

THE SANCTUARY: THE CANONICAL KEY OF OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

ROBERTO OURO
Adventist School of Theology
Sagunto, Valencia, Spain

Introduction

The matter of the Mitte or “center” of the Old Testament remains an unresolved problem for Old Testament Study. As the fragmentation of the Old Testament traditions continues in certain segments of Old Testament scholarship, the matter of the center is pushed further into the background. . . . A distinction is made between the center as a structuring approach for the systematizing of Old Testament Theology and as a theological concept. There are various scholars who argue that the Old Testament has a theological center but that there is no historical center for the structuring of an Old Testament theology. Then there are those who deny any center to the Old Testament on any level (viz., Barr). Is there an undergirding theological center in Israelite religion? Is there a unifying element in the Old Testament, or are there unifying elements?¹

The purpose of this study is to attempt to resolve this problem and to search for answers to these questions. This article investigates the methodology and proposals for an OT theology and suggests that the sanctuary motif is the canonical key of OT theology.²

The Methodology of the Old Testament Theology

In recent years, there has been an extensive debate about the question of methodology in OT theology.³ The established paradigm has come under

¹G. F. Hasel, “The Future of Old Testament Theology: Prospects and Trends,” in *The Flowering of Old Testament Theology: A Reader in Twentieth-Century Old Testament Theology*, 1930-1990, ed. B. C. Ollenburger, E. A. Martens, and G. F. Hasel, SBTS 1 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 381-382, emphasis supplied.

²See R. Ouro, *Old Testament Theology: The Canonical Key* (Zaragoza, Spain: Lusal, 2008), 1:11-34.

³J. P. Gabler in his inaugural lecture “Oratio de justo discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus” (“An Oration on the Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each”) in *Kleinere Theologische Schriften*, ed. Th. A. Gabler and J. G. Galbler (Ulm, 1831), delivered at the University of Altdorf on 30 March 1787. For some scholars, this year marks the beginning of biblical theology’s role as a purely historical discipline that is completely free of dogmatics. On the history and methodology of OT theology, see, e.g., P. R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 11-57, 548-559; also R. L. Smith, *Old Testament Theology: Its History, Method, and Message* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 72-93; R. C. Dentan, *Preface to Old Testament Theology* (New York: Seabury, 1963); R. P. Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology: Substance, Method and Cases* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); S. J. Kraftchick, Ch. D. Myers, and B. C. Ollenburger, eds., *Biblical Theology: Problems and Perspectives in Honor of J.*

increasing attack, and it is recognized that it is no longer adequate and that helpful new approaches have not yet emerged. Thus W. Brueggemann remarks that “the only two things sure about Old Testament theology now are: (1) the ways of Eichrodt and von Rad are no longer adequate. (2) There is no consensus among us about what comes next.”⁴ G. F. Hasel comments similarly, noting that “there is today a greater variety of methodologies employed than ever before in OT theology. There is still no consensus on methodology for OT theology and none seems to be emerging.”⁵ In spite of this, however, Brueggemann adds: “We would like at the beginning to have a comprehensive paradigm that relates all the parts to each other. And it is immobilizing not to have one. . . . We are now as free as we are likely to be of the old paradigms. There is now need for substantive proposals.”⁶

The question, then, is, how do we do OT theology? What is the best approach for understanding the theological message of the OT? One way of approaching this problem is to consider the OT as a theological handbook. Then an exposition of OT theology needs no special justification. However, the theological viewpoint from which a particular theology is developed must be justified. In the theological history of OT theology, several models appear, clearly demonstrating that the conception of an OT theology is determined by many preliminary presuppositions and also reflects the general tendencies of that theology.⁷ It accomplishes this task in the following ways: (1) OT theology must be presented in a coherent pattern by implementing a methodology for constructing theology; and (2) it must present itself as an integrated whole by demonstrating how the parts fit into the whole.⁸

Old Testament Theological Methodology

Old Testament methodologies can be divided into five main approaches: (1) “systematic,” which describes the basic outline of OT thought and belief into units borrowed from systematic theology, sociology, or selected theological principles that then traces its relationship to secondary concepts; (2) “historical,” which sets forth the theology of the successive time periods

Christiaan Beker (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995); H. T. C. Sun et al., eds., *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); and J. K. Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2007).

⁴W. Brueggemann, “Futures in Old Testament Theology,” *HBT* 6 (1984), 1.

⁵G. F. Hasel, “Major Recent Issues in Old Testament Theology 1978-1983,” *JSOT* 31 (1985): 34.

⁶Brueggemann, 4, 7.

⁷See G. F. Hasel, “A Decade of Old Testament Theology: Retrospect and Prospect,” *ZAW* 93 (1981): 165-184; idem., “Old Testament Theology from 1978-1987,” *AUSS* 26 (1988): 133-157.

⁸See, e.g., R. P. Knierim, “The Task of Old Testament Theology,” *HBT* 6 (1984): 25. He emphasizes the pluralism of theologies within the OT canon: “*The Old Testament contains a plurality of theologies*” (ibid., emphasis supplied).

and stratifications of Israelite history; (3) “central theme,” which arranges OT theology around a single integrating theme; (4) “canonical,” in which a study of the canonical Hebrew canon is used rather than a history-of-religions approach; and (5) “pluralistic,” in which the OT contains a plurality of theologies, and OT theology is a series of competing theologies that are defined in large part by their sociopolitical settings.⁹

In this article, a canonical and central-theme approach to OT theology is adopted, which not only assumes the canonical disposition of the Hebrew canon as a basis for interpretation, but adopts the biblical texts in the canonical form in which they appear; as I will explain below, the Hebrew canon has a tripartite, hierarchical division of Torah, Prophets, and Writings. This canon is treated as a united and divinely inspired collection of texts that claim and are accepted as having authoritative status for both the Jewish and Christian

