

## THE *NIV ZONDERVAN STUDY BIBLE*: A DISPENSATIONAL REFLECTION

by  
Mark A. Snoeberger<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

In March of 1900 Benjamin B. Warfield wrote pejoratively of the “development in our day of an entirely new theological discipline...[viz.,] Biblical Theology,” which “did not present at first...a very engaging countenance, and seemed to find for a time its chief pleasure in setting the prophets and apostles by the ears.”<sup>2</sup> For Warfield, biblical theology (unlike systematic theology) had a dubious historical record as a custodian of orthodoxy, stumbling far more often than it had succeeded. To be sure, Warfield did have a biblical theology of his own (though he did not at first call it by that label)<sup>3</sup> and his comment appears in a context of cautious optimism about the future of biblical theology, so I have no designs to paint Warfield as an enemy of the discipline. He was instead a cautious churchman greeting a new discipline with misgivings that were only beginning to subside after careful interaction with orthodox biblical theologians such as Gustav Oehler, Christian Schmid, and Geerhardus Vos. So what was it about biblical theology that elicited such preliminary consternation from the Lion of Princeton? And having discovered this answer, is there any room for similar misgivings today? The recent publication of the *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* (Zondervan, 2015), which by its own testimony represents something of a triumph of biblical theology, gives us an apt occasion to ask and answer these questions.

This enormous (2,880-page) study bible comes to us edited by D. A. Carson with editorial assistance from Richard S. Hess (OT, archaeology, and maps), T. D. Alexander (OT and biblical theology),

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Snoeberger is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary in Allen Park, MI.

<sup>2</sup>“The Century’s Progress in Biblical Knowledge,” *Homiletical Review* 39 (March 1900): 201.

<sup>3</sup>In Warfield’s words, “The architectonic principle of the Westminster Confession is supplied by the schematization of the Federal Theology, which had obtained by this time in Britain, as on the Continent, a dominant position as the most commodious mode of presenting the corpus of Reformed doctrine” (*The Westminster Assembly and Its Work* [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991], 56). I would submit that the “architectonic principle” of “Federal Theology” effectively supplied the biblical theological framework upon which Warfield’s system rested.

Douglas J. Moo (NT and biblical theology), and Andrew David Naselli, whose yeoman efforts and capable hands herded scores of evangelical “top men” to a common publication goal. The work is impressive, offering the evangelical professional community one of the best all-in-one, single-volume study helps that money can buy. Since the literature is already saturated with standard reviews of this volume (almost all of them appropriately positive), I do not intend to simply write another. Instead I hope to offer my reflections on the general idea and claim of the *NIVZSB* to be a pioneering work of evangelical biblical theology.

By advertising this volume as a pioneering piece of evangelical biblical theology, the publishers and editors firstly assume that the Bible is wholly true, and that it possesses a unified structure, development, and *mitte* (i.e., the “middle” or unifying center of all God’s activity in his universe), which unfolds according to a coherent biblical story line. Secondly, they infer that the many contributors to this volume are more-or-less committed to a common view of this structure, development, and *mitte*, irrespective of any denominational, confessional, or otherwise dogmatic theological commitments they might have. And thirdly, they connect the various parts of the project not according to the derived loci of systematic theology, but according to leitmotifs discoverable in the Bible’s very words traced diachronically through its own story line. This emphasis on biblical theology, which has been heavily peddled in the volume’s own essays and also in popular advertising, is a major selling point of this study bible. Unlike other competitors that ostensibly privilege systematic theology, the *NIVZSB*’s emphasis on biblical theology, it is argued, creates a distinctive niche for this work that any new contribution to the bloated marketplace of evangelical study bibles simply must have to thrive. What shall we make of this distinction?

