vos' separation of the Old Testament at Samuel and the rise of the Davidic kingdom has the advantage of separating Israel's history into the two chief eras as viewed by the participants themselves: the Mosaic and the Davidic; the one characterized chiefly by the Law, the other by the Prophets. These are general emphases however, and not intended to be taken as exclusive.

Taylor suggests that Vos' linear redemptive-historical method was an incorporation of historical development with the Princeton theology. The problem with this statement is that historical development had been a key

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129 Vos, Biblical Theology, 16.
121 Vos, Biblical Theology, 16. This is an attempt to place the structure of his Biblical Theology into a periodization. Vos does not actually articulate a periodization, and in fact, there is a legitimate question as to whether he would approve of them, but for the purposes of comparison with Alexander and Green, this hopefully remains true to his views.
concept in Old Testament studies at Princeton for over fifty years. In his biblical-theological method, Vos brought together the aspects of redemptive history and literary sensitivity, which Alexander and Green had affirmed, with the centrality of the covenant, which strengthened the ties to traditional Reformed confessionalism. This approach brought the historical and the eternal together in the Person of Christ. Hence, Vos' contribution to the method of biblical theology provided a solid foundation for later scholars to build upon.

V. The Legacy of Old Princeton

The impact of Joseph Addison Alexander and William Henry Green has been virtually ignored. Where these scholars have been remembered, it is chiefly for their anti-critical scholarship. It is vaguely recalled that they had some literary ability, but apart from Taylor's landmark work, these two men have received little or no recognition for their positive theological contribution. But, since Taylor's focus is particularly on the critical issues, she does not pay sufficient attention to the theological implications of the Old Princeton school.

Nonetheless, though neglected, the impact of the Old Princetonians has not been altogether eclipsed. Their influence may be seen, through Geerhardus Vos, in the persons of John Murray, Meredith Kline, Richard Gaffin, Willem VanGemeren, and other scholars who have attempted, in various ways, to build upon the Old Princeton tradition. These modern biblical theologians have carried on Vos' project and have refined his work.

Yet most modern scholars will come away from old Princeton with a measure of dissatisfaction, because for all of their alleged "post-critical" methods and approaches, most contemporary Old Testament theologians, even in the evangelical tradition, are still bound to the presuppositions of critical methodologies. Princeton approached Scripture from a confessional framework which will likely appear too rigid to modern scholars. Yet it was this very framework of traditional Reformed federal theology which enabled them to do the foundational work on redemptive history, and appropriate insights from foreign paradigms without compromising their own. It was their confidence in the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture which undergirded their appreciation for the literary unity of individual books in an era of fragmenting source criticism; while their conviction that all Scripture

130 Taylor, Old Testament, 282. She does admit that historical development had been important to Green, but believes that it was lost when he turned his focus to Pentateuchal criticism.
points to Christ buttressed their commitment to canonical interpretation in the face of rationalistic denials of the validity of a single canon. Reformed biblical theology may have advanced far beyond some of the particular applications of these nineteenth century scholars, but only because it has built upon their sure foundation.

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