

PROPOSALS FOR A CANONICAL BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

GERHARD F. HASEL¹
Andrews University

Having reviewed major models of biblical theology in the 1990s, and being fully conversant with earlier models, I am ready to present a proposal for what I call a "canonical biblical theology." My "canonical biblical theology" is not identical with the "new biblical theology" of Brevard Childs or what he now calls "the canonical approach to biblical theology." My proposal is not made in order to add to the array of models of biblical theology. There are plenty of proposals with no need of simply adding another. The reason for making this proposal is that there is none known at present that builds upon a nonfunctional use of Scripture. In this proposal Scripture is understood to be the norm of biblical theology and even of systematic/dogmatic theology, which is not the concern of this essay.

The approach to this presentation of a "canonical biblical theology" is to present several theses, each of which is subsequently elaborated:

1. **The "canonical biblical theology" envisioned here is a theology of the Bible grounded in, based on, and delimited by the Protestant biblical canon of sixty-six books.**

The designation "canonical" refers to the canon of the Bible as understood by the Reformers of the sixteenth century. They accepted the Bible of the Jews of NT times, that is, what modern scholars refer to as the Hebrew Bible. It is our position that by the time Jesus and the apostles lived and walked the streets of Palestine, by the time the NT was written, the Bible of the early Christians consisted of what we call today the OT. We agree with such scholars as David Noel Freedman, S. Talmon, Sid Z. Leiman, Brevard S. Childs, Roger Beckwith, and

¹Hasel was working on this article, the third in his series on biblical theology, when his life was tragically cut short in August 1994. How near completion he thought it was, we do not know. Out of respect for his thinking, only minor editing has been done.

others that the OT canon was closed before the NT era began and was available in the form in which we know it today.²

In taking the position we have outlined on the early closing of the OT canon, we disagree with those interpretations that name the so-called Council of Jamnia (ca. 90 A.D.), propounded initially by Zuntz, as marking the closing of the Jewish/Hebrew canon. We also remain unconvinced that the Council of Trent, on April 8, 1546, made the right decision to incorporate the so-called deuterocanonical books into the Scriptures of the OT.

In using the word "canonical" in the designation "canonical biblical theology" we make a statement as well about the interpretive role of extracanonical contemporary literature. A "canonical biblical theology" is a theology that will take extrabiblical literature into consideration in its enterprise. But it will consciously and deliberately give to the other ancient literatures a place qualitatively different from that of the writings which have the status of Scripture, because these are part of the Word of God. A biblical theology perceived as "canonical biblical theology" must remain within the boundaries of the biblical canon and the canonical form of the biblical texts.

2. A "canonical biblical theology" is a theological-historical undertaking and is not a purely historical or descriptive enterprise.

For about two hundred years, ever since the fateful distinction made by Johann Philipp Gabler in 1787 between biblical theology as historical, and dogmatic/systematic theology as theological in nature, biblical theology has been incarcerated and forced to play the role of a historical and descriptive discipline. It is now evident that the historical-critical method is itself based on the Enlightenment tradition and Western humanism.³ As such, it has had to surrender its claim to be a value-free enterprise.

²David Noel Freedman, "Canon of the Old Testament," *IDBSup* (1976): 130-136; idem, "How the Hebrew Bible and the Christian OT Differ," *BibRev* 9 (1993): 28-39, esp. 39; S. Talmon, "Holy Writings and Canonical Books in Jewish Perspective—Considerations Concerning the Formation of the Entity 'Scripture' in Judaism," in *Mitte der Schrift?*, ed. M. Klopfenstein et al. (Bern: Lang, 1987), 45-79; Sid Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence*, Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, vol. 47 (Hamden, CT: Almond 1976); Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 75; Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985).

³Jon D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993).

The older consensus of the “what it meant”/“what it means” dichotomy, strongly championed by Krister Stendahl⁴ and followers, has been seriously criticized (by Avery Dulles, Ben C. Ollenburger, M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, Jon D. Levenson, Langdon Gilkey, Ulrich Mauser, etc.).⁵ It can no longer be supported in the changing climate of present understanding.

