BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

A CANONICAL
THEMATIC
& ETHICAL
APPROACH

"When Neil Armstrong finally landed on the moon and famously said, 'That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind,' on July 20th, 1969, this was the culmination of years of planning, research, and hard work at NASA which silenced, at least for a while, all the naysayers who said such a monumental task could not be accomplished—ever. In many ways, creating a helpful and detailed biblical theology that encompasses every book of the Bible is frankly almost as monumental an achievement as the moon landing, not least because biblical studies has become a discipline that has splintered into many specialized enterprises. Furthermore, *Biblical Theology* by Köstenberger and Goswell manages to deal not just with the themes or the storylines of the sixty-six books of the Bible, but even with the ethics of each book too, recognizing that the theology and ethics of the Bible are inherently intertwined and interdependent. Whether or not one agrees in detail with the basically Reformed approach to the themes and narrative of the Bible that one finds in this volume, this book is a giant leap in the right direction to producing a coherent and comprehensive understanding of biblical theology."

Ben Witherington III, Jean R. Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary; Emeritus Professor, St. Andrews University, Scotland

"More books on biblical theology are appearing of late, but this book is a pearl of great price that does not simply probe the central themes and ethics of individual books and authors—it tracks their place in the storyline of Scripture. I wish I'd had this book for my first classes when I began studying God's word, but it also offers a wealth of insights for those already schooled in Scripture. It is brilliantly conceived and executed, and I recommend it highly for students at all levels, pastors, and researchers."

David E. Garland, Professor of Christian Scriptures, George W. Truett Theological Seminary

"This work meets a genuine and crucial need to build biblical theology inductively from the constituent works of the canon. While listening to the individual voices, the authors masterfully demonstrate the coherence of the canonical symphony highlighting God's love for the world in Christ. The authors' competence in addressing and synthesizing such a broad range of material with sensitivity and effectiveness is remarkable!"

Craig S. Keener, F. M. and Ada Thompson Professor of Biblical Studies, Asbury Theological Seminary

"Biblical theology explores the interactions of the literary, historical, and theological dimensions of the various biblical books, focusing on the Bible's unifying storyline. It is, by definition, interdisciplinary. Yet, two angles, intrinsic to the nature of the Bible itself, are sorely neglected in most studies of biblical theology: the significance of the order of the books in the Bible and the Bible's moral teaching. *Biblical Theology* by Köstenberger and Goswell incorporates canonical and ethical approaches, resulting in a rich and rewarding exposition that is comprehensive in scope. The book is a magisterial study of immense value to students and scholars, preachers and pastors, and anyone interested in the Bible's teaching about the will of God for his people and his world."

Brian Rosner, Principal, Ridley College

"In *Biblical Theology*, Goswell and Köstenberger are a dynamic duo, uniting their specializations in each Testament for the good of the church. The result is a treasure trove of insights into the theology of each book of the Bible and the rich connections binding these books together. An impressive work!"

Andrew Abernethy, Professor of Old Testament, Wheaton College; author, *Savoring Scripture*

"In this wide-ranging, well-researched book, Andreas Köstenberger and Gregory Goswell make a significant and welcome contribution to the field of biblical theology. The authors carefully examine the Scriptures' canonical structure and book order, wrestle seriously with their unity and diversity, and rightly stress the essential ethical component of biblical theology. This volume abounds with fresh insights and faithful exegetical and theological reflections, and I warmly commend it to pastors, scholars, and all serious students of Scripture."

Brian J. Tabb, Academic Dean and Professor of Biblical Studies, Bethlehem College & Seminary

"In *Biblical Theology*, Köstenberger and Goswell clearly define and locate biblical theology within its canonical, thematic, and ethical setting. They cover every major section of Scripture within the overall biblical storyline while also showing the relation between the Testaments. You rarely find a work that approaches the Scriptures from an exegetical, theological, *and* ethical perspective. Here you have it! Their marvelous contribution is comprehensive in scope, holistic in approach, grounded in solid biblical exegesis, and attentive to the unity and diversity of the Scriptures. They are faithful to the Bible's overarching goal by identifying the love of God in Christ as the heart of the biblical story. Students and church leaders looking for a reliable and engaging resource to guide them through the Bible's message about God and how he relates to his people and his world, look no further. I recommend it highly!"

J. Scott Duvall, Fuller Professor of Biblical Studies, Ouachita Baptist University

"Köstenberger and Goswell's *Biblical Theology* is a remarkably comprehensive treatment. It offers both a bird's-eye view—giving more attention than is often done to the theological significance of the arrangement of the biblical books within the canon—and an 'up close and personal view' analyzing the theological contribution of each book of the Bible. The authors describe the 'ethical' significance and contribution to the storyline of Scripture of each book and each collection of books. This volume thus puts on clear display both the diversity and the unity of our single canonical volume."

Douglas Moo, Kenneth T. Wessner Professor of New Testament, Wheaton College

"Evangelical biblical theologians have often been either too restrictive or too broad. In this refreshing volume, Köstenberger and Goswell refuse to reduce the Bible to a single concept yet refrain from multiplying endless categories. By offering a book-by-book approach that respects the Bible's canonical ordering, they helpfully identify the major themes of each inspired work and situate them within the grand storyline of Scripture. A personal favorite is their inductive treatment of biblical ethics. I commend this volume without reservation to Christians who are serious about growing in their literacy of God's word."

Cory M. Marsh, Professor of New Testament, Southern California Seminary; author, *A Primer on Biblical Literacy*

"The authors break new ground by furnishing much more under 'biblical theology' than one normally finds. In this book, we encounter methodological considerations and history of the discipline, hermeneutics (implicitly), canonical placement and its implications, theological exposition leading to thematic highlights of each book of the Bible, the ethics of every book, and each book's place in the Bible's storyline. A lengthy and full conclusion ties everything together. The extensive scholarship of Köstenberger and Goswell combines seamlessly, resulting in a wide-ranging synthesis drawing on a wealth of bibliography. The last chapter even offers a vision for the future of biblical theology. Here, then, is a compendium of recent generations of scholarship, with fresh insights for grappling with the whole counsel of Scripture in this and the coming generation."

Robert W. Yarbrough, Professor of New Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary

"Biblical theology holds in tension a variety of complexities—unity versus diversity, individual book versus corpus or canon, theme versus storyline. It indeed is a challenge to encompass all the layers of Scripture's richness. In that way, this volume makes a major contribution to the field in that it endeavors to show how all these factors build upon each other into a cohesive whole. This work then is not only a resource to observe biblical theology in every book of Scripture, but also gives much food for thought as to how we engage in biblical theology."

Abner Chou, President and John F. MacArthur Endowed Fellow, The Master's University

"How do we hear the meaning of individual parts of the Bible in light of the larger whole or determine overall themes in the Bible with proper respect to its parts? In *Biblical Theology*, Andreas Köstenberger and Gregory Goswell offer a welcomed method for discovering the theology of the whole Bible by beginning with careful interpretation of its diverse parts. What I love most about this seeming *magnum opus* is that it not only teaches a method for doing biblical theology that readers can put into practice but also models it by careful treatment of each book of the Bible where rich themes are drawn out, connections made, and the resounding voice of the triune God heard. Add to this a section on the ethical message derived from the Bible's theology, and Köstenberger and Goswell's *Biblical Theology* is something all serious readers of the Bible will want to keep close at hand."

Sam Ferguson, Rector, The Falls Church Anglican, Falls Church, Virginia

"In an age when most biblical scholarship is skeptical about the unity of the Bible, Köstenberger and Goswell have coauthored an impressive biblical theology text—a text in the tradition of Adolf Schlatter, Geerhardus Vos, and Charles H. H. Scobie, which holds together admirably both the unity of the Bible and the diversity of each canonical book's contribution to the grand storyline of redemptive history. Readers will appreciate the consistent application of Köstenberger and Goswell's solid methodology, their sophisticated exegetical engagement of the Scriptures themselves, and their scholarly engagement of the secondary literature. This is a fine text that will serve the church well."

C. Scott Shidemantle, Professor of Biblical Studies, Geneva College

"Very few scholars are brave enough to attempt to produce a biblical theology covering both Testaments. Köstenberger and Goswell ambitiously and innovatively seek to do so by considering the themes, ethics, and place within the storyline of Scripture of each biblical book. They pack a lot in and provide the reader with judicious exegetical decisions, insightful ethical reflection, and sound theological conclusions. Highly recommended."

Alexander E. Stewart, Vice-President for Academic Services and Professor of New Testament, Gateway Seminary

"Andreas J. Köstenberger and Gregory Goswell have provided a unique and significant contribution with *Biblical Theology*. Their work is not only comprehensive, but it also provides details into concerns not often addressed by standard texts on the subject of biblical theology. Their canonical approach takes seriously the fact that a 'biblical theology' depends upon the relationships between books within a book. Their thematic approach recognizes the significance of what mattered to the individual authors of Scripture, while also tracing the threads that reflect the message of the divine author. Finally, the attention given to an ethical reading comes with the understanding that biblical theology, from Genesis to Revelation, is inherently applicable. The value of this work cannot be overstated!"

Richard Alan Fuhr Jr., Professor, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University; coauthor, *Inductive Bible Study: Observation, Interpretation, and Application through the Lenses of History, Literature, and Theology*

Biblical Theology

Biblical Theology

A Canonical, Thematic, and Ethical Approach

Andreas J. Köstenberger and
Gregory Goswell

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Dedications

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Andreas:

To Marny, beloved companion and partner, precious gift from God
To my daughters and sons-in-law—Lauren and John, Tahlia and Dan
And to my sons David and Timothy
"One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts." (Psalm 145:4)

Gregory:

To Daniel Ahn and Sang Won Kim
"and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to
faithful men, who will be able to teach others also . . ." (2 Timothy 2:2)

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Authors' Preface

WRITING A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY is no small endeavor. The proverbial eating of an elephant comes to mind. Who in their right mind would tackle such a daunting task? There were many times during this process when we thought we had bitten off more than we could chew. And yet, tackling such a massive undertaking, taxing though as it has been, has also been greatly rewarding. It has forced us to fill gaps in our previous research, encouraged us to look more closely at intercanonical connections, and enabled us to use some of our previous research and integrate it into a larger whole. In many ways, therefore, this is a capstone project that culminates decades of in-depth research in various fields pertaining to Old and New Testament study.

Both of us have greatly enjoyed partnering with each other in this project. We wrote this book not merely with academics in mind but also pastors, seminary students, and other serious students of Scripture. We hope that you find this book helpful, logical, and clear. The layout of this volume is rather simple. We take a canonical, thematic, and ethical approach and follow the canonical order throughout (the Hebrew order for the Old Testament), as we believe students of Scripture have much to gain from such careful biblical-theological reading. For every book of the Bible, we discuss the themes, ethics, and place in the storyline of Scripture. In this way, we aim to blend a book-by-book reading with both a central-themes and a metanarrative approach.

In a work of this scope, it is virtually impossible to cite the entire relevant literature. As a result, certain judgment calls are inevitable. In keeping with our understanding of the nature of biblical theology, we normally presuppose introductory matters, including historical background, as well as most matters of exegesis. For this reason, we do not always cite Old or New Testament introductions or commentaries (with regard to the New Testament, the present volume builds on Andreas's work, coauthored with Scott Kellum and Charles Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*). Our focus is on biblical *theology*, which involves connections between biblical books, particularly the New Testament use of the Old Testament. In this regard, we cite primarily the monograph literature, journal articles, and essays. In addition, we interact with Old and New Testament theologies as well as biblical theologies.

In terms of primary influences, we believe that biblical theology, properly conceived, is inductive, that is, it should start with a careful and sustained reading of both Testaments in the original languages. For this reason, before turning to the secondary literature, or even primary literature outside the Bible, we developed our understanding of the theology of a given book, as well as its ethic and place in the storyline of Scripture, directly by reading that book repeatedly, both in its own right and in its canonical context. In addition, we particularly benefited from the work of Richard Hays, especially *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, and *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*.

There are many to thank in such a project. Andreas is grateful for the partnership of his wife, Marny. He is also grateful for the research assistance provided by Quinn Mosier, Jimmy Roh, Drake Isabel, and Mark Baker and for the careful reading of the manuscript and helpful editing suggestions by Chuck Bumgardner. Greg is thankful for the unstinting support of his wife, Mignon, and the contribution of many authors and teachers over the years, though pride of place must be given to the late William (Bill) Dumbrell, whose teaching in Greg's undergraduate study of theology fed his interest in the Bible and in biblical theology in particular.

Abbreviations

GENERAL

c.	*circa*, about
cf.	confer, compare
ch(s).	chapter(s)
diss.	dissertation
Eng.	English translations
esp.	especially
ET	English title
fig.	figure
ibid.	in the same place
idem	the same
lit.	literally
mg.	marginal reading
MT	Masoretic Text
n.b.	*nota bene*, take careful note
passim	here and there

BIBLIOGRAPHIC

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABR	*Australian Biblical Review*
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
ALGHJ	Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament

ApOTC	Apollos Old Testament Commentary
AYBRL	Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BHS	*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Edited by Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983.
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BTNT	Biblical Theology of the New Testament
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CD	Damascus Document (Dead Sea Scrolls)
CTJ	*Calvin Theological Journal*
CTR	*Criswell Theological Review*
CurBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
EBTC	Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary
EGGNT	Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament
ESBT	Essential Studies in Biblical Theology
EvQ	*Evangelical Quarterly*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GNT^{4}	*The Greek New Testament.* Fourth Revised Edition, edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger in cooperation with the Institute for New Testament Textual Research, Münster/Westphalia. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/United Bible Societies, 1993.
HAR	*Hebrew Annual Review*

HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HThKAT	Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
HUT	Hermeneutische Untersuchungen zur Theologie
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDBSup	*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*. Edited by Keith Crim. Nashville: Abingdon, 1976.
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JESOT	*Journal for the Evangelical Study of the Old Testament*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JGRChJ	*Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism*
JNSL	*Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages*
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
JTI	*Journal for Theological Interpretation*
JTISup	Journal for Theological Interpretation, Supplements
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
MAARAV	*MAARAV, A Journal for the Study of the Northwest Semitic Languages and Literatures*
MJT	*Midwestern Journal of Theology*
NAC	New American Commentary
NACSBT	New American Commentary Studies in Bible and Theology
NCB	New Century Bible
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NTL	New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus

NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
OTE	*Old Testament Essays*
OTL	Old Testament Library
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary
PRSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
RBS	Resources for Biblical Study
ResQ	*Restoration Quarterly*
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*
RTRSS	Reformed Theological Review Supplement Series
SBJT	*Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Supplement Series
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SJOT	*Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SSBT	Short Studies in Biblical Theology
SwJT	*Southwestern Journal of Theology*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament.* Edited by Gerhard Kittel. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965.
THNTC	Two Horizons New Testament Commentary
THOTC	Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TrinJ	*Trinity Journal*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
ZTK	*Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche*

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1

Biblical Theology: A Canonical, Thematic, and Ethical Approach

EMBARKING ON A STUDY of the theology of the biblical writers is like taking a journey around the world. Few are privileged to explore every part of our globe, but even partial forays into the beautiful landscapes offered by Planet Earth prove awe-inspiring and rewarding for the casual traveler. Similarly, students of the Bible often have not read the Scriptures in their entirety, but even what they have read reveals an amazing array of diverse literary genres, historical settings, and theological insights. How do you wrap your brain around a library of sixty-six books written over hundreds of years by dozens of authors? What is the story the Bible sets out to tell? And how do you know that your reading of Scripture is in keeping with its actual God-intended message? What is more, as an inspired book, the Bible does not merely aim to impart the knowledge of God and his ways; it also seeks to draw us into a deep personal engagement with God and others. One more thing: How can we, in all fairness, make sure all biblical voices are heard, as opposed to merely those who are dominant and have the potential of drowning out lesser voices? Those are the kinds of questions we'll try to tackle in the present chapter of our book. We hope you'll enjoy the trip around the biblical world. Fasten your seat belts!

1.1 THE NATURE OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

What is biblical theology? One might simply say, "Biblical theology is theology that is biblical"—theology that is biblically grounded.[1] The problem with this definition, however, is that all Christian theology should be properly grounded in Scripture, so positing

1 The discussion in the remainder of this chapter borrows and adapts, with permission, selected portions of Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Sizemore Lectures 2018: The Promise of Biblical Theology: What Biblical Theology Is and What It Isn't," *MJT* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 1–13; and "The Sizemore Lectures 2018: The Practice of Biblical Theology: How Is Biblical Theology Done?," *MJT* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 14–27.

this kind of definition merely seems to be stating the obvious. A simple alternative definition would be the following: "Biblical theology is the theology of the Bible."[2] In other words, *biblical theology is not our own theology, or that of our church or denomination; it is the theology of the biblical writers themselves*. Old Testament theology, then, is the theology of the Old Testament writers; New Testament theology the theology of the New Testament writers;[3] Pauline theology the theology of Paul; Johannine theology the theology of John; and so forth.[4] At the same time, there is divine continuity, since the various theologies of the biblical writers are ultimately unified and not in contradiction with one another, as they express the unitary purpose of God in biblical revelation.[5] If this is the way we define biblical theology, we will not only construct our theology on a biblical foundation (though, of course, we should do that), but we will place our focus on the writers of Scripture and their beliefs and contributions as they expressed them under divine inspiration in the Old and New Testament writings.[6]

2 Cf. Gerhard Ebeling, "The Meaning of 'Biblical Theology,'" in *Word and Faith*, trans. James W. Leitch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 79, who defines biblical theology as "the theology contained in the Bible, the theology of the Bible itself"; cited by Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 5, who adds that "this definition is the one that is preferred by most scholars."

3 James Barr calls them species within the genus "biblical theology," which he dubs "pan-biblical theology" (*The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1999], 1).

4 Of course, there are questions of authorship to be adjudicated. It is also true, as Ben Witherington maintains, that "Biblical theology involves more than just combining OT and NT theology" (*Biblical Theology: The Convergence of Canon* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019], 2). While one can detect a bifurcation of biblical theology into Old and New Testament theologies over the last two centuries, there seems to be a growing trend toward the pursuit of a unified biblical theology. For a succinct survey of this phenomenon and the history of the discipline, see Charles H. H. Scobie, "History of Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 11–20. See also D. A. Carson, "New Testament Theology," in *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 796–804; Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 867–88; Henning Graf Reventlow, "Theology (Biblical), History of," *ABD* 6:483–505; and Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Salvation Historical Fallacy? Reassessing the History of New Testament Theology*, History of Biblical Interpretation 2 (Leiden: Deo, 2004).

5 For a thorough exploration of revelation as a prolegomenon for biblical theology, see Hans Hübner, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, vol. 1: *Prolegomena* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990). See also Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 47, who contends that necessary presuppositions for a coherent biblical theology include "belief that the Bible conveys a divine revelation, that the word of God in Scripture constitutes the norm of Christian faith and life, and that all the varied material of the OT and NT can in some way be related to the plan and purpose of the one God of the whole Bible." Contra Robert Morgan, "Theology (NT)," *ABD* 6:474, who contends that "actually identifying Scripture with revelation is irrational biblicism" (see the critique by Carson, "New Testament Theology," 806, who counters that God is a talking God and points to the presence of witnesses to God's verbal self-revelation in Scripture).

6 Of course, even biblical theologians must organize their presentation of the biblical material. Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 4–5, rightly points out that biblical theology is "the *ordered study* of what the Bible has to say about God and his relation to the world and to humankind" (emphasis added). For efforts to canvas the scope of biblical theology, see Jeremy M. Kimble and Ched Spellman, *Invitation to Biblical Theology: Exploring the*

In an important sense, of course, the biblical authors themselves engaged in biblical theology, which means that we do not just get our *content* from Scripture, but our *method* as well. Later Old Testament writers referred back to earlier Old Testament books, and New Testament writers used the Old Testament in a variety of ways.[7] For this reason, it may be said that the Scriptures themselves set the standard for what biblical theology is and how it ought to be done, similar to the way in which they exhibit a certain set of hermeneutical principles that provide a framework for hermeneutics, or the way in which they deal with various moral issues that sets the stage for how the church today should engage in ethical decision-making.[8] In many ways, therefore, biblical theology done today represents an effort to recapture the *biblical* way of doing biblical theology—drawing inner-biblical connections, tracing intertextuality, and following thematic threads that are unfolding progressively along the salvation-historical metanarrative of Scripture.[9]

Fast-forwarding to the modern period, while the term "biblical theology" was used in several earlier works in a different sense,[10] the academic discipline of biblical theology

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Shape, Storyline, and Themes of Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2020); and Jason S. DeRouchie, Oren R. Martin, and Andrew David Naselli, *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 40 Questions (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2020). See also Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), ch. 15; and the theme issue "Exploring Biblical Theology," *SBJT* 12, no. 4 (Winter 2008), with contributions by Stephen J. Wellum, Graeme Goldsworthy, James M. Hamilton Jr., Robert W. Yarbrough, and Mark A. Seifrid.

7 See, e.g., D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson, eds., *It Is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars, SSF* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007).

8 See esp. Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2018); Chris Bruno, Jared Compton, and Kevin McFadden, *Biblical Theology according to the Apostles*, NSBT 52 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020).

9 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Theory and History of Literature 10 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984; orig. French ed. *La condition postmoderne* [1979]), xxiv, characterized the postmodern age by its "incredulity towards grand narratives." However, while Lyotard's critique has some legitimacy in exposing modernity's overconfidence in its ability to provide a comprehensive account of reality by virtue of mere human reason, it is plagued by epistemological skepticism and fails to provide a viable alternative. As Bauckham observes, the story of Scripture is an example of a non-modern metanarrative that is not a legitimate target of Lyotard's critique. See Richard Bauckham, "Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story," in *The Art of Reading Scripture*, ed. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 47–53. Bauckham's critique of Lyotard on pp. 45–47, in turn, is indebted to Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 23–43; and Gary K. Browning, *Lyotard and the End of Grand Narratives* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000). See also D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

10 Wolfgang Jacob Christmann, *Teutsche biblische Theologie* (Kempten, 1629; no longer extant); Henricus A. Diest, *Theologia Biblica* (Daventri, 1643); Gotthilf Traugott Zachariä, *Biblische Theologie oder Untersuchung des biblischen Grundes der vornehmsten theologischen Lehren*, 5 vols. (Göttingen/Kiel: Boßiegel, 1771, 1772, 1774, 1775, 1786; no longer extant). Note that the publication of the fifth volume in 1786 may have influenced Gabler's address (see next footnote with main text; cf. John Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, "J. P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Translation, Commentary, and Discussion of His Originality," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 33, no. 2 [April 1980]: 140–58). Cf. Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 11–12.

is commonly said to have begun with Johann Philipp Gabler and his 1787 inaugural address at the University of Altdorf, "On the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Systematic Theology."[11] As the title of Gabler's address suggests, he urged that a proper distinction be made between biblical and systematic theology in keeping with the historical character of the former and the dogmatic nature of the latter. While advocating this distinction and emphasizing the historical nature of biblical theology is certainly appropriate, however, Gabler also urged making a distinction between what is "truly divine" (i.e., revelatory) and what is "merely human" in Scripture, in keeping with universal religious rational principles, which is deeply problematic.[12] For this reason, some dispute, with some justification, that Gabler can rightfully be considered the "father of biblical theology."[13]

In the years that followed, historical criticism flourished under the banner of the Tübingen School, as did the history-of-religions approach, which sought to understand the religion of Israel and early Christianity against the backdrop of ancient

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On the history of biblical theology, see Gerald Bray, *Biblical Interpretation: Past and Present* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 193–208; Ferdinand Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, Bd. I: *Die Vielfalt des Neuen Testaments*, 3rd ed., UTB (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 1–28; James K. Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 13–59; Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Biblical Theology from a New Testament Perspective," *JETS* 62 (2019): 225–49; and Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 9–28; idem, "History of Biblical Theology." See also Peter Balla, *Challenges to New Testament Theology: An Attempt to Justify the Enterprise* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998); more briefly, Hendrikus Boers, *What Is New Testament Theology? The Rise of Criticism and the Problem of a Theology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); and Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 13–17.