⁹See, e.g., J. H. Hayes and F. C. Prussner, *Old Testament Theology: Its History and Development* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985); G. F. Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); W. Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997); J. Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); B. C. Ollenburger, ed., *Old Testament Theology: Flowering and Future* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004); W. C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 9-10; J. H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 19-21; House, 54-57, 553-559. The types of methodology listed in the text are not exhaustive. Hasel, e.g., has summarized most of the approaches taken by recent OT theologians in the history of OT theology and has sorted them into at least ten different methodologies: (1) the dogmatic-didactic method, which organizes OT theology along the lines of systematic theology (Bauer, Köhler, Jacob); (2) the genetic-progressive method, which traces the growth of Israel’s faith in history (Clements); (3) the cross-section method, which utilizes a single theme to explain the OT’s contents (Eichrodt, Vriezen, Kaiser); (4) the topical method, which focuses on major ideas regardless of their historical emergence or ability to unify the OT (McKenzie, Fohrer, Zimmerli); (5) the diachronic method, which charts the use of basic traditions in the OT (von Rad); (6) the formation-of-tradition method, which goes beyond von Rad’s arguments to claim that a series of traditions unify both testaments (Gese); (7) the thematic-dialectic method, which arranges its studies around “opposing” ideas such as a presence/absence (Terrien), deliverance/blessing (Westermann), and structure legitimation/embracing of pain (Brueggemann); (8) recent critical methods, which is Hasel’s category for scholars who question whether OT theology can be done at all (Barr, Collins); (9) the new biblical-theology method, which attempts to relate the testaments to one another; the chief proponent of which is Childs, who utilizes a canonical approach to biblical theology (Hasel also places Vriezen and Clements in this group); (10) the multiplex, canonical OT theology method, which is Hasel’s own program for the discipline, consisting of four main points: a study of the canonical Scriptures, a summary of the canon’s concepts and themes, a utilization of more than one methodological scheme, and an analysis of blocks of material without following the specific order of Hebrew canon (Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 28-114).

faiths. Further, I contend that there is a central and overarching theme, which is developed in the OT and carried into the NT.

Therefore, how one approaches the biblical text is important. Respecting all of Scripture as the inspired Word of God is the starting point for building an OT theology that addresses the overarching concerns of Scripture. I begin, then, by endorsing the preliminary presupposition that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and that God has spoken in the Bible. The Bible, however, is not merely a record of what God said in the past; it is, in fact, a record of what God is saying today. Therefore, what the text originally *meant* is, in principle, what the text *means* for us today.

Historically, there have been a variety of opinions regarding the theological unity of Scripture, especially in regard to the relationship between the Testaments. For example, many OT theologies, especially from 1930-1970, attempted to establish connections with the NT, and some indeed have claimed that the establishment of such connections is not only a central aim of OT theology, but even its most essential purpose. However, from 1970, there seems to be a shift in understanding. On one hand, there was a marked tendency to play down the importance of the NT for any OT theology (Zimmerli, Schmidt, Clements, Preuss), while, on the other, there were some who pursued these connections with even greater vigor (Westermann). I contend here, however, that a properly constructed theological view of the OT would make clear its organic relation to the NT.¹⁰ W. Eichrodt expounded on these connections, concluding: “Hence to our general aim of obtaining a comprehensive picture of the realm of Old Testament belief we must add a second and closely related purpose—to see that this comprehensive picture does justice to the essential relationship with the New Testament and does not merely ignore it.”¹¹

Therefore, the second preliminary presupposition is that the study of OT theology is not complete in itself; its line of sight extends beyond itself to something more—the NT. Old Testament theology, then, anticipates the study of NT theology and can only be complete when both the OT and NT are taken together as a final, integrated whole and that such an integrated theology is qualitatively different from a purely historical approach. Therefore,

we start from the view that *both as to its object and its method Old Testament theology is and must be a Christian theological science. . . .* Old Testament theology is a form of scholarship differing from the history of Israel’s religion in its object as well as in its method; in its object, *because its object is not the religion of Israel but the Old Testament*; in its method, *because it is a study of the message of the Old Testament both in itself and in its relation to the New Testament.*¹²

Thus, as Th. C. Vriezen adds, “the method of Old Testament theology is not purely phenomenological . . . , but it also gives the connection with

¹⁰See Barr, 172, 177-180.

¹¹W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:27, emphasis original.

¹²Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958, 1970), 147-148, emphasis original.

the New Testament message and a judgment from the point of view of that message.”¹³

However, it is important to clarify that acknowledging the relationship between the OT and the NT is not to be done at the expense of the wholeness and meaningfulness of the OT in its own right. The OT has its own identity. As a whole, it has a shape and fits together. It is the burden of OT theology to find the answer to the theological meaning of the OT and only then to discover its relationship to the NT. It is the responsibility of NT theology to wait for this answer. There is a true distinction between the OT and the NT, and each can be considered in its own right, although neither fully retains its identity alone.¹⁴

The ultimate goal of this twofold approach is to produce a biblical theology that unites the Testaments at the proper place in the sequence by first establishing the meaning of the OT and then understanding the NT in light of this meaning, with OT theology providing the interpretative foundation for the NT.¹⁵ From this perspective, NT theology becomes, in its own way, a theology of the OT, for its essential purpose is to show that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah promised to Israel to whom all Scripture bears witness (John 5:39). Therefore, the Christian canon of the Bible presents the OT and NT as being bound together christologically; that is, each bears witness to the God revealed in Jesus Christ.

*Possibilities for Establishing a Center
for Old Testament Theology*

Building on the idea that there is a shared relationship and unity between the Testaments does not imply that the OT does not have its own status; it does indeed. The articulation of OT theology, including the arrangement of the fundamental themes of the OT in relationship to a designated center, may be open to the formulation of a comprehensive biblical theology conducive to a Christian perspective without the suspicion arising that this would lead to a denial of the OT to Jews. Nonetheless, it would be rather ill-conceived for Christian scholars to attempt to read the OT as though they knew nothing of the message of the NT.¹⁶ Keeping this in mind, it is helpful to begin locating the center of biblical theology by understanding how the Hebrew canon is structured.

