

Hasel's work revolves around four basic issues: Methodology; History, History of Tradition, Salvation History, and Story; Center of Old Testament Theology; and the Relationship between the Testaments. Before discussing these questions, Hasel begins with a chapter on the Beginnings and Development of Old Testament Theology. In the period from the Reformation to the Enlightenment, Biblical theology began as a servant of Systematic Theology, and was basically proof-texting for the latter. By the end of the period however, the division had grown so that Biblical theology was a discipline in its own right, and not a servant of Systematics. During the Enlightenment era, the Bible was studied as any other ancient document. J.P. Gabler's inaugural address at Marburg in 1787 marked the beginning of Biblical Theology as a purely descriptive enterprise. G.L. Bauer first separated Biblical Theology into OT and NT theology in 1796 in his *Theology des Alten Testaments*. In the 19th century Vatke (1835) argued that OT theology should be done in categories imposed from the outside, not derived from exegesis. Oehler's OT Theology was the most influential of the time. He united OT and NT theology into Biblical theology, and argued that OT theology played a role in NT theology. Then in 1878, with the History of Religions approach, OT theology was largely ignored. Eissfeldt and Eichrodt began the golden age of OT theology (1930s to present). There have been many OT theologies published with differing methods and responses, as such no consensus has been reached on most critical issues in the discipline.

Chapter 2 deals with Methodology. Does the OT theologian engage in a merely descriptive task? In other words, should the OT theologian only describe what the text meant, and not what it means? He lists several opposing views. In describing Methodology further, he the *Dogmatic-Didactic Method*. This structures a theology around a Theology-Anthropology-Soteriology scheme, a manner in which the OT itself is not structured. The center is predetermined by the scheme. Hasel contends this method ultimately reproduces one's own theology as OT theology. Then he lists the *Genetic-Progressive Method*. God's revelation became fuller with each progressing covenant. Clements like others in this school, argue there is no center in the OT, but that it is the nature of God himself which establishes a unity. Yet, this approach tends to disregard wisdom literature completely. Then, he presents the *Cross-Section Method*. Eichrodt used covenant as a cross-section. Yet is this concept comprehensive enough to contain all the OT themes? Does it do justice to interacting with the NT? Kaiser sees "promise" as this center. Then, Goldingay does away with the concept of center, and argues for a diversity of methods and insights, admitting that one must inevitably do OT theology in a normative fashion. This marks a significant departure from the norm. The fourth method is the *Topical Method*. This method differs from the dogmatic-didactic method in that does not allow outside categories to be imposed, but rather seeks to organize theology around certain topics exegetically present in the text. McKenzie, Fohrer, and Zimmerli fit into this category, though they differ incredibly. Then, the *Diachronic Method* is discussed. This is (Von Rad) the study of the continuing series of witnesses to the faith of the OT, and then the NT right up through our time period. The *Formation of Tradition Method* argues that the historical process of formation guarantees the unity of the OT. So, there can be no Jewish or Christian theology of the OT, for there is only one theology of the OT. Gese overcomes the lack of center by proposing a common set of tradition to the OT and NT. The *Thematic-Dialectical Method* is that of Walter Brueggemann, which I am familiar with. Barr is the first person Hasel discusses in *Recent Critical Methods*. He wants a descriptive method, which is multi-voiced, with no single center. His could be called a post-modern idea. Collins incorporates the idea of story and jettisons facticity. So, OT theology then is concerned with the rhetorical effect desired from the OT material, not its actual events. These methodologies are characterized by a pronounced use of the historical critical method separated from ecclesiastical motives. Then, Hasel describes the *New Biblical-Theological Method*. It is Childs who espouses this method, and says, "It is only in the final form of the biblical text in which the normative history has reached an end that the full effect of this

revelatory history can be perceived” (106). Childs work is highly praised by Hasel. Then, Hasel moves to some suggestions for moving forward in study for scholars. *He calls it Multiplex Canonical OT Theology*. He proposes that one ought to forget the history of religions approach. One ought to evaluate and construct theology based upon the final form. He argues that each book ought to be allowed to stand on its own. In other words, Theology of Jonah need not work together with theology of Hosea. He proposes following the order in historical composition, not canonical order. One ought to avoid imposing outside doctrinal categories or systems upon the OT. The final task is to discern a unity among the longitudinal (historical) description of each book's theology. The theologian will seek to find a sort of center in this fashion, rather than impose one. Finally, he contends that one ought to understand the theology of the OT to be a part of Biblical theology, the sum of OT and NT theology.