11 Altdorf is located about 25 km east of Nürnberg in eastern Bayern (Bavaria). The Latin title of Gabler's address was *Oratio de iusto discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus*. For an English translation, see Johann Philipp Gabler, "An Oration on the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each," in *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future*, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger, Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 1, 2nd ed. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004; repr. ed., 2016), 497–506. For summaries of Gabler's work, see William Baird, *History of New Testament Research*, vol. 1: *From Deism to Tübingen* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 184–87; and Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 15–16. For an English translation and critique, see Sandys-Wunsch and Eldredge, "J. P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology," 133–58; see also Witherington, *Biblical Theology*, 11–18, esp. 14. For a discussion of the contemporary relevance of Gabler's address, see Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 40–41; for a comparative assessment of J. P. Gabler and Geerhardus Vos, see Matthew Barrett, *Canon, Covenant, and Christology: Rethinking Jesus and the Scriptures of Israel*, NSBT 51 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 17–20.

12 Sandys-Wunsch and Eldredge, "J. P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology," 143; and the discussion in Barrett, *Canon, Covenant, and Christology*, 18.

13 See, e.g., Charles H. H. Scobie, "The Challenge of Biblical Theology," *TynBul* 42 (1991): 34; William D. Dennison, "Reason, History, and Revelation: Biblical Theology and the Enlightenment," in *Resurrection and Eschatology: Theology in Service of the Church: Essays in Honor of Richard B. Gaffin Jr.*, ed. Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey C. Waddington (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008), 343; and the discussion in Barrett, *Canon, Covenant, and Christology*, 18–19.

Near Eastern religions and Hellenistic first-century religious practices.[14] In the vein of Ferdinand Christian Baur, the founder of the Tübingen School, biblical theology was conceived as a merely historical enterprise conducted by scholars who largely rejected the revelatory, inspired, and authoritative character of Scripture.[15] Thus, in 1897, William Wrede could write a capstone volume bearing the telling title, *Concerning the Task and Method of So-Called New Testament Theology*, in which he declared the demise of New Testament theology.[16] One of the few bright spots against the backdrop of the Gabler-Baur-Wrede phalanx of—often critical—historical scholarship was the Swiss-German theologian Adolf Schlatter, who published a pair of editions of his two-volume New Testament theology in 1909/10 and 1921/22, in which he engaged in an integrative discussion of *The History of the Christ* and *The Theology of the Apostles*.[17] The theological giants Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann each in their own way sought to salvage theology, whether by advocating neoorthodoxy or by engaging in demythologization, but in both cases theology no longer grew organically from the historical and literary dimensions of the biblical text.[18] Instead, they

14 On the Tübingen School, see Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School: A Historical and Theological Investigation of the School of F. C. Baur* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975). On the history-of-religions school, see Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. John Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970).

15 For a comparison and contrast of the work of F. C. Baur and Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann, see Yarbrough, *Salvation-Historical Fallacy*, 8–59, who notes that Baur produced "[o]ne of the first great syntheses of New Testament theology in the Gablerian sense" (8).

16 The German title was *Über die Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1897). Cf. Carson, "New Testament Theology," 797, who adds, "Wrede argued that to treat each book of the NT separately was absurd, since each book provided too little information to enable an interpreter to reconstruct the entire 'theology' of its author. The only responsible way forward was to reconstruct 'the history of early Christian religion and theology.'"

17 Adolf Schlatter, *Das Wort Jesu* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1909); 2nd ed., *Die Geschichte des Christus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1921); idem, *Die Lehre der Apostel* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1910); 2nd ed., *Die Theologie der Apostel* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1922). ET, *The History of the Christ: The Foundation of New Testament Theology*, trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997); *The Theology of the Apostles: The Development of New Testament Theology*, trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999). Schlatter, in turn, was influenced by Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann. See, e.g., *Die heilige Schrift des neuen Testaments zusammenhängend untersucht*, 11 vols. (Nördlingen, Germany: C. H. Beck, 1862–1878; 2nd ed., W. Volck, ed., 1896); idem, *Weissagung und Erfüllung im Alten und im Neuen Testamente*, 2 vols. (Nördlingen, Germany: C. H. Beck, 1841); von Hofmann's stance is epitomized by the following quote by Theodor Zahn, *Johann Chr. K. von Hofmann: Rede zur Feier seines hundertsten Geburtstags in der Aula der Friderico-Alexandrina am 16. Dezember 1910 gehalten* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1911), 17: "People realized soon enough that, for von Hofmann, a theologian who isn't a Christian, and therefore also a theologian-in-the-making who isn't on the way to becoming a Christian, is an equally pitiful creature as a blind person who aspires to become a painter" (our translation). For a comparison and contrast between Schlatter and Wrede, see Robert Morgan, *The Nature of New Testament Theology* (London: SCM, 1973), who notes that it is "striking how far Schlatter is in agreement with Wrede about the necessity for historical method in theology and the way it must operate, unhampered by the historian's own personal viewpoint" (29). See further the discussion below.

18 Cf., e.g., Karl Barth, *Der Römerbrief* (Zürich: EVZ, 1919; 2nd ed. 1921); ET, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwin C. Hoskyns (1933; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1976); Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the*

contended that revelation is to be located in the *kerygma*—the proclaimed apostolic message—not in biblical history.[19] Rather than take the *Wredebahn* (Wrede-train) of historical research, Barth therefore sought to engender an existential encounter with the text by looking to the "risen Christ made present through proclamation," while Bultmann reinterpreted biblical miracles—including Jesus's resurrection—in purely existentialist terms.[20]

In the 1950s and 60s, a new biblical theology movement arose—influenced, in part, by Karl Barth and to some extent also by Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann—which sought to revive the discipline, but did so by unduly dichotomizing between God's redemptive acts in history and the biblical text.[21] The enterprise stalled to such an extent that Brevard Childs could write a book in 1970 with the title *Biblical Theology in Crisis*.[22] Biblical theology, of course, was not in crisis; what was languishing was the biblical theology *movement*. James Barr severely criticized practitioners of that movement for inadequate methodological and linguistic procedures, so much so that some thought he had killed the whole enterprise.[23] Barr

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New Testament, trans. Kendrick Grobel, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951, 1955). See the discussion in Carson, "New Testament Theology," 797–98.

19 See the discussion in Morgan, *Nature of Biblical Theology*, 34–35.

20 The quote is from Morgan, *Nature of Biblical Theology*, 34. We are borrowing the *Wredebahn* terminology from N. T. Wright, who speaks of the *Wredebahn* (or *Wredestrasse*) and the *Schweitzerbahn*, designating alternative options of a historical or apocalyptic approach to New Testament studies. See Wright, "The Servant and Jesus: The Relevance of the Colloquy for the Current Quest for Jesus," in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, ed. William H. Bellinger Jr. and William R. Farmer (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 281–97. For an important critique of Bultmann, see Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. Daniel P. Bailey (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018), 19–21, who faults Bultmann for his existentialism and demythologization program, his dichotomy between Judaism and Hellenism, and his neglect of the Old Testament. Most importantly, Stuhlmacher contends, against Bultmann, that Jesus's own proclamation is not merely the presupposition of New Testament theology (as Bultmann famously contended) but the proper "historical foundation of the theology of the New Testament" (20). See also Peter Stuhlmacher, "Die Tübinger Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Ein Rückblick," *Theologische Beiträge* 48 (2017): 76–91, where the author reminisces about his relationship with Hartmut Gese and Martin Hengel (the two scholars to whom his work is dedicated) and others and laments that the current faculty at the University of Tübingen has turned back to the Bultmannian School rather than following his lead (as noted at xvii, n. 9).

21 Carson, "New Testament Theology," 798. An example of such an approach is G. Ernest Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital*, SBT 1, no. 8 (London: SCM, 1952).

22 Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Louisville: Westminster, 1970). Cf. Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 6, who speaks of "the *division* of BT (into OT and NT theology), the *decline* of BT (as it was absorbed by the history of religion), and finally the virtual *demise* of BT." For a proposal to read the New Testament canonically following the demise of the biblical theology movement, see Markus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), ch. 3, esp. 101, who stresses that all knowledge is perspectival and mediated, notes the selective interpretive nature of New Testament texts (13–21), and emphasizes the importance of reception history (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) and living memory in biblical interpretation (chs. 4 and 6).

23 James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); see esp. his critique of Gerhard Kittel's edited multivolume *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, in ch. 8. See also Barr's own *Concept of Biblical Theology*.

himself viewed Scripture as a "fragmentary collection of documents" with "no internal coherence" and a plethora of "contradictions."[24] Since then, however, especially within the North American conservative evangelical world, a new type of biblical theology has begun to flourish, based on a high view of Scripture and grounded in both historical research and literary study.[25] It is this kind of biblical theology that we are endeavoring to practice in the present volume as we adopt a thematic, ethical, and canonical approach.

Above all, biblical theology is concerned with the theology of the biblical writers themselves. Schlatter put the matter well more than a century ago: "In speaking of 'New Testament' theology, we are saying that it is not the interpreter's own theology or that of his church and times that is examined but rather the theology expressed by the New Testament itself."[26] In view of this, how should we go about discerning the theology of the Bible? Again, Schlatter's comments are helpful: "We turn away decisively from ourselves and our time to what was found in the men through whom the church came into being. Our main interest should be the thought as it was conceived *by them* and the truth that was valid *for them*. We want to see and obtain a thorough grasp of what happened historically and existed in another time."[27] Schlatter calls this "the historical task"—in distinction from historical theology, which maps later, post-canonical developments in the church's doctrinal formulations—which is followed by "the doctrinal task" of systematizing the Bible's teachings on a given subject.

24 James Barr, "Biblical Theology," in *IDBSup* (1976), 109 (see discussion in Barrett, *Canon, Covenant, and Christology*, 12).

25 Already in 2003, Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 42–45, could see signs of "A Revival of Biblical Theology." For representative series, see Biblical Theology of the New Testament (BTNT; Andreas J. Köstenberger, ed.; Zondervan); Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary (EBTC; T. Desmond Alexander, Thomas R. Schreiner, and Andreas J. Köstenberger, eds.; Lexham); Essential Studies in Biblical Theology (ESBT; Benjamin L. Gladd, ed.; InterVarsity Press); New Studies in Biblical Theology (NSBT; D. A. Carson, ed.; InterVarsity Press); and Short Studies in Biblical Theology (SSBT; Dane C. Ortlund and Miles V. Van Pelt, eds.; Crossway). In addition, Theology for the People of God (David Dockery, Christopher W. Morgan, and Nathan Finn, eds.; B&H Academic) features the collaborative work of biblical and systematic theologians on major Christian doctrines.

26 Foreword to Schlatter's *Das Wort Jesu* (1909), reprinted (ET) in Schlatter, *History of the Christ*, 18 (see the positive reference to Schlatter's work in Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 19). For a discussion along similar lines, see Andreas J. Köstenberger with Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2021), ch. 14. See also Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*, 4, who says biblical theology is meaningful only with regard to what "was thought or believed within the time, languages and cultures of the Bible itself," adding, "What we are looking for is a 'theology' that existed back there and then . . . the theology that existed in the minds of biblical persons." In some cases, this theology may be mostly implicit; in other cases (e.g., John's Gospel) it may be more explicit, that is, it may represent conscious reflection on, e.g., the deity of Christ, etc. (cf. the discussion in ibid., 248–49, noting that "[t]heology is a reflective activity in which the contents of religious expressions is to some extent abstracted, contemplated, subjected to reflection and discussion, and deliberately reformulated" [249]).

27 Schlatter, *History of the Christ*, 18. At the same time, it is, of course, important to remember that it is Christ who birthed his church, of which he is the head, *by means of* these men; they are not the originators of the church but rather the human instruments in God's redemptive plan.

Definitions matter.[28] All this discussion of definitional matters may seem rather pedantic, but we believe it is exceedingly important that, before engaging in the *practice* of biblical theology, we have a clear understanding of what it is we are doing. Whether writing a book on biblical theology or engaging in everyday communication, it is vital that our conversation partners are on the same page as we are, and part of this process is defining one's key terms carefully and explicitly. As we proceed, therefore, we do so on the basis of the understanding that when engaging in biblical theology, we are essentially *seeking to discern the theological contributions of the biblical writers themselves*. As we do so, we will naturally aim to present these contributions in a coherent format, asking questions as to what the distinctive emphases are in a given book of Scripture, arranging these in the form of major and minor themes, and relating them to one another in such a way that our presentation reflects the thought world of the biblical writers as accurately as possible.[29]

1.1.1 Biblical and Systematic Theology

The relationship between biblical and systematic theology is best conceived as a collaborative enterprise between two related and adjacent disciplines.[30] The image of a relay race comes to mind, where one runner—biblical theology—hands off the baton to the next—systematic theology. The two disciplines run—and win or lose—the race together, but biblical theology runs first and systematic theology second. In fact, since biblical theology is grounded in introductory matters such as authorship, date, provenance, audience, occasion, and purpose for writing—not to mention the exegesis of specific texts—as part of a four-person relay team, introductory matters would run first, followed by exegesis, then biblical theology—complemented by historical theology—

28 See D. A. Carson, "Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective," *BBR* 5 (1995): 17–26, who, after calling for definitional clarity, identifies the following valid approaches to biblical theology: (1) the theology of the whole Bible, descriptively and historically considered; (2) the theology of the various biblical corpora or strata (e.g., Old and New Testament theologies); (3) the theology of a particular theme across the Scriptures. Cf. Kimble and Spellman, *Invitation to Biblical Theology*, 16–21, who posit as their working definition that biblical theology is "the study of the whole Bible on its own terms" (16, 21). However, they proceed to claim that the definition of biblical theology is "A Tale of Two Senses," in which biblical theology is defined as both "the theology presented in the Scriptures" and "theological reflection that accords with the Scriptures" (17–18). We would maintain instead that only the first sense is a proper definition of biblical theology; the second sense more accurately describes systematic theology. Collapsing these two "senses" or definitions into one only perpetuates confusion and unduly blurs the lines between the two disciplines.

29 This is not to be confused with the aforementioned approach taken by Kimble and Spellman, *Invitation to Biblical Theology*, 17–18, who include "theological reflection that accords with the Scriptures" as part of biblical theology. Rather, our approach is primarily descriptive, which of necessity involves a certain amount of drawing connections and arrangement in one's presentation.

30 Cf. Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 353–55, who writes that systematic theology is the "intermediate step" between exegetical and biblical theology on the one hand and application and homiletics on the other. He adds, however, that "any attempt to separate the tasks too greatly is artificial," because in the ultimate analysis these disciplines are interdependent (quotes are from 355).

and finally systematic theology (as well as pastoral theology).[31] Hopefully, introductory matters would get the relay team off to a great start, exegesis would build a solid lead, biblical theology would even extend that lead, and systematic theology would get the team home across the finish line.[32]

So, then, when it comes to the handoff between the final two runners, biblical theology runs first and hands off the baton to systematic theology, which has the privilege and responsibility of being the final runner.[33] Incidentally, this is exactly how Schlatter himself proceeded: He first wrote a two-volume New Testament theology (*The History of the Christ* and *The Theology of the Apostles*) followed by a systematic theology (*Das christliche Dogma*), not to mention works on ethics, philosophy, and a variety of other subjects.[34] Not only is it important to distinguish between biblical and systematic theology and to engage in biblical theology first, as Schlatter reminds us, it is also important not to unduly blur the line between these two disciplines. Otherwise, our view of the Bible's teaching will likely become distorted and our application imprecise, if not invalid.[35] For example, when Paul speaks of our earthly bodies as "tents," as he does in 2 Corinthians 5, we should first examine the meaning of this metaphor in a first-century context (e.g., Paul was a tentmaker, etc.) rather than—as we've heard preachers do—use illustrations from camping trips they went on with their families. Likewise, we should seek to understand the reference to God's creation of humanity as male and female in his "image" in ancient Near Eastern rather than modern terms (e.g., as conveying representative rule rather than as reflecting a person's physical appearance as photographs do).[36] In the same

31 D. A. Carson, "The Bible and Theology," in *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 6–11. Though see further the caution against a strictly linear construal below.

32 The analogy could be extended by picturing different runners in such a relay race as various teams comprised of biblical scholars, exegetes, biblical theologians, and systematicians who practice their craft each in their own way. If so, the question would be, Which team best advances our understanding of the thought of the biblical writers?

33 Cf. D. A. Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 89–104; Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 66: "Dogmatic theology is the final stage in the movement from the horizon of the text to the horizon of the interpreter." For a dissenting view, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Is the Theology of the New Testament One or Many? Between (the Rock of) Systematic Theology and (the Hard Place of) Historical Occasionalism," in *Reconsidering the Relationship between Biblical and Systematic Theology in the New Testament: Essays by Theologians and New Testament Scholars*, ed. Benjamin E. Reynolds, Brian Lugioyo, and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, WUNT 2/369 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 38, who contends, "Systematic theology is not simply a second step that follows biblical theology; rather, it is a partner in the exegetical process itself."

34 See, e.g., Adolf Schlatter, *Die Geschichte des Christus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1909; 2nd ed. 1922); *Die Theologie der Apostel* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1910; 2nd ed. 1923); *Das christliche Dogma* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1911; 2nd ed. 1923); *Die christliche Ethik* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1914); *Die philosophische Arbeit seit Cartesius: Ihr religiöser und ethischer Ertrag* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1906; 4th ed. Stuttgart: Calwer, 1959). For a definitive biography including an exhaustive bibliography, see Werner Neuer, *Adolf Schlatter: Ein Leben für Theologie und Kirche* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1996).

35 See chs. 2 and 15 on history and application, respectively, in Köstenberger with Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*.

36 Cf. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), passim.

vein, we should read the creation account in Genesis 1 primarily in view of its original purpose—grounding Israel's covenantal history in God's act of creation—rather than as addressing questions of evolution or intelligent design.[37] As Schlatter observes, "The distinction between these two activities [biblical and systematic theology] thus turns out to be beneficial for both. Distortions in the perception of the subject also harm its appropriation, just as conversely improper procedures in the appropriation of the subject muddy its perception."[38] In other words, before moving to address current topics (systematic theology), we need to engage in biblical theology, which Schlatter calls "the historical task."

For our present purposes, we will define biblical theology as essentially historical, inductive, and descriptive.[39] In this way, the interpreter is able to "draw out"—exegete—the original meaning of the biblical text. As Geerhardus Vos rightly notes, in biblical theology, exegesis is primary; and exegesis, for its part, requires a "receptive" attitude on the interpreter's part. Thus, engaging in biblical theology is "eminently a process in which God speaks and man listens."[40] What is more, not only do interpreters employ an "authorial-intent" hermeneutic, but they also ground their interpretation in biblical authority. On the basis of their exegetical and biblical-theological work, they can proceed to organize the teaching of Scripture on various topics in order to provide a solid foundation for contemporary application. How, then, does biblical theology relate to systematic theology, and how does the latter square with the hermeneutical triad—the three-legged stool—of history, literature, and theology?[41]

In adjudicating these questions, D. A. Carson's essay on the subject, with the fitting subtitle "The Possibility of Systematic Theology," serves as a convenient starting point.[42] Addressing the relationship between exegesis, biblical theology, and systematic theology,

37 Cf. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), passim.

38 Schlatter, *History of the Christ*, 18.

39 See 1.2.1 below. Carson, "Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective," 31, rightly points out that, "[i]deally, biblical theology will transcend mere description . . . and call men and women to a knowledge of the living God" (italics removed). The present section is adapted and further developed from Köstenberger with Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, ch. 14, with publisher's permission.

40 Cf. Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1948), 4. Similarly, Schlatter, *History of the Christ*, 18, calls for a listening hermeneutic and a hermeneutic of perception that focuses primarily on "seeing" what is there. Vos goes on to say that exegetical theology consists in the study of the contents of Scripture, the science of introduction, the study of the canon ("canonics"), and biblical theology. He adds that biblical theology is "that branch of Exegetical Theology which deals with the process of the self-revelation of God deposited in the Bible" (*Biblical Theology*, 4).

41 For an explanation of what is meant by a "triadic" hermeneutical approach, see Köstenberger with Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, ch. 1. For a summary, see Andreas Köstenberger, "*Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* and the Hermeneutical Triad: New Hermeneutical Lenses for a New Generation of Bible Interpreters," *CTR* n.s. 10, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 3–12.

42 See also multiple podcasts on biblical theology posted on the website for the Center for Biblical Studies at Midwestern, cbs.mbts.edu.

Carson begins by saying that "it would be convenient if we could operate exclusively along the direction of the following diagram:

> Exegesis → Biblical Theology → [Historical Theology] → Systematic Theology."[43]

However, as Carson rightly notes, put in this straightforward, linear fashion, such a diagram would be unduly simplistic and naïve, since no one approaches exegesis without presuppositions. After exploring the model of a hermeneutical circle, he proposes a form of the diagram in which each of these component parts are mutually informing.[44] Nevertheless, he insists that "exegesis, though affected by systematic theology, is not to be shackled by it."[45] On the one hand, we should recognize that we all approach exegesis with a kind of systematic theology already in place, whether we realize it or not and regardless of how sophisticated such a systematic theology is. On the other hand, we should make every effort to be cognizant of our own theological system and presuppositions and critically distance ourselves from these, so that we can approach our exegesis and biblical-theological work as inductively as possible.[46]

One particular danger that lurks if we are unaware of our theological presuppositions or deny that we have them is that of *anachronism*, that is, the fallacy of reading later developments into earlier texts.[47] An example of this may be treatments that acknowledge progressive revelation in Scripture yet primarily stress continuity while inadequately considering possible elements of discontinuity.[48] The question that needs to be asked,

43 D. A. Carson, "Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: The Possibility of Systematic Theology," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 91; repr. in D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 145; see also idem, "Bible and Theology," 2633–36; Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Idea of Systematic Theology," in *Studies in Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 49–87, originally in *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* 7 (1896): 243–71; and Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," *WTJ* 38 (1976): 281–99.

44 See the chart "Feedback Loop" in Carson, "Bible and Theology," 2635.

45 Carson, "Unity and Diversity in the New Testament," 92. Cf. Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 83, who notes "the objection that a systematic scheme tends to impose categories that are alien to biblical thought" and, as a result, tends to overlook actual biblical categories such as "the land" or "wisdom."

46 Cf. Gabler, cited in Sandys-Wunsch and Eldredge, "J. P. Gabler and the Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology," 135, who speaks of "the depraved custom of reading one's own opinions and judgments into the Bible" and "that unfortunate fellow who heedlessly dared to attribute some of his own most insubstantial opinions to the sacred writers themselves," adding that "[t]hose completely unable to interpret correctly must inevitably inflict violence upon the sacred books."