The TaNaKh

In Jewish thought, the Hebrew canon is often referred to as “the books” (*hass’parim*), “the holy books” (*siprê haqqodeš*), or “the holy writings” (*kitbê*

¹³Ibid., 149.

¹⁴See Knierim, *Task Old Testament*, 53.

¹⁵Sailhamer, 23.

¹⁶In this regard, see J. Blenkinsopp, “Old Testament Theology and the Jewish-Christian Connection,” *JOT* 28 (1984): 3-15.

haqqodes). Later it also came to be known as the “reading” (*mīqrā*) and by the acronym תנ"ך (TaNaKh), which is made up of the initial letters of the three sections of the Hebrew canon: the *tōrāb*, meaning “law” or “instruction,” refers to the so-called books of Moses or the Pentateuch; the *n̄bī'im*, which are divided into two groups—the “former Prophets” (*n̄bī'im ri'sônīm*) from Joshua to Kings, and the “latter Prophets” (*n̄bī'im 'aharonim*), such as Isaiah and Jeremiah; and the *k̄tūbīm*, or Writings, which are all the books that do not belong to either the Torah or the Prophets including the Wisdom literature and the book of Daniel.

The subdivision of the Hebrew canon into these sections is indisputable.¹⁷ As S. Z. Leiman points out: “The talmudic and midrashic evidence is entirely consistent with a second-century-B.C. dating for the closing of the biblical canon.”¹⁸ The divisions were first mentioned in a prologue to the apocryphal book Sirach (132 B.C.), which speaks three times of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings, and is reflected in Luke 24:44 (“everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the *Law of Moses*, the *Prophets* and the *Psalms*,” NIV). This evidence demonstrates that for more than three hundred years, at least, there was a widespread understanding of which categories of texts were considered authoritative. Further, Luke 24:44 is important not only because it confirms the closed status of the Hebrew canon in the time of Jesus Christ and the apostles, but also because this canon was accepted by Jesus and the Christian church of the NT. The Bible of the first Christians contained the Hebrew canon that is still in existence today.

Evidence also indicates that the Hebrew canon was hierarchically ordered: Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Thus the Hebrew canon is an unfolding canon, meaning that intertextual connections between the books must be duly noted¹⁹ because the order of its three sections corresponds to its theological meaning.

¹⁷See D. N. 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; S. Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence*, *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 47 (Hamden, CT: Almond, 1976, 1991); R. T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); 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; B. S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); G. F. Hasel, “Proposals for a Canonical Biblical Theology,” *AUSS* 34 (1996): 23-33; R. Rendtorff, *Teologia dell'Antico Testamento*, 2 vols. (Torino: Claudiana, 2001), 1:15.

¹⁸Leiman, 135.

¹⁹Since the apocryphal books are not so quoted and described within the Hebrew canon, they will not be included in OT theology. See P. R. House, “Canon of the Old Testament,” in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation: A Complete Library of Tools and Resources*, ed. D. S. Dockery, K. A. Matthews, and R. B. Sloan (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 134-155.

The Torah

The Torah constituted the foundation for the life and thought of ancient Israel, as well as its understanding of God and the world, worship and cult. The Prophets and Writings depend theologically on the Torah. Thus as J. D. Levenson explains, the Torah is prior and normative; the prophets only applied it and did not innovate.²⁰ Moreover, when the NT characterizes the entire OT as a book of “law” (Gr. *nomos*), in effect it is referring to the canonical priority of the Torah (e.g., John 12:34).²¹

The Torah concludes with a reference to Moses as the greatest of all the prophets, implying thereby that all later prophets are subordinate to him because it was to him that God gave his Torah:

But since then there has not arisen in Israel a *prophet* [נָבִיא] like Moses whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel” (Deut 34:10-12, NKJV).

The Torah is incomparable, insuperable, and will abide forever valid. The authority of the Torah depends definitively on the authority of Moses, granted to him by God.²²

The Prophets

The second section of the canon (Prophets) clearly connects the figure and work of Joshua with the figure and work of Moses:

After the death of Moses *the servant of the LORD*, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, *Moses’ assistant*, saying: “Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. “From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. “No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. “Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the

²⁰J. D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 55. This has a rough parallel in rabbinic thought: “forty-eight male and seven female prophets prophesied to Israel, and they neither took away from nor added to that which is written in the Torah, with the exception of the reading of the Scroll [of Esther on Purim]” (b. Meg. 14a).

²¹See R. E. Clements, *Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978), 16.

²²B. S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 134-135; J. L. Ska, *Introduzione alla lettura del Pentateuco* (Bologna: EDB, 2000), 20.

land which I swore to their fathers to give them. “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Josh 1:1-8, NKJV, emphasis supplied).

In this passage, there are at least four affirmations of Joshua that help to explain the relationship of the prophetic books, former and latter, to those of Moses:

(1) Joshua is the successor of Moses. His task is to conquer and then distribute the land promised to his fathers.

(2) Moses is the servant of the LORD; however, Joshua is “Moses’ assistant.” If Moses is defined by his relation with God, Joshua is defined by his relation with Moses. In other words, Joshua is Moses’ successor and does not occupy his position as “the servant of the LORD.”

(3) There is continuity between Joshua and Moses: “as I was with Moses, so I will be with you” (v. 5). God will keep the promise made to Moses to give the possessed land to Israel (v. 3), which means that the beginning and foundation of the history of Israel is Moses, not Joshua.

(4) Joshua’s success depends on his faithfulness to the “law of Moses” (vv. 7-8). This law is “written” [*hakkātūb*] in a “book” [*seper*] (v. 8). From now on, this faithfulness will become the cornerstone of every venture in the history of Israel. It will also be the standard by which to judge history. The history of Israel will be the history of faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the Law of Moses (cf. 2 Kgs 17:7-23, esp. 13-16).²³

Just as Joshua’s role of assistant to Moses implies a hierarchical order of importance, so the role of the former and latter prophets are also understood. Malachi 4:4-5 presents the same idea as Josh 1:1-8, but in reverse:

Remember the law [*Torāh*] of Moses, my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (NKJV).

