
Pro Rege

Volume 43 | Number 4


Article 3

June 2015

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Recommended Citation

Lappenga, Benjamin J. (2015) "Revisiting the Merits of a Contested Discipline: Reflections on the Study of Old Testament Theology," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 43: No. 4, 15 - 28.
Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol43/iss4/3

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Revisiting the Merits of a Contested Discipline: Reflections on the Study of Old Testament Theology



by Benjamin Lappenga

Referring to his work as a New Testament scholar doing biblical theology, Peter Stuhlmacher maintains that “the more decisive impulses for understanding the NT [come] from OT scholars.”¹ Whether or not this claim can be substantiated by Stuhlmacher’s work,² my reading of Old Testament theology (OTT) more broadly has brought home both how *frightening* and how *exciting* this proposal is. That is, the rationale, methodology, and actual practice of OTT prove to be remarkably unsettled (for reasons that will become clear throughout this paper), and yet the potential OTT holds for illu-

minating Christian faith, practice, and reflection remains lamentably undervalued. This essay represents an attempt to chart a path through some of the major methodological issues involved in OTT, in order to (1) provide a means of evaluating the usefulness of the resources available, and (2) demonstrate that usefulness for the people of God today (at least as it might come to expression in my own roles of NT scholar, educator, and person of faith). To this end, I will first present brief arguments for my convictions about seven areas of methodological disagreement that I have deemed most crucial, and in the process I will present a working model for OTT. Second, in light of these methodological convictions, I will offer a brief example of how OTT might positively reshape the way Christians approach the NT and Christian life more broadly, by drawing out some ways OTT can deepen our understanding of a theological motif I have identified in the Gospel of John.

PART ONE:
METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Audience and the Question of Theological Commitments

Ben C. Ollenburger perhaps overstates the case with his suggestion that “[m]ethodology is also theology,” but the point stands (like it or not) that OT theologians must offer rationale for their

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aims, models, and assumptions.³ The question of whether we may speak of a *theological* rationale for OTT guides many of my reflections in this paper, but at the end of the day I simply take it as a given that OTT should be evaluated based on its *usefulness to Christian communities and individuals*.⁴ That is, the real-life needs of, for example, church communities, pastors, missionaries, and Christian social workers should be given a certain priority over purely historical and philosophical concerns, however important the latter may be. Of course, this is easy to assert and difficult to implement, not least because much of academic theological reflection is indeed “emotionally inaccessible to believers and academically unacceptable to the wider academy.”⁵ How exactly can the academic pursuit we are wrestling with in this paper ever be “useful”?

Hopefully, some answers to this question will unfold throughout the course of this paper, but two brief responses are appropriate here. First, I concede that “usefulness” is easier to verify when it comes to OT ethics, at least when OT ethics is conceived as helping Christians become “model readers” whose character is continually being shaped by the text. Yet I maintain that “formation” involves more than ethical behavior, since “biblical narrative has the ability to redescribe reality for those who, through informed and careful reading, are drawn into its world.”⁶ It seems to me that Christian transformation can manifest itself not only in our behavior but also in the ways we think, conceptualize, and reflect upon God and God’s dealings with people.⁷

Second, I believe OTT could do much worse than to have *pastors* (broadly conceived as church leaders/teachers) in mind as a primary audience. If OTT is a “truncated” enterprise (and how could it be otherwise?),⁸ for good or for ill it is pastors that are often tasked with piecing things together for average Christians who look to them for guidance.⁹ This is not to say that OTT must be “dumbed down” for those without the time or competence to read widely in the field. Rather, it demands not only that the OT theologian acquire the skills to understand the conversations in every cubby hole of the *tour d’ivoire* of academia, but that she also hone the communication skills needed to bring the best and most relevant parts of these conversations to bear on the pastor’s larger task.

“Objective” or “Confessional”?

These assumptions position us to offer some reflections on the question of how “objective” or “scientific” OTT should be, as opposed to reflecting the practitioner’s confessional stance.¹⁰ To begin, we may consider John J. Collins’s reservations about doing OTT from a position of faith:

Historical criticism is neither committed nor opposed in principle to any particular reconstruction of the history of Israel, or the unity or divine origin of the Bible. Any position can be argued for, so long as the arguments are based on commonly accepted premises. In contrast a confessional approach ... wants to privilege certain positions and exempt them from the requirement of supporting arguments ... in effect, tak[ing] biblical theology out of the public discussion.¹¹

Collins’s remarks draw attention to the difficulty of keeping faith commitment as a part of OTT without slipping into a sort of Bible-centered defense of existing doctrines.¹² As James Barr notes about the classroom, “faith commitment cannot easily be introduced as an essential ... unless all participants are of the same faith, and indeed the same form of the same faith, in which case biblical theology would have to become an explicitly denominational activity.”¹³

While Barr and Collins insist that strict adherence to the rules of historical criticism is the only way to ensure the appropriate checks on ideologies,¹⁴ it seems to me that the outstanding contributions to OTT made by scholars writing overtly (e.g., as feminists, Christians, and Jews) demonstrate that there is nothing inherently wrong with evaluative/normative perspectives within biblical studies—so long as the normative stance has been well argued.¹⁵ I am in full agreement with Barr and Bernhard W. Anderson that biblical theologians need to let the OT speak with its own voice and (in principle, at least) be willing to paint a picture of the text that is at odds with what he or she believes.¹⁶ I simply do not think that a “confessional” perspective disallows this, not least because the OT itself provides many examples of just this sort of bare and honest confrontation with God’s words—and these instances could hardly be described as “detached” or “non-confessional”!¹⁷ Ironically,

those who insist on “bracketing” faith commitments are concerned that confessional positions preclude any meaningful conversation between various groups, but at least in the case of Jews and Christians, I fully agree with Jon D. Levenson that “neutral” ground is dramatically less fulfilling and meaningful than the *common* ground that might be found when Jews and Christians approach the OT fully engaged with the passions and sensitivities of

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their faith.¹⁸ In the end, then, so long as we give due recognition to the kinds of things the defenders of “pure” historical criticism are trying to protect,¹⁹ OTT will be all the richer and more meaningful for engaging the text in a manner that is consistent with the *theological* subject matter of the OT itself.²⁰ As Patrick D. Miller writes concerning the work of Walter Brueggemann, “the normative function of Old Testament theology is not simply a matter that one decides methodologically but is inherent in the character of the text and the relation to it of those who read and study.”²¹

