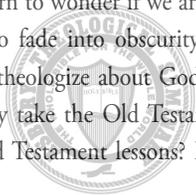


## *From the Editor*

Is the Old Testament dying? This is the provocative question we are exploring in this issue of *The Asbury Journal*. With the valued assistance of guest editor, Dr. David B. Schreiner (Assistant Professor of Old Testament at Wesley Biblical Seminary), we are able to sit in on an academic dialogue recently held at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Conference for the Study of Religion on March 3, 2018 in Atlanta, Georgia. This discussion was based on a recent book by Brent A. Strawn (*The Old Testament is Dying*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017). By this, Strawn means that cultural forces and worship practices in the Church as a whole are leading to a reduction in Christian literacy in reading, understanding, and theologizing from Old Testament sources. This dialogue is well worth reading in its entirety for those intrigued by the subject. To round out this issue, we have added two additional articles by Old Testament scholars, and one by a missiologist to demonstrate that in academic circles at least, the Old Testament is alive and well.

The article by David B. Schreiner examines the difficult nature of the literary form of 1 and 2 Samuel. Using the potential presence of an *inclusio*, Schreiner argues that these texts are more than a simple historical account of the life of King David, but that they show evidence of a secondary phase of development, which is more ideological in nature. Bill Arnold looks at verses related to God's revelation of Himself in the Pentateuch, especially focusing on how traditional visual images of gods were replaced by audible messages and words. Both of these scholarly works provide insight into the role the Old Testament continues to play in conveying messages about God's relationship with people in the Old Testament. The article by Ban Seok Cho builds on Old Testament views of social holiness to find ways in which mission might be more effective and true to the original intention of God as revealed in Old Testament scripture.

Whether you are a pastor, a Seminary student, or a scholarly academic, it should be a matter of concern to wonder if we are truly allowing our knowledge of Old Testament scripture to fade into obscurity. Do we preach enough from Old Testament texts? Do we theologize about God from the Old Testament? Do our hymns, songs, and liturgy take the Old Testament seriously? How often do our Sunday schools teach Old Testament lessons? Do we see the New Testament



as some type of replacement for the Old? Remember that in Matthew 5:17 Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” It is very much the responsibility of Christian leaders to both understand the traditional Jewish understanding of the Old Testament and to interpret it accurately for a better understanding of the teachings of the New Testament.

The *From the Archives* essay in this issue breaks away from our Old Testament discussion to look instead at the role images on posters played in the anti-religious movements of the former Soviet Union. It demonstrates some of the ways communist forces attempted to “kill” the Christian faith in that part of the world. Their methods failed, but in light of Strawn’s book, we must wonder how forces of materialism, secularism, and postmodernism might also be working to accomplish the same ends. As a number of the scholars in response to Strawn (and Strawn himself) note, the death of the Old Testament will actually lead to the death of the New Testament, which relies on the Old Testament for its foundation, and this could lead to the death of the Christian faith as we know it.

On the seal of Asbury Theological Seminary there is an old and familiar slogan, “The Whole Bible for the Whole World.” This has been, and continues to be our primary commitment. As *The Asbury Journal* has moved to being freely available online, we have become much more global. At the time I am writing this, *The Asbury Journal* has so far been downloaded 236,628 times in 216 countries around the globe! We are truly reaching the “Whole World!” But if we fail to communicate both the Old and New Testament scriptures, then we will have failed to communicate the “Whole Bible.” I pray this will never be true, and so I remain committed as editor to continue to seek out articles that explore both Testaments so that our readers will have stronger foundations in the whole Bible, so that they might become more effective witnesses to spread the message of the kingdom of God throughout the world!

*Robert Danielson Ph.D.*