Thus all of the prophets, not simply Joshua, should be understood from the viewpoint of the Torah. This text concludes the prophetic books and contains three essential elements regarding the relationship of the prophetic books with the Law of Moses:

(1) The purpose of the prophets is for “remembering” the Law of Moses. According to this canonical vision of the OT, the prophecy updates the law and maintains it alive in the mind of Israel.

(2) The Law of Moses is a divine law. Its authority is not of human origins, meaning that it is the result of divine revelation, not of human reasoning.

²³Ska, 21-22.

(3) Among the prophets, only Elijah is mentioned because he is the most similar to Moses. Elijah, like Moses, was on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19) and came face to face with God (cf. Exodus 34).²⁴

The Writings

The first Psalm, which introduces the reader to the third part of the Hebrew canon, also contains references to the Torah: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law [*Torāh*] of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night” (1:1-2, NKJV). The criterion that distinguishes the just and godly from the ungodly and the sinner is meditation of the law. The law is thereby the standard of judgment (Ps 1:5-6) and is thus called the “law of the LORD” [*Torāh YHWH*]. Psalm 1 is, then, an invitation to read all of the Psalms and Writings as meditations on the law of the LORD. Thus even the poetic description of Israel’s response to the deed and to the word of God cannot be understood without the Torah, and the study of the various messages of the Psalms is shown alongside the study of the Torah. The Torah has a bond with wisdom (Ps 37:30-31) that reaches its climax in endless praise of the law (Psalm 119).

Among the last books of the Writings are those of Ezra and Nehemiah, which culminate with the solemn proclamation of the Law of Moses before all the people (Nehemiah 8). It is not possible to conceive of the sanctuary without reference to the law and to the cult prescriptions contained in the Pentateuch. Located in the most Holy Place of the sanctuary is the Ark, and inside the Ark there are the two tablets that God gave to Moses on Mount Horeb (2 Chron 5:10). The law is thus found in the heart of the sanctuary, and the cult follows the prescriptions of that law (2 Chron 8:13; cf. Ezra 3:2; 6:18; 7:6; Neh 1:7-8; 8:1, 14; 9:14; 10:29; 13:1).

In sum, the division of the TaNaKh emphasizes the unique position of the law. The Torah is unique because Moses occupies a unique place in the history of revelation.²⁵ The Pentateuch has, then, a “normative” character that the other biblical books do not have.²⁶ In addition, throughout all sections of the canon there appear multiple references to the Torah: all narration and commandments find their source of interpretation here—from the Creation and the beginning of the human history, to the history of God with the Fathers of Israel, to the revelation of God on Mount Sinai and his gift of the commandments. Without these grounding narratives and laws found in the Torah, it would be difficult if not impossible to fully understand the Prophets

²⁴See also the “forty days and forty nights” in Exod 24:18; 34:28; Deut 9:9, and 1 Kgs 19:8.

²⁵Ibid., 24.

²⁶J. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 51-52.

and Writings.²⁷ If this is so, might there indeed be a biblical and theological center of the OT? If so, how might it be identified?

The Structural Unity of the Old Testament

In order to answer these questions, a systematic analysis of the OT must be taken in order to make visible the structural unity of the OT message. Among all the problems known to OT studies, one of the most far-reaching in its importance is that of the theology of the OT, for its concern is to construct a *complete picture of the OT realm of belief*; in other words, to comprehend in all its uniqueness and immensity what is strictly speaking, the proper object of OT study.²⁸

A purely descriptive approach, which is epistemologically questionable, results in the fragmentation of theology into a variety of disconnected and often contradictory ideas. Indeed, the purely descriptive approach is capable of presenting multiple theologies,²⁹ but not a single theology.³⁰ Nevertheless, description plays an important, though qualified, role in OT theology because the purpose of the theology is both descriptive and constructive. Thus the goal of a Christian understanding of Scripture is to develop an OT theology that is both unified in itself and with the NT. Therefore, the objective of Christian biblical methodology is to unify biblical theology around an organizational center of the OT.

Searching for the Central Theme of the Old Testament

One of the most fundamental methodological problems for OT theology during the last two centuries is the issue of whether there is a center and a unity in the OT itself. This question is in many respects at the heart of the debate on the nature of OT theology. The problem of the unity of the OT cannot be divorced from that of the *center* because the latter may be conceived

²⁷See, e.g., Rendtorff, 1:16.

²⁸Eichrodt, 1:17, 25.

²⁹See, e.g., Rendtorff, vol. 2; E. S. Gerstenberger, *Theologies in the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 1; G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962, 1965), 2:414: “*The Old Testament contains not merely one, but quite a number of theologies* which are widely divergent both in structure and method of argument” (emphasis supplied). R. Rendtorff confesses: “I have to admit that many times I am impressed by a new proposal that adds a new aspect to the possible ways to look at the Old Testament as a whole, even if I do not agree that it might be the key or the center. *But I have to confess that I never agree because I still believe in the truth of von Rad’s ‘No’*” (“Approaches to Old Testament Theology” in *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim*, ed. H. T. C. Sun et al. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 18, emphasis supplied).

³⁰See L. G. Perdue, *The Collapse of History: Reconstructing Old Testament Theology*, OBT (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 9. See also N. P. Lemche, *The Old Testament between Theology and History: A Critical Survey* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008).

of *as the key to the unity of the OT itself*. It is ultimately a question of whether one overarching theology of the OT can be found, or whether the OT yields such a manifold diversity of theologies that no unity can be discerned. Thus the task of locating a central message in the OT is challenging due to the diversity of the OT material, which, quite apart from its size, offers a challenge to anyone who intends to provide a summary statement of its contents. The OT includes a number of genre types. For instance, there are stories, poems, laments, judgment speeches, proverbs, songs, and laws.³¹ Is it possible to find a central theme among such a diversity of material that was written over a period of several centuries?