Recent major models of biblical theology reveal a disarray of the discipline. These models have little in common with each other. The “new biblical theology,” and later the “canonical approach to biblical theology” proposed by Childs force biblical theology into a mold of its own without overcoming the tension between historical-critical study of the text and theological meaning to be derived from it. The Gesenius-Stuhlmacher model of biblical theology builds solidly on the historical-critical method, using an ongoing process of tradition-building. The metamorphosis of biblical theology into a “theology as formation of tradition” separates it from the final and authoritative form of the text of the Bible.

Biblical theology must reflect on OT and NT theology in a dynamic way that overcomes the present juxtaposition. Since the two Testaments produce *one* Bible, it is difficult to look at OT theology in a totally isolated way, as if the NT did not exist. W. Eichrodt has observed correctly that there is a “historical movement from the Old Testament to the New [and] there is a current of life flowing in reverse direction from the New Testament to the Old. This reverse relationship also elucidates the full significance of the realm of OT thought.”⁶ When

⁴Krister Stendahl, “Biblical Theology, Contemporary,” *IDB* I: 418-432 (reprinted in his *Meanings: The Bible as Document and as Guide* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984], 11-24); idem, “Method in the Study of Biblical Theology,” in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), 196-209.

⁵Avery Dulles, “Response to Krister Stendahl’s ‘Method in the Study of Biblical Theology,’” in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965), 210-219; Langdon B. Gilkey, “The Roles of the ‘Descriptive’ or ‘Historical’ and of the ‘Normative’ in Our Work,” *Criterion* 20 (1981): 10-17; M. H. Goshen-Gottstein, “Tanakh Theology: The Religion of the Old Testament and the Place of Jewish Biblical Theology,” in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, ed. P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, and S. D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 617-644; Ben C. Ollenburger, “What Krister Stendahl ‘Meant’—A Normative Critique of ‘Descriptive Biblical Theology.’” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 8 (1986): 61-98; Ulrich Mauser, “Historical Criticism: Liberator or Foe of Biblical Theology?” in *The Promise and Practice of Biblical Theology*, ed. John Reumann (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 111; Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible*, 81.

⁶Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:26.

this reciprocal relationship between the Testaments is understood, with the entire Bible as the proper context of the biblical-theological enterprise, we are able to grasp the full potential of biblical theology.

Biblical theology needs to be open to and make use of the full canonical context of the whole of Scripture, in awareness of the contexts surrounding Scripture in the ancient world. The full canonical context cannot and must not be limited or dominated by restrictive or reductionist theological or procedural notions such as an authoritative core, a "canon within the canon,"⁷ a "core tradition,"⁸ or an organizing "center" (*Mitte*). The issue is "center" versus the whole Scripture, a "core tradition" versus the whole Scripture, a "canon within the canon" versus the whole Scripture. It has to be the whole Scripture of the entire Bible that makes a "canonical biblical theology."

3. **Biblical theology calls for a theological-historical approach which takes full account of God's self-revelation as embodied in Scripture with all its dimensions of reality.**

Johann P. Gabler's enlightenment definition of biblical theology as having a "historical character, transmitting what the sacred writers thought about divine matters,"⁹ limits biblical theology to the theology of human authors. His biblical theology restricted itself to the historical, and in the course of time the historical-critical method rendered it incapable of affirming the transcendent-supratemporal dimension to which the Bible testifies. Thus, the Bible was taken to be fully human without any divine dimension. It is within this context that H. J. Kraus points out that "one of the most difficult questions confronting biblical theology today is that of the starting point, the meaning and function of historical-critical research."¹⁰

We suggest that the starting point is to be considered anew. There needs to be a method which does not deny on an *a priori* basis the

⁷Inge Lönning, "Kanon im Kanon": *Zum dogmatischen Grundproblem des neutestamentlichen Kanons* (Munich: Kaiser, 1972); Ernst Käsemann, ed., *Das Neue Testament als Kanon* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970); Gerhard F. Hasel, "Whole Scripture or Canon within the Canon," *The Channel* 2 (1978): 25-50; Gerhard Maier, "Kanon im Kanon—oder die ganze Schrift?" *Theologische Beiträge* 3 (1972): 21-31.

⁸Peter Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments: Eine Hermeneutik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970): 243-246.

