

*Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect.* Edited by Scott J. Hafemann. Downers Grove/Leicester: InterVarsity/Apollos, 2002, 300 pp., n.p.

The death of biblical theology has been proclaimed more than once in the last generation, and yet the discipline continues to live on. This work represents the essays delivered at the Wheaton Theology Conference of 2000. As with other multi-author works we are not treated to uni-dimensional program for biblical theology, but a number of different proposals for the discipline.

The book begins with an essay by the editor, Scott Hafemann, which reflects the title of the book. He provides the landscape for the direction of the remainder of the book. The book is split into four different sections: 1) The OT as the foundation for biblical theology; 2) the witness of the NT as the culmination of biblical theology; 3) the unity of the Bible as the challenge of biblical theology; and 4) the prospect of biblical theology. The four sections will provide the outline for this review.

The first section investigates the OT as the foundation of biblical theology. The authors in this part of the book give brief descriptions of the task of OT theology or illustrate how it should be carried out. John Sailhamer maintains that OT theology should focus on the final form of the text as we have it in the Hebrew Bible. Brian Toews argues that Genesis 1-4 introduces the OT as a whole and is programmatic for the rest of OT theology. He relates the law, the prophets, and the writings to the inaugural chapters in Genesis, highlighting the themes of God, his word, humankind, and the earth. William Dumbrell suggests that Genesis 2:1-17 foreshadows the new creation. The Sabbath points to eschatological rest, and the garden anticipates God's sanctuary which is ultimately fulfilled in the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22. Adam is God's priest-king

in the garden enjoined with the task to extend God's rule over the entire world.

Dumbrell's emphasis on the new creation anticipates Greg Beale's essay in the NT section, though I am skeptical of Dumbrell's suggestion that humans fell but nature is left untouched. A canonical reading, that includes Rom 8:18ff, militates against such a conclusion.

One of the most fascinating essays is Stephen Dempster's proposal regarding the relationship between geography and genealogy and dominion and dynasty. Dempster thinks the order of the Hebrew Tanak provides the structure for doing OT theology. Dempster helps us in particular to perceive the importance of David for OT theology. Furthermore, he rightly discerns thematic connections between various books in the OT. Are Sailhamer and Dempster suggesting that the Tanak represents *the* order for doing OT theology or *an* order? The former hypothesis is too dogmatic and would suggest that the early church with its canonical order could not do OT theology at the same level. We should expect, on the other hand, to discern illuminating connections in the structure of the Tanak since OT theology can be studied profitably from a number of mutually enriching perspectives.

Richard Schultz surveys a number of different proposals for doing OT theology by focusing on their work in Genesis, including the work of Ronald Clements, Brevard Childs, Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, William Dumbrell, John Sailhamer, Paul House, Rolf Rendtdorff, and Bruce Birch et al. Despite the common methodology shared by many practitioners, Schultz argues that in too many cases the actual shape and structure of Genesis is ignored. Canonical theology should be wedded to the literary features of the text.

Gerald Wilson examines the Psalms, directing our attention to the order of the collection and to the order and diversity of the Psalms. The messianic configuration of the psalms is particularly explored. Jay Wells articulates the "figural" character of the biblical text which he thinks is central to displaying canonical unity. He distinguishes his view from a typological approach, but the definition he applies to figural representation could also be assigned to typology.

Part two of the book presents the witness of the NT as the culmination of biblical theology. James Scott focuses on the restoration of Israel as the basis for biblical theology. Scott represents an approach to biblical theology that is represented today in the scholarship of N. T. Wright. Andreas Köstenberger usefully traces the unity and diversity of the NT, arguing for unity in diversity. He disavows a single center, maintaining that it is "more promising to search for a plurality of integrative NT motifs" (154). The essay concludes by focusing on God, Christ, and the gospel. Greg Beale charts a course for NT theology under the rubric "new creation," which functions under the umbrella of the already but not yet. Beale makes a good case for the importance of the new creation theme, but it is doubtful that this theme captures the center of NT theology. Peter Stuhlmacher writes a partially autobiographical essay on biblical theology, reflecting on his writing and teaching for many years. Stuhlmacher insists that the central message of the gospel can be discerned through historical criticism and established on an exegetical basis.

The third segment of the book tackles the issue of the unity of the Bible. Christopher Seitz's essay indicates that the conference was not one in which all agreed. He disagrees strongly with Hartmut Gese and Peter Stuhlmacher that the canon of

scripture was still open in the first century A.D., insisting that it was closed before the coming of Christ. Nicholas Perrin sets forth a dialogic conception of the unity of the testaments by applying Hans Robert Jauss's literary theory to the task of biblical theology. Stephen Fowl repristinates Irenaeus's rule of faith and rejects the historicism of Wrede and Räisänen in doing biblical theology. Daniel Fuller challenges progressive dispensationalism and covenant theology to examine the law-gospel from the standpoint of biblical theology instead of pre-conceived theological dogmas. Ted Dorman compares and contrasts the programs for biblical theology advocated by Oscar Cullmann and Francis Watson. Dorman, like Fuller and apparently contra to Fowl, sides with Cullmann, maintaining that we must explore matters like gospel and law and justification and sanctification from the standpoint of biblical theology.

The book closes with part four which articulates the prospect for biblical theology. Paul House sketches in a program and approach for doing canonical biblical theology. House believes that each book should be investigated individually in pursuing biblical theology. Though such an approach is useful in delineating the distinctive themes of each writer, I am hesitant to endorse this as *the* method for doing biblical theology. No one method can capture the breadth and depth of the canon. Biblical theology can also be prosecuted usefully with a thematic or historical approach, and thereby some connections will be evident that are not as clear in a book by book approach. It must be acknowledged that no single approach can elucidate the whole of biblical theology. Finally, Graeme Goldsworthy insists that biblical theology should be the heartbeat of Christian ministry and Christian education. Biblical theology should not be relegated to the academy, but should inform and inspire the church.

The authors in this volume do not speak with one voice on every matter. Scholars differ on the matter of a center, and on the status of the OT canon. And yet the authors think there is such a thing as biblical theology, that the theology of whole Bible is unified, and that this unity is to be discovered by studying and explicating the biblical text. It is gratifying to see that the need for biblical theology is still acknowledged today.

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