

Edited by Scott J. Hafemann
and Paul R. House

CENTRAL THEMES *in*
BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Mapping unity in diversity



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To
Lindsey Hafemann
and
Martin Spence

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible Commentary	BEvTh	Beiträge zur evangelis- chen Theologie
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>	BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
AOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary	BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>	<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BBET	Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie	<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>	BSL	Biblical Studies Library
BCBC	Believers Church Bible Commentary	BTCL	Biblical and Theological Classics Library
BDAG	W. Bauer, F. W. Dander, W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, <i>Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999)	<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
		CSIR	Cambridge Studies in Ideology and Religion
		<i>DOTP</i>	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch</i>

<i>DPL</i>	<i>Dictionary of Paul and His Letters</i>	<i>JSNTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series</i>
<i>EKK</i>	<i>Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</i>	<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</i>
<i>ET</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>	<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>ExpT</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>	<i>LSJ</i>	H. G. Liddell, R. Scott and H. S. Jones, <i>A Greek–English Lexicon</i> , 9th ed. with revised supplement (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)
<i>FCI</i>	Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation	<i>LXX</i>	Septuagint
<i>FOTL</i>	Forms of the Old Testament Literature	<i>MT</i>	Masoretic Text
<i>FRLANT</i>	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments	<i>NAC</i>	New American Commentary
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>	<i>NASB</i>	New American Standard Bible
<i>Herm</i>	Hermeneia	<i>NCB</i>	New Century Bible
<i>HNTC</i>	Harper New Testament Commentary	<i>NDBT</i>	<i>New Dictionary of Biblical Theology</i>
<i>HSMS</i>	Harvard Semitic Monograph Series	<i>NIB</i>	New Interpreter's Bible
<i>IBC</i>	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching	<i>NICNT</i>	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>IEJ</i>	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>	<i>NICOT</i>	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>	<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>	<i>NIGTC</i>	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>	<i>NIV</i>	New International Version
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>		
<i>JPSTC</i>	Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary		
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>		

<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>	<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>NovTSup</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum Supplements</i>	SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version	<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology	TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
NTS	New Testament Studies	<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology	<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library	UBS	United Bible Society
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary	UBT	Understanding Biblical Themes
<i>PWCJS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies</i>	<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>The Reformed Theological Review</i>	<i>VTSup</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum Supplements</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version	WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature	WEC	Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary
SBLDS	SBL Dissertation Series	<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
SBLSP	SBL Seminar Papers	WUNT	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>
SBLSym	SBL Symposium	<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology		
SHS	Scripture and Hermeneutics Series		

Dead Sea Scrolls

CD	Cairo (Genizah text of the) <i>Damascus (Document)</i>	1Q33	<i>1QWarScroll</i>
1QH	<i>Hôdayôt (Thanksgiving Hymns)</i> from Qumran Cave 1	1QM+	
		4QFlor	Florilegium
		4QMessAp	<i>Messianic Apocalypse</i>
		4QpPS ^a	<i>4QPsalms Pesher^a</i>
1QM	<i>Milhamâ (War Scroll)</i>		

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*T. Jud* *Testament of Judah***Papyri**

P. Mich. Zen. *Zenon Papyri*,
 University of
 Michigan

Ignatius*Eph.* *Letter to the Ephesians**Rom.* *Letter to the Romans**Smyrn.* *Letter to the Smyrneans***Philo**

Spec. Laws The Special Laws

INTRODUCTION

In 2000 several biblical scholars met at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois to discuss the past and future of biblical theology as a discipline in the academy and in the church. It was an exciting conference, one in which veteran biblical theologians such as Peter Stuhlmacher, Daniel Fuller, Graeme Goldsworthy, Elmer Martens and William Dumbrell presented papers, and one in which younger scholars participated as well. This conference proved that interest in biblical theology has not waned in evangelical circles. Indeed, it evidenced a vitality that probably surprised even the participants. The collected conference papers appeared as *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (Downers Grove: IVP; Leicester: Apollos, 2002), and the volume was well received.