47 See further the discussion below.

48 Unfortunately, space does not permit a full airing of this issue here. For an argument for biblical and systematic theology as parallel disciplines, see Geerhardus Vos, *The Idea of Biblical Theology as a Science and as a Theological Discipline* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1894); idem, *Biblical Theology*; and Vern Sheridan Poythress, "Kinds of Biblical Theology," *WTJ* 70 (2008): 129–42. Vos prefers to speak of "the history of biblical revelation" (*Biblical Theology*, 5–9). On Vos's biblical-theological method, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Geerhardus Vos: His Biblical-Theological Method and His Theology of Gender," Geerhardus Vos Lecture (Beaver Falls, PA: Geneva College, forthcoming).

however, is whether a given system stands in tension with the inductive nature of biblical theology. In principle, at least, we ought to be committed not to read later developments into earlier Scripture but rather to allow earlier texts to be subject to further development. To be sure, the Old Testament Scriptures speak about the coming Messiah (Luke 24:24–27; John 5:46–47) and can serve to instruct New Testament believers (1 Cor. 10:1–13; 2 Tim. 3:16–17), but biblical revelation is nonetheless progressive, and at times may involve disclosure of previously unrevealed spiritual truths.[49] Restraint in this area, therefore, requires that we be open to diversity and discontinuity in Scripture if we are committed to biblical theology as being primarily and principially an inductive discipline.[50]

How, then, are we to conceive of systematic theology? Carson offers the following definition: Systematic theology is "Christian theology whose internal structure is . . . organized on atemporal principles of logic, order, and need."[51] Thus, one typical schema organizes the biblical material under the categories of prolegomena (protology or cosmology [the study of origins] and bibliology [the doctrine of Scripture]), theology proper (the doctrine of God), angelology and demonology, anthropology (the doctrine of humanity), hamartiology (the doctrine of sin), Christology, pneumatology (the doctrine of the Spirit), soteriology (the doctrine of salvation), ecclesiology (including missiology), and eschatology (the doctrine of the future).[52] If properly grounded in exegesis and biblical teaching on each of these topics, such an atemporal organization of material

49 See here the New Testament instances of the Greek word μυστήριον (e.g., Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10; Rom. 11:25–27; 16:25–26; 1 Cor. 15:51; Eph. 3:2–10; 5:32; Col. 1:26–27; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:16), which is usually rendered, rather inadequately, as "mystery" in our English translations. In fact, a μυστήριον is the very opposite of a mystery: It is the *disclosure* of a truth that had previously remained unrevealed. See D. A. Carson, "Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul's Understanding of the Old and New," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, vol. 2: *The Paradoxes of Paul*, WUNT 2/181, ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark Seifrid (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 393–436. See also G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

50 Cf. Witherington, *Biblical Theology*, 3, who stresses the importance of "operating with the right hermeneutical principles, the chief of which is the notion of progressive revelation"; and George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 27: "Since biblical theology traces the divine acts in redemptive history, we must expect progression in the revelation"; Ladd adds that scholars should also "expect diversity within a basic unity" (28). See also Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 16, who affirms that the method of biblical theology is "determined by the principle of historic progression." As a result, in general, biblical theology precedes systematic theology, though "there is at several points already a beginning of correlation among elements of truth in which the beginnings of the systematizing process can be discerned." Note, however, one major limitation in Vos's own method: because he approaches biblical theology as history of divine revelation culminating in Jesus, he does not treat Paul's letters, the remaining New Testament Epistles, and Revelation, which renders his presentation incomplete.

51 D. A. Carson, "The Role of Exegesis in Systematic Theology," in *Doing Theology in Today's World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer*, ed. John D. Woodbridge and Thomas E. McComiskey (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 66. Similarly, idem, "Bible and Theology," 2634.

52 Cf., e.g., Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013); Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020).

based on logic, order, and need (the contemporary situation) can be very beneficial as one constructs a biblical framework for the church at a particular point in time.

In fact, there are several reasons why systematic theology can helpfully complement and supplement biblical theology. To begin with, no one passage exhausts the totality of Scripture's teaching on any given topic, which requires a methodical, systematic organization of material. Also, in view of the Reformation principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture (*scriptura sui ipsius interpres*, "Scripture is its own interpreter"), systematic theology can keep interpreters from accentuating only part of the biblical teaching on a given subject while neglecting other parts and thus being unbalanced or even slipping into theological error. In this way, there is an oscillating dynamic between biblical and systematic theology. Rather than moving from exegesis to biblical theology, and from there to systematic theology, in linear fashion, we "circle back around," so that key biblical doctrines serve as confessional framework for our biblical-theological exploration (though care must be taken to do so in such a way that the inductive nature of biblical theology is not compromised).

D. A. Carson speaks to this when he writes,

> Most emphatically, this point is neither belittling systematic theology nor an attempt to sideline the discipline. When I warn against the danger of systematic theology domesticating what Scripture says, I nevertheless gladly insist that, properly deployed, systematic theology enriches, deepens, and safeguards our exegesis. . . . The best of systematic theology not only attempts to bring together all of Scripture in faithful ways, but also at its best enjoys a pedagogical function that helps to steer exegesis away from irresponsible options . . . by consciously taking into account the witness of the entire canon.[53]

Such "theology-disciplined exegesis" is able to benefit from past insights and to resist succumbing to the latest theological trends.[54] In fact, as mentioned, there is a necessary two-way relationship between exegesis and systematic theology "in which exegesis shapes systematic theology and . . . systematic theology shapes exegesis."[55]

Nevertheless, as Carson notes, as we engage in systematic theology, we should be aware of "subtle ways to abandon the authority of Scripture in our lives." One such way is "allowing the categories of Systematic Theology to domesticate what Scripture says."[56] Scripture—not exegesis, biblical theology, or even systematic theology—must remain our sole and final authority (the Reformation principle of *sola Scriptura*, i.e., Christian

53 D. A. Carson, "Subtle Ways to Abandon the Authority of Scripture in Our Lives," *Themelios* 42, no. 1 (January 2017): 8.

54 Carson, "Subtle Ways," 8.

55 Carson, "Subtle Ways," 8.

56 Carson's fifth point in "Subtle Ways," 8–9.

Scripture alone is the final authority in all matters of Christian faith and practice). In the end, we should always be prepared to subject our interpretations of individual passages, as well as the way in which we connect the dots among those passages (biblical theology), and even our larger overarching theological systems, to Scripture itself. Otherwise, our theological system usurps the role of Scripture and becomes in effect our primary point of reference and authority, a place properly reserved for Scripture alone.

One helpful way of differentiating between biblical and systematic theology is recognizing that biblical theology is primarily about establishing theological *connections* (connecting biblical texts not merely literarily and intertextually but also along historical lines) while systematic theology is primarily about theological *construction* (organizing the biblical material methodically and comprehensively, topic by topic). That is, biblical theology relates the theology of a given biblical book or writer to that of other books in a given Testament and ultimately the entire canon, though a certain amount of arrangement and organization is inevitable even in biblical theology. In this way, we can see an interconnected web of theological relationships emerge from the various biblical writings included in the canon as a whole.

Systematic theology, by contrast, consists in an effort to construct a given doctrine in a more abstract yet orderly fashion. Take the doctrine of the Trinity, for example.[57] While not explicitly taught in such terms in Scripture—the church father Tertullian was the first Latin writer to use the term *trinitas*, though not necessarily in the exact sense in which the doctrine is formulated today—the doctrine of the Trinity is the result of legitimate theological construction from the biblical teaching on God (the Father), Jesus (the Son), and the Holy Spirit in various portions of Scripture. While we may initially glean this teaching along historical lines as it emerges from the biblical writings—first in the Old Testament and then in the New—eventually connection gives way to construction, resulting in the doctrine of the Trinity organized along atemporal, logical, and systematic lines.

No one could legitimately argue that such a systematic formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity is misguided or unhelpful. There is an obvious utility to having this doctrine presented in a coherent, comprehensive manner. At the same time, it is apparent that such an atemporal presentation should be sufficiently grounded in the biblical texts themselves, studied along historical lines (the contribution of biblical theology). Thus, theology is best conceived of as a collaborative discipline between biblical scholars and (systematic) theologians who work in tandem in such a way that each contributes to our knowledge and application of Scripture in their respective areas of expertise.[58] This col-

57 Other examples include the eternal generation of the Son ("only begotten"), the doctrine of imputation (Jesus's perfect life and obedience being credited to believers), or the doctrine of sanctification. In each case, while biblical theology proceeds along original historical lines, tracing how a given teaching was disclosed gradually over time, systematic theology constructs a doctrinal framework that is atemporal and logical in orientation.

58 For examples of such cross-disciplinary collaboration between biblical scholars and systematic theologians, see Andreas J. Köstenberger and Scott R. Swain, *Father, Son, and Spirit: The Trinity and John's Gospel*, NSBT 24 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008); and Gregg R. Allison and Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Holy*

laborative model further extends to other fields such as historical theology (the study of the way in which doctrines were developed over time) and Christian philosophy (which deals with questions such as epistemology, the science of how we come to know).

Citing the work of Graham Cole, D. A. Carson distinguishes between four levels of biblical and theological exploration.[59] First is the exegesis of scriptural texts in historical contexts and in terms of their literary features (including genre), in an attempt to discern the underlying authorial intent as much as this is feasible. Second is the interpretation of a given text within the scope of biblical theology in its entirety, in an effort to determine its contribution to the biblical metanarrative. Third is the quest to understand theological structures in a given text in conjunction with other major theological themes in Scripture. Fourth is the subjection of all teachings derived from the biblical writings to the interpreter's larger hermeneutical proposal. While interpreters have traditionally operated mostly on levels 1 and 2, most recent practitioners of the theological interpretation of Scripture operate on levels 3 and 4.[60] While the best biblical-theological work operates on all four levels (or at least the first three), biblical theologians should not shortchange levels 1 and 2 in their quest to progress to levels 3 and 4. On the other hand, scholars should not stop at level 2 or even 3. Cole's model thus provides a helpful grid for assessing strengths and weaknesses of a given approach. At the same time, it remains vital to define biblical theology carefully and to maintain a proper distinction between biblical and systematic theology.[61]

1.1.2 Biblical Theology and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS)

We turn now briefly to a discussion of one recent effort to engage in theology, commonly known as the theological interpretation of Scripture (TIS). Of the two ventures described above—biblical theology and systematic theology—the latter is the more comprehensive task in that it involves even more synthesizing than biblical theology. In doing its work, such theologizing draws on a far wider range of resources, only one of which is biblical theology and its fruits. On the whole, recent

Spirit, Theology for the People of God (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2020). The latter work is the inaugural volume in a series featuring the collaborative work of biblical scholars and systematic theologians on all of the Bible's major doctrines.

59 D. A. Carson, "Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Yes, But . . . ," in *Theological Commentary: Evangelical Perspectives*, ed. R. Michael Allen (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 206–7.

60 See further the discussion under the next heading.

61 See Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Present and Future of Biblical Theology," *Themelios* 37, no. 3 (2012): 445–64; an earlier version with the same title appeared in *SwJT* 56, no. 1 (2013): 3–24. By urging a continuing distinction between biblical and systematic theology, we are in no way seeking to dispute the continuing viability of systematic theology. See R. Michael Allen and Scott R. Swain, "In Defense of Proof-Texting," *JETS* 54 (2011): 589–606, who analyze the work of Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin and urge disciplinary symbiosis with theology and exegesis working hand in hand. However, while we understand the authors' desire to defend the legitimacy of systematic theology, we do not agree with their criticism of Carson's above-cited essay, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*.

exponents of TIS seek to be more holistic and attempt to repair divisions between various disciplines rather than add another theological specialty.[62] Nevertheless, on a methodological level, TIS tends to be more *deductive*, while biblical theology aims to be more *inductive*. TIS builds a picture of the theology of the Bible using broad categories derived from systematic theology, whereas biblical theology works with specific observations found in the biblical material itself. As in the case of the relationship between biblical and systematic theology, this is not a case of competition or incompatibility, for biblical theology and TIS each have their legitimate aims and methods. Christian believers read Scripture with the aim of understanding God's person, actions, and motivations and what this means for who they are and how they should live. That, in any case, is the ideal; namely, this is part of the role of the kind of reader that the Bible itself invites us to be as we read and act upon what it says.[63] The task of reading the Bible is not just a matter of technique or method. Rather, it makes demands upon the moral character of the reader. In turn, Scripture will shape the moral character of the person who uses it as intended—the one who has eyes to see and ears to hear, both of which God gives to the reader. In this vein, practitioners of TIS understand the post-Enlightenment fragmentation of theology to have caused the division of theology into a set of discrete disciplines under such titles as biblical, historical, systematic, and practical theology—each with its own set of goals, values, and rules of operation.[64]

In line with this ambitious agenda of consolidation, attention is now being paid to the biblical canon, including the ordering of books in the canon, as a God-given theological resource provided to the church for instruction in doctrine and ethics. For example, it has been noticed that the unifying function of the Johannine corpus is all the more effective due to the fact that it includes literary works belonging to several genres—Gospel, epistle, and apocalypse—and the fact that its components are not placed together but are scattered throughout the New Testament canon.[65] The practitioners of biblical and systematic theology have started to talk with each other and even to cooperate. The Two Horizons Commentary series is an example of this rapprochement, seeking to bridge the gap between biblical studies and systematic

62 A point made by Murray Rae, "Theological Interpretation and the Problem of Method," in *Ears That Hear: Explorations in Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Joel B. Green and Tim Meadowcroft (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2013), 25.

63 Cf. Richard S. Briggs, *The Virtuous Reader: Old Testament Narrative and Interpretive Virtue*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010). The aim of Briggs is to explore the readerly virtues implied in Old Testament texts. What kind of readers does the Bible desire? Briggs provides a series of case studies of particular interpretive virtues that are explicit or implicit in various texts, that is, the moral virtues relevant to the process of interpreting Scripture. Along similar lines, see the discussion of interpretive virtues in Köstenberger with Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 66.

64 See the discussion provided by Stephen E. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 13–21.

65 This is briefly commented on by Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word*, 109.

theology by offering a section-by-section exegesis of biblical texts in close conversation with theological concerns.[66]

In writing a biblical theology, we have sought to learn from these efforts, and so the present volume is attuned to the canonical structuring of the biblical material (e.g., canonical groupings such as the Pentateuch and the four-Gospels corpus) and book order (e.g., in the Greek canon, Judges–Ruth, or Jeremiah–Lamentations). We engage in the process of synthesis that has a legitimate and essential role in biblical theology—believing that the *theologies* of different books in Scripture, while not identical in every respect, are compatible and mutually enriching, and we note and trace common theological themes in books—and ultimately in all of Scripture—as a means to that end. In our book-by-book survey of the two Testaments, we explore their ethical teaching as well as theological themes. Too often, biblical theology is an ethics-free zone, so that the important "So what?" question is not raised, much less answered.

A helpful discussion of what the theological interpretation of Scripture is and is not is provided in Kevin Vanhoozer's preface to the *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*.[67] Certainly, it should not be the imposition of a theological system or confessional grid onto the Bible in an effort to constrain exegesis. On the other hand, biblical scholars must have recourse to theology in order to make sense of the text's theological claim to be the word of God for the people of God, such that "[r]eadings that remain on the historical, literary, or sociological levels cannot ultimately do justice to the subject matter of the texts."[68] Much, of course, depends on how practitioners of

66 E.g., Ernest C. Lucas, *Proverbs*, THOTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015); Stephen E. Fowl, *Philippians*, THNTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005). Another example is the Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplement series, with a number of volumes in the series bringing together biblical studies and historical theology. See, e.g., Thomas Holsinger-Friesen, *Irenaeus and Genesis: A Study of Competition in Early Christian Hermeneutics*, JTISup 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009); Seth B. Tarrer, *Reading with the Faithful: Interpretation of True and False Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah from Ancient to Modern Times*, JTISup 6 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013). Yet another example of the theological interpretation of the Bible—whether or not Gerald Bray would describe what he is doing exactly in those terms—is the volume by Gerald Bray, *God Is Love: A Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), which is a warmhearted explanation of Christian doctrine given to us in Scripture. It is aimed at those who normally find systematic theology unappealing and incomprehensible—through no fault of their own. True to the subtitle, almost without exception, only biblical references appear in the footnotes. Bray uses simple, straightforward language, avoiding all theological jargon. Another outstanding feature of this book is the inclusion of theological and practical ethics at appropriate points in the discussion, including the Christian attitude toward marriage, sports, and politics. Even when dealing with doctrine, Bray's discussion regularly turns in a practical direction, so that when discussing the Christian hope, for example, he addresses the problem of the experience of failure. The doctrine of union with Christ leads to an explanation of the place and importance of prayer: "To be a Christian without praying is like being married but never speaking to your spouse" (623). In his discussion of the doctrine of the church, he gives a down-to-earth explanation of what is or is not essential in church life.

67 Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "What Is Theological Interpretation of the Bible?," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Craig G. Bartholomew, Daniel J. Treier, and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 19–27.

68 Vanhoozer, *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation*, 18.

TIS define "theology" and how they engage in "theological interpretation." More often than not, "theology" is a blend between the interpreter's own theology and that expressed in the text that is being interpreted; to the extent that this is the case, TIS goes beyond the approach advocated here, which understands biblical theology as essentially a quest to understand the theology of the *biblical writers* as expressed in the biblical texts and ultimately in the entire canon of Scripture.

In the final analysis, the Bible belongs to the church and was written for believers and not for the academy. This does not mean that we ignore academic attacks on the Bible (which need to be answered) or refuse to use the tools that academics have developed to study the biblical text (insofar as the tools are suitable for the text they supposedly elucidate). It does mean, however, that the primary purpose of the Bible is not to assist in the writing of a *history of religions* or a number of other reductionistic or even atheistic projects but to guide the beliefs and behavior of the people of God.[69] There are pitfalls to TIS as presently practiced, including the lack of a consensus among the practitioners as to what they are doing and why (though, to be fair, the same could be said for practitioners of biblical theology).[70] In fact, the current variety of approaches does not differ all that much from that which is found in almost any area of biblical or theological study. It appears that there is more than one way of practicing TIS; indeed, it is "a *family* of interpretive approaches."[71] We neither approve nor defend all the methods used in the current TIS movement.[72] Yet, as believing scholars with a high view of Scripture as God's inspired word, we can take to heart some of the legitimate concerns of TIS and combine these with the way in which responsible biblical scholars and systematic theologians have engaged in their work for a considerable amount of time, and such a discerning appropriation can be of genuine service to the church.[73]

69 See the essay by Adolf Schlatter, "Atheistic Methods in Theology," trans. David R. Bauer, *Asbury Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (1996): 45–57, who deplores "a deep suspicion and spirited protest against 'theology'" in Germany in his day and notes "that ethics is forgotten" in such treatments.

70 Gregg R. Allison, "The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: An Introduction and Preliminary Evaluation," *SBJT* 14, no. 2 (2010): 28–36, esp. 32–33.

71 Allison, "Theological Interpretation," 30 (emphasis added).

72 See the critique by Carson, "Theological Interpretation of Scripture," 187–207; idem, "New Covenant Theology and Biblical Theology," in *God's Glory Revealed in Christ: Essays on Biblical Theology in Honor of Thomas R. Schreiner*, ed. Denny Burk, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Brian Vickers (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2019), 25–27. See also Stanley E. Porter, "What Exactly Is Theological Interpretation of Scripture, and Is It Hermeneutically Robust Enough for the Task to Which It Has Been Appointed?," in *Horizons in Hermeneutics: A Festschrift in Honor of Anthony C. Thiselton*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Matthew R. Malcolm (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 234–67, who answers the question in the title of his essay with a resounding no.

73 For a summary and critique of an important work written by a practitioner of TIS, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Review of Craig G. Bartholomew, *Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics*," https://www.booksataglance.com/book-reviews/introducing-biblical-hermeneutics-comprehensive-framework-hearing-god-scripture-craig-g-bartholomew. Oddly enough, as noted, Bartholomew's chapter on history (ch. 10) is particularly strong, while the chapter on theology (ch. 12) is rather weak (focusing largely on creation while neglecting soteriology).

1.1.3 Biblical Theology and Hermeneutics

We now turn to the vital relationship between biblical theology and hermeneutics. While biblical theology is predicated upon hermeneutics, biblical hermeneutics itself is properly grounded in the nature (ontology) of Scripture.[74] Scripture itself claims to be God-breathed (*theopneustos*, 2 Tim. 3:16) and the product of divine inspiration (2 Pet. 1:20–21).[75] As Scott Swain affirms, "Scripture is the supreme literary expression of God's self-revelation in history."[76] In view of biblical inspiration, Eckhard Schnabel rightly observes that Scripture requires a "sacred hermeneutic" (*hermeneutica sacra*) rather than an "atheistic" method concerned merely with historical—or, one might add, literary—facets of interpretation.[77] In addition, authorial intent is never to be construed solely in terms of a human author's intent but within the orbit of dual authorship, both divine and human, whereby the divine intent provides an overall canonical, thematic, and metanarratival framework.[78]

In the ultimate analysis, the Bible's unity is grounded in the unity of the one, triune God. On the basis of this underlying unity, the manifest diversity of Scripture is accounted for by a variety of factors, such as the historical time interval over which divine revelation took place, multiple literary genres, the personal ways of expression of individual biblical authors (such as vocabulary and style), and the chosen emphases in their respective writings depending on a variety of circumstantial and other factors.[79]

74 For some of the thoughts and references in this and the next paragraph, we are indebted to Samuel G. Parkison, "Divine Revelation's Creaturely Corollary: Illumination as the Christ-Adoring Bridge between Systematics and Hermeneutics" (PhD seminar paper, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

75 See D. A. Carson, "Approaching the Bible," in D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, comp. Andrew David Naselli (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 19–54; Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), ch. 1; D. A. Carson, ed., *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016); Wayne A. Grudem, "Scripture's Self-Attestation and the Problem of Formulating a Doctrine of Scripture," in *Scripture and Truth*, ed. D. A. Carson and John Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 19–59.

76 Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 8.

77 Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Scripture," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 41. Cf. Schlatter, "Atheistic Methods in Theology"; see also Robert W. Yarbrough, "Adolf Schlatter's 'The Significance of Method for Theological Work': Translation and Commentary," *SBJT* 1, no. 2 (1997): 64–76; James Eglinton and Michael Bräutigam, "Scientific Theology? Herman Bavinck and Adolf Schlatter on the Place of Theology in the University," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7, no.1 (2013): 27–50.

78 On biblical inspiration, see, e.g., Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading*, 67; Michael W. Goheen and Michael D. Williams, "Doctrine of Scripture and Theological Interpretation," in *A Manifesto for Theological Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew and Heath A. Thomas (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 72–93. On the canon of Scripture, see Stephen G. Dempster, "The Canon and Theological Interpretation," in Bartholomew and Thomas, *Manifesto for Theological Interpretation*, 131–48; Michael J. Kruger, *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

79 On genre, see, e.g., Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "The Semantics of Biblical Literature: Truth and Scripture's Diverse Literary Forms," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 49–104.

The Father is the Creator and self-revealing God. Also, there is a sense in which Christ is both the agent and the *telos* (ultimate point of reference) of biblical revelation; all Scripture is oriented toward him and finds in him its fulfillment.[80] The Spirit is the agent of inspiration. On the human side, what corresponds to divinely inspired revelation is Spirit-illumined interpretation.[81] Thus, the Spirit's role is vital in both inscripturation and interpretation.[82]

Biblical theology is, however, more than mere Spirit-filled interpretation; it involves connecting the dots between different strands of divine revelation in Scripture.[83] Yet how are those strands to be connected? One way to do this is by way of intertextuality.[84] While it is certainly important and legitimate to identify antecedent texts where such are intentionally invoked by a later biblical author, however, the frequent tendency of practitioners of an intertextual approach is that the respective historical settings are inadequately taken into account. In fact, intertextuality can be practiced by those who affirm textual autonomy—the notion that, as far as interpretation is concerned, textuality is all there is—as well as by deconstructionists, postmodernists, structuralists, and practitioners of other methods that insufficiently ground a given text (or set of texts) in history.[85] However, since texts are themselves historical artifacts, the interpreter of Scripture—and of any text, for that matter—should keep the twin interpretive realities of text and history together throughout the process of interpretation, in addition to being mindful of the text's third vital dimension: theology. The same goes for the biblical theologian. In their quest for a string of various divinely revealed motifs, biblical theologians will therefore do well to view a given biblical text through the triadic lens of history, literature, and theology.[86]

80 See esp. Luke 24:25–27, 44–48; see also Matt. 5:17; John 5:45–47; Rom. 10:4; Heb. 1:1–2. Cf. Graham Cole, *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013); Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013); Vos, *Biblical Theology*.

81 This is the primary thesis of Parkison, "Divine Revelation's Creaturely Corollary," citing Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 350.

82 Cf. 1 Cor. 2:11–16. See the discussion of the need for regenerate, Spirit-filled, and Spirit-led interpretation in Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 55; on the role of faith and the Spirit in interpretation, see Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1995), ch. 11; Robert W. Yarbrough, *Clash of Visions: Populism and Elitism in New Testament Theology*, Reformed Exegetical Doctrine Studies (Fearn, Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus, 2019).

83 Cf. Vos, *Biblical Theology*, v, 18, taking his cue from Thomas Aquinas, who espoused the belief that theology is *a Deo docetur, Deum docet, ad Deum ducit* ("taught by God, teaches God, [and] leads to God"). Vos believed that the task of biblical theology is to trace the "organic growth . . . of the truths of Special Revelation" (v–vi). Toward this end, he divided biblical history into two periods, Mosaic and prophetic.

