

Models for Biblical Theology

- Topics from dogmatic theology
- Searching for a 'center'
- Thematic surveys
- Tracing diachronic themes
- Formation-of-tradition
- Opting for diverse theologies
- New biblical-theological method
- Multiperspectival approach

Topics from dogmatic theology

- Examples
 - God-Man-Salvation
 - More comprehensive catalogues:
e.g., Bibliology, Theology, Angelology, Hamartiology, Christology, Soteriology, Pneumatology, Eschatology
- Usefulness
 - Clarity of organization
 - Unity of OT and NT
 - Link to use for doctrine, correct, reproof, and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16)
- Risks
 - Reductionism
 - Imposition of foreign categories
 - Return to hegemony of dogmatics rather than *sola Scriptura*

Using a 'center'

- Suggestions
 - 'Covenant' (Eichrodt)
 - 'Kingdom of God' (Bright)
 - 'Promise' (Kaiser)
 - 'God' (Dentan)
 - Most comprehensive
 - Subtopics comprising his attributes and acts
 - Potentially so broad as not to be a 'center' at all
 - 'Christ' (Hengstenberg)
 - But does that short-circuit redemptive history?
 - Doesn't that erase the unique witness of OT revelation?

'Center' (cont.)

● Problems

- Perhaps no 'center' but the diversity of *Heilsgeschichte* itself; however, which version?
 - OT Deuteronomist (von Rad), Priestly, or Elohist?
 - Christological fulfillment of redemptive history (Irenaeus)
- Reductionism
 - OT 'Promise' leads to NT 'Fulfillment'
 - But this makes little room for Sinai, cult, or curse.
 - OT has not only promise but also fulfillment, and NT has not only fulfillment, but also promise.
 - 'Kingdom of God' or 'Covenant' leaves no room for 'Wisdom', the step-child of biblical theology.

Thematic survey

● Identify themes from Bible itself rather than from *foci* of dogmatic theology.

- Dogmatic themes ultimately from the Bible
- Selectivity leads to reductionism
 - What is criterion for inclusion/exclusion?
 - Quantitative: frequency of mention?
 - Qualitative: fundamentals?
 - What to make of what your 'net' doesn't catch it
 - If my 'net' doesn't catch it, it's not 'fish', that is if my criterion doesn't label it a biblical-theological theme, I can safely ignore it?
 - If my 'net' doesn't catch it, my net's deficient and must be modified or discarded in favor of something more comprehensive?

Tracing diachronic themes

● Problems

- Where to get themes (*supra*)
 - Problem of imposing foreign themes
 - Problem of reductionism
- *Credo?* (von Rad)
 - Is Deuteronomist credo the authoritative core (von Rad)? Why not 'Priestly' source, 'Jesus' tradition, 'Lukan' historiography, 'Pauline' eschatology, or even apocalyptic?
 - What is role of *Historie* in the credo of *Heilsgeschichte*?
 - Mere retelling, even in terms of canonical self-reference, is still not making application.

Formation-of-tradition

- Gese (OT) follows Stuhlmacher (NT) in defining biblical theology in terms of 'continuity of development'.
 - OT is beginning of formation, leading into the NT, and...
 - NT is completion of formation, flowing out of the OT.
- Problems
 - What of the discontinuities of development
 - Pharisees, Saducees, and Essenes
 - Extra-canonical development (e.g., Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha)
 - Judaism and Christianity
 - How to develop the identifiable continuities?
 - Along lines of critical reconstruction of OT and NT history as *Historie*?
 - Along canonical lines of OT and NT as *Heilsgeschichte*.
 - How then to relate *Heilsgeschichte* to *Historie* and therefore to 'now' — how to move from what it *meant* to what it *means*.

Opting for diverse theologies

- Levels of diversity
 - Theologies of OT and of NT
 - Theologies of JEDP?
 - Theologies of Moses and Paul
 - Theologies of Peter and Paul
 - Theologies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and 'Q'?
 - 'Red letter' theology and 'black letter' NT theology?

Diverse theologies (cont.)

- Kinds of diversity
 - Incompatible diversity
 - Yahwist vs. Priestly redactor?
 - Inclusive (Jonah) vs. exclusive (Ezra)?
 - 'Remnant' or 'day of the LORD' as positive vs. negative motif?
 - Jewish (Peter) vs. gentile (Paul) Christianity?
 - Evangelical vs. Pentecostal Christianity?
 - Dialectical diversity
 - *Elusive Presence*, but see the need for a second dialectic with his 'ethical' (covenant) and 'aesthetic' (Psalms and Wisdom) (Terrien)
 - Deliverance/blessing, but which omits Wisdom (Westermann)
 - An adaptation of the Marxist dialectic (W. Brueggemann, cf. Gottwald)

Diverse theologies (cont.)

- Compatible diversity
 - Over-arching unity in divine authorship
 - Not *competing* 'theologies' but *complementary* perspectives
 - No 'theology' trumps another:
 - The Decalogue does not trump the ceremonial law.
 - Grace does not trump law in a Marcionite fashion.
 - Paul does not trump Peter or James.
 - The 'red letters' do not trump Moses, or Paul, or the gospel writers.
 - Hebrews does not trump the ceremonial law.

New biblical theology method

- Overcoming the 'what it *meant*' vs. 'what it *means* divide'
- Diminished reliance of the historical-critical method
 - Ignoring critical reconstructions of Israel's *Historie* in favor of canonical witness to history.
 - Ignoring comparative *Religionsgeschichte* in favor of authoritative theology.
 - Demanding not only 'descriptive' function but also 'confessional' function for biblical theology.
- Prospects
 - 'Crisis' of biblical theology (Childs 1970)
 - Biblical theology declared 'dead' (Smart 1979)
 - *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Childs 1992)

Multiperspectival approach

- Biblical theology...
 - is a separate discipline from comparative religions.
 - avoids reductionism of a 'center' or of an imposed topical system.
 - surveys the particulars of books and sections, themes, and motifs.
 - follows the order of progressive revelation
 - acknowledges a reciprocal relation between the particulars and the overarching themes.
 - reflects the dynamic unity that binds together the diverse themes, motifs, and 'theologies'.
