

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY FROM A NEW TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *The history of writing comprehensive treatments of Old Testament theology, New Testament theology, and biblical theology shows that some authors pursue a historical reconstruction of theological traditions and proclamation, some authors present a systematic interpretation of content and themes, and some authors offer a combination of both. The outline and content of an Old Testament theology, a New Testament theology, or a biblical theology will be influenced by the personal interests of the author, by the intended readers, and, more mundanely, by word counts stipulated by publishers. At the same time, it can be argued that the character of God's revelation as well as the character of the biblical writings themselves demand that the unity of the biblical message is explained in the context of the diversity and contingency of the biblical writings. The variegated theological truth of Scripture is best explained in the context of the historical realities of its authors and writings, taking into account relevant literary features, and paradigmatically spelling out the significance of the biblical texts for modern readers.*

Key words: *Old Testament theology, New Testament theology, biblical theology, history of research, historical reconstruction, theological interpretation, unity, diversity*

I. DEFINITIONS

The phrase “biblical theology” deserves clarification. As is well known, the term “theology” is not a biblical term: it is never used by the LXX translators nor is it used in the NT.¹ The term θεολόγος was used by Greek philosophers to describe the poets whose texts (λόγος) describe the acts and behavior of a particular god (θεός) or multiple gods, his or her genealogical and dynastic evolution, “and the causal traits which they give to the world.” The earliest examples are references in Plato (*Resp.* 2.379a). Aristotle calls poets such as Hesiod and Homer θεολόγοι (*Metaph.* 983b29; 1000a9), but then describes the highest of the three disciplines of philosophy, which was later called metaphysics, as θεολογική: ὥστε τρεῖς ἂν εἶεν φιλοσοφίαι θεωρητικάί, μαθηματική, φυσική, θεολογική (*Metaph.* 1026a19; cf. 1064b3). The Stoics divide theology into three parts (*theologica tripartita*): the mythical discourse about the gods of the poets, the political reference to the gods in the

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¹ For the following cf. Winrich Löhr, “Theology,” in *BNP* 14:489–96, esp. 489, 493. A short version of this essay was read as a paper at the annual meeting of the ETS in Denver, CO on November 13, 2018.

civic cults, and the “natural theology” that aligns the discourse about the gods with nature (Varro, *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* fr. 6–12).

When the term was used by Christian writers in the second century, it was initially used to describe mythical or hymnic discourse on God (Isidorus, in Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 6.53.5). In the third century, the term θεολογία was linked with an emphasis on teaching (*Strom.* 1.176.1–2). When Eusebius wrote his Τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς θεολογίας (*De ecclesiastica theologia*), he used the term to describe the doctrine of God, in particular the Trinity, in contrast to οἰκονομία, the doctrine of the incarnation and Jesus’ acts of salvation. The definition of theology as the science of the Christian faith—what we would call systematic theology—was coined in the Middle Ages.

This background helps us to grasp the two main aspects of a “theology” of the OT, the NT, or a biblical theology which can be pursued as a retelling of the teaching about God by the biblical authors or as a philosophical-systematic reflection about and interpretation of the biblical texts—or, put differently, as an historical reconstruction of OT traditions or NT traditions and proclamation, or as systematic presentation of the content and themes of the OT and the NT.²

II. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. *The traditional loci method.* Initially, the term “biblical theology” described attempts to demonstrate the foundation of Protestant dogmatics in OT and NT texts, according to the material principle of *sola scriptura*.³ The first extant book title that uses the phrase is Wolfgang Jacob Christmann, *Teutsche biblische Theologie*, published in 1629.⁴ The title of the work by Sebastian Schmidt, published in 1671, is indicative of the program of this early biblical theology: *Collegium Biblicum, in quo dicta scripturae Veteris et Novi testamenti iuxta seriem locorum communium theologicorum disposita dilucide explicantur* (*A Biblical Collection of OT and NT Texts Explicated in Relation to the Se-*

² Jörg Frey, “Zum Problem der Aufgabe und Durchführung einer Theologie des Neuen Testaments,” in *Aufgabe und Durchführung einer Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (ed. C. Breytenbach and F. Frey; WUNT 205; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 3–53, 20.

