CURRENT PROBLEMS AND PROJECTS IN NEW TESTAMENT RESEARCH

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In surveying the field of New Testament studies I note not only the problems which are discussed today. I also put on record some of the projects which have been launched and others which could be launched or should be developed. Evangelical scholars may want to plan, contribute to, and eventually crystallize some projects.

By surveying the field, I focus attention on three main areas and a related one: the text, theology, and unity of the New Testament. Briefly I refer to related topics such as Gnosticism, Judaism, and Patristic studies.

I. *Text*

Three areas of study which are most prominent in textual studies of the New Testament are textual criticism, syntax, and exegesis. But before I go into these areas, I think it is fitting to mention the work of the lexicographer at this point. Ever since 1956, the English-speaking world has been using the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature,* prepared by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich. These two scholars translated the fourth revised and augmented 1952 edition of Walter Bauer's *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch.* This work is monumental in scope. Bauer conducted "a systematic search in Greek literature down to Byzantine times for parallels to the language of the New Testament."[1] Yet Bauer's alphabetically-arranged lexicon does not meet the need of today's translator. It is deficient in its composition. That is, the lexicon is arranged encyclopedically, not linguistically. Bauer, like many other lexicographer before him, provides the reader with a number of translations for a given word. Usually he provides a few examples, without comment, and leaves it to the user of the lexicon to find the correct meaning for the word in question.

The need for a linguistically-arranged lexicon is now being filled. An editorial committee consisting of Dr. Eugene Nida, Professor Rondal Smith, and Professor Johannes Louw has begun, since 1971, the gigantic task of publishing a *Greek New Testament Wordbook* based entirely on semantic principles. One of these principles is that a lexicon should not merely give the translation of words. Rather it should classify words in structural categories. For example, a physical structure is the category for

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[1]W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* Cambridge: University Press, 1956; p. V.

house, wall, table; food is the category for bread, meat, table; and the economic structure includes the words money, coin, table. All three categories incorporate the word table, each with its own context.

The publication of a lexicon based on semantic principles will be a vast improvement over the traditional wordbooks. Anyone consulting such a lexicon will be introduced to semantic areas of the Greek language and not to individual words alphabetically arranged. In this new lexicon he will be shown the figurative use of a word. Also he will learn the meaning of a word in an idiomatic expression.

A. Textual Criticism

In a recent article published in the *Journal of Biblical Literature,* Eldon Jay Epp discusses the urgent need for serious involvement in the area of textual criticism. According to Epp, the present status of New Testament textual criticism in North America is one of inactivity. Says he, "It is, in fact, difficult to name more than one or two recognized graduate institutions in North America where doctoral studies in the textual criticism of the New Testament can be pursued under some established specialist."[2]

Evangelical scholars because of their high view of Scripture ought to be in the vanguard of those engaged in New Testament textual criticism. This criticism is an area in which the conservative theologian ought to join the pursuit of establishing the purest text possible. For him the discovery of early uncials and papyri is a cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving.[3]

The character of New Testament textual criticism has not changed since the work of Wescott and Hort. In spite of all the textual evidence brought to light by discoveries of uncials and papyri, the popular critical editions of the Greek New Testament show no progress. The editions of Nestle-Aland, Merk, Bover, and the United Bible Society are based on the Westcott-Hort text. Some ten years ago, Kurt Aland queried: "*None* of us would entrust himself to a ship of the year 1881, in order to cross the Atlantic, even if the ship were renovated or he was promised danger money. Why then do we still do so in New Testament textual criticism?"[4] The question is still valid today.

It must be said that in the last ten years some progress has been made in textual criticism. I refer to the development of quantitative measurement of manuscript relationships. Ernest C. Colwell, Ernest W. Tune, Gordon D. Fee and others have spent untold hours in measuring manuscript relationships quantitatively in order to

[2]E. J. Epp, "The Twentieth Century Interlude in New Testament Textual Criticism" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (3 '74), p. 414.

[3]Cf. M. A. King, "Should Conservatives Abandon Textual Criticism?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130 (517 '73), p. 40.