Description and Reflection

Still, we must articulate more carefully what exactly we are doing when we talk about OTT that does justice to the “theology” of the OT. OT theologians have long wondered if and how “a Gablerian, descriptive biblical theology differ[s] from a history of Israelite religion,”²² and one answer is that OTT is about what the authors/final redactors believed, whereas the history of Israelite religion must take into account what those Israelites who disagreed with the authors believed.²³ Despite Erhard S. Gerstenberger’s insistence that the final redaction has “no special theological status over and above

the earlier collections,”²⁴ I am inclined to agree with Brevard Childs and many others that the final form of the text is our primary concern.²⁵ For me, the demonstrably transitory nature of reconstructions provided by archeology and historical criticism make it preferable to speak of these reconstructions as “instruments” (Childs) rather than “expressions of faith” (Gerstenberger) with a value equal to that of the theological perspective in the final form of the text (which of course is itself diverse; see further below). That said, I do not wish to dispose entirely with these reconstructions, since these reconstructions can make us more aware of the profundity of the final form.²⁶ Another way of getting at this question is to ask whether OTT is limited to what the ancient Hebrews said about God or should include theological reflection on everything that they thought and did. Again, reconstructions of what life was like in Israel are instructive, but it is the *evaluations* of these ways of living found in the OT that are ultimately the concern of OTT. Brueggemann states somewhat provocatively that “God is given to us ... only by the dangerous practice of rhetoric,”²⁷ but perhaps it is better to say with Anderson that “[t]he texts of the Bible invite us into a world—a real world—that is construed by poetic imagination.”²⁸

Evaluating Multiple Perspectives

Even granting this priority to the final form, though, the OT’s varied perspectives on different issues raise the question of whether OTT affirms some perspectives and not others, and if so, on what basis. It seems to me that we need not be totalizing here. In some cases, such as the question of how we are to envision God, there is ample reason to simply set forth multiple expressions: “The Mighty Warrior of George Ernest Wright and the Mother Goddess of Phyllis Tribble both are biblical portrayals of Israel’s God.”²⁹ But in other cases, our assumption that the source of the Bible’s value is the God whose story we find told within its pages means that we cannot simply leave the multiple expressions side by side.³⁰ Brueggemann’s courtroom analogy offers an ingenious attempt to both evaluate the relative strength of the OT’s voices *and* to retain the normative value of as many counter-voices as possible,³¹ but as with any construct that

is foreign to the text itself, Brueggemann's program is open to criticism.³² Perhaps we would do better to simply acknowledge that OTT is "a constructive, not merely a reconstructive, task."³³ Of course, any construction is vulnerable to prejudices, but by thinking of OTT as a community task guided by the Spirit³⁴ and being attentive to the totality of the Scriptures, we finally see the diversity of the OT as complementary rather than contradictory.³⁵ Yes, OTT can affirm that God's will is eternal and unchanging (e.g., the promises to David in 2 Chron. 21:7) but not in an unqualified sense that could be reduced to a propositional statement about the "unchangeable character of God" (cf. Gen. 18:20-33).³⁶ The portrait that emerges is perhaps not as manageable or "safe" as we would like, but then again neither was the conception of God proclaimed by Jesus. C. S. Lewis' famous line about Aslan might then also apply to the things OTT has to say about God: "Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king, I tell you."³⁷

Organization

A few words might also be said regarding the old debate about whether OTT should be expressed as a systematic whole with a certain *Mitte* (e.g., Eichrodt) or simply detail the theologies of different books (von Rad). As to the former, I am in agreement with Benjamin Sommer that speaking of a center for heuristic purposes may be helpful but that speaking of *the* center (like Eichrodt's use of "covenant") will almost certainly be reductionistic.³⁸ As to the latter, we might observe that a kind of spin-off of von Rad's approach can be seen in Barr's suggestion that biblical theology move away from comprehensive works and more toward shorter, piecemeal endeavors.³⁹ As a novice who is overwhelmed by the sheer amount of material in the OT, I find the piecemeal approach initially appealing, but as I will conclude below, one of the primary benefits of OTT is its capacity to take account of the whole. A book-by-book approach, however, has an important role to play, especially when utilized alongside other approaches that gather together disparate materials that inform a particular concern. Such a "seriatim reading" is criticized by Brueggemann for lacking dialogue and critical engagement.⁴⁰ But as we noted above,

OTT is a constructive task, and thus it must be admitted that evaluative judgments need to be made. These judgments will ideally be made on the basis of a sort of shaping of our sensibilities that occurs by repeated exposure to the text itself, and for this purpose there is a lot to be said about simply reading and reflecting upon the Scriptures as they have been collected in canonical form.⁴¹

Relationship to Systematic Theology

Applying words like "evaluative" and "judgments" to the task of OTT raises the question of OTT's relationship to Systematic Theology (ST). Throughout the twentieth century, deciding "what we must say on the basis of the apostles and prophets"⁴² was generally considered the realm of ST, with "exegesis" as the process of discerning what the texts say and "biblical theology" the intermediary step of describing the relationships between the texts.⁴³ Such neat categories have rightly been criticized,⁴⁴ not least because of the implicit assumption that the function of Scripture was solely to provide the content (what we should believe) for the work of ST.⁴⁵ It should be clear by now that I think OTT can be *formative* as well as *descriptive*, but some further clarification is needed. Is OTT "a bright focus within systematic theology,"⁴⁶ and if so, how do we avoid having systematic categories set the agenda?⁴⁷

In a nutshell, I think we would do well to recognize the different emphases and strengths of the two endeavors. Since the very beginning, ST has engaged with the philosophies and categories of the particular time and culture in which believers found themselves, and so long as the provisional nature of this endeavor is recognized, "critical reflection on the social and cultural frameworks within which ... faith is expressed" is a positive endeavor.⁴⁸ OTT, then, has the responsibility to draw our attention to the *foreignness* of the OT world, so as to challenge the ways that our cultures and philosophies have limited or distorted our conceptions of God. It is in this capacity that I affirm that OTT "is descriptive and historical in a way that theological interpretation and systematic theology are not."⁴⁹ In particular, OTT has a crucial role to play in resisting the urge for *closure* that plagues ST,⁵⁰ particularly when ST is conceived as providing a comprehensive set of responses within traditional categories. "Something

human and historical would be neglected or lost”⁵¹ if ST always set the agenda for our reflection on the OT. This kind of dialectical relationship I am imagining between ST and OTT is at work in Paul M. Blowers’ description of the struggles of the early church fathers: “The challenge for the antenicene theologians was, as it is even now, long after Nicea and Chalcedon, to enlist the conceptual and systematic models sufficient to achieving doctrinal coherence and comprehensiveness *while still opening the way for the Word to speak in the contextual moment in all its potency.*”⁵²