**First of all, I submit that the claim of biblical theology as a uniqueness of the *NIVZSB* is overstated.** To put it plainly, I am not sure that I have *ever* met a modern study bible that was not, at some level, a work of biblical theology. A few study bibles are more denominational than others (the *HCS Study Bible* comes to mind as a study bible weighted toward the Baptist faith, though I doubt its editors would want to call it a major triumph of the Baptist system), but for the most part study bibles have from their genesis rejected the segregation of denominationalism. Study bibles have instead turned on pivot points of cross-denominational appeal such as (1) the evangelical minimum of inerrancy (e.g., the 1985 *NIV Study Bible*, the *NLT Study Bible*) or (2) some specialized class of readers (study bibles for women, children, students, archeology buffs, etc., or all too often for people who simply want to skip the ennui of exegesis and go straight to application). We also have (3) inductive study bibles, word study bibles, and cross reference bibles that reflect a kind of biblical theology that hides its agenda behind a façade of generic biblicism—study bibles whose theological agendas grudgingly emerge only after an extended analysis of the editors’ selec-

tion of key words and texts. Most often, though, the unifying feature of the very best evangelical study bibles has been (4) a particular and stated approach to biblical theology, most notably the covenantal approach (the *Reformation Study Bible* and *ESV Study Bible*)<sup>4</sup> and the dispensational approach (the *MacArthur Study Bible*, the *Ryrie Study Bible*, and the *Scofield Reference Bibles*).

[As an aside, I would argue that, of all the study bibles that might stake a claim to breaking new ground as a work of biblical theology, the *Scofield Reference Bible* wins the prize.<sup>5</sup> In an era of denominational collapse at the turn of the last century, Scofield pioneered a new, non-denominational nexus of unity. His diverse editorial committee of a Congregationalist, two Baptists, one Episcopal, three Presbyterians, and one Methodist rallied around no common creed; rather, they maintained a common understanding of the structure, development, and *mitte* of the biblical story line: the *dispensational* understanding. Put simply, they united around a peculiar variation of biblical theology.]

I would further suggest, having compared its notes with those of other study bibles, that the *NIVZSB* is not a particularly well-integrated example of biblical theology. To be sure, its *articles* reflect a tight unity of approach, and strategically placed discussions of major motifs and nodal points of Scripture strengthen the emphasis on biblical theology, but the balance of the study notes seem to me rather autonomous of the various individual contributors. In saying this I mean no slight to the editors, who did a phenomenal job bringing this project together; still, the sheer number of contributors and the volume of their notes is such that it was practically impossible to harmonize all the notes and cross-references with each other so as to produce a rigorously coherent reference source.<sup>6</sup> In short, one of the greatest strengths of this volume (over one hundred highly qualified contributors collaborating for the largest one-volume study bible of all time) led almost necessarily to one of its greatest deficiencies—a less-than-perfectly coherent biblical theology.

**Flowing from the preceding I submit secondly that the mere claim of biblical theology as a distinctive of the *NIVZSB* tells us almost nothing about this study bible.** And that is because the discipline of biblical theology offers more variations than colors in the spectrum, and changes practically with the wind.

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<sup>4</sup>I concede that the articles of the *ESV Study Bible* tilt more toward systematic theology than those in the *NIVZSB*; still, the balance of the notes of the *ESV Study Bible* stand as a sturdy tribute to the contributors' shared view of biblical theology.

<sup>5</sup>Oxford University Press, 1907.

<sup>6</sup>Compare, for instance, the rigorous strategy for coherency discoverable in the 32-volume *Transcription of Scofield Revision Committee Meetings* (*passim*, 1955–1960), which documents the meetings of the whole body of contributors, a quorum of which reviewed every single note and cross reference in the *New Scofield Reference Bible* (1965), engaging in lively debate and revision in order to ensure hermeneutical consistency and holistic agreement of all its parts. Naturally, we cannot expect the same procedure from a project as large as the *NIVZSB*, but that's my point.

In the complaint with which this review began, Warfield expressed distrust of biblical theology on the ground that 19th-century Rationalism had developed the formal discipline of biblical theology in order that it might scuttle prevailing creeds and confessions, including his own beloved Westminster Confession. Though most today point to the eighteenth century as the earliest expression of the discipline,<sup>7</sup> Warfield's point stands: biblical theology at one point in its history meant reading the Bible with a devastatingly *rationalist mitte*.

Biblical theology has not always had this baggage attached to it. The term itself originates a full century earlier in the anti-creedal writings of Philipp Spener, a continental radical who reacted against the divisive, confessions of the day and called for a unity centered in principle on a bare reading of the Bible as the church's sole creed. More accurately, however, biblical theology for these meant reading the Bible with a *pietist* rather than a *creedal mitte*.