[4]K. Aland, *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* (ed. J. P. Hyatt). Nashville: Abingdon, 1965; p. 346. Cf. Epp, *op. cit.,* p. 390.

reconstruct the textual history of the New Testament.[5]

In the wake of the discovery of the Oxyrhynchus papyri in 1896, J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan began to compile certain representative words of the Greek language. Out of the rich storehouse of papyri, Greek inscriptions, and evidence from non-literary sources, Moulton and Milligan eventually published *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament, Illustrated from the Papyri and other Non-Literary Sources.*[6] The work is not intended to be a complete lexicon. Its purpose is to illustrate the nature of New Testament Greek. But in the twentieth century numerous papyri and countless inscriptions have been discovered. A revised edition of Moulton and Milligan's *Vocabulary* is greatly needed, because such an edition would make archeological discoveries of papyri and inscriptions meaningful to the student of New Testament Greek.

On the other hand, lively interest has developed in short studies on words such as *epiousios* in the Lord's Prayer,[7] because of Greek inscriptions. Of course, literary discoveries in the last few decades have added greatly to a better understanding of the languages spoken in Palestine during the first half of the first century A.D. Recent literature on the languages Jesus spoke is impressive and challenging.

B. Syntax

A. T. Robertson in his *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* quotes Robert Browning, who sings *A Grammarian's Funeral:*

He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—
Properly based on *Oun–*
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De,*
Dead from the waist down.

Robertson wrote his massive work in 1914; the fourth edition came off the press in 1923. Since that time, the literary evidence from manuscripts and inscriptions has been overwhelming. But the modern grammarian seems to have been influenced by Browning's poem.

Short studies in theological journals have touched on syntax. For example, J. Harold Greenlee delivered the Heidemann Lecture at Concordia Theological Seminary in 1969 entitled, "The Importance of Syntax for the Proper Understanding of the Sacred Text of the New Testament." Says Greenlee: "Syntax ... lies at the

[5]E. C. Colwell and E. W. Tune, "The Quantitative Relationships Between MS Texttypes" *Biblical and Patristic Studies in Memory of Robert Pierce Casey* (eds. J. N. Birdsall and R. W. Thomson). Freiburg: Herder, 1963; pp. 25-32. G. D. Fee, "Codex Sinaiticus in the Gospel of John: A Contribution to Methodology in Establishing Textual Relationships," *New Testament Studies,* 15 (1 '68), pp. 23-44.

[6]The first part of the work was published in 1914; the completed work appeared in 1930. W. B. Eerdmans Publishing House of Grand Rapids published reprints in 1949, 1963, and 1972.

[7]Cf. F. J. Botha, "Recent Research on the Lord's Prayer," *Neotestamentica,* 1 ('67), pp. 42-50.

very heart and center of meaning in any language."[8] It is imperative, therefore, that the Greek text be translated correctly in accord with the rules of syntax. Certainly, the New Testament scholar is concerned with the very word of the Greek text. He may take into account new translations, views of commentators, and opinions of Greek grammarians, but in the final analysis he himself must interpret the text. J. R. Mantey, in a study on the perfect tense, discusses the translation of Matthew 16:19 and John 20:23. These texts deal with the subject of forgiving sin— "... whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven ..." (NIV). Because of the information available, Mantey argues that the literal translation of the perfect tenses in these two verses is the only translation which is accurate.[9]

The work of the grammarian is not at all pedantic. On the contrary, the grammarian contributes towards a better understanding of the Greek text.

C. Exegesis

An area which has received significant attention thus far is that of New Testament exegesis of the Old Testament. This type of exegesis is broad because it includes typology, allegory, and adaptation to Christ. That is, how did Paul read the presence of Jesus into Old Testament history. Speaking about the desert journey of the Israelites, Paul says that "they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ" (I Corinthians 10:4 NIV).