Thus, when we wish to think critically about how our faith might inform a given issue, we should, in addition to looking within the framework of a systematic category like “sin,” turn to the narratives about (and reflections of) the Israelites in their struggles to obey God that are drawn together in a meaningful way by OTT. When done well, OTT is in a sense a resource for turning directly to Scripture but having much of the hard work of locating, sifting, collating, and articulating some conclusions already accomplished. We rightly scoff at the notion that “the Bible says it, I believe it, end of story,” but it strikes me that the *instinct* is not the problem here but rather the gross underestimation of what is required to read Scripture in a meaningful way. Thus OTT might be seen as a precious resource for those who long to “get back to the Bible itself” but have not yet developed the skills and sensitivities to do such a thing. From my (admittedly Protestant) perspective, the *sola scriptura* instinct is preferable to an instinct toward church dogma, confessions, or authoritative tradition, and is particularly helpful when it comes to reinvigorating the role of the OT in Christian theological reflection.

Relationship to the NT

This discussion about the particular role of the OT naturally raises our final question about the study of OTT: what is the relationship of OTT to the NT? This question is particularly important to me as a scholar whose primary expertise is in the field of NT studies, and the concluding illustration of this paper will attempt to put something of what I am learning into practice. But here we are concerned with the theoretical question, and to

begin, we must distinguish between the recognition that OTT does not constitute the whole task of Christian reflection and the very *different* assertion that “the Old Testament is ‘incomplete.’”⁵³ Eichrodt’s unfortunate words about the “torso-like appearance of Judaism”⁵⁴ only reinforce the perception that the preaching of Jesus (or the NT in general) trumps anything the OT has to say or is all that is really worth bothering about at the end of the day. As Brueggemann says about von Rad’s work, “There is present ... something of the old conviction of Bultmann that the Old Testament, from a Christian perspective, is a ‘failure’ that awaits the New.”⁵⁵ This is a sentiment baldly asserted by Francis Watson: “the New Testament gives direction and scope to the Old, without which the Old would seem unfocused, irrelevant and alien.”⁵⁶

This is clearly problematic, given everything we have considered to this point, but it seems that we need to go further than simply saying that OTT is “to guard [the OT] from being used simply as a foil for the New Testament.”⁵⁷ Childs insists that the OT is itself “a witness to Jesus Christ,”⁵⁸ but it remains unclear to me exactly how this is helpful. Would it not be better to allow that the NT is our primary witness to Jesus, but that the witness to Jesus does not exhaust what God has revealed about himself in the Scriptures? That is, for me it is less important to debate whether OTT can or

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should operate “as if the New Testament did not exist”⁵⁹ as it is to recognize anew the resources found in the OT that go deeper than the NT and are desperately needed by the church. Yes, the OT has important things to say about God’s deeds of salvation for his people, and on this point the NT is an indispensable “second act,” but the OT is a much richer resource than the NT on such matters

as expressing doubt (e.g., Lam. 3), death (e.g., Prov. 11:7), sinfulness (e.g., Amos 1-2), politics (e.g., Psalm 72), ecological concerns (Gen. 1-2; Prov. 8), worship (דָּבַע; e.g., Psalm 100), and the variety of ways we can speak about God.⁶⁰

In this sense, we can affirm Christopher R. Seitz's rather provocative suggestion that "[t]he Old Testament has a horizon that is not exhausted in what we can say about Jesus, for its language and its divine promises lie not behind the New, but show the way ahead of the New that fulfillment may be a promise made good on, to the glory of the Father."⁶¹ Of course, this claim is not as radical as it sounds when it is remembered that the NT writers and the earliest Christian communities all looked to the OT (more or less) as their source of reflection and growth *beyond* what they had come to believe about Jesus.⁶² Yes, over the course of time, Christians found it helpful to draw the writings of the apostles together with Israel's Scriptures, but properly read the NT writings are *precious examples of the theological task of engaging the OT* and not at all a replacement for the OT or even necessarily the setters of an authorized agenda for this task.⁶³ As Rolf Knierim writes, "what is necessary is an Old Testament theology in which the Old Testament itself may define its own agenda vis-à-vis the New Testament rather than be dependent on it, a theology that would precisely for this reason also be of benefit for the Christian faith."⁶⁴

This point about reading the NT writers as conversation partners in the theological task causes me to think about the idea of "rehabilitating" the NT authors from various misunderstandings that have arisen over the centuries because of a lack of engagement with the OT. My concluding reflection on John 2 will move us in this direction, but four examples come to mind from my reading this term. Brueggemann suggests that the "paradigm of exile and restoration," found in such texts as Deut. 4:23-31; Isa. 54:7-10; and Jer. 31:35-37, is crucial for understanding the way the NT conceives of crucifixion and resurrection, and that Paul's notion of "strength in weakness" (1 Cor. 1:26-31) shows Paul to be a discerning reader of Jeremiah's critique of royal history (cf. Jer. 9:22-23).⁶⁵ Joel B. Green proposes that the writer of 1 Peter 2:21-25 recognizes "God's saving purpose on behalf of a sinful people

accomplished in the suffering of Yahweh's righteous servant" in Isaiah 52:13-53:12.⁶⁶ Alice Ogden Bellis argues that a triple entendre is involved in the phrase "the just shall live by his faithfulness" (קִידָץ וְתַנּוּמָאֵב הַיָּחִי; Hab. 2:4b), and thus Paul's well-known citations in Romans and Galatians are not as radically reinterpreted as is often believed.⁶⁷ And finally, Bernhard W. Anderson shows that Rom. 9:4-5 demonstrates Paul's keen grasp of the OT conception of Israel's election (Exod. 4:22), God's "glory" (דָּבַע; Exod. 16:10), and God's promises (2 Sam. 7:11-16).⁶⁸ Each of these examples shows not the *extent* of theological reflection on the OT but rather the *kind* of reflection that can characterize our own reading of the OT.