After that event the editors of the present volume discussed ways to build upon the stimulating experience of the conference. We agreed that one way we could do so was to gather a group of like-minded scholars to explore biblical themes that contribute to the wholeness of the Bible. We chose people we believed shared our commitment to ‘whole-Bible biblical theology’, a term we coined for the sort of biblical theology that tries not only to examine the theology of biblical books, which we applaud, or to use biblical categories for discussing theology, which we also applaud. Rather, we wanted to bring together people who saw the need to trace themes and overarching structural ideas through the whole Bible. We wanted to discuss the type of biblical theology Elmer Martens defines as

that approach to Scripture which attempts to see Biblical material holistically and to describe this wholeness or synthesis in Biblical categories. Biblical theology attempts to embrace the message of the Bible and to arrive at an intelligible coherence of the whole despite the great diversity of the parts. Or, put another way: Biblical theology investigates the themes presented in Scripture and defines their inter-relationships. Biblical theology is an attempt to get to the theological heart of the Bible.¹

With these basic principles in mind, we selected the contributors to this volume and met from 24 to 27 April 2003 in Wheaton, Illinois and from 28 to 30 April 2005 at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama to present our research on seven basic themes in biblical theology and to gain the insights of our colleagues. Participants chose the theme they wished to address. This meant that some significant themes would have to be handled by other experts at other times, or were deemed to have been discussed effectively by others in the past. We did not determine the seven most important themes in the Bible and assign them to one another. Individual interests were allowed latitude, but we nonetheless found that the themes the participants chose provided a solid sample of key biblical ideas.

We came together as fellow students of the Scriptures to pursue with one another the ways in which the Bible presents these great themes across the canon. We came together not because we all shared the exact same methodology and opinions. Rather, we came together because we are like-minded when it comes to pursuing the unifying message of the Bible as it unfolded throughout redemptive history. We came together in the awareness that all our efforts are only preliminary in this world, yet certain that the work we were doing would help our understanding of the Scriptures in a way that would hopefully help us teach others more effectively. To pursue the unity of the Bible in a circle of scholars unified by their faith, their commitment to the Scriptures, their dedication to the church and their collegial relationships with one another was a unique opportunity, and we were grateful to be part of it.

As could be expected from the preceding paragraphs, the contributors to this volume share at least three core convictions about the unity of the Bible. First, we are convinced that the Bible *is* a unity because it is the word of God, who is a unified and coherent being, and that a unified biblical theology should thus span the entire range of the Scriptures because they are all part of the written word of God. Though not a uniform opinion, it is common in our age for scholars to write of the many competing ‘voices’ and various ‘theologies’

1. Elmer A. Martens, ‘Tackling Old Testament Theology’, *JETS* 20 (1977), p. 123.

of the Bible. These essays oppose such trends. They seek to uncover the overarching theology of the Bible as it develops throughout the canon. The themes they treat are studied with an eye to their integration into the whole fabric of the Bible, their use and reuse by the Bible's writers, and thus to their development across the canon.

Each contributor was allowed to pursue the chosen theme across the Scriptures in the manner they deemed best, but they all pursued that theme in a way calculated to demonstrate biblical wholeness. Stated simply, the contributors do not pit the Old Testament against the New Testament, for they do not think the biblical writers do so. This pursuit of unity does not reject legitimate diversity. Indeed, it affirms that effective literature utilizes tension and diversity to create its unity. Nonetheless, this diversity contributes to the overall unity; it does not negate it. Tragedy, for instance, must have comic elements to work, but such diversity aids the creation of the whole.

Second, we are convinced that to do biblical theology is not merely to survey the contents of the Bible. In pursuit of an understanding of God and his ways, a biblical theology that spans the canon seeks not only to unpack the content, but also to establish the conceptual unity of the Scriptures as a whole as they unfold in human events. Thus this type of biblical theology endeavours to reflect synthetically on the history and significance of the relationship between God and his people and God and his world, past, present and future, as delineated in the Scriptures. To achieve this goal, whole-Bible biblical theology does not settle for describing the discrete theological emphases of *individual* writers or sources. Nor does it settle for focusing on reconstructing the religious experiences or historical events *behind the text* that gave rise to the text. Instead, *biblical theology* seeks its content and coherence in the final propositions and basic ordering of the Old and New Testaments read in their entirety, in their final form, and in concert with one another. As attempted in this volume, *biblical theology* is the study of God's self-revelation to human beings for the purposes of redemption through the interpretation of the events and experiences written down in the Scriptures. This sort of biblical theology affirms that God's self-revelation can never be separated from the historical context in which it was given, and that this context is in concert with the literary record in which it is found.