The question whether today's theologian may be an imitator of Paul's exegesis is relevant indeed. A. J. Bandstra, in his inaugural address delivered at Calvin Theological Seminary in 1971, observes that the Bible in general and the New Testament in particular may not be used as a textbook on the science of hermeneutics. Nevertheless, he concludes that because New Testament authors were culture-conditioned in their use of the Old Testament, we may not dismiss their exegesis as irrelevant to our approach to exegesis.[10] We learn by studying Paul's epistles that the apostle betrays his educational background in the way he debates, disputes, and cites the Old Testament.[11]

What this means is that in order to exegete Paul's writings as comprehensively as possible, one must acquire a workable knowledge of the exegetical methods Paul used. Correct exegesis of II Corinthians 3:17, for instance, "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and

[8]"The Importance of Syntax," *Evangelical Quarterly*, 44 (3 '72), p. 131.

[9]J. R. Mantey, "Evidence that the Perfect Tense in John 20:23 and Matthew 16:19 is Mistranslated," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 16 (3 '73), pp. 129-138.

[10]A. J. Bandstra, "Interpretation in I Corinthians 10:1-11," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 6 (1 '71), pp. 5-21.

[11]H. N. Ridderbos, "An Attempt at the Theological Definition of Inerrancy, Infallibility, and Authority, *International Reformed Bulletin*, 11 (32-33 '68), p. 38.

where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (NIV), depends upon an understanding of the pesher-technique employed.[12] Paul does not attempt to give a full explanation of the Old Testament passage—Exodus 34:34, "the veil is taken away"—which he cites in II Corinthians 3:16. Instead, he places the quotation in the context of his own exposition of the doctrine of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.[13] Likewise Paul takes Hosea 13:14 out of the context of divine rebuke and puts it within the framework of his teachings on the resurrection of the body. Even though significant contributions in the area of exegesis have been made, much work remains to be done in studying the hermeneutical methods of the New Testament writers.

II. *Theology*

Since the Second World War, the discipline of Redaction Criticism has become a distinct branch of New Testament pursuits. It focuses attention on the writer of a given New Testament book, on his sources, and on his theology.

A. Redaction Criticism

Redaction criticism arose in reaction to the form critic's inability to answer questions concerning authorship of the Gospels. The redaction critic, by comparing Gospel parallels, has discovered the hand of a writer, not a mere collector, in every Gospel. He noticed that each evangelist is a theologian in his own right.

However, we should clearly understand that the redaction critic has not at all departed from the rationalistic antisupernaturalism which characterizes the work of the form critic.[14] In brief, redaction criticism is based on a negative view of Scripture.

The evangelical scholar approaches Scripture positively. He faces the question: where did the Gospel writers obtain their materials? Whereas Birger Gerhardsson argues convincingly for the traditional pedagogies of memorization in Jesus' day,[15] Harold Mare points to the tools, such as tablets, paper, pen, and ink, available to those who recorded the words and works of Christ.[16] Writing was common in the first half of the first century. The title on Jesus' cross was written in three languages. Moreover, the Four

[12]Cf. W. S. Vorster, "2 Kor. 3:17: Eksegese en Toeligting" (2 Cor. 3:17: Exegesis and Explanation), *Neotestamentica 3* ('69), pp. 37-44

[13]P. Grech, "The 'Testimonia' and Modern Hermeneutics," *New Testament Studies*, 19 (3 '73), pp. 318-324.

[14]Cf. W. A. Maier, "The Historical Critical Method as Employed in the Study of the New Testament," *Springfielder*, 35 (1 '71), pp. 26-40.

[15]B. Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript.* Lund: Gleerup, 1961. *Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity.* Lund: Gleerup, 1964.

[16]W. H. Mare, "The Role of the Note-taking Historian and His Emphasis on the Person and Work of Christ," *Journal Evangelical Theological Society,* 15 (2 '72), pp. 107-121.