84 The term "intertextuality" was coined by the Bulgarian-French thinker and writer Julia Kristeva. More recently, biblical scholars such as Richard Hays have appropriated an intertextual approach for biblical studies. See the extensive interaction with Hays throughout this volume, esp. in ch. 8 on the Gospels.

85 For a discussion of structuralism, poststructuralism, reader-response criticism, and deconstructionism, see appendix 1 in Osborne, *Hermeneutical Spiral*, 465–99.

86 See Köstenberger with Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*. See also Brian S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, 3: "Biblical theology is principally concerned with the overall

In addition, Vos lodges the important reminder that "knowing" God, in the Semitic sense, is not merely intellectual assent but means "to love," "to single out in love."[87] God does not merely want to be *known*; he wants to be *loved*. God's purpose is more than mere education; it is love.[88] Hence, the backbone of Old Testament revelation, for its part, is not a school but a series of covenants.[89] In addition, Vos engages in an important critique of rationalistic, critical scholarship, noting that "in religion the sinful mind of man comes . . . face to face with the claims of an independent, superior authority."[90] At closer scrutiny, therefore, rationalism's "protest against tradition is a protest against God as the source of tradition."[91] Decrying evolution and positivism, Vos adds that "[t]racing the truth historically" but "with a lack of fundamental piety" has "lost the right of calling itself theology."[92] The problem is not the exercise of one's rational faculties but irreverence and rebellion against revelation and ultimately against God himself. Thus, on a foundational level, biblical theology, which is primarily concerned with divine revelation, should be grounded in a hermeneutic that respects the divine authority, inspiration, and integrity of Scripture.[93] Above all,

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message of the whole Bible. It seeks to understand the parts in relation to the whole and, to achieve this, it must work with the mutual interaction of *the literary, historical, and theological dimensions* of the various corpora, and with the interrelationships of these within the whole canon of Scripture" (emphasis added).

87 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 8. The same premise underlies Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *For the Love of God's Word: An Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2015). See also David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), xxix, who points out that while "theology is *never less* than truth about God," it "is *never only* about expressing true information about God" (emphases original). In addition to the scientific side of theology, there is also its sapiential and spiritual dimension—"Knowing and loving God!" (xxix).

88 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 8–9.

89 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 8.

90 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 10.

91 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 10.

92 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 10–11.

93 Cf. the three guiding principles affirmed by Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 11–13: theism, revelation, and plenary inspiration; and Witherington, *Biblical Theology*, 5, who writes that "the Bible is a book of progressive revelation of the character and work of God." See also Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 13, who urges that biblical theologians be "open to the gospel's claim to revelation." While affirming the historical-critical method as "currently [the] only one established method" for understanding a text historically, Stuhlmacher states that the "New Testament attests the *revelation* of the one God in the mission, work, and resurrection of Jesus from the dead" (12, emphasis original). At the same time, Stuhlmacher believes there are errors and contradictions in Scripture. As noted in Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Diversity and Unity in the New Testament," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 144, Stuhlmacher believes that "the Bible contains diverse voices that do not merely complement but also contradict each other" ("Der Kanon und seine Auslegung," in *Jesus Christus als die Mitte der Schrift: Studien zur Hermeneutik des Evangeliums*, ed. Christof Landmesser et al., BZNW 86 [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997], 287: "vielfältige Stimmen, . . . die sich nicht nur gegenseitig ergänzen, sondern auch widersprechen"). For a thorough summary and critique of Stuhlmacher's work, see Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Review of Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*," https://www.booksataglance.com/book-reviews/andreas-kostenbergers-review-of-biblical-theology-of-the-new-testament-by-peter-stuhlmacher.

biblical interpreters should practice a "hermeneutic of love" grounded in the biblical injunction of the "twofold love of God and neighbor."[94]

1.2 THE PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

If, then, biblical theology is conceived of as the theology of the Bible and the biblical writers themselves, with the goal of not only knowing but loving God supremely, this raises the obvious set of follow-up questions: How can one ascertain what the theology of the biblical writers is? What is the most appropriate method when engaging in biblical theology? Is ascertaining the theology of the biblical writers even a realistic goal? These are valid and vital questions. Students of the history of biblical interpretation know that scholars have increasingly come to realize that interpretation has an inescapably subjective component. This is likely to affect our ability to arrive at a definitive understanding of the theology of a given biblical writer, though one's presuppositions need not have a debilitating effect, as long as proper distantiation occurs and interpreters are aware of what they bring to the text and are willing to learn from other interpreters.

Edward Herrelko wrote his PhD dissertation on the role of presuppositions in biblical theology, a rather neglected topic.[95] Specifically, he compared the Pauline theologies of James D. G. Dunn and Thomas R. Schreiner.[96] Both scholars profess to engage in biblical theology—they share the same essential definition of the nature and goals of biblical theology along the lines discussed above—and yet, when one looks at their respective works, they describe Paul's theology rather differently. What this case study demonstrates is that all interpreters come to the practice of biblical theology with a set of presuppositions that will invariably impact the outcome of their work. In the case of Dunn's and Schreiner's Pauline theologies, such presuppositions include their *view of Scripture*, their take on *introductory matters*, and their *use of history*. Schreiner is an inerrantist who believes Paul wrote all thirteen letters attributed to him in the New Testament. Dunn does not affirm inerrancy and holds

94 Augustine, *De doctrina christiana* 1.36, quoted in N. T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 73, n. 43. Wright and Bird mean by this "a sympathetic and yet inquisitive appropriation of the authors and texts of the New Testament," in which "the lover [i.e., the biblical interpreter] affirms the reality and the otherness of the beloved" (a model known as "critical realism" [73]). In addition, in the context of this biblical theology, a "hermeneutic of love" will bring to light God's love for the world and his desire for people to love him in return as a key theme in the biblical story.

95 Edward J. Herrelko III, "The Role of Presuppositions and Their Impact on the Process of Biblical Theology: A Case Study of the Pauline Theologies of James Dunn and Thomas Schreiner" (PhD diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016).

96 James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020).

to the Pauline authorship of only seven letters.[97] It is to be expected that if one writes a theology of Paul based merely on Romans, 1–2 Corinthians, Galatians, and a few other epistles, one's presentation will look different than one based on all thirteen letters. In addition, Dunn and Schreiner differ in their reconstruction of the first-century Jewish *background* when interpreting Paul's letters; Dunn is one of the major proponents of the "New Perspective on Paul," while Schreiner essentially holds to a Reformed perspective.[98]

So, how does one navigate the thorny issue of presuppositions while engaging in biblical theology? It is true that anyone aiming to discover the theology of a given writer of Scripture faces the inescapable reality of their own subjective viewpoints. At the same time, presuppositions—or preunderstanding (*Vorverständnis*), as some call it—are not necessarily a problem, much less an insurmountable one.[99] If presuppositions are well grounded—which we believe is the case for a high view of Scripture and a belief in the Pauline authorship of the letters the New Testament attributes to him—such presuppositions can serve as the vital foundation for one's biblical-theological work. What is more, through following proper principles of biblical interpretation and mutual dialogue and critique, we can reasonably expect to arrive at a valid picture of Paul's theology and that of other biblical writers, especially within the context of an evangelical hermeneutic aimed at discovering the biblical authors' original intent.[100]

Beyond this, biblical theology is much more than a mere academic exercise; it is of considerable practical relevance for the church.[101] Biblical theology has great promise for preachers and teachers and serious students of God's word; it matters and is worthy of

97 Similarly, Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 253 et passim, classifies the Pastoral Epistles (1–2 Timothy and Titus), Ephesians, and (more tentatively) Colossians and 2 Thessalonians, as deutero-Pauline (i.e., not written by Paul).

98 Among their many publications, see, e.g., James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, 2nd ed., BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018).

99 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, ed. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1975; orig. German ed. *Wahrheit und Methode* [1960]), sought to recast the German word *Vorurteil*, which has a pejorative connotation ("bias") but which, Gadamer argued, can be taken more neutrally to mean "prejudgment."

100 See, e.g., Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God*, BTNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009); idem, *Commentary on 1–2 Timothy and Titus*, EBTC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020); Andreas J. Köstenberger and Margaret E. Köstenberger, *God's Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014); Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*; and Andreas J. Köstenberger with T. Desmond Alexander, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission*, NSBT 53 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020).

101 See, e.g., Michael Lawrence, *Biblical Theology in the Life of the Church: A Guide for Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010). See also Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 13, who suggests four methodological imperatives for a biblical theology—it must be (1) historically appropriate, (2) open to revelation, (3) related to the church's faith, and (4) rationally transparent and controllable—and closes with a call, not only to biblical exegesis and dogmatics, but also to "participation in the life of the church" (789).

our utmost attention, careful definition, and execution.[102] Geerhardus Vos helpfully affirms the practical utility of biblical theology. He observes that by exhibiting the organic unfolding of revelation, biblical theology supplies a "special argument from design for the reality of Supernaturalism."[103] In addition, it provides a "useful antidote against . . . rationalistic criticism."[104] In light of the fact that the "Bible is not a dogmatic handbook but a historical book full of dramatic interest, . . . [b]iblical theology imparts new life and freshness to the truth by showing it to us in its original historic setting."[105] Biblical theology also shows the indispensable nature of the "doctrinal groundwork" of our beliefs. God has taken great care "to supply His people with a new world of ideas."[106] By engaging in biblical theology, we can move beyond isolated proof texts to an organic system.[107] Since the "supreme end" of biblical theology is the glory of God, biblical theology can give us "a new view of God as displaying a particular aspect of His nature in connection with His historical approach to and intercourse with man."[108] Similarly, Charles Scobie maintains that "BT is not to be undertaken in independence from the life of the church."[109] Properly understood, it is a "bridge discipline, standing in an intermediate position between the historical study of the Bible and the use of the Bible as authoritative Scripture by the church."[110] While building on "the historical study of Scripture, . . . it is not simply concerned with what the Bible 'meant.' It is also concerned with what the Bible 'means' as a canonical whole, and thus cannot be separated from the process of biblical interpretation."[111]

1.2.1 Method in Biblical Theology

With this, we move from a treatment of the nature of biblical theology to an examination of method.[112] In our discussion above, we've defined biblical theology as essentially the theology of the Bible that we need to discern and present in an orderly fashion, and we have proposed a triadic hermeneutic, aiming to discover the authorial intent by studying the historical, literary, and theological dimensions of Scripture.[113] That said,

102 We will return to this subject in the final chapter of this volume, which is devoted to biblical-theological synthesis.

103 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 17.

104 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 17.

105 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 17.

106 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 17.

107 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 17–18.

108 Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 18.

109 Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 8.

110 Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 8.

111 Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 8. The allusion is to Krister Stendahl, "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," *IDB* 1:419, who distinguishes between biblical theology as being concerned with what the Bible "meant" and systematic (or dogmatic) theology as being concerned with what the Bible "means" (cf. Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 5).

112 Cf. "The Method of Biblical Theology," in Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 46–80; "How Do We Do New Testament Theology?," in I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 17–48.

113 That authorial intent, it should be noted, includes the intent of both the divine and the human author. On the neglect of the divine intent in hermeneutics, see Barrett, *Canon, Covenant, and Christology*, 5, who writes,

what specific method should we use when engaging in biblical theology? D. A. Carson once trenchantly remarked, "Everyone does that which is right in his or her own eyes, and calls it biblical theology."[114] So, giving proper attention to method is very important. We would suggest that such a method needs to include the following three essential components.[115]

First, such a method should be *historical*.[116] That is, unlike systematic theology, which is primarily abstract and topical in nature, biblical theology aims to understand a given passage of Scripture in its original historical setting. For example, when interpreting the well-known passage, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" (Jer. 29:11 NIV), we should ask who the original recipients of this promise were and at what stage of Israel's history this prophecy was uttered. To cite another example, when studying the biblical theology of tithing, we need to interpret references to tithing in Malachi or Matthew in such a way that we take into account the specific salvation-historical situation in which those passages of Scripture are to be placed.[117]

"Evangelicals pay lip service to inspiration, but when we turn to the text itself the divine author may have little functional imprint across the canon. Our hermeneutic betrays a deistic God, one who has inspired the text but thereafter has no role in how the whole text (and its story) comes together over the course of history." While it is problematic to neglect divine intent, however, it is likewise problematic to neglect human intent; divine and human intent must be held in proper balance. For an example of an overemphasis on divine intent, see Vern S. Poythress, "Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning: Gains and Losses from Focusing on the Human Author, Illustrated by Zephaniah 1:2–3," *JETS* 57 (2014): 481–99, who urges that interpreters abandon the quest for authorial intent and focus exclusively on divine intent. Also, to speak about the divine intent expressing itself in the *story* or *storyline* of Scripture can be a bit slippery (cf. Barrett, *Canon, Covenant, and Christology*, 2: "it is because the story of Scripture has one divine author that his *divine authorial intent* is embedded throughout Scripture's storyline" [emphasis original]); we prefer to speak of divine/human authorial intent being expressed in concrete words and texts.

114 Carson, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," 91.

115 Cf. Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 46, who proposes "an intermediate biblical theology" focusing on historical study, biblical theology (by which he essentially means a literary study of the canon), and the "faith and life of the church." While different in execution, we would agree that engaging in biblical theology involves historical and literary study within a canonical framework as well as a concern for the ethical dimension of the teachings of Scripture.

116 Cf. Gabler, "Oration on the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Systematic Theology," 501: "There is truly a biblical theology, *of historical origin*, conveying what the holy writers felt about divine matters." However, see the important critique by Barrett, *Canon, Covenant, and Christology*, 17–20, citing John V. Fesko, "On the Antiquity of Biblical Theology," in Tipton and Waddington, eds., *Resurrection and Eschatology*, 443–77, esp. 445–53. Cf. Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 5, who seeks to strike the proper balance: "The theology of the New Testament must do justice to both the historical claims to revelation and the ecclesiastical significance of the New Testament canon" (italics removed). In "Book 1: The Origin and Character of the New Testament Proclamation," Stuhlmacher organizes his presentation of New Testament theology in six parts: the proclamation of Jesus, the early church, Paul, the period after Paul, the Synoptic Gospels, and "John and his school." See also Hagner, in Ladd, *Theology of the New Testament*, 20: "Biblical theology is that discipline which sets forth the message of the books of the Bible in their historical setting . . . primarily a descriptive discipline."

117 David A. Croteau and Andreas J. Köstenberger, "'Will a Man Rob God?' (Malachi 3:8): A Study of Tithing in the Old and New Testaments," *BBR* 16, no. 1 (2006): 53–77; idem, "Reconstructing a Biblical Model for Giving: A Discussion of Relevant Systematic Issues and New Testament Principles," *BBR* 16, no. 2 (2006): 237–60.

Second, biblical theology will seek to study Scripture *inductively*, *on its own terms*, in a way that pays special attention, not merely to the concepts addressed in Scripture, but to the very words, vocabulary, and terminology used by the biblical writers.[118] Rather than investigating "sanctification" as a broader topic, for example, the biblical theologian will study the individual words that are used in the Bible to express what may be called the subject of Christian growth—words such as "set apart" (*hagiazō*) or "grow" (*auxanō*).[119] That said, there is, of course, also the reverse danger of being limited to word studies, for a theme, issue, or concept can be present even when a key word is not. For example, we should not limit the love theme in the Bible to explicit instances of the word "love" in Greek or Hebrew. Similarly, while the *word* "mission" is not found in Scripture, the *concept* of mission certainly is.[120] This, then, is the purpose of biblical theology: to understand the theology of the Bible on its own terms before systematizing its teachings on various subjects and making application, even though there is, of course, a vital element of synthesizing in biblical theology itself.[121] The difference, however, is that synthesizing in biblical theology essentially involves the topical or thematic grouping of insights still in keeping with biblical terminology and within the framework of the original historical setting in which a given teaching was given, while systematic theology operates more broadly on a conceptual plane.[122]

Third, biblical theology, properly conceived, is primarily *descriptive*. That is, our primary goal in biblical theology is to listen to Scripture and to accurately describe the contributions made by the various biblical writers themselves (whether or not we know their full identity). While we should be actively engaged as good listeners of Scripture, we are focused on understanding and accurately representing the contributions of the

118 See Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 3: "A theology of the New Testament must allow the New Testament itself to dictate its theme and presentation" (italics removed); Rosner, "Biblical Theology," 10: "It [biblical theology] proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyze and synthesize the Bible's teaching about God and his relations to the world *on its own terms*, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus" (emphasis added); and Carson, "Current Issues in Biblical Theology," 27–32, who urges that biblical theology read the Bible as a historically developing collection of writings; presuppose a coherent and agreed-upon canon; and utilize an inductive approach, draw connections among the various corpora, and call people to know the living God.

119 A helpful book on sanctification is David Peterson, *Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, NSBT 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001). See also Marny Köstenberger, *Sanctification as Set Apart and Growing in Christ by the Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, forthcoming).

120 Cf. Andreas J. Köstenberger, *The Missions of Jesus and the Disciples according to the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

121 Cf. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 44: "The New Testament must be understood first of all and as far as possible on its own terms, as an expression of thought within the ways that were possible in the first century."

122 Thus, technically, there can be no "biblical theology of the Trinity," since the word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, even though there can be a biblical-theological exploration of the relationship between God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit in Scripture. This may seem overly pedantic but makes a vital methodological point. It is also the reason why Andreas and his coauthor Scott Swain chose the title *Father, Son, and Spirit* for their NSBT volume rather than *The Trinity*, and opted for the subtitle *The Trinity* and *John's Gospel* rather than *The Trinity* in *John's Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008).

biblical authors. Once we have done so, we are ready to ask questions as to contemporary relevance and application. What is more, in the present volume we build on our historical, inductive, and descriptive study and probe the ethical teachings of the various Old and New Testament books because we believe that Scripture has a vital moral dimension that calls its adherents not merely to know what it says but also to put their faith into practice (cf., e.g., Matt. 7:24–27; James 1:22–25).[123]

1.2.2 Unity, Diversity, and the Quest for a Single Center

One important preliminary question related to method in biblical theology is the question as to whether there is only *one* right way of engaging in biblical theology or whether there is a range of legitimate options. A survey of a wide array of representative publications on biblical theology yields a simple taxonomy.[124] There are essentially four major complementary—and not necessarily competing—ways of engaging in biblical theology: (1) an investigation of major themes in Scripture book by book (the "classic" approach); (2) an examination of central themes throughout Scripture; (3) the identification of a single center of Scripture; and (4) a metanarrative approach that focuses on discerning the Bible's major storyline.[125] Let us look briefly at each of these approaches.

First, scholars and students of Scripture have studied the theology of a given *book* or *corpus* of Scripture. An example of this would be an exploration of the theology of John's Gospel (and letters) or a study of the theology of Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. Focusing initially on the investigation of the theology of a given writer of Scripture one book or corpus at a time has the virtue of respecting the integrity of that book as a holistic discourse unit. When examining Paul's theology, for example, one will likely find that he emphasizes different attributes of God or Christ and different aspects of the Christian life in his various writings, in part depending on the needs of the congregation to which he writes and the issues he chooses to address.[126]

It is evident that looking at each of Paul's letters one at a time will be essential and highly beneficial in understanding his thought as accurately as possible.[127] Having done

123 Cf. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 43, who rightly insists that New Testament theology "must have some relevance to the theology of Christian believers" and points out that while New Testament theology is in the first place descriptive, "the prescriptive element is hard to eliminate" (44).

124 Köstenberger, "Present and Future of Biblical Theology." For an alternate (albeit controversial) taxonomy, see Klink and Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology*, who, along a spectrum from "more historical" to "more theological," distinguish between biblical theology as historical description (James Barr), history of redemption (D. A. Carson), worldview-story (N. T. Wright), canonical approach (Brevard Childs), and theological construction (Francis Watson); but see the pointed critique by Carson, "New Covenant Theology and Biblical Theology," 17–31.

125 Though perhaps (2) and (3) could be combined and a single-center approach be viewed as a subset of a central-themes approach in which one theme is given priority over all others.

126 In addition, we may consider Paul's sermons recorded by Luke in the book of Acts.

127 Cf. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 707, who, characterizing his approach in his own biblical theology, "considered it essential to begin with examining the theology of each of the documents individually." He adds

so, of course, the student of Scripture may attempt to provide a synthesis of Paul's thought more generally, but not until he or she has studied Paul's message in each of his writings individually first. This may be considered the "classic approach," echoing G. K. Beale's terminology used in his *New Testament Biblical Theology*.[128] Not only is this the way in which scholars have traditionally conceived of and practically engaged in biblical-theological study, but this is also how, we believe, we should continue to think of and pursue biblical theology.

Second, some, such as Scott Hafemann and Paul House, have utilized a *central themes* approach.[129] Rather than looking at the theology of individual books of Scripture, such scholars seek to discern major themes throughout Scripture—such as God, Messiah, salvation, and so forth—and attempt to trace the way in which these themes integrate progressive biblical revelation. This can be a very valuable enterprise, as it showcases the unity and coherence of Scripture. At the same time, it is preferable to start with a study of the theology of individual books of the Bible before moving on to connecting the dots in the form of central themes. In this way, we will not lose sight of the distinctive teaching of each individual book of Scripture. Again, the metaphor of a relay race comes to mind: To tweak the metaphor for our present purposes, the first runner is the biblical theologian, who studies the theology of individual books; the second runner examines a number of central scriptural themes; the third runner seeks to identify a possible center of Scripture (or of a corpus, such as Paul's or John's writings); and the fourth and final runner connects the theology of individual books and central themes to the biblical metanarrative.

Third, reminiscent of the elusive quest for the Holy Grail, some biblical theologians have sought to identify the *center* of Scripture.[130] Somewhat ironically, those who have tried to do so have come up with different results, which makes one wonder whether there is such a single center in the first place.[131] It is easy to see that in a Bible made up of

that, even where a series of writings comes from the same author, as in the case of Luke-Acts or Paul's letters, "it is still of value to look at these writings separately to see what contribution each has to offer to the total picture" (707).

128 G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2011), 7, notes that a number of "classic New Testament theologies . . . conduct a consecutive theological analysis of each NT book, usually in the canonical order of each corpus, and then . . . draw up a final comparison of each of the theological emphases of each of the books," citing Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, and Frank S. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005). See Beale's entire introductory discussion of issues in biblical theology in ch. 1; and his discussion of "storyline" in chs. 2 and 6.

129 Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House, eds., *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007). See also Scobie, *Ways of Our God*; and the discussion in Köstenberger, "Present and Future of Biblical Theology," 449–51.

130 Cf., e.g., Trent A. Rogers, "Song, Psalm, and Sermon: Toward a Center of Biblical Theology," *JETS* 64 (2021): 129–45. Still helpful is Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*. See also the summary discussion in Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 86; more broadly, Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 93–102; and Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 772–91.

131 Cf. Carson, "New Testament Theology," 810: "The pursuit of the center is chimerical. NT theology is so interwoven that one can move from any one topic to any other topic. We will make better progress by pursuing

sixty-six books written over more than two thousand years there will be a certain amount of diversity. Not every book of Scripture focuses on the same topic. Thus, most scholars in the field have rightly abandoned the quest for a single center.[132] Instead, it would seem preferable to view Scripture as a unity in diversity where different writers—such as the four Evangelists—each emphasize certain aspects, depending on their personal vantage point and purpose for writing to a given audience.[133] Rather than speaking of a single center, it may therefore be better to speak of multiple integrative themes in Scripture, including God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the gospel.[134]

To elaborate on the limitations of a single-center biblical theology a bit further, quite clearly there are multiple themes in Scripture. For example, there is the *creation/new creation* theme. The opening of Genesis is matched by the ending of Revelation.[135] Paul writes that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17), and neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters; what matters is a new creation (Gal. 6:15). Also, Christ is the second or last Adam (Rom. 5:12–21; cf. 1 Cor. 15:45), the "image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15). John writes that, in the beginning was the Word, but

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clusters of broadly common themes, which may not be common to all NT books." Similarly, Andreas contends in his essay "Diversity and Unity in the New Testament," in Hafemann, *Biblical Theology*, 154, that "the search for a single center of the NT should be abandoned." See further the discussion below.