Scholars have not been unanimous in their answers. Negative answers are given by scholars such as Barr, Wright, the early Hasel, Levenson, Whybray, and Westermann. Barr, for example, proposes that finding unity should not be an aim and perhaps it should even be admitted that no definitive solution can be found.³² Wright concurs, noting: "It must be admitted that no single theme is sufficiently comprehensive to include within it all variety of viewpoint."³³ Hasel points out the "undeniable inadequacies of a single concept, theme, motif, or idea as constituting the center on the basis of which the diversified OT materials could be organized into a systematized structure."³⁴ Levenson argues that "I am, for reasons that will become evident, skeptical of the entire pursuit of a center."³⁵ Whybray holds that, in contrast to NT theology and biblical theology, "only in the case of Old Testament theology is there a problem of coherence, of a 'centre.'"³⁶ Finally, Westermann, at the beginning of his book on OT theology, concludes: "The New Testament clearly has its center in the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ, to which the Gospels are directed and which the Epistles take as their starting point. The Old Testament, however, bears no similarity at all to this structure, and it is thus not possible to transfer the question of a theological center from the New to the Old Testament."³⁷ G. von Rad's similarly claims that "on the basis of the Old Testament itself, it is truly difficult to answer the question of the unity of that Testament, for it has no focal point [*Mitte*] as is found in the

³¹E. A. Martens, *God's Design: A Focus on Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981, 1998), 11.

³²See Barr, 342.

³³G. E. Wright, "The Theological Study of the Bible," in *The Interpreter's One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 983.

³⁴Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 155-156; see also *idem.*, *Proposals*, 26, 29, 30.

³⁵Levenson, 54.

³⁶R. N. Whybray, "Old Testament Theology: A Non-existent Beast?" in *Scripture: Meaning and Method. Essays Presented to Anthony T. Hanson for His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Barry P. Thompson (Hull: Hull University, 1987), 169.

³⁷C. Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 9.

New Testament.”³⁸ Whereas the NT has Jesus Christ as its center, the OT lacks such a center.³⁹ However, the later von Rad admitted reluctantly that “one can say, Yahweh is the center of the Old Testament.”⁴⁰ The prophetic message is, nevertheless, interpreted by him on the basis of a center found in the Deuteronomistic theology of history. Thus von Rad introduces into OT theology a certain historicotheological center, which is, in essence, a theology of the history of the Deuteronomistic historian. This, in fact, is his hermeneutical schema for the interpretation of the entire OT.⁴¹ It appears, then, that his initial denial of a center of the OT is not so much directed against a center as such but against making such a center “less a concern of historical or theological knowledge and more a speculative-philosophical principle, which becomes operative as a conscious premise”⁴² in the doing of OT theology.

Although many OT theologians have considered von Rad’s theology to be the single best product of its kind, few of those who came after him (e.g., Westermann) have, in fact, followed his pattern. It was instead Eichrodt’s general approach of a synthetic and structural account with a definable center that was more commonly followed by the majority of OT theologians from 1930-1980. The widespread discussions concerning the possibility of a theological center of the OT, although often differing significantly from one another, make clear that von Rad’s denial of a center was unsatisfactory.⁴³

In fact, Hasel later changed his position, arguing that the OT indeed has an all-pervading center. It is, however, a *theological*, rather than an *organizational*, center on the basis of which the OT can be systematized. God is the center of the OT. The NT likewise betrays an all-pervading center in Jesus Christ, in whom God has revealed himself. This points to the fact that the OT is *theocentric*, as the NT is *christocentric*.⁴⁴ Finally, he argues for a multiplex canonical approach (the theologies of the OT books).⁴⁵

It is highly significant that virtually all proposals for a center have God or an aspect of God and/or his activity in the world and humanity as a common denominator. However, these efforts to set forth “God/God’s self-revelation” as the center of the OT do not provide much help,⁴⁶ since it is too general.

³⁸Von Rad, 2:362.

³⁹Ibid. This was argued most forcefully for the first time by von Rad and has received support from various other scholars (see below).

⁴⁰G. von Rad, “Offene Fragen im Umkreis einer Theologie des AT,” *TLZ* 88 (1963): 406.

⁴¹See G. F. Hasel, “The Problem of History in Old Testament Theology,” *AUSS* 8 (1970): 32-46.

⁴²Von Rad, *Offene Fragen*, 405 n. 3a.

⁴³Barr, 31, 37.

⁴⁴Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 163, 168; idem., *Proposals*, 32.

⁴⁵Ibid., 194-208, 32-33; idem., *New Testament Theology*, 204-220.

⁴⁶H. G. Reventlow, *Problems of Old Testament Theology in the Twentieth Century*

God is at the center of everything, but this is not the result of a systematic theological analysis of the OT. Ultimately, the *failure of the search for the center is shown by the admission that God is the center*.⁴⁷

A survey of OT theology in the last seventy years helps to underscore Hasel's point.⁴⁸ Eichrodt, for example, provides an influential central concept for securing biblical unity: the covenant.⁴⁹ His theology thus represents one of the most impressive attempts to understand the OT as a whole, not only from a center, but from a unifying concept. Since his contribution, almost every new theology is grounded upon its own central concept: "the experience of God" (O. T. Baab),⁵⁰ "the holiness of God" (E. Sellin),⁵¹ "the rule of God and the communion between God and man" (G. Fohrer),⁵² "the book of Deuteronomy" (S. Herrmann),⁵³ "YHWH as a living, acting God" (E. Jacob),⁵⁴ "kingdom of God" (G. Klein),⁵⁵ "God-Man-Salvation" (G.A.F.

(Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). See also on problems of OT theology, J. Høgenhaven, *Problems and Prospects of Old Testament Theology* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988).

⁴⁷See R. E. Murphy, "Reflections on a Critical Biblical Theology" in *Problems in Biblical Theology: Essays in Honor of Rolf Knierim*, ed. H. T. C. Sun et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 268.