⁹Johann P. Gabler, "Oratio de iusto discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus," in *Kleinere theologische Schriften*, ed. Th. A. Gabler and J. G. Gabler, 2 vols. (Ulm: Stettin, 1831), 2:183.

¹⁰Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Die Biblische Theologie: Ihre Geschichte und Problematik* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1970), 377.

suprahuman, transcendent, or miraculous element which is part and parcel of Scripture.

Scripture needs to be viewed for what it is: a manifestation of a divine-human nature which cannot be eliminated, reduced to a merely human level, or treated as if the divine elements of its Author were unimportant. Scripture's own self-testimony must be honored.

This is not the place to review the crisis in which the historical-critical method finds itself today,¹¹ whether it is declared bankrupt (W. Wink),¹² or whether its end has actually come (Gerhard Maier).¹³ What matters is not even so much whether the method can be made to have "openness to transcendence," as Peter Stuhlmacher has suggested.¹⁴ The fact remains, as Edgar Krentz, a defender of the method, has pointed out: "Historical criticism brings a concept of truth to the Bible that is not able to give full access to reality in history."¹⁵ Stuhlmacher, who himself seeks to open the historical-critical method for transcendence, still points to a dilemma, noting incisively that the historical-critical method leads to "a conflict between theological intention and the tendentiousness of the method or introduces historical criticism into theological thought as a disturbing or destructive element."¹⁶

This dilemma of "uneasy dualism," as Langdon Gilkey has referred to it,¹⁷ must be resolved. It can be resolved with a hermeneutic which does not disparage, deny, or reinterpret the divine aspect. It has to be done with a hermeneutic which is not only "open to transcendence," because more is needed than theoretical openness; it is to be a

¹¹Gerhard F. Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 32-35, 207-211.

¹²Walter Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation: Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 1-18.

¹³Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1977).

¹⁴Peter Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 84-85.

¹⁵Edgar Krentz, *The Historical-Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 81.

¹⁶Peter Stuhlmacher, "Zur Methoden—und Sachproblematik einer interkonfessionellen Auslegung des Neuen Testaments," *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament: Vorarbeiten*, Heft 4 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1969), 46.

¹⁷Langdon Gilkey, *Naming the Whirlwind: The Renewal of God-Language* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 91; idem, "Cosmology, Ontology and the Travail of Biblical Language," *JR* 41 (1961): 194-205.

hermeneutic which is informed by Scripture, faithful to Scripture, and can account for all the dimensions of reality present in Scripture.

The theological-historical approach seeks to remain fully sensitive to the transcendent-supratemporal dimension of biblical reality. It likewise attempts to show full sensitivity to the spatial-temporal dimension of reality. It does not seek to skip one in favor of the other but seeks to be theological and historical without moving from a purely historical first stage to a fully theological second stage in a two-step process in which the steps are not related to each other.

Biblical theology, conceived as theological-historical at its starting point, puts exegesis also into a theological-historical frame of reference.¹⁸ This demands a holistic reading of Scripture within the full biblical context. In this connection the call for a reorientation of exegetical science within context-open research and theme-oriented perspectives has a place and fills an urgent need.¹⁹

4. A “canonical biblical theology” is in content a theology of the Bible and not a theology that has its roots in the Bible or takes the Bible as its starting point.

The name “biblical theology” is equivocal. It can refer to a theology that is biblical in the sense that it is rooted in the Bible, is in harmony with the Bible, or is drawn from the Bible.²⁰ It can also refer to a theology that is biblical in the sense that it presents the theology which the Bible contains or simply a theology of the Bible.²¹

The former conception takes biblical theology as part of the realm of theological studies, whereas the latter conception sees biblical theology as part of biblical studies. We suggest that a biblical theology is the theology of the Bible as Scripture. Accordingly, its content is determined by the canonical form of Scripture and not by philosophical or theological models of Judeo-Christian or other thought, of whatever culture or setting.

¹⁸Kraus, 369.

¹⁹Hans-Joachim Kraus, “Probleme und Perspektiven biblischer Theologie,” in *Biblische Theologie heute: Einführung—Beispiele—Kontroversen*, “Biblische-theologische Studien, no. 1, 97-124 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1977), 112.