PART TWO: ILLUSTRATING THE FRUITFULNESS OF OTT FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE

Synthesis

Before offering a concluding example of the way OTT might inform our larger theological reflection, I suggest, by way of synthesis, that we consider two main characteristics of the kind of OTT I have hinted at throughout this paper. First, OTT *keeps our focus on the OT itself*. As Gunther H. Wittenberg points out, letting the OT speak means that the kind of "knowledge" (ἐπιστήμη) that is presupposed by Gabler's definition of OTT (certainty, logical deduction, abstract ideas, impersonal, analytic, fully articulate, etc.) will be replaced by a "knowledge" (דַּעַת) that is contextual, involves commitment, is practical and community-based, requires a commitment to the oppressed, and stems from *story* rather than treatise.⁶⁹ Letting the OT set the agenda also means that Christians read the OT "over the shoulder of the Jew Jesus."⁷⁰ That is, slipping ourselves into the OT story should never happen easily or without thought—these are *Israel's* Scriptures, and OTT can help us regain a sense of awe at the claim that we have become part of that story, too.

Second, OTT constrains against myopia and proof-texting by *keeping our attention on the coherent whole*.⁷¹ This is not to say that narrowly focused studies on theological issues are not important for OTT, but it is to suggest that the effort to account

for the whole is a noble goal.⁷² The advent of historical criticism had its benefits, but a lingering trajectory with largely negative effects is the focus on smaller and smaller parts of the Bible. Readings of the exodus story by liberation theologians or critiques of violence based on the plight of women in the OT can be tremendously insightful and even prophetic, but OTT keeps in mind the bigger picture and imposes a healthy, relative status to theologies based on a smaller chunk.⁷³

One may object, as Barr does, that from a Christian perspective doing “comprehensive” OTT is to engage in a form of the myopia I am suggesting we must guard against.⁷⁴ Perhaps so, but given the reality of our churches, I think we should impose an “intentional myopia” on the OT materials in order to re-correct the imbalance that is continually reinvigorated by appeal to historic

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Christianity, a sense of the relative strangeness of the OT, a misuse of the creedal tradition, and our cultural tendency toward other-worldly escapism that seems to be reinforced by the NT. The danger of underemphasizing the contributions of the NT is there in theory, but I would argue that in practice it is nearly impossible for a Christian to get too far along this path before being awe-struck by the incredible cohesiveness between what God was saying and doing among the Israelites and what God has done in Jesus.

As to the form OTT should ultimately take, the reflections I have offered seem to leave room for a variety of approaches. I have noted the value of a book-by-book approach, but ideally this would be followed by something like George B. Caird’s “conference table” approach, asking how the various portions of the OT “all bear witness ... to the many splendoured wisdom of the one God.”⁷⁵ Since we would occupy a seat at the table too, the concerns of

our own time and culture will have a role in shaping the discussion, and this is as it should be. The OT is replete with examples of reinterpretations of old traditions for new contexts; what is remarkable is the degree to which the new interpretations *enliven* rather than *replace* the old.⁷⁶

John 2:17 and OTT

Let us conclude, then, with a brief illustration of how OTT might inform the larger enterprise of Christian reflection. I have recently argued that within the narrative of the Fourth Gospel, the quotation of Ps. 69:9, in the story of Jesus driving out the money changers at the temple (John 2:17 [ὁ ζῆλος τοῦ οἴκου σου καταφάγεται με; MT יִנְתַּלֵּךְ יְהוָה יְהוָה יִנְתַּלֵּךְ]), is best understood as a double entendre.⁷⁷ On this reading, the “zeal” for the Father’s house that is “remembered” by the disciples is to be attributed not only to Jesus but also to “the Jews,” whose *well-intentioned zeal for the temple* comes to have tragic results (the rejection and death of Jesus) because of their lack of understanding about Jesus’ identity.⁷⁸ In other words, John’s point is not that “zeal for the temple” is wrong, but that on the contrary, even the best and most faithful devotion to the Father goes tragically awry when Jesus is rejected. It strikes me that this positive reading of “Jewish zeal (for the temple)” is affirmed and given depth by the findings of OTT in at least three specific ways.

First, in view of the traditional perspective that the Gospel of John endorses a negative attitude toward “the Jews,” we may consider not only that OTT emphasizes God’s continuing faithfulness to Israel (e.g., Deut. 30:3-5; see further above), but also that the OT has a great deal to say about God’s reaction to those who have rejected him. Yes, the prophets (and the Gospel of John) continually offer dire warnings against Israel’s rejection of God (“‘The end has come upon my people Israel; I will never again pass them by. The songs of the temple shall become wailings in that day,’ says the Lord Yhwh” [Amos 8:2b-3a]). But time and again Yhwh’s character is shown to be one of preservation (“I will not make an end of you”; Jer. 30:10-11), new promises (Jer. 31:31-34), and restoration (cf. the shouts of praise at the restoration of the temple in Ezra 3:11-13). From the perspective of OTT,

Marianne Meye Thompson is correct that far too much has been made of the idea of Jesus as the “replacement” of the temple: “Jesus is not understood to say, ‘If the Jerusalem temple is destroyed, I will replace it.’ Rather, the narrator informs us that Jesus was speaking of another temple altogether, namely, one that was destroyed about the year 30, not the year 70.”⁷⁹

Second, the OT offers reflection upon what the temple and temple worship should mean for God’s people. Beyond the historical questions about the function of the Jerusalem temple in the time of Jesus and the legacy of Maccabean zeal for the temple (1 Macc. 1:37; 2:24-26), the OT offers insight into the broader significance of the places of God’s presence (e.g., Exod. 33:7-10), the proper kinds of preparations for offering and sacrifice (note the range of acceptable sacrifices in Lev. 1-3), and the temple as a special place of God’s choosing (“I have seen you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory”; Ps. 63:2; cf. Ps. 132:13; 2 Chron. 7:12-16).

Finally, it is in the OT that we learn what it is to exhibit “zeal” (ζήλος/ἰσχυρία). It is tempting to consider only Jesus (and perhaps Paul) as a model for what it means to be passionate/zealous for God, but OTT can show the significance of how the OT deals with the related concepts of “jealousy/envy” (cf. Gen. 30:1; Prov. 3:31; 6:34; and the vision in Isa. 11:13, looking to a time when the negative societal effects of *qin’â* [“jealousy”] will end), Yhwh’s *qin’â* (directed at Israel because of idolatry or against Israel’s enemies out of covenantal love; cf. Exod. 20:5; Isa 42:3; Joel 2:18), and positive human zeal (cf. Num. 25:13; Ps. 119:139; and of course Ps. 69:9). Taken as a whole, “jealousy” is consistently cautioned against but also “taken up” or redirected into a richer, positive “zeal” that derives from Yhwh’s own *qin’â*—not unlike the portrait of ζήλος (“zeal”) in the Gospel of John!