Gospels seem to intimate that note-taking by the immediate followers of Christ cannot be ruled out.[17]

A study of the twin-volume Luke-Acts reveals that the writer stands closer to Mark and an additional source than to Paul, closer to Palestine than to Antioch. It appears from Acts that Luke wrote much of his work in Palestine while Paul spent time in prison at Caesarea.[18] The book of Acts is a clear demonstration of Luke's method of interpreting the time in which he lived with the aid of the inherited tradition.[19]

Because of their failure to give due recognition to the divine will, both the form critic and the redaction critic are unable to address adequately the method used by Luke. The theological emphasis in Acts which Luke portrays is a display of a unified scheme which reveals the glory of Jesus in the daily experience of the church's historical development. As I. Howard Marshall notes in his cogent article, "The Resurrection in the Acts of the Apostles" that in respect to the resurrection the book of Acts faithfully reflects the teachings of the early church.[20]

Turning to the Gospel of Luke, we notice that the passion narrative is distinctive. The material in Luke's narrative is not so much derived from Mark as from an extra source. Also, we should pay attention to the order of the passion material arranged in Luke's Gospel compared to that of the other three. A study in parallelism and the theological purpose of the individual Gospel writer in respect to the passion narrative would make a valuable contribution to a better understanding of this purpose by tracing the *ipsissima verba Jesu* to see how the individual evangelist transmits them.

B. Resurrection

In today's theology, Christological studies are relatively few. The reason is that theologians have been occupied with studies on Jesus of Nazareth. But both studies, the Christological and the Jesus of Nazareth ones, must be placed under the critique of early Christianity. Roman Catholic theologian E. Schillebeeckx recently surveyed this field and concluded: "Contemporary biblical scholarship has increasingly abandoned the position (R. Bultmann) that Jesus' person, message and entire way of life serve only as a presupposition for the theology of the New Testament without being an integral part of it. The discussion now concentrates on the

[17]Cf. R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel.* Leiden: Brill, 1967, pp. 182-185.

[18]Cf. H. Klein, "Zur Frage nach dem Abfassungsort der Lukasschriften," *Evangelische Theologie,* 32 (5 '72), pp. 467-477.

[19]J. Panagopoulos, "Zur Theologie der Apostelgeschichte," *Novum Testamentum,* 14 (2 '72), p. 140.

[20]I. H. Marshall, "The Resurrection in the Acts of the Apostles," *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (eds. W. W. Gasque, R. P. Martin). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970; p. 103.

continuity or discontinuity between the Jesus and the Christ as preached by the church."[21]

The affirmation that Jesus is the Christ must be grounded in those basic Christological statements which are given in the New Testament. Besides, the earliest confession of faith must be examined to see the relation between the proclamation of the first-century church and the so-called historical Jesus.[22] The Gospels indicate repeatedly that faith in Jesus was present prior to the resurrection. Moreover, faith in the resurrection of Jesus is—as especially the book of Acts indicates—the highest form of faith in God.[23] It is impossible to explain the content of this resurrection faith without referring to the earthly existence of Jesus.

It is heartening to see that scholars have searched the Scriptures and have gained evidence from the early church to effectively challenge Rudolf Bultmann's and Willi Marxsen's interpretation of the resurrection. Scholars have taken a positive approach by stressing that the resurrection of Jesus is not an intuition from within but a manifestation from without. They do so by pointing to the apostles who proclaimed the centrality of the message of Jesus' resurrection, who were witnesses of the risen Lord, who had seen the empty tomb and who understood the Scriptures.[24]

I would like to single out an article written by K. L. McKay of the Australian National University in Canberra, who challenges Marxsen's view on the resurrection of Jesus by studying the Greek tenses relating to the resurrection event. Marxsen uses the key phrase "Jesus is risen" and interprets it without any connection to the actual resurrection of Jesus' body. McKay points out that the verb "to raise" (egeirō) used with reference to Jesus' resurrection is in the aorist tense—only twice in the perfect tense. The aorist tense, of course, describes the single occurrence of the resurrection event. Jesus' resurrection is a single event, according to the New Testament Scriptures.

Also, McKay illustrates the nature of Jesus' resurrection by referring to the present tense of Jesus' command to Mary Magdalene, "Do not hold on to me" (John 20:17). The present tense indicates that Mary was holding Jesus by clasping his feet or ankles. Jesus' resurrection is a physical appearance as the New Testament clearly teaches.[25]

[21]E. Schillebeeckx, "Ons heil: Jezus' leven of Christus de verrezene? (Salvation in Jesus or in the Risen Christ?)", *Tijdschrift voor Theologie,* 13 (2 '73), p. 166.

