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Review: A Survey of the Old Testament (by Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton)

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Hill, Andrew E. and John H. Walton, **A Survey of the Old Testament** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991, 461 pp, cloth) reviewed by Michael S. Jones.

The discovery of new materials and methods of study which impact the understanding of the Old Testament never stops. Therefore, Old Testament survey/introduction books are particularly vulnerable to time. *A Survey of the Old Testament* is an introduction which is written from a conservative perspective, yet interacts with the plethora of current methodology and material.

In their preface, the authors state that their purpose is "to bring together the most significant data from Old Testament historical and literary backgrounds, critical and technical introduction, Biblical commentary, and Old Testament theology . . . challenging the reader to a serious investigation and personal appreciation of God's truth as revealed in the Old Testament" (xiv, xv). The first chapter deals with the historical, cultural, geographical, literary, and religious background of the Old Testament, and its formation and canonization. Chapters 2 through 5 treat

the individual books of the OT. Each book is investigated concerning its writing, background, outline, purpose and message, structure and organization, and major themes. Each section ends with questions for further study and suggestions for further reading (xiv). The final chapter discusses the relation of the Old Testament to New Testament studies, and reviews the major impacts of the Old Testament on Christian theology.

Hill and Walton believe that Israel was not unaffected by the milieu in which it lived, and that therefore studying this milieu may shed light on the OT (see Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*). Thus light can be shed on the Decalogue by comparing it to a Neo-Hittite suzerain treaty (116, 144), or on Job by observing the retribution principle in ancient Near East theology (271-2). Likewise, higher critical methodologies may provide useful insights into the OT (eg. the partial Mosaic authorship of Exodus, 106). But Hill and Walton are also aware that, via Divine intervention, the OT can be quite independent of its milieu (eg. Canaanite worship versus true worship, 147ff).

A Survey of the Old Testament is a well-written, up-to-date introduction to the Old Testament. Its authors are both conservative and informed. This book is well suited for an advanced college or entry level seminary textbook. Its (sometimes excellent) outline and theme sections make it a useful reference for pastors as well.