

## Old Testament Studies: From A Literary Text to A Discipline

### - An Overview of Old Testament<sup>1</sup>Studies in the Academic Circle In the Mainland of China in the Past Three Decades

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Starting from scratch, Old Testament studies in higher learning institutions in the Mainland of China have made great strides in recent three decades (1978-2008), and its starting point was 1978 when the Central Committee of the CPC held its Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, a year marking the double end of the Mao Zedong Era (1949-1978) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Especially during the decade of catastrophe known as “Cultural Revolution”, all religious studies and activities, including Old Testament studies, were wiped out and exterminated as they were branded as feudal superstition and opium of the people. In the Deng Xiaoping Era ushered in 1978, reform and development had become the theme and common understanding, which provided Old Testament studies with a relatively loose social and historical background. In this macro environment, Old Testament studies gradually, albeit slowly, ascended to the stage of academic arena and history of thought. In a word, this leap-forward change is embodied in three main transformations: that Old Testament studies have now developed into a multidisciplinary object of study from having only a marginal status in the system of higher learning as a kind of literary text in the very beginning; the conscious pursuit for Sino-Christian theology by the intelligentsia of higher learning institutions in the Mainland has made Old Testament studies part of Sino-Christian theology; since beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, biblical studies (certainly, Old Testament studies are included) have become a sub-discipline of religious studies, its legitimacy has not been doubted, and its preliminary framework of a discipline has been established.

#### Old Testament Studies: From A Literary Text to A Multidisciplinary Object of Research

In 1980, the late Prof. ZHU Weizhi (1905-1999) with Nankai University of Tianjin published an article entitled “Introduction to the Hebrew Literature – An Literary Exploration towards the ‘Old Testament’”<sup>2</sup>, which opened a gap for Old Testament studies that had been suspended for nearly three decades. In fact, subsequent popular readings, such as “Shengjing Gushi (*Biblical Stories*)”<sup>3</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Biblical studies in the academic circles in the Mainland of China are, by and large, based on Protestantism, the Union (Ho Ho) version translation of the Bible is currently used, and although there is also the Catholic Dun Scotus version translation, its use is limited only within the Catholic church, the Old Testament in this article therefore refers to its meaning according to Protestantism. From the Canon of Scripture point of view, the Old Testament for Protestantism is the same as the Hebrew Bible of the canon of Judaism. Therefore, Old Testament studies summarized in this article do not include the so-called Apocrypha or secondary scripture of Protestantism. Due to space constraint, summary of this article is mostly limited to literary works, and no sorting or arrangement is made to articles published in various journals or books. Moreover, as there is a dichotomy between the religious circle and the academic circle in terms of biblical studies in the Mainland of China, summary of this article is limited to only the academic circle and formal publications, therefore no books or articles published by the religious circle are included.

<sup>2</sup> ZHU Weizhi, “Xibolai Wenxue Jianjie – Xiang ‘Jiuyue Quanshu’ Wenxue Tanta (Introduction to Hebrew Literature – An Literary Exploration towards the ‘Old Testament’)”, published in *Foreign Literature Studies*, 1980, Vol.2.

<sup>3</sup> ZHANG Jiuxuan, *Shengjing Gushi (Biblical Stories)*, Beijing: Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Press,

“Manhua Shengjing (*Stories of the Bible*)”<sup>4</sup> as well as academic introductory readings, including “Shengjing Wenxue (*The Literature of the Bible*)”<sup>5</sup> and the “Shengjing Wenxue Shier Jiang (*Twelve Discourses on Biblical Literature*)” authored by Prof. ZHU<sup>6</sup>, may all be well branded as trend-setting works.

Since then, the academic circle in the Mainland of China started to write and translate articles or works related to literature, history, religion and culture of the Old Testament, of which, the highest achievement has been in translation. As a result, “take-in” or “importation-ism” has become the main approach for Old Testament studies in the beginning of the new period. On the basis of translation and introduction, the Mainland academic circle used Chinese to compose related works. In this regard, three series are worth mentioning: the “Yutai Wenhua Xilie (Jewish Culture Series)” translations, edited by Prof. GU Xiaoming with the History Department of Fudan University (a project launched in 1989, 20 varieties would be churned out according to plan, currently 10 have already been published, of which, 4 are related to the Old Testament studies)<sup>7</sup>; the “Hanyi Yutai Wenhua Mingzhu Congshu (Jewish Culture Masterpiece Series – Chinese Translation)”, edited by Prof. FU Youde with Shandong University (launched in 1995, 9 varieties have already been published, of which, 7 are related to the Old Testament studies)<sup>8</sup>, and also the “Shengjing Wenhua Jiedu Shuxi (Biblical Culture Interpretation Book Series)”, edited jointly by

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1987.