²⁰So, for example, Daniel Schenkel, “Die Aufgabe der biblischen Theologie in dem gegenwärtigen Entwicklungsstadium der theologischen Wissenschaft,” *Theologische Studien und Kritiken* 25 (1852): 42-44.

²¹See Otto Merk, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments in ihrer Anfangszeit* (Marburg: Elwert, 1972), 7-8; Gerhard Ebeling, “The Meaning of Biblical Theology,” in *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963), 79-81.

Other fields of study draw upon material from the Bible, for example, the history of ancient Israel and the religion of Israel or the history of early Christianity. A "canonical biblical theology" is, however, not identical with them. This is not the place to engage in an extended discussion of the differences between these endeavors, their materials, and their purposes. May it suffice to say that endeavors other than biblical theology proceed along the lines of historico-genetic relations with the surrounding realm of sociocultural settings. A "canonical biblical theology," on the other hand, focuses upon the biblical faith as revealed in Scripture in all its variety, richness, and abundance.

5. A "canonical biblical theology" has the dual task of (1) providing summary interpretations of the final form of the individual biblical documents or groups of writings and of (2) presenting the longitudinal themes, motifs, and concepts that emerge from the biblical materials.

The conception of this two-pronged task tends toward an inclusion of the full variety present in the biblical materials. It attempts to ward off a one-sided emphasis on an "authoritative core," center, or the like within either the OT or NT or one that is common to both Testaments.²² The basic openness toward the whole of the Bible is in harmony with the holistic intention of the canon itself. NT Christianity obviously did not see the Torah in the OT as the primary authoritative core, which some modern scholars have wished to make it, but conceived the whole of the OT as Scripture and prophetic in nature. Evidence of this is found in the NT affirmation of the OT canon (Luke 24:44)²³ and the undifferentiated longitudinal themes, motifs, and concepts which emerge in the fullness of the totality of biblical revelation.

The twofold approach just outlined will reveal multiple forms of connection within each Testament and between the Testaments. It will reveal that the Bible of Jesus and the apostles is not on a lower or higher level than the writings which became known as the NT. It will reveal that there is indeed one Bible of two Testaments. It will reveal that the NT would be merely a torso without the OT and that the OT is incomplete without the NT.

²²The affirmation of such an "authoritative core" for OT theology comes from George E. Wright, *The Old Testament and Theology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 179-183.

²³See also the reference to other parts of the Hebrew canon in Matt 5:17; 7:12; Luke 24:27; see Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture*, 40-41.

6. The structure of a "canonical biblical theology" must be capable of encompassing the multiform materials of the Bible without forcing upon them molds extraneous to the respective biblical materials and contents. It must reveal the dynamic interrelationship of the various parts of Scripture.

The appropriate structure for a "canonical biblical theology" is not easy to come by. Despite the wide use of procedures such as systematizing the theological thoughts of Scripture along the line of "concepts-of-doctrine" (*Lehrbegriffe*),²⁴ the closely related dogmatic structure of theology-anthropology-soteriology,²⁵ or other systematizations based on a "center" or something else, we have to admit that they can succeed only by forcing a structure from outside on the biblical materials, if they seek to encompass the whole of biblical truth. The Bible does not order its material and its theology in such a way.

Likewise, the cross-section structures,²⁶ the genetic structures,²⁷ and the topical structures²⁸ reveal the problems of bringing together the fullness of the biblical realm of revelation.

A favorite way of uniting the richness of the symphonic voices of OT and NT revelation is by means of a center, theme, key concept, focal point, or the like.²⁹ It is not necessary to deal *in extenso* with the

²⁴It was still used by Bernard Weiss, *Lehrbuch der Biblischen Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Berlin: Hertz, 1895); Eng. trans. from 3d ed., *The Theology of the New Testament* (London, 1892). See Hasel, *New Testament Theology*, 35-36.

²⁵For R. Bultmann, the heart of NT theology is Pauline anthropology (*Theology of the New Testament* [New York: Scribner, 1970]). On the whole issue, see Wilfrid Harrington, *The Path of Biblical Theology* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), 244-259.

²⁶Typical examples are: Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961); Theodorus C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970); Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).

²⁷Recently used by Chester K. Lehman, *Biblical Theology*, vol. 1, *Old Testament* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1971); idem, *Biblical Theology*, vol. 2, *New Testament* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1974).