³ For this section see the helpful survey of Frey, “Aufgabe und Durchführung,” 21–42. For the early period cf. Otto Merk, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments in ihrer Anfangszeit: Ihre methodischen Probleme bei Johann Philipp Gabler und Georg Lorenz Bauer und deren Nachwirkungen* (Marburger Theologische Studien 9; Marburg: Elwert, 1972); see also Heikki Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology: A Story and a Programme* (London: SCM, 1990), 3–90; Peter Balla, *Challenges to New Testament Theology: An Attempt to Justify the Enterprise* (WUNT 2/95; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1997; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998); D. A. Carson, “Current Issues in Biblical Theology: A New Testament Perspective,” *BBR* 5 (1995): 17–41; James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999); D. A. Carson, “Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology,” *NDBT* (2000), 89–104; Dan O. Via, *What is New Testament Theology?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002); James K. Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 13–59; Edward W. Klink and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012); and surveys in OT theologies and NT theologies.

⁴ Wolfgang Jacob Christmann, *Teutsche biblische Theologie* (Kempten, 1629).

ries of Standard Theological Topics).⁵ The outline of “biblical theology” was determined by the loci method of the medieval and contemporary systematic theology.

2. *The historical turn of biblical theology.* The first signs that biblical theology became a more independent enterprise is the conviction by some scholars in the eighteenth century, following the critique of scholastic orthodox theology by Pietists such as Philipp Jakob Spener, that a biblical theology has advantages over systematic-dogmatic theology. The work by Anton Friedrich Büsching, published in 1758, advertises this advantage in the title, *Gedanken von der Beschaffenheit und dem Vorzuge der biblisch-dogmatischen Theologie vor der alten und neuen scholastischen (Thoughts on the Nature and the Advantage of Biblical-Dogmatic Theology over the Old and New Scholastic [Theology])*.⁶ Johann Salomo Semler, in his four-volume *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon (Treatise of the Free Investigation of the Canon)*, published between 1771 and 1775, argued for the necessity of emancipating the study of OT and NT texts from dogmatic theology.⁷ Gotthilf Traugott Zachariä, in his *Biblische Theologie*, also published from 1771 to 1775, rearranged the biblical subjects in order to achieve a greater alignment with the presentation in the OT and NT.⁸

The classic text regarded as the *Geburtsurkunde* (“birth certificate”) of biblical theology is the inaugural lecture of Johann Philipp Gabler at the University of Altdorf in 1787, entitled *De iusto discrimine theologiae biblicae regundisque recte utriusque finibus (The Proper Distinction between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology and the Specific Objectives of Each)*.⁹ Gabler emphasized the historical character of the biblical texts and beliefs which have to be explained from the style, the idiom, and the customs of the relevant historical period. He abandoned the assumed unity of the biblical teaching of the OT and the NT. He concluded that “biblical theology” has, by necessity, an historical character as it conveys what the biblical writers said about divine matters. Since Gabler does not abandon the conviction that the OT and NT convey clear truths that are universally significant, irrespective of the time periods in which they were formulated, he advocates a “double biblical theology” (thus the formulation of Otto Merk):¹⁰ an historically informed and controlled biblical theology, and a

⁵ Sebastian Schmidt, *Collegium Biblicum, in quo dicta scripturae Veteris et Novi testamenti iuxta seriem locorum communium theologorum disposita dilucide explicantur* (Argentorati [Straßburg]: Städel, 1671).

⁶ Anton Friedrich Büsching, *Gedanken von der Beschaffenheit und dem Vorzuge der biblisch-dogmatischen Theologie vor der alten und neuen scholastischen* (Lemgo: Meyer, 1758).

⁷ Johann Salomo Semler, *Abhandlung von freier Untersuchung des Canon* (4 vols.; Halle: Hemmerde, 1771–1775).

⁸ Gotthilf Traugott Zachariä, *Biblische Theologie oder Untersuchung des biblischen Grundes der vornehmsten theologischen Lehren* (4 vols.; Göttingen/Kiel: Boßiegel, 1771–1775).