<sup>4</sup> H. Vanloon, *Manhua Shengjing (Stories of the Bible)*, translated by SHI Lv and YU Yi, Shanghai: Sanlian Shudian Press, 1988. Subsequently, several versions appeared: H. Vanloon, *Shengjing de Gushi (Stories of the Bible)*, translated by QIN Liyan, Guangxi: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2006; H. Vanloon, *Fanglong Jiangshu Shengjing de Gushi (Stories of the Bible)*, translated and edited by DING Chaoyang, Beijing: China Radio & Television Publishing House, 2006; H. Vanloon, *Shengjing de Gushi (Stories of the Bible)*, translated by QIAO Fei and LIU Xuezheng, Beijing: Yanshan Press, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> L. Ryken, *Shengjing Wenxue (The Literature of the Bible)*, translated by XU Zhong, Shenyang: Chunfeng Wenyi Press, 1988.

<sup>6</sup> ZHU Weizhi, *Shengjing Wenxue Shier Jiang (Twelve Discourses on Biblical Literature)*, Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1989 Version.

<sup>7</sup> Of the *Yutai Wenhua Xilie (Jewish Culture Series)* edited by GU Xiaoming, books already published and related to the Old Testament studies are: 1. J.B. Gabel et al.; *Shengjing Zhong de Yutai Xingji (The Bible as Literature: An Introduction)*, translated by LIANG Gong et al., Shanghai: Sanlian Shudian Press, 1991. In fact, this is the translation of the book authored by John B. Gabel & Charles B. Wheeler entitled *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 1986. The original title of the book was *Shengjing Wenxue Daolun*. 2. *Yutairen yu Shijie Wenhua: Zai Kexue, Wenxue he Shehui Falv de Weidu Shang*, translated and edited by LIN Tai and ZHANG Maomao (Shanghai: Sanlian Bookstore, 1994). In fact, this book is the version of selected works of the book entitled *The Jews: Their History, Culture and Religion*, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1960, edited by Louis Finkelstein. 3. *Yutai de Jiye (Accomplishment of the Jews)*, compiled by CHEN Chaonan, Shanghai: Sanlian Shudian Press, 1996. Resources of this book selected are unknown. 4. Robert M. Seltzer: *Yutai de Sixiang*, translated by ZHAO Lixing and FENG Wei, Shanghai: Sanlian Shudian Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Version, December 1994. In fact, this book is a version of translation of extract of the book entitled *Jewish People, Jewish Thought* (Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980) authored by Robert M. Seltzer.

<sup>8</sup> Of the *Hanyi Yutai Wenhua Mingzhu Congshu (Jewish Culture Masterpiece Series – Chinese Translation)* edited by FU Youde, books already published and related to the Old Testament studies include: 1. Cecil Roth, *Jianming Yutai Minzushi (A Short History of the Jewish People)*, translated by HUANG Fuwu, WANG Lili et al., Shandong: Shandong University Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Version, December 1997. 2. Abraham Cohen, *Dazhong Tamude (Everyman's Talmud)*, translated by GAI Xun, Shandong: Shandong University Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Version, January 1998. 3. Moses Maimonides, *Mitu Zhijin (The Guide for the Perplexed)*, translated by FU Youde et al., Shandong: Shandong University Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Version, January 1998. 4. A. J. Heschel, *Miren de Shangdi: Yutaijiao Zhexue (God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism)*, translated by GUO Peng and WU Zhengxuan, Shandong: Shandong University Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Version, 2003. 5. Mordecai Kaplan, *Yutaijiao: Yizhong Wenming (Judaism as a Civilization)*, translated by HUANG Fuwu and ZHANG Ligai, Shandong: Shandong University Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Version, February 2002. 6. Martin Buber, *Lun Yutaijiao (On Judaism)*, translated by LIU Jie et al., Shandong: Shandong University Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Version, February 2002. 7. Leo Baeck, *Yutaijiao de Benzhi (The Essence of Judaism)*, Shandong: Shandong University Press, 1<sup>st</sup> Version, February 2002.