To conclude: so long as we are conscious of the danger of “reading the NT into the OT,” I am excited by the notion that after identifying a theological perspective in a NT passage, we may turn again to the OT, not as “background” but as a rich resource for filling out our broader theological reflection.⁸⁰ If the NT theme has provided us with certain sensitivities that make us better able to perceive various aspects of the OT text, we can be glad! For

it seems to me that we should not be surprised that a theological truth about Yhwh, the Father of Jesus, comes to expression in both Testaments. Or to put it another way, we should not be surprised that the fertile resources of the OT already shaped and informed the people of God who wrote in the first century, often in ways that have come to be neglected by the church. As for the frightening and exciting aspects of Stuhlmacher’s claim that “the more decisive impulses for understanding the NT [come] from OT scholars,” we have seen that although the theory and method of OTT will remain contested, and that although the task of ensuring its reception by the church will be difficult, it is well worth the effort.

Endnotes

1. Stuhlmacher specifically lists Gerhard von Rad, Walther Zimmerli, Hartmut Gese, Klaus Koch, Brevard S. Childs, and Bernd Janowski, and continues, “They have shown me that it does NT scholarship no good to isolate itself and to pursue its exegetical task only under its own direction. When it does so—as is still the rule—then it falls almost unavoidably into prejudices, which have grown with the history of research, and it all too quickly follows implicit or explicit dogmatic interests” (“My Experience with Biblical Theology,” in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann [Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2002], 175).
2. It is beyond the scope of this paper to evaluate the usefulness of a “biblical theology of the NT,” but see (e.g.) Stuhlmacher’s *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (2 vols; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1992 and 1999) and the brief discussion in John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology Volume One: Israel’s Gospel* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2003), 25.
3. “Theology, OT,” *NIDB* 5:564. Ollenburger is making the point that “[m]any options are currently available ... and none can be simply assumed.... Old Testament theology will remain a diverse and contested field”; see also Mark G. Brett’s insistence that we ask “what purpose?” and “for whom?” *before* talking about method (“The Future of Old Testament Theology,” in *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future*, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004], 485). Addressing similar questions about the broader topic of biblical theology, Daniel J. Treier asks, “Does this methodological mess matter?... Perhaps methods need not determine results, but in the modern academic context

they often do. Certainly the methods of inquiry should also influence the training and reading habits of scholars” (“Biblical Theology and/or Theological Interpretation of Scripture?” *SJT* 61, no. 1 [2008], 22). I might add that the methods of inquiry chosen by scholars also influence the training and thinking of the church more broadly, even (or especially!) when Christians have *not* thought critically about methodological issues.

4. This is not to say that OTT has no audience outside the walls of the church. On this point, I am drawn to Ellen F. Davis’s opinion (drawing on the “ethics of reading” à la Wayne Booth’s *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988]) that the OT accords its readers respect as a multi-voiced witness and is thus a text we can encourage others to “befriend” (“Losing a Friend: The Loss of the Old Testament to the Church,” in *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, ed. Alice Ogden Bellis and Joel S. Kaminsky [Atlanta: SBL, 2000], 83-94). Something like this seems to lie behind John Rogerson’s whole “humane” approach to OTT, such as his insistence that the “divine image” of Gen. 1:26-27 is an “empty” concept that has to be filled with meaning in light of human history, not least through the recognition that “we become more truly human the more that we accept others as being truly human” (*A Theology of the Old Testament: Cultural Memory, Communication, and Being Human* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010], 193).
5. Ellen T. Charry, “To What End Knowledge?: The Academic Captivity of the Church,” in *Theology in the Service of the Church: Essays in Honor of Thomas W. Gillespie*, ed. Wallace M. Alston, Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 83; cited in Treier, “Biblical Theology,” 22.
6. Leo G. Perdue (*The Collapse of History: Reconstructing Old Testament Theology* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994], 242), summarizing Robert Alter’s perspective in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981). See also David Tracy’s reflections about allowing our minds to be transformed (*The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* [New York: Crossroad, 1981], 450-55) and the further discussion in Perdue’s *Reconstructing Old Testament Theology: After the Collapse of History* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 74.
7. As Richard B. Hays notes with regard to the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, “In view of the actual importance of ‘cognitive’ teaching in Christian communities in history, the dichotomy [between the lived experience of religious communities and expressions of thought and doctrine] may be less than illuminating” (“Reading the Bible with Eyes of Faith: The Practice of Theological Exegesis,” *JTI* 1 [2007]: 9 [n. 11]). John Goldingay helpfully notes that “the shaping of character is rarely the direct aim of biblical narrative ...[;] the primary concern of biblical narrative is to expound the gospel, to talk about God and what God has done, rather than to talk about the human characters who appear in God’s story. The commonsense view that biblical narrative is concerned to shape character is surely right, but the narrative assumes that expounding the gospel is the way to do that” (“Biblical Narrative and Systematic Theology,” in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 137).
8. Cf. Goldingay, *OTT*, 1:24. Christopher R. Seitz thinks Goldingay’s audience is “unclear” (Review of John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology Volume 1: Israel’s Gospel*, *IJST* 7, no. 2 [2005]: 212). Seitz may be right that a more explicit description of audience would be helpful, but for the audience I am suggesting here we could do much worse than what Seitz describes as a “long, personal, intelligent account of ‘what this material means to me and what it might also mean to you if you find my approach engaging and true.’”
9. Brevard S. Childs notes that Christian pastors will always do their own synthesizing: “Whether consciously or unconsciously the working minister must come to some understanding of theology in its relation to the biblical tradition” (*Biblical Theology in Crisis* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970], 95). This is also true, I think, of all Christians, but properly understood I have no difficulty with the notion that pastors bear a special burden with regard to this synthesizing task.
10. Childs sees his canonical approach as an attempt to overcome the sharp polarity in the debate whether the object of OTT is a faith-construal of history (à la von Rad), or based on a reconstructed scientific history (*Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986], 16), but Rolf Rendtorff complains of Childs’ work that it ultimately shows no independent theology of the OT and is finally part of Christian systematic theology. Rendtorff himself says that there is no reason to “approach the Hebrew Bible from a specifically Christian point of view” (“A Christian Approach to the Theology of Hebrew Scriptures,” in *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, ed. Alice Ogden Bellis and Joel S. Kaminsky [Atlanta: SBL, 2000], 146).