⁹ Johann Philipp Gabler, “De iusto discrimine theologiae biblicae regundisque recte utriusque finibus,” in *Opuscula academica* (ed. T. A. Gabler and J. G. Gabler; Ulm: Stettin, 1831), 2:179–98; cf. Johann Philipp Gabler, “Von der richtigen Unterscheidung der biblischen und der dogmatischen Theologie und der rechten Bestimmung ihrer beider Ziele,” in *Otto Merk. Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments in ihrer Anfangszeit. Ihre methodischen Probleme bei Johann Philipp Gabler und Georg Lorenz Bauer und deren Nachwirkungen* (Marburger Theologische Studien 9; Marburg: Elwert, 1972), 273–84; John Sandys-Wunsch and Laurence Eldredge, “J. P. Gabler and the Distinction Between Biblical and Dogmatic Theology: Commentary and Discussion of His Originality,” *SJT* 33 (1980): 133–58.

¹⁰ Merk, *Biblische Theologie*, 43.

“biblical theology in the stricter sense of the word” which is the sum of biblical truths which can be the foundation of a reasonable Christian dogmatic theology.

Gabler’s work implied the necessity of differentiating between OT theology and NT theology, projects that were very soon realized. Gabler’s colleague in Altdorf, Georg Lorenz Bauer, published in 1796 a *Theologie des Alten Testaments*¹¹ and, between 1800 and 1802, a *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*,¹² which presents Christology according to the first three Gospels in volume 1; the theology and anthropology according to the first three Gospels and the Christian “theory of religion” according to John in volume 2; Christian religious concepts according to the Apocalypse, Peter, Peter’s second Epistle, and the Epistle of Jude in volume 3; and the teaching of Paul in volume 4. Soon, individual NT authors were treated in separate theological analyses. Paul’s theology was discussed by Gottlob Wilhelm Meyer in 1801¹³ and by Johann Georg Friedrich Leun in 1803, with the telling subtitle “A Companion to the Biblical Theology of the NT.”¹⁴ Ferdinand Christian Baur, in his *Lectures on New Testament Theology* published posthumously in 1864,¹⁵ combined the programmatic conceptions of Gabler and Bauer, acknowledging the interlocking demands of historical reconstruction and interpretation.

William Wrede criticized Baur’s project in his programmatic essay *Über Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten neutestamentlichen Theologie* (*The Tasks and Methods of ‘New Testament Theology’*),¹⁶ published in 1897, for achieving his historical reconstruction only because he managed to align historical developments with the assumed dialectic between Jewish Christianity and Pauline theology and the synthesis of this dialectic in the Johannine project. Wrede criticized the NT theologies of

¹¹ Georg Lorenz Bauer, *Theologie des Alten Testaments oder Abriss der religiösen Begriffe der alten Hebräer. Von den ältesten Zeugen bis auf den Anfang der christlichen Epoche. Zum Gebrauch akademischer Vorlesungen* (Leipzig: Weygand, 1796); ET Georg Lorenz Bauer, *The Theology of the Old Testament, or, A Biblical Sketch of the Religious Opinions of the Ancient Hebrews from the Earliest Times to the Commencement of the Christian Era. Extracted and Translated from the Theologie des alten Testaments of Georg Lorenz Bauer* (trans. Philip Harwood; London: Paternoster, 1838).

¹² Georg Lorenz Bauer, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (4 vols.; Leipzig: Weygand, 1800–1802); this extensive work comprising 1,545 pages was not translated into English.

¹³ Gottlob Wilhelm Meyer, *Entwicklung des Paulinischen Lehrbegriffs. Ein Beitrag zur Kritik des christlichen Religionsystems* (Altona: Hammerich, 1801).

¹⁴ Johann Georg Friedrich Leun, *Reine Auffassung des Christenthums in den paulinischen Briefen. Ein Seitenstück zur biblischen Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Leipzig: Weygand, 1803).

¹⁵ Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Vorlesungen über neutestamentliche Theologie* (ed. Ferdinand Friedrich Baur; 2 vols.; Gotha: Perthes, 1864; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973); ET Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Lectures on New Testament Theology* (ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson and Robert F. Brown; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹⁶ William Wrede, *Über Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1897); repr. in William Wrede, “Über Aufgabe und Methode der sogenannten neutestamentlichen Theologie,” in *Das Problem der Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (ed. G. Strecker; Wege der Forschung 367; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 81–154; ET William Wrede, “The Tasks and Methods of ‘New Testament Theology’ [1897],” in *The Nature of New Testament Theology: The Contribution of William Wrede and Adolf Schlatter* (ed. Robert Morgan; SBT 2/25; London: SCM, 1973), 68–116.