Prof. LIANG Gong with Henan University and Prof. LO Lung Kwong with The Chinese University of Hong Kong (launched in 2003, 6 varieties have already been published, of which, 4 are related to the Old Testament studies)<sup>9</sup>. Comparatively speaking, the “Jewish Culture Series” and the “Jewish Culture Masterpiece Series – Chinese Translation” provided us with important literature data to fully understand the literature, history, theology, and the Rabbi Tradition of the Old Testament; as far as the academic qualities are concerned, most of the books selected in the “Jewish Culture Masterpiece Series – Chinese Translation” are classics of different periods, they accumulate important literature data for Old Testament studies, and occupy an important position in bridging relations between the Jewish tradition and the Old Testament studies; whereas the “Biblical Culture Interpretation Book Series” are works of local writers, they constitute an overview of objective introduction to the biblical contents and related academic research, with therefore more data value than academic value.

With the gradual enlightenment of politics in the Mainland of China, Old Testament studies have gradually infiltrated into other disciplines from the literary field. As such, biblical literary studies are no longer outstanding; instead, it becomes part of the multidisciplinary Old Testament studies. Yet, generally speaking, it still occupies a sizable proportion. In probable terms, circumstances of multidisciplinary Old Testament studies have the following characteristics:

First of all, Old Testament studies still occupy an outstanding position, with relatively rich translations and monographs<sup>10</sup>;

<sup>9</sup> Of the *Shengjing Wenhua Jiedu Shu Xi (Biblical Cultural Interpretation Book Series)* edited by LIANG Gong and LO Lung Kwong, books already published and related to the Old Testament studies are: 1. LIANG Gong et al, *Shengjing Jiedu (Interpretation of the Bible)*, Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 1<sup>st</sup> Version, 2003; 2. LIANG Gong et al., *Lvfashu · Xushi Zhuzuo Jiedu (The Book of the Law · Narrative Work Interpretation)*, Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 1<sup>st</sup> Version, 2003; 3. LIANG Gong and GUO Xiaoxia et al., *Shegeshu · Zhihui Wenxue Jiedu (The Book of Songs · Wisdom Literature Interpretation)*, Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 1<sup>st</sup> Version, 2003; 4. ZHAO Yu, *Xianzhishu · Qishi Wenxue Jiedu (The Book of Prophets · Apocalyptic Literature Interpretation)*, Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 1<sup>st</sup> Version 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Main representative works include: 1. LIANG Gong, *Shengjing Wenxue Daodu (Introductory Reading for Bible Literature)*, Guangxi: Lijiang Publishing House, 1990; 2. Edited by HONG Wen, *Shengjing Zhong de Nvxing (Women in the Bible)*, Yunnan: Yunnan People's Publishing House, 1995; 3. Northrop Frye, *Weida de Daima – Shengjing yu Wenxue (The Great Code: The Bible and Literature)*, translated by HAO Zhenyi et al., Beijing: Peking University Press, 1998 Version; Northrop Frye, *Shenli de Nuoyan – 'Shengjing yu Wenxue' Yanjiu Xubian (Words with Power: Being a Second Study of The Bible and Literature)*, translated by WU Chizhe, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2004; 4. LIU Yiqing, *'Shengjing' de Wenxue Chanshi (Literary Explanation of the 'Bible')*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2004; 5. ZHANG Zhaoke, *'Shengjing yu Xibolai Minjian Wenxue ('Bible' and the Hebrew Folk Literature)*, Beijing: Orient Press, 2004; 6. SUN Caixia, *Xifang Xiandai pai Wenxue yu 'Shengjing' (Western Modernist Literature and the 'Bible')*, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2005; 7. David Lyle Jeffrey, *Shengshu de Zimin – Jidujiao de Tezhi yu Wenben Chuantong (People of The book: Christian Identity and Literary Culture)*, translated by LI Yi, Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2005; 8. LIANG Gong, *Shengjing Xushi Yishu Yanjiu (Study of the Narrative Art in the Bible)*, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2005; 9. GU Min and YUN Feng, *Shengjing Wenxue Shier Jiang (Twelve Discourses on Biblical Literature)*, Guangxi: Guangxi Minorities Press, 2005; 10. Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Shengjing de Xushi Yishu (Narrative Art in the Bible)*, translated by LI Feng, Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2006; 11. Leland Ryken, *Shengjing Wenxue Daolun (Words of Delight and Words of Life)*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007; Leland Ryken, *Renshi 'Shengjing' Wenxue (How to Read the Bible As Literature: And Get More Out of It)*, translated by LI Yiwei, Jiangxi: Jiangxi People's Publishing House, 2007; 11. LIU Feng, *'Shengjing' de Wenxuexing Quanshi yu Xibolai Jingshen de Tantai (Literary Annotation of the 'Bible' and Exploration of the Hebrew Spirit)*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007. Main literary compilations include: edited by LIANG Gong, *Shengjing yu Oumei Zuojia Zuopin (Bible and Works of European and American Writers)*, Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2000; Selected and edited by LIANG Gong and LO Lung Kwong, *Shengjing yu Wenxue Chanshi (Bible and Literary Explanation)*, Beijing: People's Literature Press, 2003; Edited by LIANG Gong, *Shashibiya yu Shengjing (Shakespeare and the Bible)* (Vol. I and Vol. II), Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2006; Edited by LIANG Gong, *Shengjing yu Wenxue (Bible and Literature)*, Jilin: The Time Literature & Art