Third, we are convinced that these days doing whole-Bible biblical theology most likely should be a collaborative effort. The subject matter of biblical theology and the literature associated with it have grown too complex and the questions too many for most of us to pursue the task by working alone. There will always be dramatic exceptions to this rule. Still, keeping pace with current scholarship in Old Testament, New Testament and Theology, to say nothing

of supporting disciplines such as Ancient History, can be a daunting task. Therefore, we met together at the beginning and end of the work and kept in contact in the interim and afterwards. We learned a great deal from one another. We found working in dialogue with one another to be fruitful and encouraging. Of course, readers will have to judge the results themselves.

Finally, we present the results of our research with a certain progression in mind. The first essay establishes ‘covenant’ as an integrative concept that spans the Bible. Scripture takes shape as two interrelated covenants, so this choice is not astounding, yet it is a vitally important point to make. Based on this introductory principle, we then present essays on God’s commands, God’s means of atonement, God’s sending of servants and God’s warning about the Day of the Lord as natural outgrowths of the Bible’s covenantal structure. The final two essays, on God’s people and the history of redemption, are considered summaries of God’s purpose for relating to human beings in a covenantal way. Stated simply, God is in the process of gathering a holy people, which in effect means that God pursues a redemptive mission in our world.

Several people deserve our thanks for their help in this process. Our first meeting was made possible by a grant from Dr Stan Jones, Provost of Wheaton College. Stan is an excellent scholar in his own right, and he supports his faculty members’ scholarly pursuits as well as anyone in the academy. We are also grateful for the help and hospitality given us by the staff at Harbor House at Wheaton College, the lovely venue where the meeting took place.

Our second meeting was supported by a grant approved by Dean Timothy George of Beeson Divinity School. Like virtually everything else that occurs at Beeson, this meeting was made possible by endowment funds provided by our benefactor, the late Ralph Waldo Beeson (1900–90). Mr Beeson’s generosity and Dean George’s faithful leadership, scholarship and churchmanship have combined to make Beeson Divinity School a unique place. Elizabeth Baker made the arrangements for the meeting as part of her ongoing excellent support of Paul House’s work. She also painstakingly produced the final draft of the manuscript.

We owe special thanks to Dr Philip Duce, Theological Books Editor at Inter-Varsity Press (UK), for accepting this project and seeing it through to its completion. Such books are hardly mega-sellers, so his patience, support and commitment to this type of biblical analysis are much appreciated.

Most of all, we thank our wives, Debara Hafemann and Heather House, for their enthusiasm for this project. We thank them particularly for showing gracious hospitality during the two meetings. Their love and support for us and for each other has served to strengthen our long-standing and uncommon friendship, as well as our lives of study and teaching, out of which this work

was born. They also deserve thanks for keeping us on task by wondering, among other things, what the Bible is if not a unified expression of God's character that expresses his redemptive and loving plan for us all. Heather merits added thanks for donating hours of work spent copy-editing the manuscript.

Twenty years ago, when we were young teachers at Taylor University, our children Eric Hafemann and Molly House used to play together. In July 2006, Eric was married to Lindsey Robison in California and Molly married Martin Spence in England. We rejoice that both couples know and serve the Lord. Now that we are no longer 'promising young scholars', it is a great comfort to know that not even death can separate us from those we love most. We dedicate this book to Lindsey and Martin as a way of welcoming them to our families and as an encouragement to search the Scriptures for transforming truth.

For these and other kindnesses we are very grateful.

