

Introduction to NT Theology

- Definition of NT Theology
- Why is NT Theology Necessary?
- History of NT Theology
- Approaches to NT Theology
- Methodological Issues
- What is NT Theology Good For?
- How to Do NT Theology

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Definition of NT Theology

- Defining NT theology is difficult.
- Donald Hagner (1993): NT theology exists in a state of “methodological confusion.”
- Those who practice it don’t agree on what they ought to be doing!

2

Definition of NT Theology

- Term “biblical theology” used in 2 senses:
 - Theology based on Bible or consistent with it.
 - Theology contained in the biblical documents
- Ladd’s definition: “Biblical theology is that discipline which sets forth the message of the books of the Bible in their historical setting. . . .”
 - Canonical context
 - Historical context

3

Definition of NT Theology

- Ladd’s definition: “. . . Biblical theology is primarily a descriptive discipline. It is not initially concerned with the final meaning of the teachings of the Bible or their relevance for today. This is the task of systematic theology. Biblical theology has the task of expounding the theology found in the Bible in its own historical setting, and its own terms, categories, and thought forms” (20).

4

Definition of NT Theology

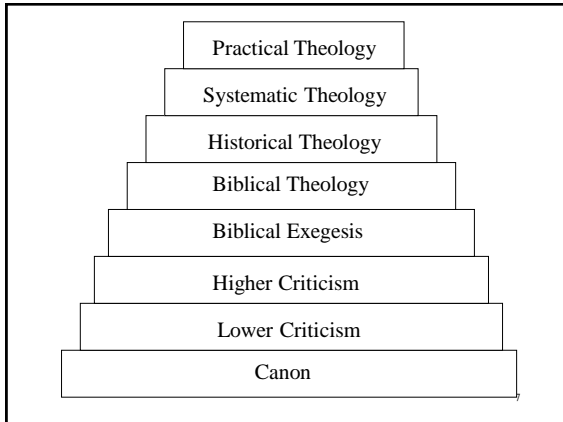
- Matera’s definition (xxvii):
 - “[A] theology of the New Testament ought to be a literary and theological analysis of the New Testament writings rather than a history of early Christian thought.”
 - “New Testament theology, then, should seek to provide a theological interpretation of the New Testament that integrates and relates the diverse theologies of the New Testament into a unified whole without harmonizing them . . .”

5

Why is NT Theology Necessary?

- Because the NT is a theological book.
- Because the NT isn’t systematic theology.
- Divine revelation as God’s acts in history
- Historical particularity \Rightarrow biblical diversity
- Biblical theology = OT theology + NT theology.
- P. Stuhlmacher: a biblical theology of the NT.

6



Why is NT Theology Necessary?

- Biblical theology is the bridge between exegesis and systematic theology.
 - Hybrid between biblical studies and theology.
 - Divorce between disciplines has sometimes left it stranded.
 - Necessary step in formulating doctrine.
 - Without it, we're more likely to read our preconceptions into the Bible.

8

History of NT Theology

- Before Enlightenment: biblical data used to support church doctrine.
- Enlightenment: biblical theology established as separate discipline.
- 19th century: push to replace biblical theology by history of religion.
- 20th century: existentialism and reactions.
- Biblical theology is dead . . . but yet it lives.

9

Approaches to NT Theology

- Orientations to NT Theology
- Thematic approach
- Existential approach
- Modern historical approach
- Salvation history approach
- Note that approach and organization are not the same (except for thematic approach).
- New approaches that don't fit this scheme

10

Approaches to NT Theology

- Frank Matera:
 - Salvation history ("master story")
 - Literary approach (focus on final form)
 - Thematic summary of master story.
- Matera's five themes: (1) humanity in need of salvation; (2) the bringer of salvation; (3) the community of the sanctified; (4) the life of the sanctified; (5) the hope of the sanctified.

11

Methodological Issues

- Historical description vs. theological interpretation ("what it meant/means")
- Matera: descriptive *and* theological.
 - Unity through the implied narrative.
 - Historical: respects the historical context.
 - Literary: focus on narrative and rhetoric.
 - Descriptive: analyze the theological claims.
 - Interpretive: all description is interpretation.
 - Theological: interpret from a stance of faith.

12

Methodological Issues

- We can't divorce description from theology.
- But we can exercise intellectual honesty and humility.
 - Give priority to description.
 - Be aware of our presuppositions.
 - Let the NT challenge us.
 - Make use of critical methods without accepting naturalistic presuppositions.

13

Methodological Issues

- The role of faith in interpreting the NT
 - Should the interpreter be a believer?
 - Related to historical/theological question.
- Is NT theology restricted to the canon?
 - History of religion: no.
 - NT theology: yes.
- The place of Jesus in NT theology
 - R. Bultmann vs. S. Neill.
 - Presuppositions about history

14

Methodological Issues

- Unity and diversity in the NT
 - James Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the NT*.
 - Modern emphasis on diversity.
 - Relationship between OT and NT.
- The center of NT theology
 - Concept, event, principle, person?
 - Canon within the canon
 - A narrative unity?

15

Methodological Issues

- C. Kavin Rowe, "NT Theology: The Revival of a Discipline" – recent trends:
 - Importance of the OT in NT theology.
 - Teaching of Jesus has central place.
 - Deal with NT documents in historical context.
 - Address unity as well as diversity.
 - Narrative as a way to go forward.
 - Lack of non-European works (but not as true now).

16

What is NT Theology Good For?

What do you think it's good for?

17

What is NT Theology Good For?

- Integrates biblical truth
- Basis of sound doctrine and practice, and standard to critique them
- Source of reform and renewal
- Demonstrates gospel's call to obedience
- Enables us to know, love, and serve Christ more fully

18

How to Do NT Theology

- Presuppositions
 - Primarily historical and descriptive
 - Deals with NT books in canonical context
 - Tends to emphasize diversity
 - Is not systematic or historical theology

19

How to Do NT Theology

- Presuppositions
- Select a topic.
 - Limit the topic.
 - Formulate a question.
 - Reflect on your presuppositions.

20

How to Do NT Theology

- Presuppositions
- Select a topic.
- Gather material.
 - Inductive approach.
 - Look at the topic afresh.
 - Read entire book(s).
 - Use a concordance.
 - Identify all concepts related to your topic.
 - Use secondary resources after reading the NT.

21

How to Do NT Theology

- Presuppositions
- Select a topic.
- Gather material.
- Synthesize the material.
 - Identify commonalities and differences.
 - Be careful using the “analogy of Scripture.”
 - Give full scope to the diversity of Scripture.
 - Be aware of methodological issues.
 - Leave room for paradox and mystery.

22

How to Do NT Theology

- Presuppositions
- Select a topic.
- Gather material.
- Synthesize the material.
- Draw conclusions.
 - Answer the question as well as the NT allows.
 - Determine implications.
 - Recognize the limits of your findings.

23

How to Do NT Theology

- Presuppositions
- Select a topic.
- Gather material.
- Synthesize the material.
- Draw conclusions.
- Write the paper.
 - Use an outline, but be open to discovery.
 - Don't let secondary sources write your paper.
 - Let the NT writers be themselves.

24