

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



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Biblical Theology: Past, Present, and Future (Vol. 2)

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Ever since Brevard Childs wrote *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (1970) and declared the discipline to be dead, the Biblical theology movement has, to the contrary, substantially grown. Indeed, it is thriving at present—especially amongst evangelicals who are committed to the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. This development is an excellent one primarily because it can aid the church in the making and equipping of disciples, and it is also timely, especially in a day when Biblical illiteracy has dramatically increased, even amongst church members.

Biblical theology clearly has its growing pains. 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 regularly 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 both the previous and the present issue of this journal.

This issue of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* (SWJT) marks our online debut and is the second of two volumes on the topic, *Biblical Theology: Past, Present, and Future*. Most of 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 Present and Future* and features five helpful articles. The lead article is presented by Andreas

Köstenberger entitled, "The Present and Future of Biblical Theology." In this essay he looks at what he thinks is the present and future of the discipline. Moreover, he offers survey and summary assessments of recent Biblical theologies. John Taylor, associate professor of New Testament at Southwestern, also contributes a paper titled, "The Freedom of God and the Hope of Israel: Theological Interpretation of Romans 9." In this article, he outlines some of the historical contours of the soteriological debate over the interpretation of Romans 9 and asks whether the passage can bear the weight of such discussion. He argues that theological interpretation of the chapter needs to consider properly in context the Roman believers' situation and Paul's concern for the status and fate of Israel. This editor contributes to this issue an article called, "Phoebe, the Letter-Carrier of Romans, and the Impact of Her Role on Biblical Theology," in which he contends that Phoebe is a courier and that Paul's recommendation of her in Romans 16:1-2 fits the pattern found in texts where letter-carriers are commended to the recipients of letters. The impact of this conclusion on a Biblical theology of women in ministry is then briefly considered. Steven Smith, Vice President for Student Services and Communications and Professor of Communication at Southwestern, provides an article in which he maintains that the Christology of the New Testament cannot be understood apart from the book of Hebrews. He views the portrait of Christ in Hebrews as overwhelming and focuses in his essay on the triad of Christ's exclusive work, superiority, and corporate nature. Lastly, Helmuth Pehlke, professor of Old Testament for Southwestern's Bonn, Germany extension, provides an article called, "Observations on the Historical Reliability of the Old Testament. He maintains that no reason exists to doubt that the Old Testament in its reports preserves historical facts. If the events were fictionally reported, as some claim, then it would have enormous theological implications because God would then no longer be the Lord of history, but a creature of one's own imagination. A close relationship exists between historical understanding and relationship with God. This issue also contains for your perusal several book reviews and abstracts of recent doctoral dissertations done at Southwestern.

We pray that these articles equip and assist you as you 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 at Southwestern for the study of Biblical theology. God bless you.

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