The idea of biblical theology is older still, finding its most resilient form in the *redemptive mitte* of Scripture championed by the likes of Johannes Cocceius, Francis Turretin, and Hermann Witsius. These post-Reformational Protestant scholastics identified the divine covenants as the structure upon which the whole biblical storyline turns. This federal model in turn refined (some might argue it replaced) an earlier, less developed *mitte* for biblical theology, popular among the Reformers, that centered on the organizing structure of the *two kingdoms* (Luther) or *two governments* (Calvin) of God.

Of course biblical theology did not remain static after Gabler, either. Gabler's rationalist (but still largely cohesive) biblical theology almost immediately collapsed in the hands of his critical successors into the Bible as an error-filled anthology of diverse documents, collected and edited so as to offer a rather ordinary *etiological mitte* for the Hebrew and Christian peoples. It is from these "cultured despisers" of religion that Schleiermacher wrested an *ethical mitte* that became the trademark of liberalism's second century. But this iteration of biblical theology would not last either. After the ethical failures epitomized in the Great War, yet another variation of biblical theology emerged in the New Orthodox *mitte* of *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation history). This model in turn splintered into a raft of biblical theological models, including a short-lived and ill-conceived "Biblical Theology Movement," and also an important model fixated on realized eschatology and later rehabilitated from its errantist roots into the "already/not yet" *kingdom mitte* of the new evangelicalism, principally through the efforts of George E. Ladd.

Meanwhile, somewhat cloistered from these larger streams of thought, yet another set of theologians quietly developed a biblical theology with a very different-looking *kingdom mitte*, using a framework not of *covenants*, but of *dispensations* to carry the biblical storyline. For a sampling of key biblical theologies produced by this movement, the

<sup>7</sup>Most frequently cited is Johann P. Gabler's 1787 inaugural at Altdorf.

reader is directed to George N. H. Peters's massive work, *The Theocratic Kingdom*,<sup>8</sup> and a shorter but more careful treatment, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, by Alva J. McClain,<sup>9</sup> which stood in its day as the principal fundamentalist/evangelical alternative to Ladd's more popular approach.<sup>10</sup>

Now, after something of a lull, it seems that biblical theology is experiencing yet another revival, birthing yet another variation of biblical theology. Like many of the iterations of biblical theology before it, this new variation is hopeful that by setting aside the constraints of systematic theology and examining afresh the biblical story line, we may yet be able to find a purer expression of Christian theology than can be found in the prevailing creeds and systems of the Christian tradition. History, I would argue, suggests that this aspiration be met with pessimism.

**Thirdly, then, I submit that the claim of biblical theology as a distinctive of the NIVZSB must be qualified if we are to establish its precise niche in the sprawling market of study bibles.** Which brings me to my thesis, namely, that the germane peculiarity of NIVZSB is not so much that it is a work of biblical theology, but rather the work of a new and peculiar adaptation of biblical theology born from features of several parent theologies discussed above: *new covenant theology* or as some have come to call it, *progressive covenantalism*.

Born in the early 1970s and incubated among Calvinistic Baptists who self-identified as *Reformed* but who struggled with the troubling discontinuities that Baptist theology brought to the Reformed system,<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup>New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884.

<sup>9</sup>Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959.

<sup>10</sup>Some will no doubt object to this privileging of Peters and McClain over the various biblical theologies produced by Dallas Theological Seminary personnel during the mid-20th century, and I am sensitive to this. I would argue, however, that the biblical theology developed at DTS during this period tended to be less a "whole Bible" theology and more a book-by-book or epoch-by-epoch approach reminiscent of the previous century—an approach that spawned concerns (and rightly at times) that the dispensationalists had rejected the unity of the Bible. Peters and McClain, I believe, make an end of this criticism for those who take the time to read them.