11. "Historical Criticism and the State of Biblical Theology," *Christian Century* 110, no. 22 (1993), 747. Collins is specifically referring to Jon Levenson's "confessional" position. In response it could of course be said that Collins allows "any position" so long as it is not "confessional"!
12. In his critique of Krister Stendahl's famous essay on biblical theology ("Biblical Theology, Contemporary," *IDB* 1:418-32), Ollenburger notes how difficult it is to keep faith and theology as part of BT without it becoming precisely what Stendahl did not want: Bible-oriented systematic theology. Ollenburger concludes that there should be more room than Stendahl allows between pure history and pure theology—theology and history both have their "norming" and "descriptive" aspects ("What Krister Stendahl 'Meant': A Normative Critique of 'Descriptive Biblical Theology,'" *HBT* 8, no. 1 [1986], 78, 84, 90). Given the abuse of "biblical" perspectives throughout Christian history (e.g., slavery in Europe and America), Collins is right that we should pause before shutting ourselves off from the "public discussion," though even more important than the voices of the "public" in this regard is the wider testimony of Scripture, the articulation of which is perhaps OTT's most important function; see further below.
13. *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress: 1999), 191.
14. The topic of the role of historical criticism within OTT is too large to fully address here, but given my instincts toward literary/final form/synchronic approaches, two points should be noted. First, it is important to remember that historical criticism and OTT arose together (cf. Johann Philipp Gabler's famous 1787 address), so in a way, we cannot get away from the kind of thinking that characterizes historical criticism if we want to do OT theology—it has profoundly shaped the way we ask questions, think through things, etc. Second, we must avoid the impression that the debate about historical criticism is between those of faith and those without faith. Defenders of historical criticism include many who are profoundly concerned with theology and matters of faith.
15. On this point, see Brett's discussion of the work of Levenson ("Future," 485). Similarly, Leo Perdue notes the importance of specific "criteriology" for evaluating theological approaches: "Serious efforts at criteriology need to be taken in order to find established procedures for evaluating theological interpretations and approaches, much in the fashion of some contemporary theologians. The establishment of a carefully proposed and rigorously applied criteriology would not result in only one way of doing OTT. However, appropriate criteria, carefully applied, could evaluate and assess the quality of an interpretation in important ways and remove it from the realm of subjective preference and preposterous claims" (*Collapse*, 6-7; cf. *Reconstructing*, 8).
16. Barr writes, "a hermeneutic that will tell us 'what it means' for today must be prepared to include an element of critique" (*Concept*, 198), and Anderson insists that we be "deliberate about allowing the past, in so far as possible, to speak to us with its own voice, rather than being ventriloquists who project our voice onto the Bible. We must allow the Old Testament to be a different, even an alien, voice that speaks to us from another world of discourse" ("Royal Covenant," in *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future*, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004], 342). On this point see also Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 102.
17. Examples that come to mind from my reading this quarter include Jer. 12:1 ("Why does the way of the guilty prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?") and Ps. 74:10 ("How long, O God, is the foe to scoff? Is the enemy to revile your name forever?").
18. Stendahl argues that "we can achieve a common discourse among different kinds of believers and non-believers as long as we define the descriptive task clearly" ("Method in the Study of Biblical Theology," in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* [ed. J. Philip Hyatt; New York: Abingdon, 1965], 202), but Jon D. Levenson maintains that "to the extent that Jews and Christians bracket their religious commitments in the pursuit of biblical studies, they meet not as Jews and Christians, but as something else.... The ground that the historical methods ... have opened up can indeed be *common* to Jews and Christians, but more often it is actually *neutral* between them--a difference that has drawn insufficient attention" (*The Hebrew Bible, The Old Testament and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* [Louisville: WJK, 1993], 84). On this point, see also Child's thoughtful remarks: "The real task of theological dialogue between Christians and Jews does not lie in exploring the religious boundaries of a lowest common denominator within a secular society, nor does it consist merely in engaging in common ethical causes—good as the latter may be Rather, true dialogue must engage itself with the elements of uniqueness of each group and focus on its highest common denominator" ("Does the Old