⁴⁸Cf. J. Goldingay, "The Study of Old Testament Theology: Its Aims and Purpose," *TB* 20 (1975): 34-52. For literature addressing the problem of a center for the OT, see G. F. Hasel, "The Problem of the Center in the Old Testament Theology Debate," *ZAW* 86 (1974): 65-82; idem., *Old Testament Theology*, 139-171; idem., *Proposals*, 30-33; W. C. Kaiser, "The Center of OT Theology: The Promise," *Themelios* 10 (1974): 1-10; idem., "Wisdom Theology and the Center of Old Testament Theology," *EvQ* 50 (1978): 132-146; W. Zimmerli, "Zum Problem der 'Mitte des Alten Testaments,'" *EvT* 35 (1975): 97-118. For literature addressing the problem of a center for the NT, see, e.g., G. F. Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 140-170; H. Riesenfeld, "Reflections on the Unity of the New Testament," *Religion* 3 (1973): 35-51.

⁴⁹Eichrodt, 1:13f.

⁵⁰O. T. Baab, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (New York: Abingdon, 1949), 22.

⁵¹E. Sellin, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig: Verlag von Quelle und Meyer, 1936), 19.

⁵²G. Fohrer, "The Centre of a Theology of the OT," *NGTT* 7 (1966): 198-206; see esp. 198; idem., "Der Mittelpunkt einer Theologie des AT," *TZ* 24 (1968): 161-172; see esp. 161-163.

⁵³S. Herrmann, "Die konstruktive Restauration. Das Deuteronomium als Mitte biblischer Theologie," in *Probleme biblischer Theologie. Gerhard von Rad zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hans Walter Wolff (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1971), 155-170.

⁵⁴E. Jacob, *Théologie de l'Ancien Testament* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1968).

⁵⁵G. Klein, "Reich Gottes' als biblischer Zentralbegriff," *EvT* 30 (1970): 642-670.

Knight),⁵⁶ “YHWH as the LORD” (L. Köhler),⁵⁷ “sovereign reign of God through human agency” (E. H. Merrill),⁵⁸ “rulership of God” (H. Seebass),⁵⁹ “Yahweh the God of Israel, Israel the people of Yahweh” (R. Smend),⁶⁰ “communion” (Th. C. Vriezen),⁶¹ and “Israel’s election as the people of God” (H. Wildberger, H. D. Preuss).⁶²

Others have also suggested the “dialectic of law and promise” (R. E. Clements),⁶³ “dominion and dynasty” (S. G. Dempster),⁶⁴ “righteousness” (W. Dietrich),⁶⁵ “God’s glory in salvation through judgment” (J. M. Hamilton),⁶⁶ “monotheism—the existence and worship of one God” (P. R. House),⁶⁷ “promise” (W. C. Kaiser),⁶⁸ “justice and righteousness” (R. P. Knierim),⁶⁹ “God’s plan and his purposes” (E. A. Martens),⁷⁰ “the first commandment” (W. H. Schmidt),⁷¹ “the presence of God” (S. L. Terrien),⁷² “the breaking

⁵⁶G.A.F. Knight, *A Christian Theology of the Old Testament* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1959).

⁵⁷L. Köhler, *Old Testament Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1957), 30.

⁵⁸E. H. Merrill, *Everlasting Dominion: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 646-648.

⁵⁹H. Seebass, “Der Beitrag des AT zum Entwurf einer biblischen Theologie,” *Wort und Dienst* 8 (1965): 20-49; see esp. 34-42.

⁶⁰R. Smend, *Die Mitte des Alten Testaments*, **TS** 101 (Zurich: Evangelischer, 1970), 49, 55.

⁶¹Vriezen, 8.

⁶²H. Wildberger, “Auf dem Wege zu einer biblischen Theologie,” *EvT* 19 (1959): 70-90; see esp. 77-78; H. D. Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1995-1996), 1:25.

⁶³Clements, 23.

⁶⁴S. G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 15 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003).

⁶⁵W. Dietrich, “Der rote Faden im Alten Testament,” *EvT* 49 (1989): 232-250; see esp. 232.

⁶⁶J. M. Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010). For a recent survey of the debate over the theological center of Bible, and biblical justification for continuing the quest for such a theological center, see also idem, “The Glory of God in Salvation through Judgment: The Center of Biblical Theology?” *TynBul* 57 (2006): 57-84; see esp. 57-62, 65-71.

⁶⁷House, 56-57.

⁶⁸Recently see W. C. Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008).

⁶⁹Knierim, *Task Old Testament*, 25-57; see esp. 43.

⁷⁰Martens, 15.

⁷¹W. H. Schmidt, *Das erste Gebot. Seine Bedeutung für das Alte Testament* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1969), 11, 49-55.

⁷²S. L. Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology* (San Francisco:

in of the kingdom of God” (B. K. Waltke),⁷³ “God’s acts in history” (G. E. Wright),⁷⁴ and “the name of Yahweh” (W. Zimmerli).⁷⁵

These suggestions are all intended to provide structuring concepts for biblical theology.⁷⁶ However, they also indicate that there is no consensus on what is the alleged center of the Bible.⁷⁷ Therefore, the basic, and perhaps most crucial and decisive, hermeneutical question arises at this point, namely, whether or not a single central theme/concept, taken from the biblical texts, is sufficient for bringing about an organization of the OT and its theology in terms of a systematized structural unity.

How, then, might the “center” of OT theology be more precisely defined, and why does having a central unifying concept of the OT matter? In regard to the first question, R. Smend notes that this concept is also referred to as the “fundamental” principle, thought, character, and idea of the OT; its “kernel.”⁷⁸ Such terms strongly suggest that there are several reasons why OT theologians should be concerned about whether there is a theological center to the OT: (1) it is the means by which one can efficiently come to terms with the large amount of OT material, while the disparate nature of OT genre—poetry, narrative, prophetic oracle—is vastly simplified; (2) to classify material around a governing theme aids in the process of understanding the OT concept of reality; (3) a center offers clarity as to how other OT themes are related to one another and to the center and greatly facilitates an appreciation and understanding of the OT’s multiple themes; and (4) by means of a center, it becomes easier to connect the OT to the NT.⁷⁹

Additionally, to say that God alone is that unity merely restates the *subject* of theology, while failing to identify the *object* (humanity) or the nexus (or element) of union between *subject* and *object*. Significantly, it mocks the very concept of revelation, the process of revealing to humanity the knowledge of God and his plans for the salvation of humanity (*contra* Hasel et al.).⁸⁰ If,

Harper & Row, 1978), 5.