<sup>11</sup>The earliest organized expression of new covenant theology traces to the writings of Jon Zens, Steven Lehrer, Ernst Reisinger, and several other Calvinistic Baptists, principally as found in the *Baptist Reformation Review* (founded 1972, now *Searching Together*). This group earned early notice for their opposition to certain Mosaic practices in the life of the NT Church (esp. tithing and Sabbatarianism), and enjoyed a "breakthrough" of sorts in Douglas J. Moo's "Modified Lutheran View," in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993). This piece received positive reviews from both sides of the Dispensational/Covenantal divide and led to the rapid development of a more complete biblical theology. Tom Wells and Fred Zaspel together produced the first book-length treatment on the topic in 2002: *New Covenant Theology: Description, Definition, Defense* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media), with endorsements from Doug Moo and D. A. Carson, which the reader will recognize as the NT and general editors of the NIVZSB, respectively. For an up-to-date book-length expression of this model, the reader should consult Stephen J. Wellum and Brent E. Parker, eds., *Progressive Covenantalism* (Nashville: B&H, 2016).

new covenant theology has flowered over the past two decades. It has earned the endorsement of a great many key evangelicals (including the *NIVZSB* editors) and has found substantial refinement in contemporary conservative evangelical enthusiasm for biblical theology. New covenant theology resembles traditional covenant theology more than it does dispensationalism, offering a covenantal structuring of the Bible and an emphatically redemptive *mitte*.<sup>12</sup> Still, its provision for the attenuation of the Mosaic Law and evolution of the people of God reflects similarities to the dispensational model as well.

While older expressions of covenant theology struggled with some of the stark discontinuities between the OT and NT, earning it labels such as *supersessionist* or *replacement* theology, new covenant theology has constructed a cleaner explanation for these differences. New covenant theology concentrates its greatest focus not so much on the foundational covenants of Genesis, but on the culminating covenant that dominates the eschaton—the new covenant (hence the label). The progress of history toward this climax is best seen as a collage of developing motifs or typologies that moult over time into their final form. As these themes mature, they shed nascent features that have proven to be mere *shadows* of a later and greater reality.

As an example, Adam's kingdom (the land of Eden) recapitulates as Joshua's Promised Land and later as David's kingdom (the land of Israel) and thence as Christ's spiritual kingdom, the Church. This spiritual kingdom morphs in some expressions of the New Covenant model into Christ's Millennial Kingdom (which encompasses the whole earth) and unanimously into the universal kingdom of God (comprised of a new heaven and new earth, whose builder and maker is God). Each expression of the kingdom/land motif is *real*, but the significance of each primitive "shadow" form falls away as progressively greater expressions of these motifs arrive in turn. When the next iteration of the motif arrives, the literal function of these earlier forms fades and effectively reduces to a *type* or *Hinweis* that directs the reader's attention to its fulfillment in Christ. A similar sequence may be observed in a great many other biblical motifs: seed, Law, people of God,<sup>13</sup> temple/priest,

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<sup>12</sup>Timothy Keller kicks off the articles of the *NIVZSB* with an essay titled "The Story of the Bible: How the Good News about Jesus Is Central" (2631–32) in which he asserts (without really entertaining any alternatives) that the Gospel is the governing *mitte* of Scripture. D. A. Carson concurs, asserting first that the Bible is to be classed a work of "salvation history," then defining this salvation history as "the history of events that focus on the salvation of human beings and issues involving the new heaven and the new earth.... the account of what God has done, of the events and explanations he has brought about in order to save lost human beings" (2637). Carson is careful to explain that the Bible "contains things other than salvation history," the redemptive theme alone can make sense of "such themes as tabernacle/temple, the priestly ministry, the Davidic dynasty, and the Messianic hope." Indeed, without positing redemption as the unifying center of the Bible, tracing these themes would be "impossible" (2638).

<sup>13</sup>One can immediately see the relief that this approach gives to the Baptist system, especially in facilitating discontinuity between the old covenant people of God (an ethnically homogenous and spiritually mixed group with an entry rite of circumcision)

sacrifice, exodus/exile, etc. The selective tracing of these motifs collectively constitutes the subject material of about half the articles appended to the *NIVZSB*.

The most visible feature of new covenant theology, then, is its peculiar hermeneutic, called variously a *Christological* or *typological* approach. This supplies the method for realizing the particular idealization of biblical theology that marks the *NIVZSB*. Now, to be sure, not every contributor to this volume is a strict devotee of new covenant theology: I counted two dispensationalists and several traditional covenant theologians among the contributors. The seminal goal of new covenant theology to supply rapprochement between these two poles, in fact, anticipates this kind of munificence. The articles, however, are the strict property of the new covenant theologians, who closely guard the precise form of biblical theology championed in this volume.