- Testament Witness to Jesus Christ,” in *Evangelium, Schriftauslegung, Kirche: Festschrift für Peter Stuhlmacher* [ed. Jostein Ådna et al.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1977], 64).
19. Two excellent defenses of historical criticism are found in Hans Dieter Betz’s review of James Barr (*Review of Biblical Literature* 2 [2000]: 5-13) and Paul D. Hanson’s review of Brueggemann (“A New Challenge to Biblical Theology,” *JAAR* 67, no. 2 [1999], 449-50). Specifically, Betz claims, “Without these methodologies, there would be no protection against ignorance, arbitrariness, obscurantist, and ideological tyranny” and asks, “Is not one of the purposes of the historical-critical methodology to avoid, expose and eliminate flawed scholarship?” (11-12).
 20. Kevin VanHoozer claims that “[r]eadings that remain on the historical, literary, or sociological levels cannot ultimately do justice to the subject matter of the texts” (“What Is Theological Interpretation of the Bible?” *DTIB*, 21), and Goldingay adds, “One might never have guessed that biblical narratives had a different set of concerns from those of Ovid The teasing out of their religious and theological implications is inherent in their exegesis; it is not an optional, additional task that the exegete may responsibly ignore if so inclined” (“Biblical Narrative,” 126-27). Perdue advocates a mediating position through what he calls an “imagination” approach, asserting that “history and text belong together” (*Collapsing*, 302) and that OT theology should be “both descriptive and constructive” (*Reconstructing*, 344).
 21. Introduction to *Old Testament Theology: Essay on Structure, Theme, and Text*, by Walter Brueggemann (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), xiv.
 22. Benjamin D. Sommer, “Dialogical Biblical Theology: A Jewish Approach to Reading Scripture Theologically,” in *Biblical Theology: Introducing the Conversation*, ed. Leo G. Perdue, Robert Morgan, and Benjamin D. Sommer (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 17. Sommer is Jewish, and thus “biblical theology” here is identical with my use of the term OTT.
 23. On this point, see Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1998), 53-54; reprinted in Ollenburger, ed., *Old Testament Theology*, 324-25.
 24. *Theologies in the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 15.
 25. See especially Childs’ *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986).
 26. On this point, cf. Hartmut Gese, “Tradition and Biblical Theology,” in Ollenburger, ed., 390. In proper critical perspective, I also have respect for the view that “a critical archeology of knowledge [should treat the] past as an *arché*, a source of meaning for people alive today” (Charles Kannengiesser, “The Bible as Read in the Early Church: Patristic Exegesis and its Presuppositions,” in *The Bible and Its Readers*, ed. W. A. M. Beuken [London: SCM, 1991], 35). Kannengiesser refers specifically to the writings of the church fathers, but I am suggesting that the same might be said about certain “heretical” voices that can be recovered in and behind the final form of the text.
 27. *TOT*, 66; cf. 576; here the influence of Jacques Derrida is evident (cf. Ollenburger, ed., *Old Testament Theology*, 247). Brueggemann’s notion of a “grammar of faith” is a helpful metaphor.
 28. “Royal Covenant,” in Ollenburger, ed., 343. Here of course we might enter the debate between Walter Eichrodt and Gerhard von Rad over whether the recovery of “what happened” is necessary for the account to be “true” (on this point, cf. Perdue, *Collapsing*, 48). As I have indicated, I think scholarship’s confidence about recovering “what really happened” has been far too high over the past 200 years, and thus the recent methodological shift is a positive development for OTT.
 29. Perdue, *Collapsing*, 302.
 30. As Perdue asks, “Is biblical theology a historical enterprise in which the variety of views about God ... is set forth in diverse and multiple expressions?” His answer is, of course, no, because “Biblical theology ... has to do, at least in part, with revelation, that is, the effort to find a divine voice that exists within the multiple voices of the text” (*Reconstructing*, 73).
 31. See both his *TOT* and the excellent collection of articles in *Old Testament Theology: Essay on Structure, Theme, and Text* (ed. Patrick D. Miller; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). Drawing on Assman’s notion of “kontrapräsentische Erinnerung” involving a critique of centers of power, John Rogerson finds the idea of “cultural memory” fascinating with respect to the OT because writing was practiced primarily in the court and temple, and yet so much of the OT is highly critical of court and temple. Rogerson proposes that either there were groups within that court and temple who actively opposed the regime, or these “counter-present” narratives were written after the royal house no longer existed after 587 B.C.E. (*A Theology*, 22-23).
 32. Barr famously trashes Brueggemann for his post-

- modernism (*Concept*, 541-62), but in my view the most important critique of Brueggemann's work is that of Jon D. Levenson. Levenson thinks Brueggemann does not allow the text to critique Brueggemann's own liberal Protestant values, asking, "Would not a genuine 'plurality of testimonies' and 'a subversive protest as an alternative act of vision' subvert the gospel of 'altruism, egalitarianism, anti-elitism, pluralism, multiculturalism and political correctness' and show how the Old Testament offers an alternative to them, too?" ("Is Brueggemann Really a Pluralist?" *HTR* 93, no. 3 [2000], 266). For his part, Levenson wishes to prioritize the Torah over the other sections of Scripture (in keeping with Jewish tradition).
33. Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 183.
 34. "I will put my spirit in your midst, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances"; Ezek. 36:27.
 35. As Rogerson puts it, the OT "is invariably at its most interesting when it appears to contradict itself and to undermine commonly held views" (*A Theology*, 184).
 36. Goldingay notes that this is a primary benefit of doing *narrative* theology: "Narrative is by nature open-ended, allusive, and capable of embracing questions and ambiguity" ("Narrative," 132).
 37. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 80.
 38. Cf. Sommer, "Dialogical," 5. Horst Dietrich Preuss suggests using the twin themes of election and response and provides a helpful list of some of the "centers" that have been provided, such as Yhwh as providential Lord (Köhler), theocracy or covenant (Eichrodt), community between the holy God and humanity (Vriezen), and promise (W. C. Kaiser, "Exodus and Election," in *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future*, ed. Ben C. Ollenburger [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004], 289-94).
 39. Of course, von Rad's comprehensive *Theology* went further than simply setting out the theologies of different books, and von Rad himself found it beneficial that his reader get "a theological picture of one and the same thing in various aspects and different contexts [of his work]" (*Old Testament Theology* [2 vols.; New York: Harper, 1962-1965], 1:xxxiv). For Barr's perspective, see *Concept*, 54-55.
 40. Cf. Brueggemann, *TOT*, 84-86. Brueggemann might say the book by book approach is not "thematizing" enough.
 41. Examples of this kind of approach include Paul R. House (cf. "Ruth in the Canon," *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future* [ed. Ben C. Ollenburger; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004], 327) and Rolf Rendtorff (cf. *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* [Leiderdorp: Deo Publishing, 2005], 1-4).
 42. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1.1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 16.
 43. E.g., Rolf P. Knierim insists that "the task of biblical theology is not only distinct from but also precedes the task of biblical hermeneutics, just as it follows the task of biblical exegesis" ("Cosmos and History," in *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future* [ed. Ben C. Ollenburger; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004], 269).
 44. For example, Joel B. Green writes, "In spite of the variety of its incarnations, the twentieth-century branch of study known as 'biblical theology' has typically been so enamored with its own disciplinary integrity—generally as a discrete, intermediary step between exegesis and systematics—that it has been little oriented toward a more constructive theological enterprise" ("Scripture and Theology: Uniting the Two So Long Divided," in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000], 24).
 45. My sister-in-law recently reminded me of this perception of the work of biblical scholars. She was frustrated and dissatisfied with explanations given to her about doctrines such as predestination and wanted to know my perspective "because you are an expert on the Bible itself"—in other words, the answers are clear if we would simply know what the Bible says and stop muddling with "theology." I am sympathetic to her view, of course, but things are not so tidy either when it comes to the wider task of theology nor when it comes to the Scriptures themselves.
 46. Steve Motyer, "Two Testaments, One Biblical Theology," in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology*, ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 159.
 47. As Treier asks, "how can we avoid the well-documented problems of viewing systematic theology as simply the translation of biblical theology into new contexts?" ("Biblical Theology," 21).
 48. Brett, "Future," 487.
 49. Bartholomew, "Biblical Theology," *DTIB*, 86.