⁷³B. K. Waltke, with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: A Canonical and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 143-172; see esp. 144.

⁷⁴G. E. Wright, *God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital* (London: SCM, 1952).

⁷⁵W. Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978).

⁷⁶For fifty different scholarly proposals concerning the theological center of the OT or the Bible as a whole (in chronological order), see R. M. Davidson, “Back to the Beginning: Genesis 1–3 and the Theological Center of Scripture,” in *Christ, Salvation, and the Eschaton: Essays in Honor of Hans K. LaRondelle*, ed. Daniel Heinz, Jiří Moskala, and Peter M. van Bemmelen (Berrien Springs: Old Testament Department, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, 2009), 5–29.

⁷⁷Hasel, *Old Testament Theology*, 141-143, 156, 159, 162; idem., *Proposals*, 31-32; Levenson, 54.

⁷⁸Smend, 57ff.

⁷⁹Martens, 366.

⁸⁰It is important to underscore the fact that Jewish scholars have entered the

however, God is not the central concept that binds the OT together, then what is?

The Biblical Center of the Old Testament

Is there a single theme running throughout all of the OT? Does an interpretative key exist for an orderly and progressive arrangement of its subjects, themes, and motifs? If so, what is this central theme, and how should it be expressed?

I propose there is an all-encompassing concept that brings together OT theological concepts of God and humanity. The center of OT theology can be neither the subject (God) nor the object (humanity) because it would then be a reductionist theology; rather it must be a vehicle (or nexus) of union between the subject and the object. This union, I propose, is the sanctuary. God and humanity are present in the sanctuary, together carrying out the plan of salvation. Thus the term “sanctuary” is not simply the physical macrostructure, including elements, parts, components, personnel, and community; but it is also the theological macroconcept that includes all of the ideas, concepts, and theological themes symbolized in these physical elements, parts, components, personnel, and community. Taken together, the physical and conceptual components of the sanctuary form a macroconcept that governs the meaning of all the major theological themes of the OT. Therefore, our *theological macroconcept of the sanctuary is a new way or approach to the OT theology, different to the ways of Eichrodt and von Rad* (see above). Consequently, *we are suggesting a new paradigm of the OT theology.*

I base this proposal on the following insight: the unity of the OT can be found only through the center of Jewish religious and theological life: *the sanctuary*. In ancient Israel, the sanctuary represented a meeting place between God and his people and was, therefore, the center of worship (cf. Ps 132:7). The centrality of the sanctuary to all of life was to represent cohesion, orientation, and safety (e.g., Numbers 2, esp. v. 2, “*The Israelites are to camp around the Tent of Meeting some distance from it, each man under his standard with the banners of his family,*” NIV), and it was to serve as a *vital and dynamic center*, where the power, the blessings, the protection and the forgiveness of God were manifested as a guide before the nations of the earth, with the universal God serving as both judge and protector (e.g., Exod 20:24; 25:8; 29:43-46; 30:11-16; 40:34-38 [cf. 1 Kgs 8:10-13]; Leviticus 16; 26:12).

Therefore, it would appear from the biblical and theological evidence that the sanctuary concept brings together the theological concepts of Scripture (e.g., “the covenant,” “the holiness of God,” “God as the LORD,” “Israel’s election as the people of God”) and explains them as a harmonious whole and in their true perspectives.

discussion about the center of the OT. The Jewish interest in determining a center is clear from the emphasis given to the Torah as the most important corpus of texts within the TaNaKh. This view derives from the value and placement of the Torah within the TaNaKh as a whole; see above.

Biblical Evidence

First, an impressive percentage of biblical texts are related to the sanctuary. For example, forty-five chapters in the Torah are devoted exclusively to the sanctuary building and rituals, while an equal number of chapters in the Prophets deal directly with the sanctuary. Nearly *one-third* of the book of Exodus is devoted to considerations regarding the tabernacle; that is, *thirteen* chapters having to do with the Israel's wilderness sanctuary. The information regarding the tabernacle is given in minute detail and in most cases twice, once prescriptively (Exodus 25–31) and once descriptively (Exodus 35–40). The tabernacle construction account concludes with its erection in Exodus 40, but Exodus 40 also opens up onto Leviticus and Numbers, binding Exodus 25-40 with the sacrifices and other ritual principles and procedures inside the tabernacle (Leviticus 1-16) and eventually the prescriptions and descriptions of its religious, moral, and physical centrality to the wilderness community that surrounded it (Leviticus 17-Numbers 10). Leviticus 17-27 is focused on maintaining the holiness of the community that surrounded the tabernacle.

The prophets uniformly affirmed the indispensability of the sanctuary (e.g., Isa 2:2-3; Jer 14:21; Ezek 43:1-12; Hag 1:9; Zech 2:10 [MT 2:14]; 8:3); they only remonstrated against the blind belief in its efficacy without affecting the moral behavior of the people (Jer 7:1-15; 26:1-15).

In the Writings, the whole book of Psalms, which served as the temple hymnal, contains explicit references to the sanctuary that average one per psalm (e.g., Pss 30; 92; 120-134; Ps 5:7; 11:4; 18:6; 23:6; 24:7, 9; 26:6, 8; 27:4-6; 42:1-2, 4; 63:1-8; 65:4; 74:7; 84:1-2; 95:1-2, 6; 96:1-3; 100:1-4; 118:19-20; 132:5; 138:2).

In the NT, there are many allusions to sanctuary terminology and ritual as fulfilled in Christ. Whole NT documents are structured around the sanctuary, including the Gospel of John, Hebrews, and Revelation (e.g., John 1:29, 36; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 4-5, 7-10; 13:9-12; Rev 5:6, 8, 12-13; 6:1, 16; 7:9-10, 14, 17; 8:1; 12:11; 13:6, 8; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3, 5; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:3, 9, 14, 22-23; 22:1, 3).