132 One of the few exceptions in recent decades is James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), who practices this approach rather rigidly (and continues to defend it: see idem, "The Definition, Structure, and Center of Biblical Theology," *MJT* 20, no. 1 [2021]: 1–18); see the discussion and assessment in Köstenberger, "Present and Future of Biblical Theology," 452–55; and the critique by Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 20–21. As Gentry and Wellum observe, "Many proposals [as to the center of biblical theology] have been given, and they all tend toward reductionism" (31, n. 2). In his 2021 article, Hamilton does affirm a book-by-book approach, which is commendable but rings a bit hollow as he does not seem to be prepared to acknowledge adequately the theological and thematic diversity of the biblical writings. More latitude is found in J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *God's Relational Presence: The Cohesive Center of Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), who speak of God's relational presence as a "cohesive center." See also Joshua W. Jipp, *The Messianic Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), whose "central argument" is "that the messianic identity of Jesus of Nazareth is not only the presupposition for, but is also the primary (though certainly not exclusive) content of theology" (3). There are some points of affinity with James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM, 2006).

133 See, e.g., Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, who devotes vol. 1 to diversity and vol. 2 to unity. He starts vol. 1 with Paul (topical) and the "Pauline school" (2 Thessalonians; Colossians; Ephesians; Pastorals); moves to post-apostolic "Hellenistic-Jewish Christian writings" independent of Paul (James; 1 Peter; Hebrews; Revelation); the Synoptics and Acts; John; and, finally, Jude and 2 Peter. In vol. 2, Hahn provides a systematic presentation of the Old Testament, God's revelation in Jesus Christ, pneumatology, soteriology, ecclesiology, ethics, and eschatology. Similarly, Hübner, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, who, after a lengthy prolegomenon on revelation (vol. 1), starts with Paul (chronological); moves on to the deutero-Paulines (same as Hahn) and General Epistles (vol. 2); before covering Hebrews, the Synoptics, John, and Revelation (vol. 3).

134 Köstenberger, "Diversity and Unity in the New Testament," 200–23.

135 See, e.g., Andrew David Naselli, "How Do Genesis 1–3 and Revelation 21–22 Relate as the Bible's Bookends?," in *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 339–46; see also D. A. Carson, "Genesis 1–3: Not Maximalist, but Seminal," *TrinJ* 39, no. 2 (2018): 143–63.

now that Word has come and lived among us (John 1:1, 14) and died for us (19:30), and then Jesus breathes on his new messianic community and commissions his followers to fulfill their mission (20:21–23). So, it is evident that creation/new creation is a vital biblical-theological motif.[136]

Yet creation theology is not the only significant, pervasive theme in Scripture. Another such theme is that of *covenant*. People differ as to whether one can speak of an Adamic covenant, but there clearly is a Noahic covenant, and then the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. Finally, in keeping with the prediction of Jeremiah and other prophets, Jesus instituted a new covenant.[137] Revelation shows how, in the eternal state, the faithful covenant God will dwell amid his people.[138] This, of course, is only the barest survey of a massive scriptural theme. Our point here is simply that, at the very least, *both* creation/new creation *and* covenant are vital themes in Scripture. In addition, we might adduce several other pervasive biblical themes, such as Messiah, the kingdom of God, salvation, mission, and others. All this is to illustrate the point that a single-center approach is demonstrably reductionistic and therefore inadequate.

Fourth, perhaps the most recent attempt in biblical theology, and a rather fruitful one at that, is utilizing a *metanarrative* approach to understand the teachings of Scripture.[139] Those who utilize this approach take a close look at the *story* of the Bible—the overall *storyline*—to describe its theology in all its unity and diversity. In many ways, this is commendable and complements, even improves upon, previous efforts. It is possible to study the theology of the Bible book by book, and then to sketch a composite picture based on the study of individual books and their theology, and still not to get the big picture totally right. Even when one traces the central themes of Scripture, one may look at them individually, or even jointly, and not quite arrive at a full grasp of the metanarrative—the grand narrative—of Scripture. In this regard, a metanarrative or story approach to biblical theology may well constitute an improvement.

136 See, e.g., G. K. Beale, "The New Testament and New Creation," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, 159–73; Matthew Y. Emerson, *Christ and the New Creation: A Canonical Approach to the Theology of the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), who suggests that the New Testament book order "points to the goal of Christ's coming, which is to bring about the New Creation" and calls this "the center or focal point of New Testament theology" (xvii); and Sean McDonough, *Creation and New Creation: Understanding God's Creation Project* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016). For the creation/new creation theme in John's Gospel and letters, see Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel*, ch. 8.

137 For a survey, see Köstenberger with Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 566–76. See also Thomas R. Schreiner, *Covenant and God's Purpose for the World*, SSBT (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017).

138 See Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, who encapsulate God's program by the phrase "kingdom through covenant."

139 See, e.g., T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012); Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*. See the discussion and assessment of these works in Köstenberger, "Present and Future of Biblical Theology," 455–49.

At the same time, however, it is easy to see that if looking at the big picture is all one does, there are multiple ways to connect the dots.[140] Which of these is most fitting, and how do we ensure that the picture is not unduly subjective? It is also possible, if not likely, that by looking at the grand narrative one will overlook some of the plot twists, minor themes, and characters in the biblical storyline. For example, one could construe the biblical metanarrative from just a few select books such as Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, one or more of the Gospels, Romans, and Revelation, and ignore the rest, such as the Twelve (Minor Prophets) or lesser-known New Testament letters such as James or Jude. And what about Wisdom Books such as Job, Ecclesiastes, or the Song of Songs? If one is not careful, one may well end up with what scholars call "a canon within a canon," that is, a collection of one's favorite biblical books—or the books that best fit one's preferred overall construal of the biblical storyline—while neglecting or even subconsciously avoiding lesser voices—or ones that are perhaps inconvenient.[141] At the same time, it is of course also true that certain books in Scripture have greater canonical and theological weight than others.[142]

For these reasons, we recommend a metanarrative approach as the *final* step in a biblical-theological investigation but not as *substitute* for a classic, book-by-book approach. As Bruce Metzger well stated,

> New Testament scholars have the responsibility as servants of the Church to investigate, understand, and elucidate, for the development of the Christian life of believers, the full meaning of every book within the canon and not only of those which may be most popular in certain circles and at certain times. Only in such a way will the Church be able to hear the Word of God in all of its breadth and depth.[143]

140 In fact, the metanarrative approach also leans heavily on systematics, because everyone has a theological system that draws theological connections, whether classical Reformed covenant theology, dispensationalism, new covenant theology, or some other system. This will doubtless affect even the most principled biblical theologian's work (e.g., G. K. Beale writing within the bounds of the Westminster confession, as he acknowledges in the dedication and conclusion to his work).

141 On the question of a "canon within a canon" in German scholarship, see Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 1:24, who cites Siegfried Schulz, *Die Mitte der Schrift: Der Frühkatholizismus im Neuen Testament als Herausforderung an den Protestantismus* (Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1976), as an example of a scholar who considers only Pauline theology as genuinely Christian theology.

142 E.g., Deuteronomy has greater weight than Zephaniah, Romans greater weight than Jude. Note in this regard the frequency of New Testament references to Old Testament books: References to the Pentateuch (esp. Deuteronomy), the Psalms, and Isaiah predominate, while there is no explicit citation of Esther or the Song of Songs. See further ch. 7 below.

143 Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 282. But see the gentle pushback by Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 785, who insists that such a comprehensive approach "still does not relieve exegetes of the responsibility of informing their audiences about the central teaching of the New Testament." For his part, Stuhlmacher follows the lead of Werner Georg Kümmel, who advocates discerning the main New Testament traditions without neglecting the Old Testament (cf. Werner Georg Kümmel, "Das Problem der 'Mitte des Neuen Testaments,'" in *Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte*, 2 vols., Marburger Theologische Studien 16 [Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1968], 2:73), resulting in his seeing

Starting with a given book or corpus of Scripture (book by book), then aiming to identify major topics (central themes), and finally attempting to understand how these all fit together in the storyline of Scripture (metanarrative) combines the strengths of the various approaches and avoids potential weaknesses. Such a balanced procedure enables interpreters to discern the theology of the biblical writers themselves—as Schlatter and others rightly conceive of the aim of biblical theology—not just to rehearse the story interpreters themselves have composed based on what they see as the highlights in the biblical narrative. At the same time, we readily acknowledge that there are self-evident high points in the biblical storyline.[144] While one could quarrel over minor details, it is hard to debate the pillars of the Bible's overall story such as creation, fall, redemption, and consummation.

1.2.3 Detecting and Analyzing Themes

In our discussion above, we have defined what biblical theology is and what it is not. We have also discussed hermeneutics and method in biblical theology and surveyed various ways of engaging in biblical theology: moving through the Bible book by book, studying the Bible's central themes, seeking to identify a single center, and tracing the Bible's metanarrative. But how does one move from theory to practice? While this entire volume is an exercise in whole-Bible theology, it will be helpful to look at the very outset at two specific examples of how to engage in biblical theology by studying the theology of a corpus of Scripture or by exploring a given theme throughout the Bible.

When working on a project surveying the biblical theology of a given book or corpus of Scripture such as John's Gospel or the letters to Timothy and Titus, or when tracing a theme such as God's design for man and woman, the mission motif, or the Bible's teaching on the Holy Spirit through Scripture, once we have a solid method, all we need to do is execute it methodically. Thus, defining one's terms carefully and honing one's method is half the battle. In what follows, then, we will briefly demonstrate in an incipient fashion how biblical theology works in practice. As we engage in biblical-theological study, we propose the following four general guidelines:

1. Read through the book multiple times and take notes or mark up your Bible as you try to identify significant themes and emphases. This may surface on either a key word or a conceptual level.
2. In so doing, identify key passages where the biblical theology of a given book or corpus is most prominently enunciated, such as a preface, prologue, or introduction, summary and purpose statements, or conclusion.

Paul's gospel of justification as the biblical center. At the outset of his work, Stuhlmacher affirms, "The gospel of God concerning Jesus Christ is the decisive center of the New Testament" (12).

144 Cf., e.g., Jason S. DeRouchie, "What Is Scripture's Storyline?," in *40 Questions about Biblical Theology*, 29–40; "Epilogue: The Story Line of Scripture," in Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, 1024–49; and the discussion at 1.2.4 below.

3. Identify prominent themes and distinctive theological emphases. In so doing, draw on literary analysis and consider important literary features such as strategic placement, repetition, structure, and/or emphases.
4. Develop a hierarchy of themes. Determine which of the prominent themes that you identified in the previous step are foundational themes that provide cohesion to the biblical story (e.g., love) and which are specific instantiations (e.g., the cross).

In what follows, we will first engage in a case study of the theology of Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus before turning to a second case study on a selected biblical-theological theme, the Bible's teaching on the Holy Spirit.

1.2.3.1 Case Study #1: Letters to Timothy and Titus

In view of these general guidelines, let us now look at the first case study, Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus, or, as they are commonly known, the "Pastoral Epistles." As mentioned, our biblical-theological approach calls us to be inductive, historical, and descriptive. The question, therefore, is *not*, How would *you or we* outline these books or come up with theological categories, but how did *Paul himself*, judging by the texts we have, articulate his theological thinking in these letters? This method, in turn, flows from our understanding of the nature of biblical theology as describing the theology of the Bible and of the biblical writers themselves, rather than reading our own theology into the biblical writings. Hermeneutically, as mentioned above, we interpret these writings by viewing them through the trifocal lens of history, literature, and theology.

Regarding the historical context, we see that these letters were most likely the final letters Paul wrote, toward the end of his life. That is clear especially in 2 Timothy, where Paul is suffering imprisonment that would soon lead to his martyrdom. Many scholars argue that these letters were written by someone other than Paul, after his death, primarily because they exhibit some significant differences from his earlier letters.[145] For

145 E.g., Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles*, HUT 22 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), who claims pseudepigraphy was an accepted way of reclaiming Pauline tradition; David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority in Jewish and Earliest Christian Tradition*, WUNT 1/39 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), whose argument is similar; and Bart D. Ehrman, *Forgery and Counterforgery: The Use of Literary Deceit in Early Christian Polemics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), who considers all three letters forged polemic for the sake of church order (1 Timothy, Titus) and eschatology (2 Timothy). But see Armin D. Baum, *Pseudepigraphie und literarische Fälschung im frühen Christentum. Mit ausgewählten Quellentexten samt deutscher Übersetzung*, WUNT 2/138 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); Stanley E. Porter and Gregory P. Fewster, eds., *Paul and Pseudepigraphy* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), esp. the essay by Armin Baum; Terry L. Wilder, *Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and Deception: An Inquiry into Intention and Reception* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004); idem, "Pseudonymity, the New Testament, and the Pastoral Epistles," in *Entrusted with the Gospel: Paul's Theology in the Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Terry L. Wilder (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 28–51; and the discussion of "Authenticity" in Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 14–24.

example, the author of these letters, when speaking of the church, does not use Paul's favorite metaphor—the church as the body of Christ—but instead depicts the church as God's household.[146] That seems to be a significant shift. Also, the author uses a different term for Christ's second coming—*epiphaneia* rather than *parousia*[147]—and calls on his apostolic delegates to emulate a series of virtues—such as godliness (*eusebeia*)—rather than speaking of the fruit of the Spirit or other Christian graces as in his earlier letters.[148] Many also note the pronounced interest in church structure and leadership, which, they say, reflects an "early Catholicism" such as what we see in the writings of the second-century church fathers.[149]

While none of these differences justifies the conclusion that Paul cannot be the author of these letters, it is imperative to recognize that these three letters are distinct and unique in the Pauline corpus. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, we believe that a high view of Scripture demands Pauline authorship—all three letters explicitly affirm it at the very outset, and there is little evidence for epistolary pseudonymity as an established literary practice in the first century—and the evidence strongly supports it.[150] That said, these letters do exhibit a distinctive set of biblical-theological themes. For example, Paul repeatedly uses the phrase "God our Savior" or "Christ our Savior"—a designation absent from his earlier letters.[151] Another unique feature is a series of "trustworthy sayings."[152]

The question, then, becomes, How do we explain these differences? One way is to say that these letters were written by someone other than Paul. Or, one might argue that the author is the same—Paul—but he expressed himself differently. If the latter, how should we account for the differences in terminology? One possibility would be that Paul contextualized his message to the respective locales to which he wrote, something we see clearly, for example, in the approach Paul uses in Athens (Acts 17:16–34). For example, we have plenty of archaeological evidence from Crete, where Titus was ministering, to suggest that people there worshiped deities other than YHWH or Christ as Savior, which might account for Paul's unique use of the phrases "God our Savior" and "Christ our Savior."[153] So, it is certainly possible, if not likely, that Paul, by using these expressions, makes the point that God, and Christ, is Savior—and those other deities the Cretans were worshiping were not. As Eckhard Schnabel aptly notes,

146 See esp. 1 Tim. 3:15; cf. vv. 4–5.

147 E.g., 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1; Titus 2:13.

148 E.g., 1 Tim. 4:12; 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22.

149 For additional reasons and assessment, see Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 19–24.

150 Carson and Moo's judgment is sound, that the letters to Timothy and Titus "are much more akin to the accepted letters of Paul than they are to the known pseudonymous documents that circulated in the early church" (D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005], 563).

151 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:3; Titus 1:3, 4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6.

152 1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:8–9; 2 Tim. 2:11–13; Titus 3:4–8.

153 See Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 296–99.

> The absence of Pauline theological themes from the Pastoral Epistles (e.g., the cross, the Holy Spirit, the flesh/spirit dichotomy) does not prove inauthenticity. There is no reason why Paul should mention the whole range of basic theological topics in all of his letters, particularly in letters to coworkers who know his theology. It is only if it could be shown that the theology of the Pastoral Epistles *contradicts* Paul's undisputed letters that we would have a serious problem.[154]

Keeping these preliminary considerations in mind, let us now move on to examine the biblical theology of these letters.[155] In the general guidelines above, we suggest that the first thing to do when engaging in biblical-theological study is to read through a given book multiple times and to take notes or mark up one's Bible in an attempt to identify significant themes and emphases. As one reads the letters to Timothy and Titus repeatedly, one is struck by how firmly they are rooted in the idea of mission, or more specifically, in the apostolic mission of Paul and his associates. It is virtually impossible to separate the letters to Timothy and Titus from Acts and the other Pauline letters with regards to this theme. Indeed, we can argue that the first major theme in these letters—the foundational theme—is that of *mission*.[156] While this may seem rather obvious, the vast majority of scholars today hold to non-Pauline authorship, treat the study of these letters as a mere academic exercise, and thus do not have a particular interest in their focus on mission.

Second, a careful study of these letters reveals that closely related to mission is the theme of *teaching*, the kind that flows from Paul's apostolic preaching—the *kerygma*—and is passed on to his apostolic delegates as they guard it against false teachers. As to specific words or phrases conveying the "teaching" theme in these letters, there is considerable variety.[157] The vocabulary includes "the deposit" (1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:14); "the faith" (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7); "the word of God" (1 Tim. 4:5; 2 Tim. 2:9) or "the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15); "Scripture" (2 Tim. 3:16–17); "teaching" (*didaskalia*; 1 Tim. 1:10) or the verb "to teach" (*didaskein*; 1 Tim. 4:11; 6:2), both positive; and negatively (*heterodidaskalein*; 1 Tim. 1:3; 6:3); and the above-mentioned five "trustworthy sayings." The wide range of vocabulary and the prominence of the teaching motif

154 Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Paul, Timothy, and Titus: The Assumption of a Pseudonymous Author and of Pseudonymous Recipients in the Light of Literary, Theological, and Historical Evidence," in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, ed. James K. Hoffmeier and Dennis R. Magary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 392 (emphasis original). Note, however, that Schnabel concedes too much when he speaks of the "absence" of the Holy Spirit in these letters; see Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 427–31.

155 For a full discussion, see the biblical-theological portion in Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 357–544.

156 See esp. Andreas J. Köstenberger, "An Investigation of the Mission Motif in the Letters to Timothy and Titus with Implications for Pauline Authorship," *BBR* 29 (2019): 49–64; Chiao Ek Ho, "Mission in the Pastoral Epistles," in *Entrusted with the Gospel*, 241–67.

157 See Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 386–97.

in these letters underscore that Paul placed immense value on right doctrine, or as he regularly calls it, "sound" or wholesome teaching (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:10). The reason for this is that he firmly believes that right teaching is healthful and life-giving while false teaching saps the life out of individual believers and the church. So, mission and teaching are integrally related and occupy pride of place in these letters.

Third, when it comes to repeated and prominent references, the "*salvation*" word group is rather conspicuous, both the noun *sōtēria* and the verb *sōzō* and related terms.[158] We have already seen that God and Christ are referred to in these letters primarily as "God our Savior" or "Christ our Savior," so much so that some commentators have suggested that the Christology in these letters is essentially equivalent to their soteriology. While this is probably an exaggeration, the observation is valid that Christ is featured in these letters primarily in his role as divine Savior. Salvation, in turn, like teaching, is integrally related to mission, so it makes sense that all three—mission, teaching, and salvation—are prominent themes in these letters. Salvation being a prominent theme also makes sense in that all people are sinners and need salvation, a foundational reality in, and incentive for, mission.

What is more, in conjunction with salvation, as mentioned, there are several references to *God* and *Christ*, which is why it is best to treat salvation, God, and Christ together under one and the same overall rubric.[159] In fact, a plausible argument can be made that salvation is in fact the *main* theme, and God and Christ—as well as the Holy Spirit—are *subthemes* in that God and Christ are the source and providers of salvation. This, incidentally, is an example of how biblical theology can helpfully supplement, or even correct, systematic theology; we see here that, from Paul's vantage point, salvation is the primary motif and God and Christ assume their significance in conjunction with salvation rather than as separate themes in and of themselves.

In other words, Paul does not frequently urge Timothy or Titus, or their churches, to contemplate God or Christ in their own right and with regard to their various attributes (though there are places where he erupts in doxology). Rather, Paul typically focuses on mission, teaching, and salvation, *and in that context* makes clear that the salvation he teaches and preaches about in his missionary practice has God as its source and Christ as its provider. Regarding the Holy Spirit, finally, it is apparent that he is less prominently featured than either God or Christ. In fact, these letters contain only a handful of references to the Spirit, primarily in conjunction with Timothy's appointment to ministry, though there is one remarkable passage on the Spirit in Titus 3:4–7.

Fourth, rather than speaking of the church as the body of Christ as he does in several of his earlier letters, Paul here sets forth the metaphor of the church as *God's*

158 Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 431–45.
159 Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 413–46.

household.[160] The main passage in this regard is 1 Timothy 3:14–15, where Paul writes, "I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the *household of God*, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth" (cf. vv. 4–5). Beyond *explicit* references to the church as God's household, the concept is *implicit* in substantial portions of these letters, especially in 1 Timothy and Titus.[161] For this reason, many consider both letters in their entirety—or at least sizable portions of them—to be extended "household codes" which provide instructions on how God's people are to conduct themselves in the church. A conception of the church as God's household, we believe, also has important implications for how we conceive of the pastoral office. Just as a natural household has various members with a vast range of needs that the head of the household is called to meet, so pastors and elders are to attend to the needs of the various members of the church. They are to love and care for God's people in all their diversity, complexity, and neediness.

Fifth, Paul talks in these letters prominently about the *Christian life*, especially in terms of virtues believers are to pursue.[162] In this regard, Timothy and Titus, as his apostolic delegates, are to serve as moral examples. As a result, they are frequently charged with emulating Christian virtues such as love, righteousness, faithfulness, godliness, or self-control. This reminds us that the character of church leaders is an indispensable prerequisite for their effectiveness in ministry. We dare not neglect our personal lives for the sake of service in the church. As Paul tells Timothy, "Watch your *life and doctrine* closely" (1 Tim. 4:16 NIV); and "Let no one despise you on account of your youth, but rather *set believers an example* in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity" (1 Tim. 4:12 [our translation]). In addition, Paul talks about the importance of good works and good citizenship. He also exhorts God's people to witness to the gospel in word and deed and to persist in their faith amid suffering and adversity.

Sixth and finally, Paul speaks in these letters repeatedly about the *last days*.[163] Some have argued that these letters date to a time when the expectation of Christ's return has largely faded from view and the author is more interested in the church as a permanent institution than in spiritual gifts or eschatological expectations.[164] This, as briefly noted, is called the theory of "early Catholicism," which implies that these letters are late and date to the end of the first or even the beginning of the second century, by which time the church had developed a hierarchy of bishops and priests, eventually leading to the

160 See Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 446–82.

161 For a helpful study, see the PhD dissertation by Charles J. Bumgardner, "Family Relationships in the Letters to Timothy and Titus" (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020); see also idem, "Kinship, Christian Kinship, and the Letters to Timothy and Titus," *Southeastern Theological Review* 7, no. 2 (2016): 3–17.

162 Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 482–513.

163 Köstenberger, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 513–27.

164 E.g., Ernst Käsemann, "Paulus und der Frühkatholizismus," *ZTK* 60 (1963): 75–89; cf. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity*, 372–400.

Roman Catholic Church. However, this view is demonstrably mistaken, as it overlooks the connection with the mission of the early church in Acts, where we see that Paul and others appointed church leaders from the very beginning (e.g., Acts 14:23; cf. Phil. 1:1), so that this feature need not reflect late first- or early second-century practice. Also, the letters to Timothy and Titus display a keen interest in the end times, including the workings of Satan, demons, and angels, and the second coming of Christ. In particular, Paul sees the end times as already present in the sense that the devil is actively at work through the false teachers who try to infiltrate and subvert the church and lead it away from the apostolic gospel. Perhaps most distinctively, Paul sees the present age as the time between Christ's first and second comings, both of which he describes in similar terms (i.e., by using the *epiphaneia* word group).[165]

This has been a brief sketch of some of the major contours of Paul's theology in the letters to Timothy and Titus. In light of this, let us briefly ponder the important question: How is this understanding of the biblical theology of these letters different from the standard treatment in systematic theology? We may register a few general observations. (1) Starting with mission is very different, as systematic treatments virtually never start with mission and some, if not many or even most, systematic theologies do not include the topic of mission at all. (2) Putting salvation in a preeminent place and subordinating God and Christ to salvation is also different, as systematic theology typically treats God and Christ prior to salvation, moving from theology proper to Christology and soteriology. (3) The depiction of the church as God's household may in many systematic theologies pale in comparison to the more prominent metaphor of the church as Christ's body. (4) Viewing eschatology and ecclesiology jointly as we have done is also different from systematic theology, which typically treats ecclesiology and eschatology separately.