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1. THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP

Scott J. Hafemann

At its most fundamental level, the subject matter of biblical theology is the *Bible's* understanding of *God's* character and purposes. This 'theology' is displayed in the developing relationship between God and his people (Israel and the church) and, through them, in God's relationship with the world (the nations and the created order). The primary matrix of God's self-revelation is therefore not private religious experience, but the events recounted and interpreted in the Scriptures that establish and maintain these relationships.¹

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1. As James D. Smart, *The Past, Present, and Future of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), pointed out, the nature of the link between 'theology' as God's self-revelation and 'history' as the discernible nexus of cause and effect is the key question of Biblical Theology. Smart's own answer, advocated by many today, was to follow Barth's separation of theology from history by relocating revelation in the human experience of God reflected in the Scriptures (see pp. 90–92). In contrast, the position taken here is that Scripture is not a record of religious beliefs or experiences in response to a divine revelation outside itself, but is itself divine revelation. In this regard, see the helpful distinction established by John S. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology, A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), pp. 13–15, between God's self-revelation in the Bible and religion as a human act in accordance with that revelation. Sailhamer follows

History, not the heart, is the locus of divine revelation. Moreover, since biblical history focuses on God's rescue of humanity from its rebellion against its creator and sustainer, it can be called the 'history of redemption' or 'salvation history'. Thus God's relationship with his people within the salvation history recounted in Scripture is the subject matter of 'biblical *theology*'. To call it 'theology' is especially apropos in that the intention of biblical salvation history is unequivocally *theocentric*, being focused on God's self-revelation of his righteous character in and through his relationship with his people, the nations and the world. Biblically speaking, the purpose of theology is doxology.²

This means that God's relationship with the world and his people is not a theoretical abstraction, nor is it fundamentally a subjective experience. Rather, with salvation history as its framework, this relationship is expressed in and defined by the interrelated covenants that exist throughout the history of redemption. This leads to the apostle Paul being able to refer to the various covenants throughout Israel's history (cf. Rom. 9:4; Eph. 2:12), as well as to references to the 'old' or 'new' covenant as the two epochs of salvation history.

Nevertheless, although all would agree that there are various individual covenants throughout the Scriptures, it is significant that the term for covenant in the Old Testament (*bērit*) never occurs in the plural when describing God's covenants with Israel.³ Rather, the biblical writers refer either to a specific covenant or to 'the' covenant between God and his people. This is because the covenants of the Bible all embody the same fundamental covenant relationship. For this reason, 'covenant' is the biblical-theological concept used to

E. Hirsch in tracing the shift from a faith based on the Bible as revelation, to a faith based on the Bible as a religious response to revelation, to the work of Sigmund Baumgarten in the mid-eighteenth century.

2. This conviction first came home to me through the teaching of John Piper as crystallized in *The Justification of God, An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 9:1-23* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), pp. 90-97, in which he establishes that God's righteousness 'consists most basically in God's unswerving commitment to preserve the honor of his name and display his glory' in everything he does (p. 97). See, e.g., Exod. 14:4, 18; 1 Kgs 8:41-45; Ps. 31:1-3; 79:9; 143:1-2, 11; Isa. 43:6-7, 21-25; 46:13; 48:11; Jer. 14:7-21; Ezek. 20:9-44; 36:20-32; Dan. 9:7-19; Rom. 11:32-36; Eph. 1:3-14.
3. As Rolf Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula, An Exegetical and Theological Investigation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), pp. 8, 79, has pointed out, though James Barr emphasized this point in 1977, it has not been taken seriously enough in subsequent scholarship.

explain (1) the essential character of God as King or Sovereign Ruler, (2) the election of a people under his rule who, as his ‘adopted’ children, live in dependence upon him, and (3) the corresponding nature of God’s bond with them as their ‘Sovereign Father’. The content of this covenant relationship is thus summarized in what has come to be known as the ‘covenant formula’, i.e., that YHWH declares, ‘I will be God for you [= your God] and you shall be a people for me [= my people],’⁴ a mutual belonging between God and Israel that eventually encompasses the nations and consummates history (Ezek. 37:26–28; Zech. 2:11; Rom. 15:10; Rev. 21:3).