[22]Cf. K. Kertelge, "Der geschichtliche Jesus und das Christusbekenntnis der ersten Gemeinden," *Bibel und Leben,* 13 (2 '72), pp. 77-88.

[23]T. J. van Bavel, "Verrijzenis: Grondslag of object van het geloof in Christus? (The resurrection, foundation, or object of our faith?)", *Tijdschrift voor Theologie,* 13 (2 '73), pp. 133-144.

[24]Cf. I. H. Marshall, *op. cit.,* p. 107

[25]K. L. McKay, "Some Linguistic Points in Marxsen's Resurrection Theory," *Expository Times,* 84 (11 '73), pp. 330-332.

An in-depth study of the resurrection from an exegetical, confessional, and historical point of view would be a great help in confronting the central issues of theology today.

C. Divinity of Jesus

That early Christology was widely taught in the first-century church is reflected in the letters of Paul. For example, in Romans 1:3, 4 Paul teaches that Christ Jesus "as to his human nature was a descendant of David and ... through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God (NIV)." In this passage Paul reflects the endeavor of the early church to express faith in Jesus, who is both human and divine. The word *sarx* and *pneuma* are used. But this is also true of the early Christian hymn recorded in I Timothy 3:16. The words *body* (sarx) and *spirit* (pneuma) overlap in regard to Jesus' earthly ministry. Paul's epistles reflect the universally accepted Christology of the early church.[26] The New Testament Scriptures, and not the modern theologian, speak decisively on the humanity and divinity of Jesus.

Evangelical scholars can be engaged most profitably in learning how Paul and John develop the teaching of Jesus' pre-existence. Paul, for example, speaks of a change of Jesus' condition (Philippians 2:6-8), of Jesus' work of creation (Colossians 1:15-17), and of Jesus' coming from heaven to earth (II Corinthians 8:9). Likewise, John refers to the pre-existence of Jesus.

Such a study must include a comparison with the Synoptics and Acts, because these writings do not portray the earthly Jesus in terms of the glory belonging to the exalted Christ. The obvious conclusion is that the Synoptics and Acts testify to a remarkable trustworthiness as far as historical documents are concerned.[27]

The early Church was interested in the "that", the "how", and the "what" of Jesus' life. Therefore, the assertion of W. Schmithals that the historical Jesus is irrelevant for theology is baseless.[28] The early Church did have a distinct interest in the earthly Jesus, and expressed this in its confessions and its theology. Evangelical scholarship can make a worthy contribution by showing that the so-called historical Jesus controls the development of Christology. A Christology which does not confess the earthly Jesus is nothing more than mythology.

Moreover, a study of the Greek tense in respect to the "I am" expressions in the Gospel of John is convincing evidence of the deity

[26]J. D. G. Dunn, "Jesus—Flesh and Spirit. An Exposition of Romans 1:3-4," *Journal of Theological Studies*, 24 (1 '70), pp. 5-29.
R. H. Gundry, "The Form, Meaning and Background of the Hymn Quoted in I Timothy 3:16," *Apostolic History and the Gospel* (eds. W. W. Gasque, R. P. Martin). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970; pp. 209f.

[27]P. Benoit, "Preexistence et Incarnation," *Revue Biblique*, 77 (1 '70), pp. 5-29.

[28]W. Schmithals, "Kein Streit um des Kaisers Bart. Zur Diskussion über das Bekenntnis zu Jesus Christus," *Evangelische Kommentare*, 3 (2 '70), pp. 76-82. Cf. T. Lorenzmeier, "Zum Thema: Historischer Jesus," *Evangelische Kommentare*, 3 (5 '70), pp. 296-298. Cf. W. Schmithals, "Noch einmal: Historischer und biblischer Jesus," *Evangelische Kommentare*, 3 (7 '70), pp. 416-418.

of Jesus.[29] In short, a study of the words of Jesus in the four Gospels is not merely necessary, but will prove a major contribution to the theology of the New Testament.