Examples could be multiplied, but the overall point is clear: Biblical theology, if done well, can give interpreters an independent pair of legs to stand on that allows them to get closer to the Bible and enables them to critique, and at times even correct, standard systematic theology treatments, especially when looking at a given Old or New Testament book or corpus. We believe the above study of the theology of the letters to Timothy and Titus demonstrates rather clearly that while both biblical and systematic theology have a vital contribution to make, there is a marked difference between the two. Systematic theology endeavors to bring Scripture closer to *our* day by trying to find answers to questions we have *today*. By contrast, biblical theology tries to bring *us* closer to *Scripture* by helping us see what the biblical writers *themselves* believed, so that we can conform *our* beliefs to *theirs*. In this way, we submit to the *authority* of Scripture and allow *it* to set the agenda rather than domesticating Scripture and conforming it to our agenda, ideology, or culture. With that, let us move to our second case study.

165 First coming, Titus 2:11; second coming, 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1; Titus 2:13.

1.2.3.2 Case Study #2: The Holy Spirit

It is important to realize that there are several legitimate ways in which to engage in biblical theology. One is to study all the themes in one book or corpus of Scripture, as we have just done with the letters to Timothy and Titus. Another legitimate way of engaging in biblical theology—and arguably the most common in recent years—is to study one major theme throughout Scripture. As mentioned, there are several examples we could give here, such as the theme of mission or the Bible's teaching on God's design for man and woman. Yet for our present purposes, we would like to take a brief look at the biblical theology of the Holy Spirit, summarizing some of the major findings of Andreas's biblical-theological work on this topic.[166]

As we study the Bible's teaching on the Spirit historically, inductively, and descriptively, we start with individual references to the Spirit in both Testaments. There are about four hundred references to "spirit" (*rûaḥ*) in the Old Testament, but only about one hundred of these relate to the person of the Holy Spirit; the rest refer to the human spirit or breath or to the wind (which at times serves as an emblem for God's judgment). Remarkably, the expression "Holy Spirit" occurs only twice in the Old Testament (Ps. 51:11 [disputed by some]; Isa. 63:10–11); most commonly, the reference is to the "Spirit of YHWH" or simply "the Spirit." Similarly, in the New Testament, not every reference to *pneuma*, "spirit," refers to the person of the Holy Spirit. Many references are to the human spirit or the wind.[167] What is more, sometimes the Holy Spirit is referenced apart from the word *pneuma*.[168] Theologically, there is a development from the Old Testament—where the Spirit is shown to be active in creation and later said to come upon certain leaders or prophets at God-appointed times but is not said to indwell ordinary believers—to the New Testament, where the Spirit comes to indwell believers, starting at Pentecost (Acts 2).

One fascinating challenge when studying the Holy Spirit throughout Scripture is that there is only a limited amount of material on the Spirit in the Old Testament. To begin with, there are three references to the Spirit in Genesis and ten more in the remainder of the Pentateuch.[169] The Spirit is first mentioned in the Bible as hovering over the waters at creation (Gen. 1:2); the closest Old Testament parallel speaks of an eagle hovering over her young (Deut. 32:11), so the word picture is likely that of the Spirit as a mother bird (see also Isa. 31:5). In Genesis 6:3, just prior to the universal flood, it is said that God's Spirit will not remain with humanity forever. In Genesis 41:38, none other than Pharaoh recognizes the Spirit's presence with Joseph. In the rest of

166 Andreas J. Köstenberger, "Part 1: Biblical Theology," in Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 3–219.

167 See, e.g., Jesus's wordplay in John 3:6–8, where he uses πνεῦμα to refer to both the Spirit and the wind.

168 See, e.g., Jesus's reference to "the promise of my Father" in Luke 24:49 or "the gift my Father promised" in Acts 1:4 (NIV).

169 Gen. 1:2; 6:3; 41:38; Ex. 31:3; 35:31; Num. 11:17; 11:25 (2x), 26, 29; 24:2; 27:18; Deut. 34:9. See Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 9–15, and the discussion below.

the Pentateuch, the Spirit is depicted as coming on, or being with, various individuals: the craftsmen building the sanctuary (Bezalel and Oholiab; Ex. 31:2; 35:34–35); the seventy elders (Num. 11:17, 25); Balaam the prophet (Num. 24:2); and Joshua, Moses's successor (Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9). In the Pentateuch, then, the Spirit is shown in three primary functions: (1) as an agent of creation; (2) as an agent of judgment (in the sense that withdrawal of the Spirit leads to weakness and death); and (3) as an agent of empowerment for God's service.

In the Historical Books, in the days of the judges the Spirit is said to have come upon national deliverers such as Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.[170] During the early days of the monarchy, the Spirit came first on Saul (1 Sam. 10:6) and later on David his successor (1 Sam. 16:13). In both time periods—the judges and the monarchy—the Spirit is shown to mediate God's presence and to empower national deliverers and rulers. In addition, the references to the Spirit in Kings, Chronicles, and Nehemiah all involve his activity in conveying God's words to his people through prophets—or inspired individuals—such as Elijah, Elisha, or Zechariah.[171] Thus, in the Historical Books the Spirit's work is essentially twofold: (1) raising up and equipping national deliverers and rulers; and (2) empowering God's spokespersons to prophesy.

There are few overt references to the Spirit in the Wisdom Literature.[172] Overall, wisdom theology is more focused on God's powerful, effective word as the ground of everything that exists. Thus, the Spirit takes on foundational importance for how God's creation works and is to be inhabited, utilized, and enjoyed. The Spirit is also shown to teach God's will and to examine a person's inner being (Ps. 143:10; Prov. 20:27).

The Spirit is mentioned repeatedly in the Prophetic Books, especially Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah.[173] In Isaiah, the operation of the Spirit is linked with the coming of the servant of the Lord. In Isaiah 11:2, the prophet says that "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him [the servant], the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." In Isaiah 42:1, Isaiah prophesies, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations," and the figure of the servant of the Lord also finds its fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah. Finally, in a passage cited by Jesus in his hometown synagogue at Nazareth, Isaiah writes of a figure who appears to be the servant of the Lord:

> The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim

170 Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; etc. See Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 17–26.

171 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; 2 Chron. 24:20.

172 Though see, e.g., Pss. 33:6; 104:30; 139:7; Job 33:4. See Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 26–31.

173 Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 33–49.

> the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn. (Isa. 61:1–2; cf. Luke 4:18–19)

The Spirit is also frequently mentioned in Ezekiel, while being virtually absent from Jeremiah. Ezekiel prophesies that God will provide his people with a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek. 36:25–27; cf. 39:29) and links the Spirit with restoration from the exile (Ezek. 37:12–14). Perhaps the most important passage on the Spirit in the Twelve (the "Minor Prophets") is Joel 2:28–29, the well-known passage cited by Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:16–21), which speaks of a universal outpouring of God's Spirit on "all flesh" regardless of ethnicity, gender, or social status.

In the New Testament, we see the Spirit actively at work in strategic salvation-historical individuals such as John the Baptist, Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah, and Simeon in anticipation of the coming Messiah, Jesus, through whom God would be present with his people in an unprecedented manner (Luke 1–2).[174] During his earthly ministry, Jesus is shown to possess the Spirit to an unlimited degree (John 3:34), and the Spirit is depicted at Jesus's baptism as descending and resting on him.[175] The future would hold the promise of even more significant pneumatological developments. John the Baptist, and later Jesus himself, indicated that the Messiah would baptize not merely with water but with the Holy Spirit.[176] At this future giving of the Spirit (John 7:38), both Jesus and his Father would make their home with believers by the Spirit, who would be with them forever.[177]

Jesus's promise is realized following his ascension at Pentecost, when believers are filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4) in fulfillment of the promise of Joel 2 that in the last days God would pour out his Spirit "on all flesh" (Acts 2:16–21).[178] Now it was not only the *leaders* of God's people who experienced the presence of the Spirit but *everyone* who called on the name of the Lord. Soon it became clear that the same presence of the Spirit was available to Gentile believers in Jesus as well (Acts 10:44–47), in keeping with John the Baptist's prophecy (Acts 11:15–17). Throughout Acts, the Spirit is shown to empower and direct the early church's mission to the ends of the earth, so much so that Acts is not so much the Acts *of the Apostles* as it is the Acts *of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles*.

The New Testament letters, especially the writings of Paul, reinforce the notion that every believer now enjoys the Spirit's indwelling presence.[179] Paul writes that believers have "received" the Spirit who has been given to them (Rom. 5:5; 8:15). The Spirit is

174 Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 53–79.
175 Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32–33.
176 Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5.
177 John 14:16–17, 21; cf. John 20:22; Luke 24:49.
178 Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 81–101.
179 Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 103–66.

"in" believers (see 1 Cor. 6:19) and has come to "dwell in" them (Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16). They possess the Spirit as "firstfruits" (Rom. 8:23) and as a "guarantee" (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5) and are to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). In terms of his activity, the Spirit is shown in Paul's letters to mediate God's presence, to impart life, to reveal truth, to foster holiness, to supply power, and to effect unity (see esp. Eph. 4:1–5). In the non-Pauline letters, the Holy Spirit is featured in three warning passages in the letter to the Hebrews.[180] The author issues warnings not to disregard the witness borne by God through the Holy Spirit; not to disregard manifestations of the Holy Spirit as the people of Israel did in the wilderness during the exodus; and not to disregard the Son of God and the blood of the covenant, thus enraging the Spirit of grace (Heb. 2:4; 6:4; 10:29). The Spirit is also featured as the author of the sacred Old Testament writings through which God still speaks "today" (Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15–16). Peter, in his first letter, highlights the Spirit's role in sanctification (1 Pet. 1:2). He reminds his readers that they are blessed if and when they are persecuted, because the Spirit of God rests on them (1 Pet. 4:14). Peter also underscores the Spirit's role in the ministry of Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles (1 Pet. 1:10–12; 2 Pet. 1:21) and features the Spirit as an agent of Christ's resurrection. John, in his first letter, speaks of believers having an "anointing from the Holy One," namely the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20, 27 NIV). John also, in all likelihood, identifies the Spirit as God's "seed" and agent of regeneration (1 John 3:9); as one of three witnesses to Jesus together with Jesus's baptism and crucifixion (1 John 5:6–8); and as the one who bears internal witness to believers (1 John 5:10).

In Revelation, finally, the Spirit is associated with each of John's four visions. The phrase "in the Spirit" is found at or near the beginning of each of these visions.[181] The Spirit is also repeatedly featured in Revelation as the "seven spirits of God" (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6), and the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2–3 contain the consistent refrain, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Finally, the Spirit is shown to be actively involved in the church's witness and mission amid persecution, and at the end of the book of Revelation, the Spirit and the church both plead with Jesus to return soon (Rev. 22:17).

To summarize, "From Genesis to Revelation, from creation to new creation, the Spirit of God is an active participant in the story of Scripture."[182] He mediates God's presence, reveals truth, fosters holiness, effects unity, and is life-giving, life-empowering, and life-transforming. While closely aligned with God, the Spirit operates as a distinct person along the salvation-historical continuum. The Bible, in both Testaments, provides a fascinating and intriguing conglomerate of pieces that comprise the mosaic sketching

180 Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 167–88.

181 Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10 (Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 188–94).

182 Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 201. See "A Biblical-Theological Synthesis of the Holy Spirit in Scripture," in Allison and Köstenberger, *Holy Spirit*, 201–19.

the contours of a biblical theology of the Spirit. D. A. Carson has rightly said that the measure of any biblical-theological proposal is the way in which it deals with the question of the Bible's unity and diversity.[183] Regarding a biblical theology of the Spirit, one detects a measure of both unity and diversity, continuity and discontinuity. On the one hand, the same Spirit is operative throughout the full orbit and canvas of Scripture. On the other hand, the day of Pentecost marks a watershed with the outpouring of the Spirit on all believers. The New Testament writers provide a multifaceted portrayal of the roles and ministries of the Spirit. He regenerates, renews, transforms, guides, convicts, teaches, sovereignly distributes spiritual gifts, and fulfills many other vital functions in the life of the church and individual believers. He also sustains an intimate and integral relationship with God the Father and God the Son throughout salvation history past, present, and future.

Both case studies have illustrated how to engage in biblical theology so as to discern the theology held by the biblical writers themselves. As mentioned, engaging in biblical theology requires careful listening to the text and an inductive approach that is primarily historical and descriptive. To flesh this out, we have looked at two examples of engaging in biblical theology: (1) studying the theology of a distinct group of writings in the Bible, the letters to Timothy and Titus; and (2) studying a particular theme throughout Scripture, namely, that of the Holy Spirit. Arguably, engaging in biblical theology has gotten us into closer touch with what the Bible teaches on these subjects. If we come to the Bible prepared to submit to its authority, even where this is countercultural, we will be challenged to make life changes to align our lives with God's will for our lives (the ethical component). Rather than imposing our own views, and those of our culture, onto Scripture, we will be changed by the "living and active . . . word of God" (Heb. 4:12). Biblical theology, therefore, holds great promise as it enables us to move closer to Scripture and closer to God.

1.2.4 The Storyline of Scripture

While, in the present volume, we engage in a close, book-by-book study of each of the sixty-six books of the canon of Scripture with regard to their major themes and ethical emphases, in each case we also seek to locate each book within the overall storyline of Scripture. At the very outset, it will therefore be helpful to reflect briefly on the kind of writing we are dealing with and the kind of literature the Bible represents. In so doing, we will register several important observations that will guide our approach for the remainder of this volume. We will do so in the form of twelve affirmations that we will briefly explain and defend. What kind of document is the Bible?

183 Carson, "New Testament Theology," 810: "The most pressing of these [issues] is how simultaneously to expound the unity of NT theology . . . while doing justice to the manifest diversity." Cf. Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 1.xvii: "A theology of the New Testament must . . . deal not only with the diversity but also with the unity of the early Christian witness" (our translation).

(1) *The Bible is "the greatest story ever told."* It is unlike any other story. While there may be similarities between the Bible and, say, the corpus of a prolific writer such as William Shakespeare, there are also important differences as to its nature and message, as we will develop in the following affirmations.

(2) *The Bible is a true story.* It is history. In German, the word *Geschichte* can mean both "story" and "history." In English, the word "story" can convey the sense of a story being told that is not grounded in actual history. In both cases, confusion can easily result. While the Bible contains multiple genres, it is based on historical characters and events. It is not merely "realistic" or "history-like," as Eric Auerbach, Hans Frei, and others contend.[184] It is not contradicted by history, as many German—and British, American, and other—historical critics maintain.[185] It tells the story of God's historical creation, his historical dealings with the people of Israel, and God invading history through the historical virgin birth, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, story and history must be kept together rather than being pitted against each other, or one being jettisoned in favor of the other.[186]

(3) *The Bible cannot be reduced to a series of propositions.* The fact that the Bible is a story—a grand narrative—implies that it cannot simply be reduced to a set of declarations about who God is or what to believe. There is a surplus of meaning in telling and interpreting a story that must be kept intact and preserved. This is the great merit of various narrative and literary approaches to Scripture—even though, sadly, many such approaches are reductionistic and deny the historicity of the material.[187]

(4) *The Bible contains multiple genres.* Each genre sets its own ground rules for interpretation. As Kevin Vanhoozer explains, even doctrines such as the inerrancy or inspiration of Scripture cannot be uniformly asserted across all genres but need to be formulated in keeping with specific genre categories in order to be accurate and meaningful.[188] Likewise, the multiplicity of genres in Scripture poses great challenges—as well as opportunities—to the enterprise of biblical theology and calls for considerable nuance, interpretive skill, and hermeneutical sophistication.

(5) *The Bible is a canon*, an authoritative collection of books. Each book has integrity and contains its own distinct discourse, yet the books are all interconnected by way of common themes and a common metanarrative (not to mention a common divine

184 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963); Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974).

185 See Harris, *Tübingen School*; see also Yarbrough, *Salvation-Historical Fallacy*; idem, *Clash of Visions*.

186 This insight is a vital part of the hermeneutical triad; see Köstenberger with Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*.

187 See the previous point.

188 See Vanhoozer, "Semantics of Biblical Literature"; idem, "A Lamp in the Labyrinth: The Hermeneutics of 'Aesthetic' Theology," *TrinJ* 8 (1987): 25–56; idem, "Lost in Interpretation? Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics," *JETS* 48 (2005): 89–114.

author). For this reason, out of respect for the integrity of each individual book of Scripture, and in the recognition that each book has its own distinctive contribution to make to the canon, we will initially engage in a book-by-book study, seeking to discern individual themes and characteristic ethical teachings before attempting to place a given book within the overall storyline of Scripture.

(6) *The Bible is inspired*. It is revelation, divine self-disclosure—not merely a human word but the word of God.[189] This is taught explicitly in Scripture.[190] It is also implied in many statements in the New Testament by Jesus—e.g., "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35)—and several of the New Testament writers.[191] Thus, the author of Hebrews would cite a given Old Testament passage and introduce the quote by saying, "the Holy Spirit says" (Heb. 3:7; 10:15). Belief in the inspiration and revelatory character of Scripture instills in the interpreter a certain awe and reverence, as they are contrite and humble and tremble at God's word (Isa. 66:2).

(7) *The Bible is authoritative*. Scripture is not only inspired; it is also authoritative. It contains divine speech acts that call for human action (ethics).[192] This requires a stance of obedient submission to God's word. We come to the Bible not merely as scholars or students, seeking information or intending to increase our knowledge about its contents. We come to the Bible to find out what it is God wants us to *do* (James 1:22–25; cf. Matt. 7:21–29). "Speech act theory" helpfully points out that words are locutionary (they are utterances), illocutionary (they are intentional), and perlocutionary (they seek to effect results).[193] They are not merely conveying information but are also calling the recipients to action. God gave us his word to call us to obedience—"the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26).

(8) *The Bible is a love story*. It tells the story of redemptive love—how "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son" (John 3:16a). The story of the Messiah's cross is a story about God's perfect love. This, we believe, is at the heart of the metanarrative of Scripture. In fact, we will attempt to show that many biblical writers—Moses, John,

189 Contra, e.g., Kenton L. Sparks, *God's Word in Human Words: An Evangelical Appropriation of Critical Biblical Scholarship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008); Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015). Cf. G. K. Beale, *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism: Responding to New Challenges to Biblical Authority* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

190 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21; cf. Pss. 19; 119.

191 See John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, 3rd ed. (1972; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009).

192 By "ethics" we essentially mean moral principles governing a person's conduct, as well as specific exhortations in keeping with these moral principles, though we will be open to the individual contributions of the various biblical writers in developing a biblical ethics inductively throughout this volume.

193 On speech act theory, see J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962); John R. Searle, *Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969). See also Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998).

Paul, Peter, not to mention Jesus himself—touch on the theme of love and espouse a love ethic that calls for love of God and love of people. Thus, *love* will emerge as being at the very heart of the biblical storyline and of biblical revelation about who God is, why he created humanity, and what he expects of his people.

(9) *The Bible is a story of salvation*: ". . . that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16b). As mentioned in the previous point, God is not merely love; his is a love that will not let people go without going to extreme lengths in order to save them (though people are of course free to reject that love if they so choose). Thus, there is a redemptive thread that runs through the entire metanarrative of Scripture.

(10) *The Bible is a story with many twists and turns*. It is a story with many characters—some major, some minor. Thus, the Bible reflects both diversity and unity. This is the weakness of a central-themes approach; while the effort to ground the biblical metanarrative in the unity of God and of Scripture is commendable, such a model insufficiently accounts for the "story" nature of Scripture—and the fact that, like every good story, the Bible covers many topics and features a plotline that is not always linear but includes many twists and turns. This calls for engaging reading, creative imagination, and hermeneutical, interpretive, and literary sophistication.

(11) *The Bible is the story of God calling out a people*—the people of God. The Bible's thrust is not merely individual but communal. It connects God's call of Abraham with his calling out a people, the nation of Israel, and later the church, made up of believing Jews and Gentiles. This, too, has important thematic, ethical, and interpretive implications.[194]

(12) *The Bible is a dramatic story*, a theo-drama, the story of a cosmic battle between God and Satan.[195] The Bible teaches that God created both humans and angels, and that just as humanity rebelled against him, the highest angel (Satan) and many other angels (demons) rebelled against God as well. Thus, the backdrop of the entire biblical narrative is a supernatural battle between God and evil forces, which, in turn, seek to pull sinful humanity to their side and away from God. The mission of Jesus is therefore a spiritual rescue operation of sinful humanity, and Satan is the main antagonist of the scriptural theo-drama. This creates enormous suspense and drama throughout the biblical narrative, which comes to a head at the cross, and ultimately at the second coming. Yet there is little suspense about the final outcome: God wins! With this, we move from story to canon and the significance of the canonical forms of Scripture for biblical theology.

194 See the discussion at 13.3.2.4 below.

195 See Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 281–82. See also Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), developing further the seminal work by Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, 5 vols. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988–1998); and Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014).

1.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CANONICAL FORM(S) OF SCRIPTURE FOR BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

There is currently a renaissance in the appreciation of the theological dimension of Scripture, and one aspect of this has been recent efforts at writing biblical theologies.[196] Our present volume aims to serve as a further contribution to that venture. The Bible is an inherently theological book, for it claims to describe and explain God, his character, his ways, and his purposes, and on that basis a theological reading of the text is demanded by its contents. The Bible tells us what is important to know about God and how humans are to behave if God is who he is revealed to be. Believers read Scripture with the aim of understanding God's nature, actions, and motivations and what this means for who they are and how they should live. In line with this agenda, the biblical canon is being treated with new theological seriousness as a sacred collection providentially preserved for the church for instruction in doctrine and ethics,[197] and biblical book order is an obvious and important aspect of the canonical presentation of the biblical material.

1.3.1 Biblical Book Order and Hermeneutics

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to consider what status is to be given to the phenomenon of book order in the reading of the Bible. The sequential ordering of the books according to the contours of the historical canons (Hebrew and Greek) is a component of the *paratext* of Scripture. The term "paratext" refers to elements that are adjoined to the text but not part of the text per se.[198] The scriptural paratext also includes book titles and the internal partitioning of books (e.g., paragraphing). The order of the biblical books is a paratextual phenomenon that cannot be put on the same level as the text itself, for it is a product of ancient readers of the text rather than of the biblical authors themselves. It is a *post-authorial* interpretive frame around the biblical text, generated by early readers as they sought to grapple with the meaning of the various Bible books and as a result placed them in what they deemed appropriate canonical settings as a hermeneutical guide to later users, on the principle that juxtaposed books are related in some way and illuminate each other. A prescribed order of books is a de facto interpretation of the text.[199] For this reason, we must approach the issue of book

196 An earlier version of material in 1.3 was published in Gregory Goswell, "The Ordering of the Books of the Canon and the Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament," *JTI* 13 (2019): 1–20. ©The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, 2019. Used by permission.

197 E.g., Dempster, "Canon and Theological Interpretation"; Ron Haydon, "A Survey and Analysis of Recent 'Canonical' Methods (2000–2015)," *JTI* 10 (2016): 145–55.

198 For the concept of paratext, see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Cf. Martin Wallraff and Patrick Andrist, "Paratexts of the Bible: A New Research Project on Greek Textual Transmission," *Early Christianity* 6 (2015): 239: "all contents in biblical manuscripts except the biblical text itself are a priori paratexts."

199 Cf. Robert W. Wall, "Canonical Context and Canonical Conversations," in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids, MI:

order as part of the history of the interpretation of the Bible. A study of biblical book order uncovers an early stage in the reception history (*Rezeptionsgeschichte*) of Scripture, preserving for posterity the insights and convictions of ancient readers. In the present subsection, we will examine the positions assigned to the book of Ruth in the Hebrew and Greek canons as a test case, seeking to discover how the compilers of these canons viewed this book's theological meanings, all with the aim of informing and enriching our own understanding and response to sacred Scripture.