It can be argued, then, that the sanctuary plays an important role throughout all of Scripture. Just as the physical sanctuary in ancient Israel served as the centralized point around which the rest of the camp was situated, so the theological concept of the sanctuary is the point around which OT and NT theologies are structured. As White notes, "The subject of the *sanctuary* was the key which . . . opened to view a complete system of truth, connected and harmonious."⁸¹ "The tabernacle and temple of God on earth were patterned after the original in heaven. *Around the sanctuary and its solemn services mystically gathered the grand truths which were to be developed through succeeding generations.*"⁸²

⁸¹E. G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 432, emphasis supplied.

⁸²E. G. White, "The Two Dispensations," *Review and Herald*, March 2, 1886, Par. 9, emphasis supplied.

Theological Evidence

In affirming the sanctuary as the dynamic, unifying center of the OT, it is also possible to use it as an organizing principle on the basis of which an OT theology can be structured. With the sanctuary as the dynamic, unifying center, the sections of the Hebrew canon are able to present their own theologies. Accordingly, for example, creation theology, covenant theology, and wisdom theology are permitted to take their rightful places and are not relegated to an inferior status or completely left out of consideration. Thus the question of the center of the OT touches most basically on the nature of the unity and continuity of the OT in its most fundamental sense. The OT shows itself at the same time as an “open testament” which points beyond itself, allowing the NT to witness to the centrality of Christ’s ministry in the sanctuary; that is, the proposition that the Messiah fulfills all the symbols represented in the sanctuary of the OT. As the physical sanctuary with its shekinah glory stood in the center of the Israelites’ wilderness camp, so Christ stands within the sanctuary and ministers on behalf of his people.

The emphasis on the sanctuary as a unifying and organizing key theme of the OT materials arises from an exegesis of biblical texts. The approach advocated in this OT theology is distinctive in that the answer to the question about the central message is derived from a biblical theology rather than a systematic theology (*contra* Eichrodt) or form-critical and traditio-historical theologies (*contra* von Rad). It is with exegesis that we will get a framework and development of OT theology.

The exegesis of texts includes each text’s theology. The biblical texts are essentially theological in nature. We will exegete texts’ own inherent theology. Biblical theology is not theological because it is a discipline distinct from exegesis but because it evolves from the results of the exegesis of the theological nature of the texts. Consequently, the task of biblical theology may then be described as the completing and summarizing of exegetical results.

The theology of the sanctuary is the center of all the OT theology. The theological center of the OT is the sacrificial system and all the symbols and articles of furniture of the sanctuary that represent the Messiah that was to come and die as a sacrifice for the humankind. The central texts of this theological center of the OT are found in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (the Fourth Servant Poem) and Daniel 8–9.⁸³

The theological center of the NT is the same as the OT one, that is, Christ as Messiah and lamb that comes to carry out his mission of salvation and sacrifice fulfilling all of the symbolism of the OT sanctuary, to establish

⁸³See R. Ouro, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. 1: Pentateuch/Torah, 1-348; idem, “Dan 9:27a: A Key for Understanding the Law’s End in the New Testament,” *JATS* 12, 2 (2001): 180-198; A. M. Rodríguez, “Significance of the Cultic Language in Daniel 8:9-14,” in *Symposium on Daniel*, edited by F. B. Holbrook, DARCOM 2 (Washington: Biblical Research Institute, 1986), 527-549; idem, *Substitution in the Hebrew Cultus and in Cultic-Related Texts* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University, 1979).

a new covenant (New Testament) and substitute the sacrifices and the earthly sanctuary of the OT by his sacrifice and the heavenly sanctuary in the NT.

Conclusion

The sanctuary is a kaleidoscope of the OT theology. Through the basic metals of antiquity, fabrics of various kinds and colors, hides, acacia wood, oil, spices, and precious stones offered by the people of Israel as offerings for the sanctuary construction, symbolically all theological ideas, concepts, and themes of the OT are presented; Exod 25:3-9: “These are the offerings you are to receive from them: *gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems. . . .* Then have them make a *sanctuary* for me.”

As the geometrical forms presented in a kaleidoscope with glasses of colors shaping all type of beautiful compositions, filled with light and knowledge, that is, beautiful forms and compositions, with harmony and rational architecture, thus the *sanctuary*, as a *giant kaleidoscope* unfolds into its complete structure and composition the beauty and knowledge of all OT theology, the same as the theology of redemption, the final purpose of God’s revelation for mankind in the Bible (OT and NT).

Each form and composition perceived in this *theological kaleidoscope* stand for each theme and aspect of the biblical theology. In accordance with the perspective as seen through the components of a kaleidoscope, likewise each element of the sanctuary structure (Court, Holy Place, Holy of Holies, articles of furnishing, priesthood, garments, sacrifices, offerings, offerers, people, leaders, individual, etc.) can be observed, perceiving all the nuances, ideas, concepts, and themes of the OT as a multicolored, multifaceted, multithematic, and multidimensional theological reality. Finally, *the sanctuary is the golden key which unlocks all the mysteries of the OT (and NT) and OT theology (and NT theology)* (see following summary chart).

Preliminary Presuppositions of Old Testament Theology

1. The Bible is the inspired Word of God.
2. OT and NT theology are an integrated and unified whole.
3. Employment of a canonical and central-theme approach:
 - a. Canonical priority belongs to the Torah, with the Torah as the center of OT theology;
 - b. Purpose of OT theology is both descriptive and constructive.
4. Identifying the biblical center of OT theology:
God (subject) ⇔ Sanctuary (vehicle/nexus of union) ⇔ Humanity (object)
5. Identifying the theological center of OT and NT theologies:
Earthly Sanctuary ⇔ Sacrifices ⇔ Lamb ⇔ Messiah ⇔ Christ ⇔ Heavenly Sanctuary