²⁸Typical are John L. McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1974); Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1958); Karl H. Schelkle, *Theology of the New Testament*, 4 vols. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1971-1978).

²⁹In NT theology *Heilsgeschichte* is a prominent trend; it has rather diversified emphases in Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964); Oscar Cullmann, *Salvation in History* (London: SCM, 1967); George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); Leonhard Goppelt, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 2 vols. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975-1976).

problem of the center of the OT³⁰ or the NT³¹ as it relates to the structuring or systematizing of the respective theologies. Some scholars propose a center, theme, or key concept that unites OT and NT theology. A number of suggestions have been made for the "center" and organizing principle of a biblical theology, such as the "rulership of God" (H. Seebass),³² or "Kingdom of God" (Günter Klein).³³ Others have suggested the "covenant" (R. Rendtorff, F. C. Fensham³⁴), "election" (Hans Wildberger),³⁵ "righteousness" (H. Seebass, W. Dietrich),³⁶ "righteousness for the ungodly" (O. Hofius),³⁷ or "righteousness and

See Hasel, *New Testament Theology*, 111-132.

³⁰See Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Problem of the Center in the Old Testament Theology Debate," *ZAW* 86 (1974): 65-82; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Center of OT Theology: The Promise," *Themelios* 10 (1974): 1-10; W. C. Kaiser, "Wisdom Theology and the Center of Old Testament Theology," *EvQ* 50 (1978): 132-146; Walter Zimmerli, "Zum Problem der 'Mitte des Alten Testaments,'" *EvT* 35 (1975): 97-118.

³¹Klaus Haacker, "Einheit und Vielfalt in der Theologie des Neuen Testaments," *Themelios* 4 (1968): 27-44; Alex Stock, *Einheit des Neuen Testaments: Erordnung hermeneutischer Grundpositionen der heutigen Theologie* (Zurich: Benziger, 1969); Harald Riesenfeld, "Reflections on the Unity of the New Testament," *Religion* 3 (1973): 35-51; Eduard Lohse, "Die Einheit des Neuen Testaments als theologisches Problem: Überlegungen zur Aufgabe einer Theologie des Neuen Testaments," *EvT* 35 (1975): 139-154. For additional literature and discussion, see Hasel, *New Testament Theology*, 140-170; Brice L. Martin, "Some Reflections on the Unity of the New Testament," *RelS* 8 (1979): 143-152.

³²Horst Seebass, "Der Beitrag des Alten Testaments zum Entwurf einer biblischen Theologie," *Wort und Dienst* 8 (1965): 20-49.

³³Gunter Klein, "'Reich Gottes' als biblischer Zentralbegriff," *EvT* 30 (1970): 642-670.

³⁴Rolf Rendtorff, "'Covenant' as a Structuring Concept in Genesis and Exodus," *JBL* 108 (1989): 358-393; F. Charles Fensham, "Covenant, Promise and Expectation in the Bible," *TZ* 23 (1967): 305-322; idem, "The Covenant as Giving Expression to the Relationship Between Old and New Testament," *Tyndale Bulletin* 22 (1971): 82-94.

³⁵Hans Wildberger, "Auf dem Wege zu einer biblischen Theologie: Erwägungen zur Hermeneutik des Alten Testaments," *EvT* 19 (1959): 70-90.

³⁶Horst Seebass, "Gerechtigkeit Gottes: Zum Dialog mit Peter Stuhlmacher," in *Einheit und Vielfalt Biblischer Theologie*, ed. Ingo Baldermann, Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie, 1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986), 115-134; Walter Dietrich, "Der rote Faden im Alten Testament," *EvT* 49 (1989): 232-250.

³⁷Otfried Hofius, "Rechtfertigung der Gottlosen" als Thema biblischer Theologie, Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie, 2 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner, 1987), 95-105.

justice" (Rolf Knierim)³⁸ for both Testaments. These suggestions are all intended to provide structuring concepts for biblical theology.

