



# The Bible's Obituary?

How Biblical Theology Can Resurrect the Old Testament in the Life of the Church

- In 2018, influential Baptist pastor Andy Stanley set off a firestorm.



*Once upon a time there existed a  
version of our faith that was ...*

# *Irresistible*

Reclaiming the New  
that Jesus Unleashed  
for the World

ANDY STANLEY

- In a [sermon](#) series and then a book, he proposed a way for pastors and their churches to “reclaim” the irresistibility of the Christian faith—to remove stumbling blocks and display the beauty of the gospel.

One of the primary ways to do this, he said, was to consider how we handle the Old Testament:

- “when it comes to stumbling blocks to faith, the Old Testament is right up there at the top of the list... the Old Testament is usually the culprit” (*Irresistible*: 280, 278)
- As such, to solve this problem he urges pastors: “Would you consider unhitching your teaching of what it means to follow Jesus from all things old covenant?” (p. 315).

# *Unhitch*

- This was the word that sent people into orbit

# Outrage!

And so Stanley was roundly criticized, from within and without:

- **Dispensationalist folk:**
  - [Baptist dispensationalists](#) were quick to point out that Stanley's view was not orthodox, and, in fact, was essentially a caricature of their perspective.
- **Reformed folk:**
  - Reformed Baptists, such as Southern Seminary's president, [Al Mohler](#), and those within the [Gospel Coalition](#), swiftly denounced the idea.

*So people pointed to...*

# The New Testament



On the road to Emmaus: “And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] explained to them what was written in all the Scriptures about Himself” (Luke 24:27)





# Marcion:

Early church heretic  
(officially declared  
heretic c. 144 AD).

Claimed the Old Testament  
witnessed to a different God  
than the New Testament  
and therefore should not be  
used as Christian Scripture.

# Saint Augustine:

“In the Old Testament, the  
New is concealed; in the New  
the Old is Revealed”

(Hept. 2,73: PL 34 34, 623,; cf. DV 16)



# Martin Luther:

“Here [in the Old Testament] you will find the swaddling clothes and the manger in which Christ lies...Simple and lowly are these swaddling clothes, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them.” (1545)



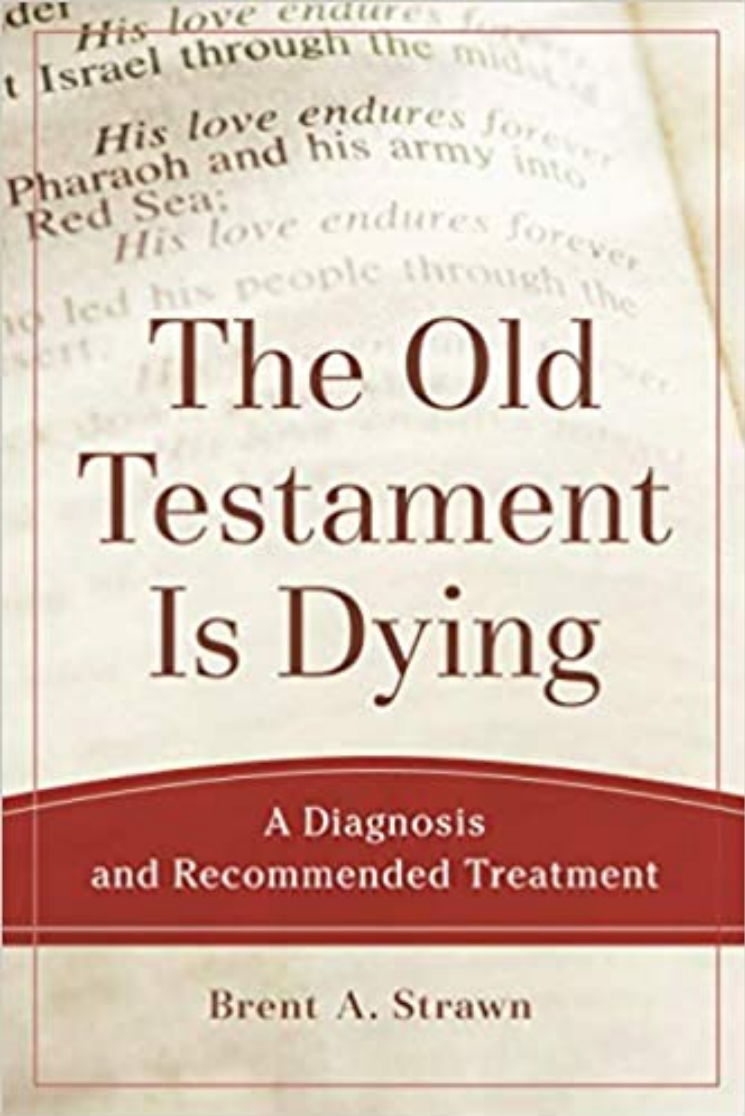
# The Only Problem?

- As it turns out, Stanley was speaking about apologetics, not theology (see [Christianity Today](#), [Relevant](#), and [interviews](#))
- In essence, he was outlining his apologetic approach:
  - *The Old Testament is at the beginning of the Bible but at the end of his apologetic. He begins with the event of the resurrection, because of people get that they get everything else, too.*



- In the midst of all this, something struck me as deeply ironic:

- Why are we bothered by this idea  
*theologically* when it's what we  
tend to practice  
*ecclesiologicaly?*



# The Old Testament Is Dying

A Diagnosis  
and Recommended Treatment

Brent A. Strawn

## A Dying Bible

- Not an accusation, but an *open secret*.
- Scholars and social observers have been saying this for years.

# Discussion:

The situation, then, is that we tend to value the Old Testament *theologically* but struggle to implement it *ecclesiologically*.

1. To what extent is this true in your own church culture?
  - That is, how central is the OT, for example, to the preaching, discipling, counseling, and general theologising?
2. In your particular context, why do you think this is the case?
  - That is, what is the major hurdle to having a more central place for the OT in your ministry?



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