III. *The Unity of the New Testament*

In 1943, A. M. Hunter published an interesting booklet which bore the title *The Unity of the New Testament.* According to Hunter, the unity of the New Testament is expressed substantially by the German word *Heilsgeschichte* (Salvation History). He sees the unity basically in terms of one Lord, one Church, and one Salvation. Not all scholars see the unity of the New Testament or the need for it.[30] Nevertheless,this New Testament unity ought to be stressed today because of the modern theological emphasis to dissect the Bible.

A. Development of the Gospel

How did the Gospel develop? E. F. Harrison has traced the transmission of the sayings of Jesus in the Gospels, in Acts, and in the Epistles.[31] When Paul preached the Gospel in Thessalonica for a period of three weeks, he did not hand out pocket New Testaments, so to speak. He proclaimed an oral Gospel, and the Thessalonians heard the word of God (I Thessalonians 2:13). That word of God in I Thessalonians 2:14-16 shows a remarkable resemblance to Jesus' discourse against the Pharisees recorded in Matthew 23:13. Paul, therefore, proclaimed the same Gospel as that of our canonical Matthew.

An evangelical answer to the question: "how did the Gospels develop?" is not just a topic of debate. Serious research in the area of the Synoptic Problem is the need of the day. Though some individual studies have appeared, a united effort to set forth a scholarly analysis and solution to the problem would be greatly appreciated.

H. Meynell in a study on the Synoptic Problem posed five major objections to the hypothesis that the evangelists Matthew and Luke used Mark's Gospel in its present form. They are: 1. Luke's Gospel seldom deviates from the Gospel of Mark where Matthew does. 2. It would not be necessary for Matthew to 'resemiticize' Mark's Gospel. 3. Several expressions in the Gospel of Mark imply that the author is omitting material. 4. Matthew's special material is more organically connected with Markan material than Luke's special material is. 5. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke are not influenced by Markan style and vocabulary to the same extent.[32] The supposition is that

[29]Cf. G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; 1974; p. 250.

[30]A. M. Hunter, *The Unity of the New Testament.* London: SCM, 1957, p. 110.

[31]E. F. Harrison, "Tradition of the Sayings of Jesus: A Crux Interpretum," *Toward a Theology for the Future* (eds. D. F. Wells, C. H. Pinnock). Carol Stream, Illinois: Creation House, 1971; pp. 40-63.

[32]H. Meynell, "A Note on the Synoptic Problem," *Downside Review* 90 (300 '72), pp. 201-206.

Matthew and Luke used an earlier version of the Gospel of Mark which differed substantially from the version known to us, yet not in regard to matter and style. Also, the suggestion has been made that behind the Gospels of Matthew and Mark lies an earlier document from which both Matthew and Mark have drawn.[33]

Form critical studies seek to show that in the development of the Gospel tradition proper names were added in the course of time. An example used is that of the name Malchus, servant of the high priest, in the Gospel of John. If then the Gospel of Mark is accorded priority, Matthew is expected to add precise detail to the material of Mark. E. P. Sanders, in his book on the Synoptic tradition, even speaks of three laws of tradition: 1. increased length, 2. increased detail, and 3. diminishing Semiticism are the marks of developing tradition.[34] However, detailed study shows that Mark's Gospel in many passages gives the fullest references to such details as names of individuals and names of groups, while Matthew and Luke often present summaries in such verses. In other words, the laws of Sanders are no laws at all.

Evangelical scholars face the challenge of analyzing the Gospel parallels to learn why a writer omits or adds to the Gospel account. J. K. Elliott of the University of Leeds, England, asked the following core questions: "a. Does one evangelist consistently reserve certain topics in Jesus' teaching for the disciples? b. In his selection of material, does one evangelist favour certain themes? c. Is one evangelist consistent in a particular use of Christological titles?"[35] Presented in these questions is the inception of a study of the individual evangelist's style, grammar, and idiosyncracies as well as a study of his theological position.

B. Development of Doctrine

In the middle of the first century the writers of the Synoptics did not seek to gather and arrange a developing gospel tradition. Instead they presented a Gospel which was authoritatively based on firmly delineated beliefs. These beliefs brought about a homogeneity in early Christianity, which in turn made it possible for the early Christians to accept a diversity of inspired books.[36] The early believers accepted these inspired books because they were God-breathed. They knew that God authorized them.