This ‘covenant relationship’, in which the basic categories of kingship (Sovereign Ruler) and kinship (Father) are mutually interpretive,⁵ is not static. It is the dynamic, historical arena within which God reveals himself. As such, it provides the interpretive lens for understanding who God is, who his people are and how they relate to one another. Hence, as Rolf Rendtorff has observed, ‘covenant’ is ‘the most comprehensive and the most theologically weighty term for God’s attention to humans in the Hebrew Bible.’⁶ John Walton concludes that it is the ‘single most important theological structure in the Old Testament’; indeed, ‘both the Old and New Testament weave their theology on the loom of history with the thread of the covenant.’⁷ The covenant relationship con-

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4. For an insightful treatment of this theme, see Rendtorff, *The Covenant Formula*. See his p. 11 for this literal translation and pp. 50, 73, for his conclusion that the covenant formula is ‘at once the unfolding and the endorsement of the . . . covenant’, and as such ‘the expression of the fundamental relationship between God and Israel’. Rendtorff’s study is based on an analysis of the context and significance of the distribution of the three forms of the formula: (A) ‘I will be God for you’; (B) ‘You shall be a people for me’; and (A) and (B) combined. For a listing of the passages according to these categories, see his pp. 93–94.
 5. For the programmatic insight that the concept of ‘covenant’ in the Bible is based in tribal and family ‘kinship’ relationships, which later become interpreted in terms of kingship, see F. M. Cross, ‘Kinship and Covenant in Ancient Israel’, in *From Epic to Canon* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998), pp. 3–21.
 6. Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible, A Theology of the Old Testament*, Tools for Biblical Study 7 (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2005), p. 433.
 7. John H. Walton, *Covenant, God’s Purpose, God’s Plan* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 10. In accord with my emphasis, Walton’s thesis, p. 24, is that God’s sovereign plan is to be in relationship with the people whom he has created, but that people must know God to be in relationship with him. Therefore God has instituted ‘as a primary objective a program of self-revelation . . . the mechanism that drives this program is the

sequently provides not only the content but also the context for understanding the revelation-in-relationship and the history-of-redemption within which the biblical narrative and theology unfold.⁸ Brevard Childs is right: a scripturally interpreted *Heilsgeschichte* and the notion of the covenant are the two key categories for constructing a biblical theology.⁹

This does not mean that the ‘covenant relationship’ is the one, central theme of the Bible. The attempt to isolate such a theme has proved to be too specific to gain a consensus or too general to be of explanatory power. More appropriately, the concept of the covenant relationship provides the *structure* that serves to integrate the interrelated themes developed throughout the history of redemption delineated in the Scriptures.¹⁰ Like the hub and rim of a wheel respectively, the old (establishment) and new (restoration and consummation) covenants define and hold together the different ‘spokes’ of divine revelation manifested in the words and deeds of redemptive history. In so doing, the covenant becomes the interpretive lens for seeing clearly the conceptual and historical unity of the Bible in the midst of its diversity.

The covenant concept of the Bible

In 1933 Walther Eichrodt shocked the scholarly world of his day, which emphasized critical reconstructions and the disunity of the Old Testament, by arguing

covenant, and the instrument is Israel. The purpose of the covenant is to reveal God.’ See his pp. 26, 29 and esp. 31–43 for his fourteen key texts in support of this thesis.

8. For the history of the debate surrounding this complex issue, see Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy? Reassessing the History of New Testament Theology* (Leiden: Deo Publishing, 2004).
9. Brevard Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 92; cf. p. 419.
10. James Barr’s conclusion concerning scholarship’s search for the centre of biblical theology is instructive in this regard: ‘To sum up the question of the “centre,” it seems to me that the discussion of it has not been a vain waste of breath, as some have thought, and that valuable results have emerged from it. It is not a matter of reaching a definitive answer, but rather of weighing possibilities for the expression of structure. Whether writers of Theologies define a “centre” or not, they will very likely have to work with some idea of one (or more?), as a simple necessity for the organization of their work’ (*The Concept of Biblical Theology, An Old Testament Perspective* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999], p. 343).