Secondly, a new force of introduction to the Old Testament from other disciplines, especially from the point of view of Judaism, Christian theology<sup>11</sup>, archaeology, historical documentation, and hermeneutics<sup>12</sup> have suddenly emerged. Works of summary or translations of Christian theology that introduce the contents of the Old Testament are mainly based on the academic background of Protestantism, and in the “Anonymous Translation Base: Christianity Cultural Translation Series” published by the Peking University Press, there are mainly three works of translations that made primary introduction to the contents of the Bible, namely, the introductory “Jiuyue Gailun (Introducing the Old Testament Testament)”, “Shengjing Daodu (Shang) – Jieshi Yuanze (How to Read the Bible for All its Worth), and “Shengjing Daodu (Xia) – An Juan Dujing (How to Read the Bible Book by Book)<sup>13</sup>. In contrast, very few books of introduction to the Old Testament are from the point of view of the Catholic theology.<sup>14</sup>

Third, cross-cultural studies of the Old Testament have already become a relatively important trend, and there are scholars who start to pay attention to comparative studies of the Old Testament and classics of the Chinese culture<sup>15</sup>. With the incorporation of a batch of overseas-returned Chinese students or scholars into the system of higher learning institutions of the Mainland of China, this kind of study will be further improved in academic standard.

The above translation series or writings have already expanded gradually to the field of the Old Testament studies, and the field involved therein is no longer restricted to the Old Testament that serves as literary text, rather it has extended to the history of the Israeli race in the Old Testament, the Old Testament and the world culture, as well as religious thoughts in the Old Testament etc., which provide readers with a relatively more panoramic view. Accordingly, Old Testament has already been transformed from a purely literary text to a multidisciplinary object of research at the turn of the century.

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Press, 2006; Edited by LO Lung Kwong and WANG Lixin, *‘Shengjing’ Wenxue yu Wenhua: Jinian ZHU Weizhi Jiaoshou Bainian Tanchen Lunji* (*‘Bible’ Literature and Culture: Analects In Commemoration of the One Hundred Years Birth Anniversary of Prof. ZHU Weizhi*), Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 2007; LIANG Gong et al., *Shengjing Shiyu Zhong de Dongxifang Wenxue* (*The Eastern and Western Literature in the Visual Threshold of the Bible*), Beijing: China Publishing House, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> ZHOU Ping: *Zouchu Yidanyuan: ‘Shengjing’ Renxue Yanjiu* (*Walk out of Eden: Humane Studies of the ‘Bible’*), Sichuan: Sichuan People’s Publishing House, 1999.

<sup>12</sup> See annotations in the following text.

<sup>13</sup> John Drane, *Introducing the Old Testament*, Beijing: Peking University Press; Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, translated by WEI Qiyuan, RAO Xiaozhen, and WANG Ailing, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005; Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*, translated by LI Ruiping, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2005. In addition, books with equal quality include: ZHUO Xiping, *Shengjing Jianshang* (*Bible Appreciation*), Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, SUN Yi, *‘Shengjing’ Daodu* (*Reading Guide to the ‘Bible’*), Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2005; CHEN Junwei, *Jiuyue Daolun* (*Introduction to the Old Testament*), Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> This author has seen only two so far: FU Hede, *Jiuyue Beijing* (*Background of the Old Testament*), Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2002; FU Hede, *Jiuyue Quanshi* (*Annotation to the Old Testament*), Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Main works include: 1. MA Xiaochao, *Zhoushi de Pili yu Jidu de Shizijia: Xila Shenhua he ‘Shengjing’ dui Xifang Wenxue de Fashengxue Yiyi* (*The Thunderbolt of Zeus and the Cross of Christ: Genetic Significance of the Greek Mythology and the ‘Bible’ to the Western Literature*), Shanghai: Xue Lin Chu Ban She (*Xuelin Publishing House*), 1999; 2. ZHANG Lixin, *Shengsheng de Yuyi: ‘Shijing’ yu ‘Shengjing’ Bijiao Yanjiu* (*Sacred Message: Comparative Studies of ‘Shijing [Classic of Poetry]’ and the ‘Bible’*), Yunnan: Yunnan University Press, 1999; 3. SU San, *Xiangdong Xiangdong Zai Xiangdong: ‘Shengjing’ yu Xia, Shang, Zhou Wenming Qiyuan* (*Eastward, Eastward, and Again Eastward: Origin of Civilization of the ‘Bible’ and Xia, Shang, and Zhou Dynasties*), Qinghai: Qinghai People’s Publishing House, 2004; 4. GAO Shen, *Tiandao yu Shengyan: ‘Zhuangzi’ yu ‘Shengjing’ Bijiao Yanjiu* (*The Dao [Tao] of Heaven and the Divine Word: A Comparative Study of ‘Zhuangzi’ and the ‘Bible’*), Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2008.