This sampling of suggestions indicates that there is no consensus on what is the alleged "center" of the Bible. The reason rests in the variety of biblical revelation.³⁹ Therefore J. Barr has ventured to speak of a "plurality of 'centres'" which makes many different organizations possible. In this instance the choice of the "center" and the structure of a biblical theology are again moved into the subjective realm. We have not been persuaded that a "centered" approach to the structure of biblical theology will be adequate to both structure and content.

On the positive side, the OT indeed betrays an all-pervading center. God is the beginning, center, and future of the OT.⁴⁰ The NT likewise betrays an all-pervading center in Jesus Christ, in whom God has revealed Himself. But we must make a significant distinction with regard to the matter of the center. The fact of the center and unity of biblical thought, i.e., the issue of whether there is something that appears as providing an overriding unity in spite of all variety, must be clearly separated from the question of a center, theme, concept, or the like, on the basis of which a biblical theology is structured or on the basis of which one engages in "content criticism," distills an "authoritative core," or finds a "canon within the canon."⁴¹

This distinction is crucial. I would like to reformulate my understanding of the "center" by defining the center of both Testaments as the triune God who revealed Himself in the OT in multiple ways and who has manifested Himself in the NT in the incarnation of Jesus Christ as the God-man.

Where does that leave us when it comes to the structure of a biblical theology? We have argued elsewhere for a multiplex approach,⁴² which avoids a juxtaposition of OT theology and NT theology. The

³⁸Rolf Knierim, "The Task of Old Testament Theology," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 6 (1984): 91-128.

³⁹Henri Clavier, *Les variétés de la pensée biblique et le problème de son unité: Esquisse d'une théologie de la Bible sur les textes originaux et dans leur contexte historique* (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

⁴⁰Hasel, "Problem," 80-82.

⁴¹See Friedrich Mildenerger, "Die Gegenläufigkeit von historischer Methode und kirchlicher Anwendung als Problem der Bibelauslegung," *Theologische Beiträge* 3 (1972): 57-64; Gerhard Maier, "Einer biblischen Hermeneutik entgegen? Zum Gespräch mit P. Stuhlmacher und H. Linden," *Theologische Beiträge* 8 (1977): 148-160; Peter Stuhlmacher, "Biblische Theologie und kritische Exegese," *Theologische Beiträge* 8 (1977): 88-90.

⁴²Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 194-208; Hasel, *New Testament Theology*, 204-220.

multiplex approach consists basically of two major steps regarding the structure of biblical theology. The first step consists of a presentation of the theologies of the various OT and NT books or groups of writings so that *each* biblical witness stands next to the others in all its richness and variety. This procedure allows ample opportunity for every aspect of biblical thought to emerge and be heard. In principle these book-by-book and group-by-group theologies provide the opportunity of recognizing both differences and similarities, continuity, growth, and enlargements, revealing the full richness of the divine self-disclosure. The second step is equally important. It consists of a multitrack treatment of the longitudinal themes, motifs, and concepts that have emerged from the book-by-book and group-by-group presentations. On the basis of the longitudinal thematic perspectives, the totality of the unity of the Bible can be perceived without forcing a single unilinear approach upon the Bible itself. The unity that emerges through the appearance of the multiple interrelationships between the Testaments and within each Testament will certainly not mean single uniformity, nor will it destroy variety, but it will demonstrate the fullness of the unity within all variety. Neither Testament is in itself monochromatic, but the full spectrum of colors within each Testament and between the Testaments can be expected to reveal a compatible, rich, and dynamic blend.

7. Biblical theology presents the most profound challenge and the greatest hope for the biblical scholar in the latter part of the twentieth century.

This thesis is highlighted by the fact that critical biblical scholarship has found it most difficult, if not nearly impossible, to speak of and to present a way of engaging in biblical theology. The flowering of proposals and renewed interest in methods and procedures for biblical theology in the last few years reveal that the challenge remains intense. We believe that the time for creative and critical reflection presents a new opportunity for constructive biblical theology and that the brightest future for biblical theology has arrived.

In our view a "canonical biblical theology" is called for and can be produced on the basis of a theological-historical approach that is both open to and affirming of the fullest claims of biblical revelation within the context of the totality of Scripture. May it be an enterprise that will strengthen the church, renew an appreciation of the Bible as the Word of God, and give honor and glory to Him who sent His Son into this world to be our Lord and Savior.