

Within conservative biblical scholarship, an essential methodological distinction must be maintained between an Old Testament Introduction and an Old Testament Survey, as each serves a distinct function in handling the text.

The Old Testament Introduction is an explicitly technical, academic, and often polemical discipline. It is divided into General Introduction (which handles macro-critical issues like the divine inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, canon formation, and the textual criticism of ancient Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts) and Special Introduction (which goes book-by-book to aggressively defend historic authorship and early canonical dating against skeptical higher-critical frameworks like the Documentary Hypothesis). Its primary objective is to establish the historical validity and authority of the text before exegesis even begins.

The Old Testament Survey, by contrast, is an overview-driven, expositional, and highly pastoral discipline. Operating with the baseline assumption that the text is already proven reliable, a survey takes a big-picture, bird's-eye view of the 39 books. It focuses on breaking down the narrative flow, clarifying structural outlines, explaining literary genres, and mapping the progressive revelation of God's covenants across redemptive history.

While the Introduction constructs the defensive historical armor around the Word of God, the Survey provides the scannable, theological map necessary for faithful, christocentric preaching and teaching. Both are indispensable, complementary pillars of rigorous biblical literacy.

General Old Testament Introductions

[Utle, Bob. *Old Testament Survey*](#) . Utle, a contemporary retired Baptist professor, offers a highly practical, modern survey designed primarily for pastors, teachers, and serious lay readers. Rooted firmly in a conservative evangelical framework that honors the text as divinely inspired, Utle's survey focuses heavily on his "You Can Understand the Bible" inductive hermeneutic method. He treats critical introductory questions briefly before diving into paragraph-by-paragraph structural outlines and theological themes. It is a highly scannable, accessible modern resource that prioritizes textual execution over dense academic debates.

[Boadt, Lawrence. *Reading the Old Testament: An Introduction* . 1984.](#) Boadt, a prominent American Roman Catholic scholar and priest, provides a highly popular, beautifully structured

introductory text that approaches the Hebrew Bible primarily through the lens of modern historical-critical and archeological methodologies. Boadt integrates ancient Near Eastern legal codes, epics, and geopolitical history to explain the societal development of ancient Israel. While conservative readers will disagree with his fluid view of canon formation and his ready acceptance of source and form-critical editing models, his literary insights into the narrative structures of the Old Testament remain incredibly useful for setting a historical background.

[Green, William Henry. *General Introduction to the Old Testament* . 1898.](#) Green, a legendary Old Testament professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, delivers an unassailable, classic defense of historic evangelical orthodoxy. Written at the absolute height of the Wellhausenian assault on the Bible, Green systematically deconstructs the assumptions of the "Higher Critics." Volume I addresses the Canon, proving its divine compilation and preservation, while Volume II deals with the Text and text-critical methods. Written with devastating logical precision and unparalleled semantic mastery, Green's work remains an essential historical-grammatical bulwark for the absolute inerrancy, inspiration, and divine authority of the Hebrew Scriptures.

[Bleek, Friedrich, Johannes Friedrich Bleek, Adolf Kamphausen, G. H. VENABLES, and Edmund VENABLES. *An Introduction to the Old Testament* . 1869.](#) Bleek, a towering German biblical scholar who studied under Schleiermacher and Neander, represents a transitional phase in 19th-century European higher criticism. While Bleek rejects traditional authorship for many Old Testament books—leaning into early forms of the documentary hypothesis—he does so with a distinctively reverent tone, steering clear of the radical skepticism of the later Wellhausen school. For the contemporary conservative scholar, this translation offers an invaluable historical window into the development of critical Old Testament theories and the structural mechanics of historical-literary editing.

[Jahn, Johann, and Samuel Hulbeart. *An Introduction to the Old Testament* . 1827.](#) Originally written by a pioneering German Roman Catholic orientalist and biblical scholar, this early 19th-century translation functions as a massive, linguistically rigorous introduction to the Old Testament. Jahn provides an exhaustive treatment of Hebrew philology, text-critical history, and archaeological backgrounds. While written on the European continent as higher criticism was beginning to crest, Jahn maintains a remarkably conservative defense of the historical integrity and mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, making this classic text a foundational artifact showing how early modern scholarship defended traditional canonical boundaries.

The Revelation, Inspiration and Authority of the Old Testament

[Clifford, John. *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* . 1895.](#) Clifford, a prominent late-19th-century British Nonconformist and social reformer, addresses the swirling theological

anxieties caused by scientific advancements and higher textual criticism during the Victorian era. Written from a broader, moderately progressive evangelical stance, Clifford seeks to decouple the divine authority and saving message of Scripture from traditional concepts of verbal-plenary inspiration or strict mechanical inerrancy. For the conservative researcher, this text serves as an important historical indicator of the shifting definitions of inspiration within the late-19th-century British church.