## Old Testament Studies: From the Object of Literary Research to A Component of Sino-Christian Theology

Since the late 1980s, approach to Old Testament studies has gradually been diversified, and has become an organic component of Sino-Christian theology<sup>16</sup>. With the vigorous promotion of LIU Xiaofeng who was working in the Institute of Sino-Christian Studies Hong Kong at that time, intellectuals in higher learning institutions in the Mainland of China began to study Christian theology from the way of humanism, and translation and publication of works on Christian theology and introduction and sorting of Christian thoughts have become the main stream. This upsurge was called Sino-Christian theology in its narrow sense. However, no matter how we define Sino-Christian theology, the emphases of Sino-Christian theology itself is still limited to the ways of Christian theology even to the present time, and this is an indisputable fact. Biblical studies, which serves as the basis and source of Christian theology, are a part that is neglected, and yet, rightfully it should belong to one of its component. However, only a handful of the so-called Sino-Christian theologians have come into contact or spent energy to study biblical theology, especially theology of the Old Testament. In 1994, ZHAO Dunhua, currently a professor in Peking University, published a book entitled “1500 Years of Christian Philosophy”<sup>17</sup>, in a total of nearly 700 pages, only 15 pages were used to introduce the biblical thoughts, all the rest were dedicated to the history of Christian theology from the Fathers of the Church to the late middle ages. As far as majority of the contemporary Sino-Christian theologians are concerned, the Old Testament is a source of theological structure, and yet in their own already built theological system, its status is not clear at all, so much so that when reviewing the history of research of the Christian philosophy<sup>18</sup>, scholars from the Mainland even do not say a word on biblical studies<sup>19</sup>. Though Old Testament studies are neglected, yet no one can deny that it is a natural component of Sino-Christian theology.

### Old Testament Studies: From Object of Literary Research to A Sub-discipline

With dawning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Old Testament studies have also gained further development. Since 2006, biblical studies have already become a sub-discipline of religious studies at least in the disciplines supported by the National Social Science Fund, which indicates that biblical studies have obtained a legitimate status, and more and more young-and mid-aged scholars have devoted to Old Testament studies and teachings. Quite a few universities, such as Peking University, Renmin University of China, Fudan University, Wuhan University, Sichuan University, East China Normal University, and Minzu University of China etc., have already opened courses on biblical studies for undergraduates and graduate students, and Old Testament studies are important part of it. At present, in Old Testament studies, equal attention is paid mainly to translation and introduction, and creative writings. On the one hand, scholars are committed to translating and introducing existing western academic achievements, and on the other, they are also trying to link up the Old Testament with the Chinese tradition, cut in to the current problems and make corresponding response. Of the nearly a decade academic achievements, a work

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<sup>16</sup> See also Daniel Yeung, ed., *Lunyu Shenxue Chuyi (Comment on Sino-Christian Theology)*, Hong Kong: Institute of Sino-Christian Studies, 2000.

<sup>17</sup> ZHAO Dunhua, *Jidujiao Zhexue 1500 Nian (1500 Years of the Christian Philosophy)*, Beijing: People Press, 1994, pp. 45-60.

<sup>18</sup> In the special Mainland context, “Christian Theology” is generally expressed as “Christian Philosophy”, and obtains its own living space under the item of philosophy.

