

Review of Literature

Carter, Charles. E. "Opening Windows onto Biblical Worlds: Applying the Social Sciences to Hebrew Scripture." Chapter in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold.. Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1999.

By Etoughé Anani Patrick

From the enlightenment, the Bible has been approached from humanities perspectives. However, the sociology of Israel has been lacking though in rabbinical literature, we found peripheral sociological observations.

Several lines of sociology and anthropology have emerged (1) the conflict model, which explores the strategies of competing groups, (2) the structural-functional approach that emphasizes the basic unity existing within societies, and (3) the materialist or cultural materialism that suggests that the physical realities of culture give rise to the ideologies on social structure.

The sociology of biblical Israel is based on a central problem: what social models are appropriate analogs for biblical Israel, and how should these models be applied? For Charles E. Carter, the point of departure is essential since it may bring different results. This has been seen from MendeHall

Israel had a peaceful infiltration and Albright's conquest model views gets revolt theory.

Carter gives a brief historical account of the emergence and application of sociological studies related to the OT. Then, he provides an evaluation of this later contribution.

The foundation of Social Science would have been appropriate for times where the priority is given to human reason over revelation. These ideas had pervaded the realm of anthropology and sociology by their forerunners such as Durkheim, Spencer, and Weber.

The routinization that brought Israel to abandon their nomadic life to a sedentary life may be right, though models proposed in sociological and anthropological studies may be right at once; they concentrate too much on the human side without looking to its correlation with the Godhead. Israelite life is centered on God's acceptance and rejection of his leadership. The sedentarisation was a fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, but the use of God's promise sometimes brings people far from the Giver. The Bible gives itself its own reason within the covenant of relationship-God's people wanted to have a king on the model of other nations (1 Sam 8:1-10). Was the *longue durée*? Or simply the issues of sin that is the spiritual cause of everything? Ethnographic parallels are not at all adequate to explain the prophetic unit of Israel's prophecy. Elsewhere, the prophetic authority lies on the community, whereas Israel prophetic authority lies on God's presence.

What is good with sociological research is that they helped much to understand the role of women in a society dominated by male, thus, making scholars aware of the many possibilities that women dealt in ancient cultures; however, sociological model needs to be clarified by the authoritative understanding of God's role for both sexes.

In addition, sociological models can be applied wrongly, since an old existing custom is not always right.

The dangers of sociological and anthropological are many. For example, relativity, that is reading the modern world-view onto ancient Israel, another tool that will diminish the authority of the Word of God.

Yet, theology uses both the methods of social science. Thus, by using the sociological approach to comprehend to the function of the society upon their evolution is at best possible whether the idea of God's authority is always put in the picture.

Two other critics that may be found within the sociological/anthropological studies are: it is not centered in the mission of God's kingdom rather, in man's kingdom; and it does not always serve the mission of the Church. On other hand, if sociological approach presupposes that most of the Bible is sociologically-conditioned, that is, it cannot escape the relativity of times, places, and groups within which it existed, then, it would mean that doctrinal claims may merely reflect a particular understanding of a socio-linguistic-cultural group rather than a timeless truth from God.

