

First I would like to congratulate Taiwan Theological Seminary with its 120 years' anniversary. It is an honor both for me and for the seminary I represent, to be invited to contribute to the issue of Taiwan Theological Journal celebrating this anniversary. I want to dedicate this article to Dr. George Leslie Mackay and to the founders of Taiwan Theological Seminary, thanking them for their dedication to realize among the people of Taiwan the intent of our Lord: I will be your God, you will be my people.

Scholars have proposed several concepts and phrases as a focal point from which the theology of the Old Testament may be described. These include covenant, the promise, God's fourfold design, the kingdom of God, and others. Sometimes one of these concepts is hailed as the center of Old Testament theology. In other cases the scholar has only claimed that it is a perspective through which the theology of the Hebrew Bible may be described, in other words, that it is fruitful to write an Old Testament theology from this perspective, but that it is not necessarily the Old Testament theology. A brilliant example of the latter is the monograph by Walter Brueggemann where he was able to describe the theology of the Old Testament through the "prism" of the land.

I suspect the formula 'I will be your God, you will be my people', would be a good candidate for such an undertaking. However, my aim in this paper is much more limited. I merely want to investigate how this formula is used in the Old Testament. What other motifs are closely connected to this formula? On what does the relation expressed by the formula rest, or how is it brought about? What are the results of this relation or what is the formula used to motivate? Is there any pattern as to which texts or in what part of Israel's history the formula shows up?

The formula consists of two clauses, "I will be your God," and "You will be my people," I include both texts that have the full formula and texts that only contain the first clause. I use the name: 'the Relational Formula' to denote the full formula or when I do not distinguish between the full formula and the "I will be your God" clause only. I use 'the Relational Clause' when referring specially to the clause "I will be your God." Also, the wording of this formula is not absolutely fixed. For example, some texts use the second person, "your God," other texts use the third, "their God." Also, in some cases "You will be my people" precedes the clause "I will be your God."

I work with the texts as they are found in the Old Testament context and with the picture of Israel's history that is drawn by the canonical books of the Old Testament.