<sup>19</sup> SUN Shangyang and LIU Zongkun, *20 Shiji Xifang Zhexue Dongjianshi: Jidujiao Zhexue Zai Zhongguo (The History of Progressive Spreading of the Western Philosophy to the East in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Christian Philosophy in China)*, Beijing: Capital Normal University Press, 2002.

written by YOU Bin entitled “Xibolai Shengjing De Wenben, Lishi Yu Sixiang Shijie (Text, History and the World of Thought of the Hebrew Bible)”<sup>20</sup> is a representative masterpiece, which, taking modern western biblical criticism as basis, gives a comprehensive introduction to the contents and theology of the Old Testament. “Shengjing Xibolaiwen Wenfa (A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew)”<sup>21</sup>, a book written by CHOON Leong Seow (XIAO Junliang) who wields certain influence in the western world, has already been published, which can serve as general teaching materials of the biblical Hebrew. Moreover, in the “Dangdai Shengjing Yanjiu Yicong (Contemporary Bible Study Translation Series)” (launched in 2008, and 4 varieties have already been published so far), jointly edited by LIU Ping (pseudonym “LIU Hengxian”), professor with the Department of Religion of Fudan University, and WANG Zhongxin with Chinese Christian Scholars Association in North America, “Moxi Wujing Daolun: Cong Yidanyuan Dao Yingxuzhidi (From Paradise to the Promised Land: Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch)”<sup>22</sup> and “Shengjing Zhengdian (The Canon of the Scripture)”<sup>23</sup> are both important works of the Old Testament studies, and there is no doubt that “The Canon of the Scripture” is the first book in the Mainland of China that gives a comprehensive study of the canon of the Old Testament, whereas “Shengjing Wenxue Yanjiu (The Biblical Literature Studies)” edited by LIANG Gong, professor with Henan University, has become the first academic journal on biblical studies that “substitute journals with books”<sup>24</sup>. Currently, there are approximately seven ways to study the Old Testament as follows<sup>25</sup>:

- (1) Old Testament studies from the biblical language<sup>26</sup>, translation and text transmission point of view, and works already published include: biblical Hebrew teaching materials, and the history of biblical circulation<sup>27</sup> etc.;
- (2) Edit basic reference books, which mainly include: various kinds of bible dictionaries, bible handbooks<sup>28</sup>, and atlases<sup>29</sup> etc.;

<sup>20</sup> YOU Bin, *Xibolai Shengjing de Wenben, Lishi yu Sixiang Shijie (Text, History and the World of Thought of the Hebrew Bible)*, Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Choon-Leong Seow, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, translated by FEI Gaoying and LU Sihao, proofread by LIU Ping, Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> T. D. Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch*, translated by LIU Ping and ZHOU Yong, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of the Scripture*, translated by LIU Ping and LIU Yougu, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Edited by LIANG Gong, *Shengjing Wenxue Yanjiu (The Biblical Literature Studies)*, Beijing: People's Literature Press. The 1<sup>st</sup> Volume was published in September 2007.

<sup>25</sup> See J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu, ed.: *Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Leopold Leeb, *Shengjing de Yuyan he Sixiang (Language and Thought of the Bible)*, Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2000. LI Chichang, ed., *Shenghao Lunheng: Wanqing 'Wanguo Gongbao' Jidujiao 'Shenghao Lunzheng' Wenxian Huibian (Discourse on the Sign of the Cross: A Collection of Literature on 'Argument of the Sign of the Cross' of Christianity in 'Wanguo Gongbao [The Global Magazine]' in the Late Qing Dynasty)*, Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe (Shanghai Ancient Books Press), 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Works related to Chinese translation of the Bible include: REN Dongsheng, *Shengjing Hanyi Wenhua Yanjiu (Study of the Culture of Chinese Translation of the Bible)*, Hubei: Hubei Education Press, 2007. Works related to the history of biblical circulation include: Kenneth Connolly, *The Indestructible Book*, translated by YANG Dao, Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe (World Affairs Press), 2004. English name of the original author is not found in the book. Stephen M. Miller and Robert V. Huber, *The Bible: A History*, translated by HUANG Jianbo and AI Juhong, Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press (CCTP), 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Now a great variety of dictionaries have been published. There are three kinds translated and edited by BAI Yunxiao: Edited by LIANG Gong and CHEN Jianfeng, *Shengjing Baike Cidian (Biblical Encyclopaedia)*, Liaoning: Liaoning People's Publishing House, 1990; *Shengjing Yuhui Cidian (Biblical Vocabulary Dictionary)*, *Shengjing Diming Cidian (Biblical Placename Dictionary)*, and *Shengjing Renming Cidian (Biblical Name Dictionary)*, Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press (CCTP), 2002. MA Ziyi, ed.,