**Fourthly I propose that the claim of biblical theology as a distinctive of the *NIVZSB* does little to safeguard orthodoxy.** If the brief historical survey above tells us anything, it tells us that biblical theology never yields the undisturbed, utopian form of the Christian religion for which many yearn. Theologians may wish that they could begin their work with a blank slate—a total absence of presupposition, bias, and judgment—and read the *nuda Scriptura* afresh in all its purity and simplicity. Some have even sought to reach this blessed state by self-consciously setting aside every known creed, confession, council, and system, and adopting the appellative *biblicist*. But to borrow a line from Galadriel, “They are all of them deceived.”

Thankfully, the editors of the *NIVZSB* have not yielded to such extremes. Still, the elevation of biblical theology above all other emphases is a point of concern to me. It seems to ignore the fact that while some of the high-water marks of biblical theology in the history of the Church have corresponded with her greatest reforms, biblical theology has also featured prominently in the nodal points of decline in the church into new expressions of heterodoxy. And that is because attempts to “read the Bible again for the first time” not only allow readers to discover lost orthodoxies, but also allows them to invent new orthodoxies that are not orthodox at all—novel approaches born out of the prevailing “spirit of the age” or *Zeitgeist*.

It is not a coincidence that Modernists invented the formal discipline of biblical theology. It freed them from the shackles of orthodox subscription, allowing them to create a bevy of Aristotelian, uniformitarian readings of Scripture—readings that gutted the Bible of its transcendent center and replaced it with an ethical and immanent one. Neo-Orthodoxy was also a great purveyor of biblical theology, but only to replace failed Aristotelian readings of the Modernist with Platonic, postmodern ones, recasting the Bible as a document that functions as a

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and the new covenant people of God (an ethnically diverse and strictly regenerate group with an entry rite of baptism), without prompting the accusation of “replacement.”

mythical etiology and a place of existential encounter.

The list goes on. Just as Modernism birthed the formal discipline of biblical theology to craft out a hermeneutic that served Modernist ends, and just as postmodernism revisited biblical theology to develop another hermeneutic for postmodern ends, so also have other “isms” done the same. The new evangelicalism used biblical theology to craft out a realized kingdom hermeneutic for its peculiar evangelical ends; progressive dispensationalism used biblical theology to showcase a complementary hermeneutic for its unique ends; and now new covenant theology is using biblical theology to create a typological hermeneutic that serves new covenant ends. In short, the history of biblical theology has come to us more as a patchwork of theological conclusions in search of a validating hermeneutic than it has the reverse.

The solution is not to throw up our hands in hopelessness and trudge back behind the high walls of confessional orthodoxy and assume that one of these systems is correct in every detail. While such a stance likely offers a greater measure of safety than we theological mid-gets admit, I remain convinced that careful study in the realms of hermeneutics and biblical theology for the purpose of perfecting our systems is not only helpful but also necessary—we need to continue perfecting our knowledge of the whole story if we are to make the best sense of its parts. But the idea that privileging biblical theology will enable us to avert the errors of systematic theology is a frightening one—and one that leaves 21st-century evangelicalism vulnerable to invasive philosophies and worldviews that have no legitimate expression in the Christian system. Warfield is correct that subscription to systems of theology offers far more protection to Christian orthodoxy than biblical theology can ever dream of offering.

**Fifthly and finally, I would submit that the trajectory of the biblical theology of the *NIVZSB* is disappointingly opposite what I would have hoped when I compare it to its predecessor.** I confess to being a long-term user of the 1985 *NIV Study Bible*, and owe this preference largely to the collective influence of Bill Combs and Bob McCabe, close friends and honorees of the *festschrift* of which this article is a part. It was on their advice that my wife presented to me a 10th anniversary update of that study bible, bound in Moroccan leather, on my first occasion teaching at the graduate level. I have used it as my “teaching Bible” ever since. I have for these many years appreciated the even-handedness and conservatism of this earlier work, most especially its success in accommodating both Reformed and dispensational ideals of biblical theology, side-by-side, in surprisingly irenic tension.