To reiterate the gist of the preceding paragraph, the ordering of the biblical books should not be put on the same level of authority as the text itself, for it is readers rather than authors who are responsible for the ordering.[200] Authors generate the biblical text and are the *makers* of meaning—which is the case irrespective of the precise compositional history of a work (e.g., the possibility of multiple authors, editions, and stages of redaction)—whereas readers, by putting the books in a particular canonical order, provide a paratextual frame for the text, reflecting their *understanding* of the meaning of the text. The placing of books in a certain order is putting an external constraint on the text of Scripture, albeit an inescapable one when texts of diverse origin are collected into a literary corpus. That being the case, it is not possible to have a text without a paratext,[201] yet their inseparability does not mean that they are indistinct in origin and function. Not all scholars accept that the distinction between text and paratext is quite as absolute as we are suggesting;[202] however, we would insist that there is a clear demarcation between the two.[203]

Since the Reformation, what might be viewed as a halfway house has prevailed with regard to the Bible commonly in use, so that the Hebrew text forms the basis for translations of the Old Testament in Protestant Bibles, but the ordering of the books is that of the Greek canonical tradition (transmitted via the Latin Vulgate). Strange to say, this is a not-unsatisfactory situation, for it has the benefit of reminding Christian readers of their debt to *both* canonical traditions and does not allow either tradition to have absolute precedence over the other.

Some have claimed too much significance for a particular way of ordering the books (e.g., Georg Steins, Stephen Dempster). Others view the order of the biblical books as

Eerdmans, 2000), 175–76: "the literary conventions of the canonical process, such as the final arrangement of canonical writings and their titles, purpose to facilitate their use as Scripture."

200 Cf. Graham A. Cole, "Why a Book? Why This Book? Why the Particular Order within This Book? Some Theological Reflections on the Canon," in Carson, ed., *Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, 473, 475–76.

201 There are, however, paratexts without texts, e.g., the lost works known only by title in the Bible (e.g., Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah [2 Kings 20:20]; Chronicles of King David [1 Chron. 27:24]), for a title is an optional, though almost universal, element of paratext; see Gérard Genette, "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History* 22 (1991): 263.

202 E.g., Hendrik J. Koorevaar, who specifically critiques this view in "The Torah Model as Original Macrostructure of the Hebrew Canon: A Critical Evaluation," *ZAW* 122 (2010): 64–66.

203 For arguments along these lines, see Gregory Goswell, "Should the Church Be Committed to a Particular Order of the Old Testament Canon?," *HBT* 40 (2018): 28–34.

a mechanical phenomenon of little or no interpretive consequence (e.g., John Barton, John C. Poirier). Both extremes are to be avoided. Steins believes that Chronicles was written to be the last book in the Old Testament canon,[204] so that placing it in any other position would be inappropriate; however, there is no evidence that the Chronicler wrote with any such intention.[205] Nor should one particular order of canonical books—for example, the Hebrew order found in Baba Bathra—be used as the exclusive basis of an Old Testament theology, as Dempster does.[206] According to John Barton, "It could in theory be the case that canonical listings preserve important hermeneutical principles. Collecting books together is potentially an interpretative process."[207] Barton, however, is quite skeptical as to whether this can be convincingly established as fact. Likewise, Poirier cites the ordering of the Pauline Epistles according to the decreasing size of the letters (resulting in Romans as the head book), seeing this as proving that the order conveys no meaning for the reader.[208] However, the main target of Poirier's critique is what he sees as Brevard Childs's unfounded move from description (the empirical fact of book order) to prescription (mandating that a particular interpretation based on book order be binding on later readers).[209] For our part, we do not assume or argue that this paratextual feature *always* has to be purposeful; however, where a book is placed within the canonical collection seldom if ever appears haphazard. Its position usually does seem to represent an interpretive evaluation of the book's meaning and function by those responsible for placing the books in order. A more positive evaluation of the interpretive significance of book order is provided by Ched Spellman, who states, "Where an individual writing is positioned in relation to other writings in a collection (either materially or conceptually) has significant hermeneutical ramifications."[210]

We maintain that the divergent orders of the canonical books are not to be viewed as *competing* traditions but rather as complementary and mutually enriching perspectives on the meaning of Scripture that should be considered by contemporary readers who seek to discern the theological parameters of the biblical text.

204 Georg Steins, *Die Chronik als kanonisches Abschlussphänomen: Studien zur Entstehung und Theologie von 1/2 Chronik*, BBB 93 (Weinheim, Germany: Beltz Athenäum, 1995).

205 For arguments against Steins's approach, see Edmon L. Gallagher, "The End of the Bible? The Position of Chronicles in the Canon," *TynBul* 65 (2014): 181–99; Gregory Goswell, "Putting the Book of Chronicles in Its Place," *JETS* 60 (2017): 283–99.

206 Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 15 (Leicester, UK: Apollos, 2003).

207 John Barton, *Holy Writings, Sacred Text: The Canon in Early Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 34.

208 John C. Poirier, "Order and Essence of Canon in Brevard Childs's Book on Paul," *BBR* 20 (2010): 503–16.

209 Cf. Brevard S. Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

210 Ched Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible: Exploring the History and Hermeneutics of the Canon*, New Testament Monographs 34 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014), 109–10.

1.3.2 A Missing Factor in Recent Efforts at Theological Interpretation?

Practitioners of the theological interpretation of Scripture, which has biblical theology as an essential first step and foundation, though not rejecting academic rigor and critical tools, view their task as primarily serving the church rather than the academy.[211] According to Stephen Fowl, what is required for the reading of Scripture is "a complex interaction in which Christian convictions, practices, and concerns are brought to bear on scriptural interpretation in ways that both shape interpretation and are shaped by it."[212] In line with an interpretive approach that privileges the ecclesial context of biblical interpretation is the fact of the liturgical context of the use of ancient biblical manuscripts, whether in Israelite assemblies, synagogue worship, or early Christian gatherings.[213] Given that usage, the resultant forms of the Old Testament canon—and the subsequent New Testament canon—are likely to reflect the reading habits of believing communities and fundamental theology as understood by these groups. It is plain that more than one reading community (*communio lectorum*) has been involved in the process of producing the canon in its different historic forms.[214] Any biblical theology that ignores the resultant shape(s) of the canon is likely to be theologically lacking for its failure to take seriously the insights of these earlier readers.

Roger Beckwith is one of a number of scholars who sees the threefold structure of the Old Testament canon reflected in the dominical post-resurrection saying recorded in Luke 24:44: "everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."[215] However, "Psalms" may be referring only to that specific book, so that Jesus is singling out the Psalter from other books in the broad category of prophecy only because it is a particularly important biblical witness to him. Seeing that the Old Testament Scriptures are usually designated by bipartite expressions such as "the Law and the Prophets" (e.g., Matt. 5:17),[216] it is best to understand the wording in Luke 24:44 to mean "*especially* the Psalms."[217] In addition, the Qumran manuscript

211 Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 79–100.

212 Stephen E. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 8.

213 E.g., Josh. 8:30–35; 2 Kings 23:1–3; Neh. 8:1–8; Luke 4:16–30; Acts 13:13–16; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; 1 Tim. 4:13; Justin Martyr, *Apologia i* 67. G. J. Venema, *Reading Scripture in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 9–10; 31; 2 Kings 22–23; Jeremiah 36; Nehemiah 8*, OtSt 48 (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Michael J. Kruger, *Christianity at the Crossroads: How the Second Century Shaped the Future of the Church* (London: SPCK, 2017), 99–102.

214 This is stressed by Stefan Schorch, "Which Bible, Whose Text? Biblical Theologies in Light of the Textual History of the Hebrew Bible," in *Beyond Biblical Theologies*, ed. Heinrich Assel, Stefan Beyerle, and Christfried Böttrich, WUNT 1/295 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 359–74.

215 Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1985).

216 See the survey provided by Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets: A Study in Old Testament Canon Formation*, FAT 27 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 276–79.

217 Cf. Konrad Schmid, "The Canon and the Cult: The Emergence of Book Religion in Ancient Israel and the Gradual Sublimation of the Temple Cult," *JBL* 131 (2012): 300: "Scattered references like those in 4QMMT

11QPs[a] (column 27, line 11) provides evidence that the Psalms may have been included among the Prophets, since they were spoken by David "through prophecy" (cf. 4 Macc. 18:10–19; Acts 2:30).[218] The reading of "Psalms" as a synecdoche for a third canonical division is, in fact, an improper retrojection of later evidence from the Talmud, which is a methodological flaw in Beckwith's argumentation in general. The historian Josephus also lists the canonical books in three sections, but in his listing only the Pentateuch coincides with one of the sections of the typical tripartite arrangement of books in the Hebrew Bible (*Contra Apionem* 1.37–42). It is not convincing, therefore, to claim that Jesus read his Bible in this way and that we should read our Old Testament in this way as well.

While the arrangement of the Old Testament into three sections may be ancient, the first conclusive evidence for a formal distinction between the Prophets and Writings is found in the Talmud, which records second-century traditions to that effect (Baba Bathra 14b).[219] John Barton suggests that the rationale for the division is the practice of regularly reading from the Prophetic Books in the synagogue but not from the Writings.[220] In other words, the arrangement of the biblical books as set out in the Talmud is liturgical and presumably reflects the theological commitments of ancient communities of Jewish believers. The *Haftarot* are the selections from the Prophets recited publicly in the synagogue on Sabbaths, festivals, and certain fast days after the set portion from the Torah (*Parashah*).[221] For Jews, the canonical section Prophets covers the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings (Former Prophets), as well as what Christians consider Prophetic Books (Latter Prophets), namely Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve (= Minor Prophets), so that in the Hebrew Bible it is an eight-book canonical unit. What we are arguing is that the reading practices of ancient Jewish worshiping communities are enshrined in the sequencing and aggregations of the books of the Old Testament, which suggests that these literary arrangements may reflect the theological conviction of those communities.

Earlier scholarship lightly dismissed the historical organization of the biblical books in favor of a rearranged "scholar's canon," for example, by extracting Deuteronomy from the Pentateuch and placing it with the books that follow, as in Martin Noth's theory of

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or Luke 24:44 specifically accentuate the Psalms alongside the Law and the Prophets, but they are rare and not necessarily contradictory: the 'and' between the Prophets and the Psalms may have an epexegetical [= clarifying] instead of an additive meaning."

218 For the Hebrew text and translation, see J. A. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11 (11QPs[a])*, DJD 4 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), 92. For David as a prophet, see, e.g., Benjamin Sargent, *David Being a Prophet: The Contingency of Scripture upon History in the New Testament*, BZNW 207 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 78.

219 Andrew E. Steinmann, *The Oracles of God: The Old Testament Canon* (Saint Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 1999), 136–44.

220 John Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1986), 75–82.

221 On the possible origins of the public recitation of the Torah, see Michael Fishbane, *Haftarot*, JPS Bible Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 2002), xx–xxiii.

the Deuteronomistic History.[222] According to Noth's theory, Deuteronomy 1–3 is an introduction to a literary work encompassing Deuteronomy–2 Kings. Despite the strong thematic ties between the books of Joshua and Deuteronomy,[223] in all ancient canon lists and Bibles the canonical unit is a Pentateuch (the first five scrolls), not a Tetrateuch (four scrolls).[224] Neither is it a Hexateuch (six scrolls), formed by combining the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua, such as is promoted by other scholars. Even though this would appear to be a natural unit, running from the exodus to the entrance into the land (as in Deut. 6:20–24; 26:5b–9),[225] or moving from the patriarchs to land possession (as found in the speech of Josh. 24:2–13),[226] ancient readers did not group the books in this way. In contrast to such reconfigurations of the biblical material, in its traditional location at the close of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy is to be read as a sermonic recapitulation and application of the teaching of the Pentateuch to all future generations of Israelites.

Another example is the critical handling of the Book of the Twelve, one instance being that Judean references by the northern prophet Hosea (e.g., 1:7, 11; 4:15; 5:5, 10, 12, 13, 14) are discounted as secondary. Christopher Seitz provides a brief history of scholarly work on the Minor Prophets, showing that there has been an increasing appreciation of the literary links between the twelve prophetic sections, so that the twelve prophets are to be read in light of each other.[227] Hosean prophecy is mostly addressed to the northern kingdom, yet at times makes reference to the southern kingdom.[228] Given the fact that the superscription at Hosea 1:1 mentions four southern kings by name (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah), as well as Jeroboam II, king of Israel, it is no surprise to find a united-kingdom stance in the final form of the prophecy. What is more, in the superscription, Judean kings are listed *before* Israelite kings (as also in Amos 1:1),[229] so that some relation of the contents of the prophecy of Hosea to the situation of Judah is

222 Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History*, JSOTSup 15 (Sheffield, UK: JSOT, 1981).

223 These are explored in Gordon J. Wenham, "The Deuteronomic Theology of the Book of Joshua," *JBL* 90 (1971): 140–48.

224 This was promoted by Noth, in part due to his failure to find Deuteronomic material in Genesis–Numbers; see Martin Noth, *A History of Pentateuchal Traditions*, trans. Bernhard W. Anderson, Scholars Press Reprints and Translations 5 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981).

225 The "short historical creed" in the latter Deuteronomic passage is an important part of the argument of Gerhard von Rad in favor of a Hexateuch; see *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E. W. Trueman Dicken (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 3–13.

226 See Thomas C. Römer and Marc Z. Brettler, "Deuteronomy 34 and the Case for a Persian Hexateuch," *JBL* 119 (2000): 401–19, for the argument that Joshua 24 was created by the Hexateuch redactor to summarize and conclude the larger work.

227 Christopher R. Seitz, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); idem, *Prophecy and Hermeneutics: Toward a New Introduction to the Prophets*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

228 On this topic, see the detailed study of Grace I. Emmerson, *Hosea: An Israelite Prophet in Judean Perspective*, JSOTSup 28 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 56–116. She refuses to assume that Hosea, as a northerner, must have had an anti-Judean stance (*Hosea*, 95).

229 On the priority given to the kings of Judah, see James Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, BZAW 217 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), 85–87.

assumed from the outset. This explanation is supported by the wider patterning of the Book of the Twelve, in which there is an alternation of prophets who ministered in Israel and Judah: Hosea (Israel), Joel (Judah), Amos (Israel), Obadiah (Judah), Jonah (Israel), and Micah (Judah).[230] This schematic arrangement encourages a hermeneutic that reads the prophetic threats and promises as applying to both kingdoms and, even more widely, to God's people generally, irrespective of time and place. Seitz himself tries to maintain a delicate balance between preserving the individuality of the twelve witnesses and appreciating the overall effect of the Twelve as a canonical corpus. As a sincere admirer of Childs, Seitz takes seriously the theological dimension of the historical process that led to the shape of the canon of the Old Testament as we know it.

To give an example from the New Testament, in current study of Luke-Acts, this two-part Lucan corpus is viewed by most scholars as a natural unit for the purposes of elucidating the meaning and significance of the two books,[231] and this methodology accords with the grammatico-historical orientation of many modern practitioners.[232] Ancient practice cannot coerce the contemporary reading of Scripture, but nor should we ignore how earlier generations read and interpreted the Scriptures.[233] The relevant point is that Luke is not put next to Acts in any extant ancient Greek manuscript,[234] and the positions assigned to Luke reflect the view of early readers that the primary canonical conversation partners of Luke are the other three Gospels, not its companion volume, Acts. The alternative of conjoining Luke and Acts "as one unit in a mutually interpretive two-part treatise" was not taken up in antiquity,[235] and their lack of physical contiguity in canonical arrangements can be read as a statement about the *differing* contexts in which each volume should be read.[236] In contrast to the order customary in English Bibles, in all Greek textual witnesses Acts precedes the Catholic Letters, and these are treated as a fixed and coherent canonical unit (*Praxapostolos*).[237] As Robert Wall observes,

230 Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve," in *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John G. Gammie*, ed. L. G. Perdue, B. Scott, and W. Wiseman (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 34. The idea goes back to C. F. Keil, *The Minor Prophets*, trans. J. Martin, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 10 (1869; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 3.

231 There is, however, a vocal minority who think otherwise. For a review of recent debate over the unity of Luke-Acts, see Alan J. Bale, *Genre and Narrative Coherence in the Acts of the Apostles*, LNTS 514 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 15–20.

232 E.g., Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986); J. Verheyden, ed., *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, BETL 142 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1999).

233 See David Paul Parris, *Reading the Bible with Giants: How 2000 Years of Biblical Interpretation Can Shed Light on Old Texts* (Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, UK: Paternoster, 2006).

234 Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 230, 231, 296, 297.

235 Michael F. Bird, "The Unity of Luke-Acts in Recent Discussion," *JSNT* 29 (2007): 440.

236 Andrew Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus: Looking for Luke in the Second Century*, WUNT 2/169 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 2–5, 352.

237 David C. Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 283–86. The *Praxapostolos* is the combination of Acts and the Catholic Epistles, in that order.

the manuscript tradition indicates that "Acts found its significance as the context for understanding the non-Pauline apostolic witness."[238] The settled pattern of conjoining Acts and the Catholic Epistles implies that Acts promotes non-Pauline forms of Christianity, whereas contemporary scholarship has used Acts for other purposes (e.g., the relation of its portrait of Paul to what can be gleaned about the apostle from his epistles).

A final example of how modern scholarship has tended to ignore the canonical positions assigned to biblical books is its treatment of Ruth. The book of Ruth is put after Judges in the Greek tradition, after Proverbs in the Hebrew Masoretic tradition, and before the Psalter in the Talmudic tradition. Modern scholarship routinely assigns Ruth a postexilic date of composition and views it as a polemic against the ban on interracial marriages. Ezra and Nehemiah insisted that those Israelites who had married foreign wives must divorce them (Ezra 10; Neh. 13:23–27). In this reconstructed context, Ruth is read as resisting their exclusivist stance.[239] In fact, although muted, a hint of a more inclusive outlook may be detected in the mention in Ezra-Nehemiah of foreigners participating in the Passover.[240] An inclusive outlook may also be detected in the community pledge to follow the Torah (Neh. 10:28), for those making the pledge included "all who have separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the law of God."[241] Also, the book of Ruth fails to address the specific concerns of the early Restoration period, for example the issue of children speaking the foreign language of their mother (Neh. 13:23–24) and what to do with foreign wives who are not like Ruth. Ruth the Moabitess is portrayed as adopting worship of the God of Israel (1:16–17; 2:12), and so it is hardly the case that the story of Ruth "provides an alternative or a solution to the problems that Ezra-Nehemiah seeks to address."[242] Daniel Hawk views the book of Ruth as recording dissent to the Ezra-Nehemiah reforms; however, the reforms did not oppose marriage to foreign women like Ruth, namely, women who had left their foreign gods behind and embraced the Israelite faith.[243] Hawk, like many others, fails to note the references to the acceptance of proselytes in Ezra 6 and Nehemiah 10. Put simply, the books Ruth and Ezra-Nehemiah are about different things, as might have been suspected if their canonical placements had been considered by scholars when

238 Robert W. Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles in Canonical Context," *BTB* 18 (1988): 20.

239 This view continues to be popular in recent commentaries. E.g., André LaCocque, *Ruth: A Continental Commentary*, trans. K. C. Hanson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004); Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Ruth*, JPS Bible Commentary (Philadelphia: JPS, 2011).

240 Ezra 6:21: "and also everyone who had joined them and separated himself from the uncleanness of the peoples of the land to worship the Lord, the God of Israel."

241 See Peter H. W. Lau, "Gentile Incorporation into Israel in Ezra-Nehemiah?," *Biblica* 90 (2009): 356–73. Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky note that "Ezra 6:21 could be read as referring to a loophole in this exclusionary policy" (*Ruth*, lxxi, n. 41).

242 As asserted by Eskenazi and Frymer-Kensky (*Ruth*, xxv).

243 L. Daniel Hawk, *Ruth*, ApOTC 7B (Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2015). By contrast, see the more nuanced discussion provided by Marvin A. Sweeney, *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 429–33.

attempting to interpret them. Therefore, taking seriously the canonical position(s) of the book of Ruth potentially facilitates the reader's discovery of the biblical-theological dimensions of its story.

Downplaying canonical arrangements is only one manifestation of a larger intellectual movement in the wake of the Enlightenment.[244] By contrast, the exercise of theological interpretation includes, or should include, taking seriously the form of the biblical canon—including the ordering and juxtapositioning of books—bequeathed by earlier generations of believers.[245] We are not saying that book order has been entirely ignored by those seeking to provide theological readings of the Bible, for scholars such as Brevard Childs, Christopher Seitz, Francis Watson, and Markus Bockmuehl have made notable contributions to this area,[246] but they are in the minority.

1.3.3 How Theological Is Biblical Book Order?

To demonstrate the potential of considering biblical book order, we will explore some of the theological implications of the canonical orders settled upon by different communities of faith, with a focus on the book of Ruth. It is not our aim to justify or promote a particular order of Old Testament books (Hebrew versus Greek canons) as the exclusive basis for study and thinking on the theology of the biblical text. It is not necessary to decide upon one order of books, favoring it to the exclusion of other orders, seeing that each order in its own way may be valid and useful to the present-day reader.

The differing positions assigned to Ruth in Hebrew and Greek canons suggest alternative ways of viewing its content.[247] It is found after Judges among books classified as Histories in the Greek Old Testament, for it tells the story of God's providential care of the family that produced David, and the books of Samuel that follow plot the rise

244 See Michael C. Legaspi, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), viii: "The academic Bible was created by scholars [in the eighteenth century, and by Johann David Michaelis in particular] who saw that the scriptural Bible, embedded as it was in confessional particularities, was inimical to the socio-political project from which Enlightenment universities draw their purpose and support" (our bracketed addition).

245 For a critique of any salvation-historical model that claims exclusivity for biblical theology on the basis of Augustine's distinction between "sign" and "thing," see Darian Lockett, "Limitations of a Purely Salvation-Historical Approach to Biblical Theology," *HBT* 39 (2017): 211–31. As Lockett contends, "In the end, the thesis here is that the salvation-historical approach is a necessary but, on its own, insufficient method for doing biblical theology" (213). He adds, "Insisting that a historically reconstructed salvation history *is* in fact the Bible's own overarching pattern and shape both fails to appreciate the various ways the Bible speaks theologically through other genres and obscures theological characteristics which cannot be fully captured in such chronological sequence (for example, God's transcendence)" (220).

246 Childs, *Church's Guide*; Seitz, *Goodly Fellowship*; Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 2004); Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word*.

247 Murray D. Gow comments briefly on the interpretive consequences of reading Ruth in different canonical locations; see "Ruth, Book of," in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation*, ed. Vanhoozer et al., 706. For more details, see Andrea Beyer, *Hoffnung in Bethlehem: Innerbiblische Querbezüge als Deutungshorizonte im Ruthbuch*, BZAW 463 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 141–45.

of David to the throne.[248] God's direct involvement is stated by the narrator only once (enabling Ruth to conceive; 4:13), but God is repeatedly referred to by characters within the story.[249] In line with this, the rise of David to the throne in the books of Samuel is shown to be providential.[250] Ruth 1:1 locates the action of the book in the period of the judges, and the Ruth narrative forms a sharp contrast with the story of the Levite from Bethlehem (Judg. 17:8–9) and that of the Levite's concubine who comes from Bethlehem (19:1–2). Judges 21 concerns the drastic measures taken to secure wives for an Israelite tribe (Benjamin) threatened with extinction (Judg. 21:6), and the book of Ruth depicts God's providence in preserving the Bethlehemite family of Naomi that eventually produces the great King David (Ruth 4:5, 10, 18–22). In what amounts to a record of the historical background of the Davidic house, the author shows that the workings of divine providence on behalf of David began during the lives of his ancestors, giving hope for the future of the Davidic house, a family line that will eventually produce the Messiah. The propriety of a salvation-historical reading of the book of Ruth is confirmed for the Christian reader by the inclusion of the heroine Ruth in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:5).