- (3) Attention to exploration of the Old Testament from other relevant disciplines, for instance, attention to the Old Testament from history<sup>30</sup>, archaeology<sup>31</sup>, ancient Near Eastern literature<sup>32</sup>, The Dead Sea Scrolls, Greece-Roman world culture<sup>33</sup>, Judaism<sup>34</sup>, and political philosophy<sup>35</sup> etc., and their discussions are often listed under the name of Jewish studies<sup>36</sup>, with relatively remarkable achievements; at the same time, comparative studies of the Chinese classics and the Old Testament have also become a highlight;<sup>37</sup>
- (4) Discussion of problems and ideas in the Old Testament from social and historical point of view, which involves priest system, temple system, law, prophet, Apocrypha (secondary scripture), and wisdom literature etc.;<sup>38</sup>

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*Shengjing Dili (Biblical Geography)*, Shanghai: Xue Lin Chu Ban She, 2005. CHEN Dakai, ed., *Shengjing Wenhua Baoku (Treasure of Biblical Culture)*, included four categories: *Shengjing Gushi (Stories of the Bible)*, *Shengjing Diangu (Biblical Allusions)*, *Shengjing Tulu (Biblical Images)*, and *Shengjing Renwu (Biblical Characters)*, all published by Xue Lin Chu Ban She of Shanghai. SHI Jian, LIN Biguo, and LI Xiaotao, et., *Shengjing Wenxue Wenhua Cidian (Biblical Literature and Culture Dictionary)*, Sichuan: Sichuan University Press, 2003. Dictionaries with academic values include: LO Lung Kwong, ed., *Jidujiao Shengjing yu Shenxue Cidian (Christian Bible and Theology Dictionary)*, Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2007; LUO Qingcai and HUANG Ximu, *Shengjing Tongshi Shouce (A Concise Bible Handbook)*, Shanghai: Xue Lin Chu Ban She, 2007.

<sup>29</sup> LIANG Tianshu, *Jianming Shengjingshi Ditujie (Bible Atlas & Place Names)*, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2006. It is the first time that the first Chinese Bible atlas and place names is published in the world, and also currently the most complete Bible atlas and place names in both China and abroad. Subsequently it also published *Jianming Shengjing Renming Tujie (Concise Bible, Illustrated Bible Names)*, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2009. It is the first Chinese Biblical Genealogy in the world.

<sup>30</sup> WANG Lixin, *Gudai Yiseli Lishi Wenxian, Lishi Kuangjia, Lishi Guannian Yanjiu (Study of the Ancient Israeli Historical Literature, Historical Framework, and Historical Concept)*, Beijing: Peking University Press, 2004.

<sup>31</sup> As far as the Old Testament and archaeology are concerned, works include: David M. Rohl, *A Test of Time*, translated by LI Yang and SHEN Shiguang, Beijing: The Writers Publishing House, 1<sup>st</sup> Version published in August 2000; Gary Greenberg, *The Moses Mystery: The African Origins of the Jewish People*, translated by ZHU Dongli and QIN Xiqing, Beijing: Guangming Daily Press, 2001.

<sup>32</sup> CHEN Yiyi, *Xibolaiyu Shengjing (The Hebrew Bible)*, Beijing: Kunlun Press, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> Philo, *On the Life of Moses*, translated by SHI Minmin, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2007; Philo, *On the Law*, translated by SHI Minmin, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press; Thotlief Boman, *Das Hebraische Denken im Vergleich mit dem griechischen*, translated by WU Yongli, Shanghai: Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House of Shanghai Century Publishing Co., Ltd., 2007. Related monographs include: ZHANG Xuefu, *Shengjing he Xilaizhuyi de Shuangchong Shiye: Aolijin Qiren ji Shenxue Sixiang (Double Views of the Bible and Hellenism: Origen, the Man and His Theological Thoughts)*, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2004.

<sup>34</sup> Aside from the above Old Testament studies by way of Judaism, there are also quite a number of achievements, mainly include: ZHU Weizhi and HAN Kesheng, *Gu Yutai Wenhua Shi (History of the Ancient Jewish Culture)*, Beijing: Economic Times Press, 1997.

<sup>35</sup> LIU Xiaofeng and CHEN Shaoming, ed., *Zhengzhi Zhaxue zhong de Moxi (Moses in Political Philosophy)*, Beijing: Hua Xia Publishing House, 2006. In fact, there is already precedence in the translated works by Spinoza, please refer to Benedict de Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, translated by WEN Xizeng, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 1963.

<sup>36</sup> In addition to those mentioned in the above annotations, there are also: LIANG Gong, ed., *Shengjing Shidai de Yutai Shehui yu Minsu (The Jewish Society and Folk-custom in the Biblical Times)*, Beijing: Religious Culture Publishing House, 2002.

<sup>37</sup> LIN Yan, *Zai Hanji Chuangshi Shenhua de Liangguangxia Chongdu 'Chuangshiji' 1-3 Zhang (Re-reading Chapters 1-3 of Genesis in the Light of the Chinese Creation Mythology)*, Gansu: Lanzhou University Press, 2008.