50. As Brueggemann notes about the propensity toward closure in Christian tradition: “neither text nor life is like that” (“Biblical Theology Appropriately Postmodern,” in *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, ed. Alice Ogden Bellis and Joel S. Kaminsky [Atlanta: SBL, 2000], 104).
51. Treier, “Biblical Theology,” 29.
52. “The *Regula Fidei* and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith,” *Pro Ecclesia* 6, no. 2 (1997), 228; italics mine.
53. Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:327.
54. *Theology of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961-1967), 1:26.
55. Introduction to *Old Testament Theology*, by Gerhard von Rad (2 vols.; Louisville: WJK, 2001 [New York: Harper, 1962-1965]), xxiii.
56. “The Old Testament as Christian Scripture: A Response to Professor Seitz,” *SJT* 52, no. 2 (1999): 232. To be fair, Watson prefaces this comment with the assertion that “[t]he Old Testament adds a dimension of depth to the New, without which the New would seem thin, superficial and narrow.”
57. Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, 17.
58. Childs, *Crisis*, 111; cf. Barr’s take on the work of John L. McKenzie: “the Old Testament in itself is so thoroughly Christian that there is no need at all to interpret it through the New (and so an Old Testament theology on its own is fully and positively Christian)” (*Concept*, 177).
59. Ronald E. Clements with reference to John L. McKenzie (Clements, *Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach* [London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1978], 319); cf. Perdue’s insistence that biblical theology “cannot be carried on as though the Christ event has not occurred” (*Reconstructing*, 74).
60. For an overview of the many ways the OT is distinct from the NT, see Goldingay, *OTT* 1:21.
61. “Christological Interpretation of Texts and Trinitarian Claims to Truth: An Engagement with Francis Watson’s *Text and Truth*,” *SJT* 52, no. 2 (1999): 226. Watson rejects this view, insisting that “Christian Old Testament interpretation is ... a re-reading, a second reading that clarifies and re-orders the first reading” (“A Response to Professor Seitz,” 229).
62. As Stuhlmacher puts it, “All the main books of the NT originated under the influence of Christian interaction with the *graphai hagiai*, and throughout the first century there was still no canonical NT. Under these circumstances, it is historically wrong and hermeneutically misleading for NT exegesis to demote the OT to the level of a Jewish testimony collection” (“My Experience,” 176).
63. “These NT materials, then, are not simply or primarily ‘sources’ for theological data, but are themselves already exemplars of the theological task” (Green, “Scripture and Theology,” 40).
64. “Cosmos and History,” in Ollenburger, ed., 272.
65. *OTT*, 200-201; 295.
66. *Seized By Truth: Reading the Bible as Scripture* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 39.
67. “Habakkuk 2:4b: Intertextuality and Hermeneutics,” in *Jews, Christians, and the Theology of the Hebrew Scriptures*, ed. Alice Ogden Bellis and Joel S. Kaminsky (Atlanta: SBL, 2000), 369-85.
68. “Royal Covenant,” in Ollenburger, ed., 343-44.
69. “Contextual Theology and Resistance,” in Ollenburger, ed., 441.
70. Paul M. van Buren, “On Reading Someone Else’s Mail: The Church and Israel’s Scriptures,” in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Erhard Blum et al. (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 602. Van Buren writes, “Those Scriptures remain Israel’s ... but the Church may ... read that God’s covenantal love, by which he bound and binds the Jewish people to himself at Sinai, is not exhausted by Sinai but can overflow so as to draw the Gentile also into God’s service.”
71. Thus Walther Zimmerli’s definition of OT theology: “... die Aufgabe, das at. Reden von Gott in seinem inneren Zusammenhange darzustellen” (“the task of presenting what the Old Testament says about God as a coherent whole”; *Grundriß der alttestamentlichen Theologie* [Berlin: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1972], 9).
72. Pace Barr, who thinks it was a “misfortune for the subject” that Eichrodt and others set before us “the ideal of a *synthetic* or *comprehensive* study as opposed to an analytic one” (*Concept*, 59).
73. Bartholomew suggests that “the intuition that motivates comprehensive biblical theology stems from the gospel itself” (“Biblical Theology,” 88), and from the perspective of the OT we might look to the unifying impulse of the *shema*: “Hear, O Israel: Yhwh our God, Yhwh is one. You shall love Yhwh your God with all your heart, and with all your spirit, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are

at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise..." (Deut. 6:4-8; slightly modified from NRSV).

74. "For how can a theology of *part* of the Old Testament, or even of the whole of it, be 'normative' in itself for Christianity?" (*Concept*, 195).
75. George B. Caird, *New Testament Theology*, ed. Lincoln D. Hurst (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 18, 24. The important thing, again, is that the voices in the OT have their say and that the whole is in view; this seems to be possible with both a shorter work such as John Rogerson's *A Theology* and as large a work as Goldingay's three volumes.
76. As Knierim writes, "What had formerly had a certain meaning because of its distinct time came to have a different meaning as it was placed side by side (i.e., synchronically) with traditions of earlier times. This synchronization of the traditions amounted to the canonization of theological diversity" ("Cosmos and History," in Ollenburger, ed., 273). Perdue similarly notes that Israel's theology and our own is the "critical engagement and response of each generation to the proclamation of the ancestors" (*Collapse*, 52); and Hartmut Gese insists, "Just as we cannot, in view of the holistic character of biblical theology, absolutize preliterary tradition, or the formation of the text, or certain redactional stages, or the canonical composition—so also we cannot understand the *telos* of the New Testament as the 'final' form which has surpassed and thus done away with all prior forms" ("Tradition," 397).
77. Benjamin J. Lappenga, "The Citation of Psalm 69:9 in John 2:17 as a Double Entendre," in *Abiding Words: Perspectives on the Use of Scripture in the Gospel of John*, ed. Bruce G. Schuchard and Alicia D. Myers (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 141-59.
78. The most convincing argument for this reading is John's repeated narration of the behavior of the Jewish opposition to Jesus "in the temple" (ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ) in keeping with the characteristics of "Jewish zeal" in the first century; cf. John 2:13; 5:14; 7:14, 28; 10:23; 11:56; 18:20.
79. "Jesus and the Victory of God Meets the Gospel of John," in *Jesus, Paul, and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N. T. Wright*, ed. Nicholas Perrin and Richard B. Hays (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2010), 34. The reference is to John 2:19-21.
80. As Brevard Childs writes, "By insisting on its place within the normative tradition, and yet subjecting it to the criticism and balance of the other witnesses, another theological alternative is opened up for the serious handling of Scripture in the life of the church" (*Crisis*, 200).