Old Testament Surveys

[Mitchell, Eric, and Archie England. *Old Testament Survey: A Student's Guide* . 2007.](#)

Designed as an interactive companion guide for modern undergraduate and seminary students, this volume provides a pedagogically rich framework for digesting the Old Testament narrative. The authors, writing from a solidly conservative Southern Baptist posture, use fill-in outlines, maps, and comparative charts to drill down into the historical settings, major personalities, and messianic trajectories of each book. It represents an excellent, highly functional blueprint for building an integrated biblical-theological foundation.

[LaSor, William Sanford, David Allan Hubbard, Frederic William Bush, and Leslie C. Allen. *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form and Background of the Old Testament* . 1982, 1996.](#)

Compiled by four world-class professors from Fuller Theological Seminary, this monumental volume is a cornerstone of modern evangelical Old Testament studies. The textbook is deeply committed to investigating the historical and geographical background, the specific literary form, and the ultimate theological message of each book. While the authors demonstrate an openness to certain redactional and source theories that traditionalist scholars avoid, they handle the canonical text with a deep, uncompromising reverence for its divine inspiration. It is an indispensable, intellectually rigorous tool for academic exegesis.

[Benware, Paul N. *Survey of the Old Testament* . 1988, 1993.](#) Benware delivers a classic, highly streamlined, book-by-book survey written from an intentionally traditional, dispensational evangelical perspective. He treats introductory matters with an unwavering defense of mosaic authorship and historical inerrancy. The book utilizes clear tables, chronological outlines, and bulleted summaries to illuminate the foundational covenants (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, New) that run through the text. It functions as an exceptionally useful, clear introductory reference guide for students needing a baseline structural understanding of the text.

Listen to Lectures Online

[Stuart, Douglas. *Old Testament Survey* . BiblicalTraining.org.](#) In this exhaustive digital lecture

series, Douglas Stuart—a world-renowned evangelical Old Testament scholar and co-author of *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*—brings his legendary expertise directly to students and pastors. Stuart's approach is fiercely text-focused, historically conservative, and deeply practical. He unpacks ancient Near Eastern context, covenantal obligations, and poetic structures with the easy familiarity of a seasoned scholar-pastor, making this an exceptional, modern auditory masterclass for faithful biblical interpretation.

Critical and Historical Introductions

Within biblical bibliography, works categorized under Critical and Historical Introductions represent the academic battlefield where the divine origin of the Old Testament is directly evaluated against humanistic, rationalistic methodologies. Originating primarily in 19th-century Germany through the rise of the historical-critical method (higher criticism), these introductions treat the biblical text not as an inspired, infallible revelation, but as an evolving, purely human literary artifact. They focus heavily on deconstructing the text into hypothetical sources, evolutionary stages of development, and late historical redactions (such as assigning the Pentateuch to late anonymous sources like J, E, D, or P, or dividing the Book of Isaiah among multiple authors).

For the conservative, orthodox researcher, volumes within this specific sub-category fall into two distinct camps:

Skeptical/Rationalistic Works: (e.g., De Wette, Davidson) Textbooks written by higher critics that seek to dismantle traditional authorship, deny predictive prophecy, and subvert the historic authority of Scripture.

Polemical/Defensive Works: (e.g., Green, Zahn) Exhaustive counter-introductions written by conservative champions who weaponize the exact same rigorous historical and linguistic tools to systematically refute critical theories and vindicate the integrity, inspiration, and historical reliability of the biblical canon.

Consequently, this category is not intended for light, devotional reading, but serves as an indispensable academic apparatus for serious pastors and theologians who must understand, anticipate, and thoroughly answer the historical-critical challenges leveled against the Word of God.

[De Wette, Wilhelm Martin Leberecht, and Theodore Parker. *A Critical and Historical Introduction to the Canonical Scriptures of the Old Testament* . 1850.](#)

This two-volume work stands as one of the most influential and radical monuments of 19th-century German higher criticism. De Wette was among the first to argue that Deuteronomy was written during the reign of King Josiah (the "pious fraud" theory) and to treat the historical books as romanticized, mythological national epics rather than literal history. Translated and expanded by American transcendentalist Theodore Parker, this work represents the exact critical foil against which conservative giants like William Henry Green fought. It is an essential primary source for understanding the rise of theological liberalism in the West.

[Volume I](#) , [Volume II](#)

[Davidson, Samuel. *An Introduction to the Old Testament: Critical, Historical and Theological* . Vol. 3.](#)

Davidson's multi-volume work marks a historic turning point in British biblical scholarship, as he was one of the first prominent UK academics to fully embrace and popularize continental rationalistic higher criticism. In this third volume, Davidson applies source-critical methods to the Prophetic and Wisdom literature, actively denying traditional predictive prophecy and unitary authorship (such as Deutero-Isaiah). This text sparked intense controversy in his day, leading to his removal from his teaching post, and remains a vital historical benchmark showing the fracturing of traditional biblical views in the mid-19th century.