<sup>38</sup> LI Chichang and YOU Bin, *Shengming Yanshuo yu Shequn Rentong: Xibolai Shengjing Wuxiaojuan Yanjiu (Life Speech and Community Identification: Study of the Five Megillot of the Hebrew Bible)*, Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2003.

- (5) Discussion of the Bible from biblical methodology, which mainly include: archaeological method, textual criticism, form criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, rhetorical criticism, new literary criticism, feminism, social political and ideological criticism, and Marxism criticism etc.<sup>39</sup>;
- (6) Study of the Bible from biblical hermeneutics<sup>40</sup> and annotation; at present, the largest annotation project was carried out by East China Normal University Press, and it is estimated that all translation and publication works can be completed within the recent decade;<sup>41</sup>
- (7) Study of the Bible from the authorities point of view, mainly involving: formation of the canon, basic teachings, historical criticism and relations of the authority of the bible etc.<sup>42</sup>

In a word, current Old Testament studies have already made preparatory works for establishment of a relatively complete framework of academic studies, though it is still in an overall preliminary level. Achievements of the above academic studies indicate that, aside from the fruits of Christian theology and history already achieved, Old Testament studies have already established its own status, and laid a basis for the possible complete framework in the future.

### A Non-conclusive Summary

Since 1980s, western biblical studies have always been a blind spot, consciously or unconsciously, in the study of the academic circle of China. In the introduction of foreign civilizations (mainly civilizations as represented by the European and the American civilizations), the academic circle of China lays particular stress mainly on the Greek tradition, and fails to pay adequate attention to biblical studies which serve as basis of the Hebrew tradition (Jewish-Christian tradition) that constitutes part of the western civilization. In the view of a few Chinese scholars who pay attention to biblical studies, Old Testament studies are just part of the western academic tradition, a foil affiliated to the western Jewish-Christian culture-philosophy. For this reason, most of the scholars cut in to biblical studies by way of culture-history-literature, and therefore Old Testament studies are always a blind spot in our studies.

As far as the academic circle of China is concerned, though some achievements have been made since 1980s, from the collective point of view, they could not form a system at all for probably

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<sup>39</sup> LIU Ping, *Cong Makesi de Chongtu Lilun Jiedu 'Tanake' zhong de Yiselle Minzushi (Interpreting the History of the Israeli Race in 'Taanach' from the Conflict Theory of Marx)*, included in *Dangdai Guowai Makesi Zhuyi Pinglun (Contemporary Overseas Marxist Commentary)*, 6<sup>th</sup> Vol., 2008. Representative works are: LIANG Gong, *Xifang Shengjing Piping Yinlun (Introduction to the Western Biblical Criticism)*, Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2006. This book expounded the following of the Bible in six chapters, namely, brief history of the western biblical literary criticism; hermeneutics and biblical studies; form criticism and biblical studies; sociological criticism and "Old Testament" studies; feminism hermeneutics; and N. Frye and biblical literary studies etc.

<sup>40</sup> Johann Lai, *Practical Hermeneutics*, Beijing: Zhongguo Wenshi Chubanshe (China Literature and History Press), 2004.

<sup>41</sup> ZHUO Xinping, ed., *Jianqiao Shengjing Zhushu Ji (Collection of Notes and Commentaries of Cambridge on the Bible)*, the project was initiated in 2008, and books already published this year include: Carol Meyers, *Exodus*, translated by TIAN Haihua, Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Adolf von Harnack, *Maccion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott*, translated by ZHU Yanbing, Shanghai: Sanlian Bookstore, 2007.



three reasons: first, since reform and opening up, religious studies have always been lagging behind the development of other academic disciplines, and the overall backward religious studies determine that, Old Testament studies, as an offshoot, cannot make substantial achievements. Since 1980s, Old Testament studies have been focusing on translation and introduction of works of the western studies in general, whereas western biblical studies, which, as a whole, was taken only as part of it, did not receive due and adequate attention. Secondly, as biblical studies in western countries have made remarkable achievements, with immense number of books and papers published, for Sino-Christian biblical studies which are still at its initial stage, long-term absorption and digestion are still necessary. Thirdly, the inadequacies of its biblical language and basis have restricted the depth and width of the Mainland academic circle for further development when pursuing for in-depth studies and translation. Many factors determine therefore that, to achieve the objective of building a complete Sino-Christian Old Testament studies, and even the framework of Sino-Christian biblical studies, we now still have a long and arduous journey.

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