Chapter 3 is titled *The question of History, History of Tradition, Salvation History, and Story*. Some of the questions the OT theologian must grapple with are: Does one use the scientific history or the textual history for OT theology? Then, does one think of salvation history as encompassing NT history as well? And, should one think in salvation history terms, or historiography terms? Then, What is meant by studying the OT as story? Does that mean one jettisons the idea of history? Does it do away with the normative nature of the OT? Hasel points out that Childs was against this method, and thought that the normativity of scripture came from it being scripture, not some great story. A new OT theology must deal with the literary nature of the study of the Old Testament. This takes a dramatically different starting point than the historical-critical method's point of historical events.

Chapter 4 is titled *The Center of the OT and OT Theology*. The idea of center starts with Eichrodt and the idea of covenant. Then it progresses to a sort of formula, such as with Smend. Then Von Rad says there is no center. Yet he admits perhaps Yahweh is the center, though it is too broad. Ultimately he relents and thinks maybe relational revelation of Yahweh is at the center though he does not call it that. These sorts of “centers” show up in Schmidt's use of the first commandment, and Zimmerli's idea of “I am Yahweh your God”. He proposes that in thinking about a center one ought to hold the possibility that God is the center in some way, the OT is theocentric.

Chapter 5 deals with the *Relationship between the Two Testaments*. Is there continuity between the testaments? In other words, does what happens in the New Testament influence how one understands the Old Testament? Furthermore, does one think of this continuity in terms of typology? If one allows for a repetition of historical events which become grander in scale, does one allow for other types of continuity as well, such as fulfillment of prophecy? Should one consider the idea of *Heilsgeschichte* as the means of continuity, as several scholars have done? Hasel considers the question of continuity complex enough that a “multiplex approach” is necessary. He advocates allowing for: a continuous history of God's people; continuity based upon scriptural quotations; theological key terms showing continuity; thematic continuity; typological continuity – though in a guarded fashion.

Chapter 6 contains Hasel's proposals for doing Old Testament Theology. First, he says that OT theology is both historical and normative. The method for Old Testament theology must be historical and theological. So in this way of thinking, the historical-critical method must be modified to allow for the supernatural. Incorporating the theological method means that one does not examine each text on its own for its theological message. Rather, one allows it to speak alongside the rest of the canon. Third, Hasel proposes that one follow the texts of the Old Testament, and not other Jewish material. This keeps the discipline from devolving into a history of religions exercise. Fourth, one should attempt to present the material of each book in a chronological fashion. The canon was arranged for purposes other than theological. Therefore, one ought to present the material in as close to chronological sequence as possible. Fifth, one ought to attempt to draw together various themes under a sort of center, or main theme. Sixth, one must attempt to unify the theology of all the individual books, so as to present an Old Testament theology, not a theology of individual books. Seventh, as an Old Testament Theology, one must demonstrate a relationship to the New Testament in some fashion. Otherwise, it is simply a theology of the Hebrew Bible.

This book is somewhat dated (almost 20 years old in 2010). Yet, the analysis of the field is still quite useful, for the problems (questions) are still basically the same. Still, several major OT theologies have been published since this book was written. Brueggemann's work takes a radically different approach from the one proposed here, bypassing several of Hasel's "issues". He does this by making use of rhetorical criticism, a perspective which Hasel's work fails to note. Hasel's work does well to describe and categorize the works of theology which he analyzes. Every course on Old Testament theology I have taken (4 now) have used this book as a textbook in some way.

Still, Hasel's basic proposals at the end of the book are very much debated. One should probably think of the final chapter as "one man's way of working through the issues", and not a conclusive decision for the field. The work is very lacking in how one incorporates literary theory into doing OT theology. The idea reading the Bible as literature, or utilizing theory in reading, goes untouched in this book, though many (often sub-par) theologies have made use of these methods lately (Segovia, Oduyoye, Kwok, etc.).