The book of Ruth appears to be read from a wisdom perspective in the Hebrew Bible, in which it is found immediately after the portrait of the "woman of worth" (*'ēšet-ḥayil*) in Proverbs 31.[251] The phrase "woman of worth" occurs only once elsewhere in the Old Testament, namely Proverbs 12:4 ("A *good wife* is the crown of her husband"). The description in Proverbs 31:31 fits the woman Ruth ("her deeds will praise her in the gates"), for in Ruth 3:11, Boaz, in praising Ruth, says, "all my fellow townsmen [lit., 'all the gate of my people'] know that you are a woman of worth (*'ēšet-ḥayil*)" (our translations), and the people at the gate and the elders who meet there are recorded as praising Ruth (4:11–12). The canonical placement next to Proverbs suggests that Ruth the Moabitess is to be viewed as a real-life example of the piety taught in Proverbs and embodied in the exemplary woman of Proverbs 31. The book of Ruth is not usually thought of as a wisdom work, and certainly none of the *dramatis personae* (characters in the narrative) are identified as "wise"; also, the story makes no use of what may be said to be exclusively wisdom terms. On the other hand, the narrative provides in the person of Ruth an ethical paradigm,[252] namely a pattern of behavior worthy of emulation by readers.[253]

248 Gregory Goswell, "The Book of Ruth and the House of David," *EvQ* 86 (2014): 116–29.

249 Ruth 1:6, 9, 16–17, 20–21; 2:12, 20; 3:10, 13; 4:11, 12, 14. Ronald M. Hals, *The Theology of the Book of Ruth*, Facet Books Biblical Series 23 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969).

250 1 Sam. 16:13, 18; 18:12, 28; 2 Sam. 5:2.

251 See Gregory Goswell, "Is Ruth also among the Wise?," in *Exploring Old Testament Wisdom: Literature and Themes*, ed. David G. Firth and Lindsay Wilson (London: Apollos, 2016), 115–33.

252 R. B. Y. Scott, *The Way of Wisdom in the Old Testament* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 85–87.

253 E.g., an ethic of hard work (Ruth 2:7, 17; cf. Prov. 6:6–11; 10:26; 13:4), and the book contains themes that find a place in acknowledged Wisdom Books (e.g., marriage to a suitable wife, theodicy, providence, reward, and the care of the poor). Cf. Katharine Dell, "Didactic Intertextuality: Proverbial Wisdom as Illustrated in

In the listing of books in Baba Bathra, Ruth precedes the Psalter and can be read as a prehistory of David the chief psalmist, who is shown in Psalms to be one who "takes refuge" (root *ḥsh*) in God just as did his ancestor (e.g., Pss. 2:12; 7:1; 11:1; 16:1).[254] This suggests that the heroine Ruth is being viewed by the ancient readers responsible for this canonical order as an embodiment of the implied ethic of the Psalter, in which David turns to God in times of distress.[255] The conjoining of Ruth and the Psalter helps to bring to light the thematic links between the two books that include the key terms "refuge," "wings," and "kindness." This way of ordering the books highlights the connection of Ruth with David the psalmist, and Ruth personifies the implied ethic of total reliance on God as taught in the Psalter. Just as Ruth embodies and experiences God's "kindness" (*ḥesed*),[256] so also David praises God as the one who "shows [kindness] to his anointed, to David and his offspring forever" (Ps. 18:50). In Ruth 2:12, Boaz evokes the image of the protecting "wings" (*kānāp*) of YHWH, the God of Israel, a metaphor that apparently is in no need of explanation or elaboration, with its meaning immediately understood, and indeed this motif is found a number of times in the Psalter.[257] In this way, the ancestor of the chief psalmist anticipates the piety of David, who calls on God to defend and help him in his troubles.[258] The noted thematic links present Ruth the Moabitess as a model of the piety of the Psalter.

The different canonical orders—Ruth after Judges, Ruth after Proverbs 31, and Ruth preceding the Psalter—each have a logic, and arguably no one order of books is superior to the other two. There is more than one possible principle of organization for the ordering of the Old Testament books, and it is left to the reader to surmise what rationale is at work. We should not attempt to force all the books of the Bible into exactly the same theological mold, for it is to be expected that they will have different emphases and interests, seeing that they address disparate times and situations, though, as component parts of the biblical canon, their compatibility is assumed, even as their (measure of) variety is to be celebrated and exploited to speak to the multitude of circumstances in which God's people find themselves.

Ruth," in *Reading Proverbs Intertextually*, ed. Katharine Dell and Will Kynes, LHBOTS 629 (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 103–14.

254 Ruth 2:12: "under whose wings you have come to take refuge." See Jerome F. D. Creach, *Yahweh as Refuge and the Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, JSOTSup 217 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

255 Peter H. W. Lau and Gregory Goswell, *Unceasing Kindness: A Biblical Theology of Ruth*, NSBT 41 (London: Apollos, 2016), 53–70.

256 The English translation supplied reflects the fact that the Hebrew term denotes *non-obligatory* generous action on God's part, as demonstrated by Francis I. Andersen, "Yahweh, the Kind and Sensitive God," in *God Who Is Rich in Mercy: Essays Presented to Dr. D. B. Knox*, ed. Peter T. O'Brien and David G. Peterson (Homebush West, NSW, Australia: Lancer, 1986), 41–88. Andersen examines the three uses of the term in Ruth on pp. 59–60.

257 Pss. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:4. Alec Basson, *Divine Metaphors in Selected Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation*, FAT 2/15 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 99–100.

258 The similarity of these Psalms texts to Ruth 2:12 is noted by Gert Kwakkel, "Under Yahweh's Wings," in *Metaphors in the Psalms*, ed. Antje Labahn and Pierre Van Hecke, BETL 231 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2010), 143.

Ancient readers placed Ruth among Historical Books in the Greek canonical tradition and put it alongside Proverbs 31 in the Hebrew canon. These alternate placements suggest the compatibility of the wisdom ideal (exemplified in the figure of Ruth) and the salvation-historical focus of the narrative book of Ruth (given the David linkage). Certainly, there is no evidence that these are irreconcilable ways of interpreting the canonical book. This affirms the essential relation between ethics and biblical theology, and the theological appreciation of Scripture includes an exploration of the ethical implications of Old Testament narratives as a resource for Christian formation.[259] Indeed, properly understood, the study of ethics comes under the umbrella of theology.

The canon of Scripture fosters the interaction of the texts within the bounds of the canon, and this dynamic was reinforced when later readers placed particular books side by side as canonical conversation partners (e.g., Ruth and Psalms). Reading a biblical book in relation to other biblical books both narrows its range of possible meanings and opens up new interpretative options as the contents of one canonical text throws light on the contents of another. The significance for theology of the relationship between narrative and poetry is affirmed by the placing of Ruth and Psalms next to each other, one lesson being the compatibility of the history of God's dealings with his people (the story of Ruth) and theology (expressed in the lament, doxology, and prayers of the Psalter). Indeed, a consideration of the acts of God on behalf of his people is what generates theology—an understanding of God's character, ways, and purposes—and leads to adoration and worship. The Ruth-Psalter collation also shows that beliefs about God enshrined in the pious expressions of the Psalter are not arbitrary but can be viewed as valid conclusions drawn from Israel's historical experience of God's "kindness" (e.g., as epitomized in the story of Ruth). Having established that biblical book order has theological implications, we will now turn to addressing the relationship between biblical theology and ethics.

1.4 BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AND ETHICS

"All Scripture," writes Paul, is useful for teaching Christians (2 Tim. 3:16). The reference, in context, is to the Old Testament, though the text applies, of course, derivatively, to the New Testament corpus of writings of which 2 Timothy is now a component. The Old Testament contains ethical teaching that the New Testament simply assumes and does not necessarily bother to repeat. Indeed, Paul states that the Old Testament is essential for the moral equipping of the believer.[260] It is plain by the expressions used alongside the word "teaching" in this text—"reproof," "correction," "training in righteousness"—

259 E.g., Bruce C. Birch, "Old Testament Narrative and Moral Address," in *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs*, ed. Gene M. Tucker, David L. Petersen, and Robert R. Wilson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 75–91; Douglas S. Earl, *Reading Old Testament Narrative as Christian Scripture*, JTISup 17 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2017), ch. 7.

260 2 Tim. 3:17: "that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

that Paul primarily has in mind the use of the Old Testament as a *moral* resource for the believer.[261] It is right to distinguish between theology (what we know about God and his ways) and ethics (how humans are to behave as a result), but these two aspects of biblical revelation should not be separated. It is for this reason—conforming to what the Bible says about itself—that the present volume explores both biblical-theological themes and ethical teachings on display in the storyline of Scripture.

1.4.1 The Relation of Biblical Theology to Ethics

In applying the Old Testament to Christian living, we are not only to think of the Ten Words (Ex. 20:1–17; Deut. 5:1–21), which the New Testament clearly takes up and endorses (Matt. 19:18–19; Rom. 13:8–10; 1 Tim. 1:8–11)—with the exception of the Sabbath command (though it may indeed endorse the general principle of rest)—or even of the instructional sections of the Old Testament more widely (e.g., Ex. 20–23; Deut. 5–26). Wisdom literature (e.g., Proverbs) is another source of moral instruction upon which Jesus and the authors of the New Testament draw in such portions as the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and the epistle of James. The social conscience of the prophets (e.g., Amos 2:6–7; 4:1; 8:4–6) has been a source of guidance and rebuke to the church down through the centuries. The ethical application of Old Testament narratives also has dominical sanction (e.g., Matt. 12:41–42; Mark 2:25–26). What is more, the importance of the Old Testament *story* for Paul's theology and ethics can be readily demonstrated.[262] As noted by Richard Hays, in Romans 4 Paul sees Abraham as an example of faith for all believers, with the principles of faith and works on display in the story of Abraham applying to the behavior of God's people before and after Christ's coming. The apostle assumes that his Roman and Corinthian readers are well versed in the Old Testament, including its stories, and that they recognize their authority and relevance.[263] The other New Testament writers expect similar things of their readers. For example, the author of Hebrews makes use of the story of the rebellion of the Israelites under the leadership of Moses (Heb. 3:7–19); James finds examples of good works in the lives of Abraham and Rahab (James 2:21–25) and cites the prophets and Job as exemplars of steadfastness in the face of suffering (5:10–11) and Elijah of persevering prayer (5:17). The same principles apply to the ethical use of the narrative portions of the New Testament. For example, Robert Tannehill argues cogently that the book of Acts gives ethical guidance by narrating scenes in which persons are

261 For efforts to use the Old Testament for this purpose, see, e.g., Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983); Bruce C. Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991); Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester, UK: IVP, 2004).

262 E.g., 1 Cor. 10:1–11 draws on stories from Exodus and Numbers (Gordon J. Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading the Old Testament Ethically*, OTS [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000], 129–34).

263 Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 147–62.

models of good—or bad—behavior, and he focuses on the ethics of witness, leadership, the mission and governing authorities, and possessions.[264]

There are a number of common difficulties that need to be acknowledged and addressed if the ethics of the Old Testament is to have its proper place in molding Christian attitudes and behavior. First, it is not necessarily the case that the Old Testament presents a lesser ethical demand than does the New Testament, though there are instances where this is the case.[265] For example, the six antitheses of Matthew 5:21–48 ("You have heard that it was said, . . . But I say to you . . ."), properly interpreted, are not contradicting or correcting the Old Testament itself but the distortion of its injunctions as practiced and taught by the scribes and Pharisees (cf. Matt. 5:17–20). In addition, the two great commandments—love of God and of neighbor—drawn from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 sum up not only the ethics of the Old Testament (Matt. 22:36–40) but that of the New Testament as well.[266]

Second, there is the fear that use of the Old Testament for ethical instruction may lead to legalism, that is, an ethic separated from its gospel basis. This appears to be the target of Graeme Goldsworthy's book, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, where he warns of the danger of reverting to Old Testament character studies.[267] What he fears most is legalism, and the biblical theology method he advocates is seen as the antidote. However, there is no legalism in the Old Testament itself, as the preface to (and so the context of) the Ten Words serves to show (Ex. 20:2), for the presupposition behind the (mostly) prohibitions is the exodus deliverance, so that the Ten Words are meant to be understood as outlining how *saved* people are to behave.[268] Also to be considered is the *non-mention* of the keeping of many of the Old Testament legal stipulations in the Old Testament period, such as circumcision (Josh. 5:2–7) and Passover (2 Chron. 30:26); and little is said about the Sabbath until the time of the prophets. The Old Testament does not portray the punctilious performance of the details of the law of Moses. For this reason, it is fallacious to read the Old Testament through the eyes of the Pharisees, who, as Christ said, knew "neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). In other words, the ethics of the Old Testament, like that of the New, has a *gospel* dynamic and motivation, though it is of course also true, as Paul writes in Romans, that we are no longer under law but under grace (Rom. 6:14).

264 Robert C. Tannehill, "Acts of the Apostles and Ethics," *Interpretation* 66 (2012): 270–82; cf. Gert J. Steyn, "Driven by Conviction and Attitude! Ethics in the Acts of the Apostles," in *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, ed. Jan Gabriël van der Watt, BZNW 141 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 136–62.

265 Cf., e.g., Matt. 19:8a: "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives." Though note Jesus's quotation of God's original and abiding design for lifelong marriage in Gen. 2:24 at Matt. 19:5.

266 See John 13:34–35; 14:15; Rom. 12:9–10; 13:8; Heb. 13:1.

267 Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 99.

268 The adverb "therefore" in Rom. 12:1 serves a similar function in joining Paul's moral instructions to the preceding eleven chapters of instruction on "the mercies of God."

Third, many wonder whether the ethics of the Old Testament is useful, after the many centuries that have elapsed, or whether it is even appropriate to make application from the stories and teaching of the Old Testament after the provision of the New Testament. Often, however, the stories encourage "global virtues" that are easily transferable to the present, such as faith, hospitality, modesty, prayerfulness, perseverance; or they warn against stereotypical sins such as sexual immorality, greed, and idolatry.[269] What is more, behind the plethora of instructions provided in the Pentateuch and the Wisdom Books are certain basic moral principles that have no *use-by-a-certain-date* label (e.g., the fear of God: Deut. 6:2; Prov. 1:7). In addition, the new creation is not yet complete, and believers have been taught to pray, "Your kingdom come," and so Christians still live in a world where sin, selfishness, and violence are endemic, and not dissimilar moral choices face every generation of believers.

Fourth, the supposed "moral difficulties" attached to the extermination of the Canaanites, the breakup of families by Ezra and Nehemiah, and the curses on enemies found in the Psalms are seen by some as proof that the Old Testament is sub-Christian; however, the answer of John Bright is apposite: "I find it most interesting and not a little odd that although the Old Testament on occasion offends our Christian feelings, it did not apparently offend Christ's 'Christian feelings'!"[270]

There is less controversy about using the warnings and injunctions of the New Testament as a moral guide to Christian living, though that does not mean that expositors and commentators have always been careful to demonstrate the essential connection between the doctrine and ethics of the New Testament writings, the first being the ground of the second. For example, the Sermon on the Mount has often been lifted from the Gospel of Matthew that has as its climax the death and resurrection of Jesus, with the result that its ethic is turned into a "social gospel" rather than viewed as an essential part of our submission to the risen Christ who claims the obedience of the nations.[271]

Likewise, effort is not always made to coordinate the contents of the two parts (doctrinal and ethical) of a number of Pauline letters. As noted by Ian K. Smith,[272] most scholarly attempts at defining the nature of the aberrant philosophy in the letter to the Colossians deal only with chapters 1–2, focusing primarily on 2:8–23. Smith shows that the *paraenesis* (exhortation) of the letter relates directly to the challenge represented by the heresy. A chapter division at 3:1 at first appears inappropriate in that 3:1–4 ("If then you have been raised with Christ, . . .") matches and is the inverse of 2:20–23 ("If with Christ you died . . ."), but there is now no mention of the false teaching of the heretics,

269 Wenham, *Story as Torah*, 130.

270 John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975), 77–78. Each of these moral issues is specifically addressed in the present volume.

271 Cf. Matt. 28:20: "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

272 Ian K. Smith, *Heavenly Perspective: A Study of the Apostle Paul's Response to a Jewish Mystical Movement at Colossae*, LNTS 326 (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

though 3:1 and the following verses presumably still have the heresy in view, even if this is less obvious.[273] Colossians 3:1–4 is, in fact, a bridge section, marking the transition to the hortatory unit of the letter, and Paul's ethic in chapters 3 and 4 develops out of the preceding doctrine enunciated by him.

1.4.2 Discerning the Ethical Import of Narrative and Poetry

Another problem is the difficulty in trying to find ethical models—positive and negative—in Old Testament narrative, seeing that it is reductionistic to think in terms of heroes and villains.[274] The complexity of the David of the books of Samuel (esp. in 2 Sam. 10–20) does not allow such easy categorization, though he is not the *same* David in Kings, in which he sets the moral standard of Yahwistic orthodoxy in worship for subsequent kings.[275] Naomi is not necessarily the nice character that readers would like her to be,[276] though Ruth appears uniformly noble.[277] Jonah is not a false prophet, only a very bad one, such that the reader has a love-hate relationship with him. The list could go on. There is the danger of Protestant exegesis setting up new "images of the saints" to replace the plaster ones destroyed. To preach moralistic sermons from biblical texts is to pay insufficient attention to the ambiguity of its characters, so that sometimes we do not know whether to praise or blame them.[278] While our sermons should provide moral application, crude moralizing is to be avoided.

The biblical narrators seldom preach, and in their committed non-didacticism they neither approve nor disapprove of the conduct of their characters. The reader is not always meant to supply this lack, and it is easy to make wrong judgments.[279] Close attention to the text will prevent the reader from falling into such an error. The Old Testament does not provide Jesus-like models, i.e., "What would Jacob do?"; we had best do the exact opposite! The advice of Gordon Wenham when using Old Testament narrative for ethical guidance is that readers try to work out the views of the implied author and his message for the implied readers that are encoded in various narratival features.[280] The Old Testament author gives clues, whether by putting an ethical judgment in the mouth of a character (e.g., 2 Sam. 13:13: "you would be as one of the wanton fools in Israel" [RSV]); by the way an act is described (e.g., Gen. 16:6: "Sarai *ill-treated* her" [our

273 See Smith, *Heavenly Perspective*, 173–84, for the relation of Col. 3:1–4 to 2:6–23.

274 The same applies to New Testament stories. See Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

275 E.g., 2 Kings 14:3; 18:3; 22:2. The contrast is not, however, too overdrawn, for the author of Kings has in mind the high points of David's piety on display in what he does for the ark (2 Sam. 6–7).

276 E.g., she thinks of Ruth's welfare only *after* she has spent a day working in the fields (Ruth 2:22).

277 D. N. Fewell and D. M. Gunn, *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1990).

278 E.g., the "lie" told by Rahab in Josh. 2:4–5; cf. 1 Sam. 19:14; 2 Sam. 17:20.

279 E.g., viewing the deaths in Naomi's family as due to the *sin* of leaving the promised land (Ruth 1:1–5).

280 Wenham, *Story as Torah*, 14–15. Cf. A. J. Culp, *Puzzling Portraits: Seeing the Old Testament's Confusing Characters as Ethical Models* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

translation]); by a (rare) moral comment by the narrator (e.g., 2 Sam. 11:27: "But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD"); by the reaction of other characters to an action (e.g., 2 Sam. 13:22); by the detrimental consequences of an action (e.g., Gen. 16:4); or by the same trait being shown in a series of scenes (e.g., the positive attitude of the patriarchs to foreigners). We will use such tools in seeking to explore the ethical import of the various biblical books.

The connection of the Psalter with cultic worship cannot be denied,[281] given the liturgical directions in many of the psalm titles,[282] but its canonical presentation shows that its prime use is for continual meditation on the divine instruction contained in the five books of the Psalter (1:2),[283] on analogy with pious use of the "Five Books" of Moses (cf. Josh. 1:8). As noted by Wenham, features that would help to mold the attitude and behavior of the user of the Psalter include: the blessings that approve a particular way of life (e.g., Pss. 1:1; 2:12; 84:12); the presence of first-person expressions (e.g., Ps. 34:1), leading the user to identify with the sentiment expressed; the depictions of the wicked and their fate in a way that makes their behavior look unattractive; and the way in which the recitation of the psalms involves active assent to their ethical sentiments (e.g., Ps. 7:8–9), so that it is close to taking an oath (Ps. 119:106).[284] In other words, the poetry of the Psalter is not just a vehicle for the verbalization of heartfelt thoughts and feelings to God; its effusion of religious sentiments also provides instruction for God's people as to what they *should* be feeling, what they *should* be doing, and what they *should* be saying in prayer.

1.5 AN ANALOGY: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AS A MODERATED FAMILY CONVERSATION

We close this introductory chapter with an analogy: biblical theology as a moderated family conversation. The approach taken in this volume is based on the conviction that all sixty-six books of the Bible have a voice that deserves to be heard. A book-by-book approach is predicated upon respect for all biblical voices, no matter how insignificant they may seem in relation to the grand metanarrative of Scripture. Think of biblical theology, then, as a moderated family conversation. In a family, too, there are parents, and there are older children who might tend to be given more weight than younger children who might at times have a hard time being heard. The persons moderating the discussion should ensure that everyone's voice is heard and every person's right to speak is respected. In this analogy, the moderators are the biblical theologians, and the various family members

281 In this volume, the words "cult" and "cultic" have reference to the worship system of ancient Israel.

282 E.g., the title of Psalm 4: "To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments." For the use of psalms with cultic sacrifice and worship, see Gordon J. Wenham, *Psalms as Torah: Reading Biblical Song Ethically* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 11–19.

283 For evidence that the Psalter was to be memorized and so to be available for constant meditation, see Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 41–56.

284 See Wenham, *Psalms as Torah*, 65–76.

are the writers of Scripture and the individual books they wrote. The moderators seek to involve each of these writers and books in canonical conversation as appropriate.

The moderators' role is primarily that of listening to the various contributions made by the participants in the family conversation, in keeping with Adolf Schlatter's call for a listening "hermeneutic of perception" that focuses on "seeing what is there."[285] They are also concerned, with Kevin Vanhoozer, that the ethical rights of the biblical authors are respected.[286] The moderators (i.e., the biblical theologians; in our case the present authors) will at times summarize the findings thus far. They will draw certain connections, point out commonalities, weave various individual contributions into larger themes, and connect them to the grand biblical metanarrative. But they will do so, not heavy-handedly, or even autocratically, but humbly, in full submission to biblical authority and a commitment to the diversity of Scripture in the context of its underlying unity. Others have used the picture of a roundtable discussion (Caird), a symphony (with the vital role of the conductor),[287] or that of a play or theater performance (with the vital role of a dramaturge; Vanhoozer).[288] What all these metaphors have in common is that in each case, (biblical) theologians are in the role of facilitators who help to bring out the truth and beauty of the Scriptures with skill and humility.

As with a good family discussion, at the end of this book our goal will be that every biblical author will walk away, so to speak, with the feeling that they have been heard and accurately represented and appreciated. In such a scenario, there will be family unity amid diversity of individual contributions. There will also be a sense that the whole is greater than its parts, and that it is only in diversity that the full-bodied truth of scriptural revelation can be adequately expressed. There will hopefully also be a sense that, when we walk away from this canonical conversation, the work has only just begun. Just like when our cars pull out of the parking lot after the church service and we see the familiar sign, "You are now entering your mission field," the individual, communal, and missional ethic of the Scriptures will urge us on to be doers of the word and not hearers only. Above all, we will sense God's call to love him and serve him unconditionally, and to love others the way Christ loved us. With these foundational considerations in place, we invite you to join us as active listeners around the table as we engage in canonical family conversation.

285 Schlatter, *History of the Christ*, 18.

286 Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*

287 As Quinn Mosier (whose father, Kirt Mosier, is an internationally known conductor) pointed out to one of us, a conductor is responsible for making sure certain lines are brought out in relation to the rest of the symphony. His role is to ensure that countermelodies interplay with melodies properly and that the balance of the orchestra is finely tuned. In addition, of course, most of all, the conductor must have ears to hear, or else the orchestra will be just a motley assortment of isolated, talented musicians all playing at the same time!

288 G. B. Caird, *Theology of the New Testament*, completed and ed. by L. D. Hurst, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Mark Strom, *The Symphony of Scripture: Making Sense of the Bible's Many Themes* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001); Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*.