One important motif in the unity of the New Testament is progress in revelation. Except for the Gospel material in the Synoptics, the parallelism in Ephesians-Colossians, and certain verses in II Peter and Jude, the New Testament is free from

[33]P. Parker, *The Gospel Before Mark.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.

[34]E. P. Sanders, *The Tendencies of the Synoptic Tradition.* New York: Cambridge, 1969.

[35]J. K. Elliott, "The Synoptic Problem and the Laws of Tradition: A Cautionary Note," *Expository Times,* 82 (5 '71), p. 152.

[36]H. Riesenfeld, "Reflections on the Unity of the New Testament," *Religion,* 3 (1 '73), pp. 35-51.

repetition. The doctrine of the priesthood is not found in any of Paul's letters, but in Hebrews. Thus, the unity of the New Testament comes to expression in its doctrinal progress.

In the thirteen letters of Paul, incorporated in the New Testament canon, Paul developed doctrinal teaching. In fact, we speak of Pauline theology. We do so because we do not wish to confuse his theology with that of John's or Luke's. However, a study of Paul's theology demands a thorough acquaintance with the history of Pauline study together with a knowledge of the different schools and nuances of this research. I am happy to learn that the volume on Pauline theology written by Herman Ribberbos in 1966, entitled *Paulus*, has been translated and will be published before long. And I wish to refer to the valuable work *A Theology of the New Testament* from the hand of George E. Ladd.[37]

The question which has become acute in evangelical circles is that of the various perspectives in Scripture. The Old Testament differs from the New Testament. And within the New Testament we find diversity of scope and interpretation. We, who hold to a view of the unity of Scripture, need to answer the question how Matthew conceives of the Law, what Paul's interpretation is and how James explains the application of the Law.[38]

C. Canon

In his article on contemporary methodological problems in New Testament theology, P. Grech asserts that the areas of debate during the last decade in New Testament theology culminate in two major areas: 1. the unity of the New Testament canon, and 2. the place of the historical Jesus.[39]

Indeed the topic of the New Testament canon has been in much debate. A number of scholars have expressed their views on the canon.[40] Of great significance to the evangelical scholar is the divine element in Scripture. That is, the evangelical acknowledges the Holy Spirit as the primary author of Scripture and the human writers as the secondary authors. In other words, it is a question of authority.

For instance, the epistles of Clement and Barnabas as well as the Shepherd of Hermas were considered canonical in some Christian circles. On the other hand the letter to the Hebrews and the Revelation of John were at one time accepted by the Church, yet later during the second, third, and even fourth centuries were rejected by major portions of the Church.

Research in the patristic era is certainly desirable and

[37]G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.

[38]Cf. R. E. Brown, *New Testament Essays.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965; p. 65.

[39]P. Grech, "Contemporary Methodological Problems in New Testament Theology," *Biblical Theological Bulletin,* 2 (3 '72), pp. 262-280.

[40]Cf. K. Aland, *The Problem of the New Testament Canon.* London: Mowbray, 1962. H. von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible.* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972.

worthwhile. How did the early Christians of the first and second centuries understand the authority, unity, inspiration, and infallibility of Scripture?

IV. *Related Topics*

In respect to the last section, entitled Related Topics, I can only mention certain areas which are of interest to the New Testament theologian. Some work has been done in the area of Gnosticism. Papers have been presented at scholarly meetings, and some books have been written. Also, there is renewed interest in Judaism. Scholars are focusing attention on the New Testament world of the first century A.D. by engaging in background studies pertaining to archaeology, history and linguistics. And last, but certainly not least, the time has come to address ourselves to Patristic studies. First, a one-volume, modern translation of the Apostolic Fathers is a much-needed item. And second, a study of patristic authority in matters of exegesis, inspiration, and the canon would be very welcome.

In this paper, I have tried to point out some areas in which evangelical scholars are making or could make valuable contributions to New Testament scholarship. Many areas remain untouched. Scholars in the past have left their contributions, yet we may not be content with labors of the past. Ours is a new age with new questions. These need answers. Ours is an age of challenge.