

# BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



SOUTHWESTERN  
JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

## ***Biblical Theology: Past, Present, and Future (Vol. 1)***

*Terry L. Wilder, Editor*  
*twilder@swbts.edu*

When Brevard Childs wrote *Biblical Theology in Crisis* in 1970, he prematurely pronounced the discipline to be dead—kaput. He held that scholars had not adequately bridged the gap between exegesis and theology, were too limited in their study of biblical theology, and in their current state, were simply not benefiting anyone. To cross the chasm between exegesis and theology, he contended the Bible really needed to be viewed within its own canonical context. That is to say, all of Scripture’s diverse constituent parts should be considered in light of the unified whole, i.e., the canon of Scripture and its unified message.

Since that time, the Biblical theology movement has grown substantially. Contrary to Childs’ claim, it is not dead at all. As a matter of fact, it is currently thriving—especially amongst evangelicals who are committed to Biblical inerrancy and inspiration. This development is good primarily because it can aid the church in the making and equipping of disciples, and it is timely, especially in a day when Biblical illiteracy has increased, even amongst church members.

Now, all of this is not to say that Biblical theology does not have its growing pains—it does. Unsettled questions in the minds of many abound, like, “What exactly is Biblical theology?” “How is it different from the disciplines of systematic theology, historical theology, practical theology, and theological interpretation?” “What precise approach should be used to do Biblical theology?” “How can we be helped in our quest by the inquiries and discussions of those who have gone before us in the church’s history?” Theological conferences are held for pastors and professors to explore and discuss answers to these kinds of questions. One such conference designed to benefit students, pastors, scholars, and the church, led to the publication of papers included in the next two issues of this journal.

This issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology (SWJT)* is the first of two volumes on the topic, *Biblical Theology: Past, Present, and Future*. The articles in these volumes were initially presented on March 9-10, 2012, at the Southwest Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), which met in the Riley Center on the campus of the host institution, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The plenary speakers for the

conference were Gerald Bray from Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, and Andreas J. Köstenberger from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Southwestern Seminary and the editorial staff of *SWJT* would like to thank Herbert W. Bateman IV, formerly professor of New Testament at Southwestern, for serving as program chair for the regional ETS meeting in 2012 from which conference he helped to select the papers for these two journal issues on Biblical theology.

The present volume is devoted to “Biblical Theology Past” and features three helpful articles. The lead article is presented by Gerald Bray entitled, “Biblical Theology and From Where It Came.” In this essay he looks at Biblical theology past and traces its roots and history from the early days of the discipline, through the Enlightenment era and the Barthian revolution, and in the English-speaking world. Robert Chisholm, professor of Old Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary, also contributes a paper titled, “Yahweh’s Self-Revelation in Deed and Word: A Biblical Theology of 1–2 Samuel.” In this article, he does not examine broad Biblical-theological themes in the text, but rather, looks at the text in a more restricted theocentric sense to see what it communicates about God. He also discusses the anthropological dimension of 1–2 Samuel’s theology by considering how God relates to people and what he expects from them. Further, Douglas Kennard, professor of New Testament at Houston Graduate School of Theology, provides an article called, “The Reef of Biblical Theology: A Method for Doing Biblical Theology that Makes Sense for Wisdom Literature.” In this essay, he contends that wisdom literature is the “reef” onto which Biblical theology often runs aground because wisdom does not easily fit into the broad dominant frameworks of the rest of the Bible. So, Kennard places a Biblical theology of OT wisdom within what he sees as the overarching OT Biblical theology strategy. This issue also contains for your perusal several book reviews, including an extended review essay.

We pray that these articles equip and assist you as you engage in and study Biblical theology. We hope you like what you read in this issue. If you would like to have one of our faculty members or students speak in your church, or lead your congregation in a study of any sort, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are more than happy to serve you. Further, if God has called you into his service please consider allowing us the privilege of preparing you for a lifetime of ministry. These are exciting times for the study of theology! God bless you!

Terry L. Wilder, Editor  
Professor and Wesley Harrison Chair of New Testament