Like all three of the honorees celebrated by this *festschrift*, I also call myself a dispensationalist, specifically a traditional dispensationalist. Traditional dispensationalism has been dogged over the years by the perception that it acknowledges no unifying center (i.e., that it is a disconnected collection of multiple, unrelated or barely related story lines with no unifying center). As I have suggested above, however,

dispensationalism has long ago answered this complaint. What dispensationalism has declined to do, though, is to accept the idea that redemption is the principal focus of the Bible. Charles Ryrie, for instance, complaining in 1965 that a redemptive center was too anthropocentric and incapable of making sense of key parts of the Bible, proposed a *doxological* center for his biblical theology in order to include all of the key motifs and nodal points of the Scriptures.<sup>14</sup> McClain, more precise than Ryrie, suggested in his aforementioned *Greatness of the Kingdom* that the storyline of the Bible is best summarized as the establishment of God's mediatorial kingdom on earth. Kenneth Barker (notably, the general editor of the 1985 *NIV Study Bible*), argued similarly for "God's rule [as] central focus of Biblical theology," summing up the biblical storyline as God "asserting and establishing his kingdom or rule over all that he has created, thus bringing all creation, through the mediatorial work of his Son, into complete submission and order under his sovereignty in order to bring the highest possible glory to himself."<sup>15</sup>

What emerges in these dispensational iterations of biblical theology is a *mitte* that is firstly *civil* in nature, administered disparately in biblical history, and then crowned by the comprehensive mediatorial work of Christ (i.e., not just his work of *redemption*, but also and especially his *rule*). Only by positing this pair of themes, dispensationalists have argued, can motifs such as law, sacrifice, temple, and kingdom be understood, not as Carson's "typologies,"<sup>16</sup> but as *literal* trajectories.<sup>17</sup>

Here is not the place to offer a formal defense of a traditional dispensational version of biblical theology and its "literal hermeneutic."<sup>18</sup> It is beyond the scope of this review. Still, I would like to suggest that the hermeneutic and attendant biblical theology of dispensationalism, while certainly in need of further development, are excepted from many of the criticisms levied against the approaches criticized above. Specifically, dispensationalism offers a *transcendental* hermeneutic that *precedes*

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<sup>14</sup>*Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 46–47. While Ryrie

<sup>15</sup>"The Scope and Center of Old and New Testament Theology and Hope," in *Dispensationalism, Israel, and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1992), 305.

<sup>16</sup>*NIVZSB*, 2639.

<sup>17</sup>For an especially fine dispensational treatment of one of these "literal trajectories," viz., *sacrifice*, the reader is directed to John Whitcomb's "Christ's Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel," *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (Fall 1985): 201–17, updated at <http://www.pre-trib.org/data/pdf/Whitcomb-Ezekiel40thru48andMi.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup>A hermeneutic that I have defined elsewhere as honoring (1) the univocal nature of language, (2) the jurisdiction of authorial intent, and (3) a textually based locus of meaning (see my blog series, "Whatever Happened to Literal Hermeneutics," available at <http://www.dbts.edu/2015/05/21/whatever-happened-to-literal-hermeneutics-part-4a/>, <http://www.dbts.edu/2015/05/28/whatever-happened-to-literal-hermeneutics-part-4b/>, <http://www.dbts.edu/2015/06/05/whatever-happened-to-literal-hermeneutics-part-4c/>, and <http://www.dbts.edu/2015/06/11/whatever-happened-to-literal-hermeneutics-part-4d/>).

rather than *succeeds* the biblical theology that attends it. In all of the biblical theologies criticized above, a biblical theological *mitte* was assumed and an arcane hermeneutic method (e.g., allegorical, mythical, typological, etc.) discovered (or perhaps better, *invented*) to account for that *mitte*. Dispensationalism is alone in presupposing a literal hermeneutic—a hermeneutic universally employed and indeed transcendental to any attempt to establish any alternative—and subsequently developing a biblical theology that is consistent with that hermeneutic.

With this in view, it should come as little surprise that I see any publication (like the one under review) that self-consciously discards a transcendental and universally practiced approach to language (an approach honored in its first edition) and asserts an arcane hermeneutic (the typological method) as its exclusive approach, as being on a backward trajectory.

### CONCLUSION

I intend to make liberal use of the *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*. The project is a masterful one that serves most admirably as one of the finest scholarly and conservative one-volume study aids for the English Bible ever produced. Even its most dubious assumptions and interpretations do not substantially dim its luster. At the end of the day, however, the primary objective of this volume is to exemplify a biblical theology and hermeneutic that are neither mine nor, I would suspect, those of the honorees of this *festschrift*. I am, at the last, disappointed.