Bernhard Weiß,¹⁷ Willibald Beyschlag,¹⁸ and Heinrich Julius Holtzmann¹⁹ for a lack of clarity regarding methodical questions, and, with regard to Holtzmann, for the failure to achieve a true historical connection.²⁰ Wrede held that the historical descriptions of the theology of the NT, whether conservative or liberal, were too much influenced by their own theological interests and by their concern for the application and normativity of the teaching of the NT. Wrede demanded that anybody who analyzes the theology of the NT authors in terms of an academic, scientific project must be guided by a “pure” interest in knowledge, not guided by personal or theological interests or viewpoints, allowing the scholar to perceive what really happened, following the evidence wherever it leads.²¹

A hundred years later, Heikki Räisänen, in a short volume entitled *Beyond New Testament Theology* (1990), sought to revive Wrede’s vision, in modified form, arguing that biblical studies are “to serve society and mankind within their own limited resources, but not the church in particular,” advocating a program that describes the rise and development of early Christian thought “as an interplay between tradition, experience, and interpretation.”²² Klaus Berger, in his *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums* (*History of the Theology of Early Christianity*; 1994),²³ claims to have written the first comprehensive history of early Christian theology, made possible by leaving behind literary-critical source criticism and relativizing the significance of redaction criticism. Berger seeks to present the historical development, geographically focused, of the theological projects of the NT writers, in terms of a consistent execution of Wrede’s program.²⁴ The subtitle “Theology of the NT” merely indicates that, for Berger, a theology of the NT can be written only as a history of the theology of early Christianity.²⁵ James Barr advocates a biblical theology that is characterized by the history of religion as an historical quantifier.²⁶ Gerd Theißen, in his *Die Religion der ersten Christen. Eine Theorie des Urchristentums* (*The Religion of the Earliest Churches*; 2000),²⁷ criticizes traditional theologies of the NT for providing an insid-

¹⁷ Bernhard Weiß, *Lehrbuch der biblischen Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1868); ET Bernhard Weiss, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (trans. David Eaton [vol. 1] and James E. Duguid [vol. 2]; 2 vols.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1882/1893).

¹⁸ Willibald Beyschlag, *Neutestamentliche Theologie oder geschichtliche Darstellung der Lehren Jesu und des Urchristentums nach den neutestamentlichen Quellen* (Halle: Strien, 1891/1892).

¹⁹ Heinrich J. Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der neutestamentlichen Theologie* (2 vols.; Freiburg: Mohr, 1897).

²⁰ Frey, “Aufgabe und Durchführung,” 27–28, following Otto Merk, “Biblische Theologie II. Neues Testament,” *TRE* 6 (1980): 462.

²¹ Wrede, *Aufgabe*, 10 (84).

²² Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology*, 120, 121.

²³ Klaus Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums. Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (UTB für Wissenschaft: Grosse Reihe; Tübingen: Francke, 1994).

²⁴ Berger, *Theologiegeschichte*, V, 3.

²⁵ Jens Schröter, “Die Bedeutung des Kanons für eine Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Konzeptionelle Überlegungen angesichts der gegenwärtigen Diskussion,” in *Aufgabe und Durchführung einer Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (ed. C. Breytenbach and F. Frey; WUNT 205; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 135–58, 143.

²⁶ Barr, *Concept of Biblical Theology*, 605, 607.

²⁷ Gerd Theißen, *Die Religion der ersten Christen. Eine Theorie des Urchristentums* (3rd rev. ed.; orig. 2000; repr., Gütersloh: Gütersloher, 2003); ET Gerd Theissen, *A Theory of Primitive Christian Religion* (trans.

er's perspective, written for future pastors; he wants to present a scholarly history-of-religions ("religionswissenschaftliche") description and analysis of earliest Christianity, describing "the content of that religion in such a way that it is accessible to men and women whether or not they are religious,"²⁸ employing the language and categories of semiotic theory and the social construction of knowledge. As Johan Vos suggests, Theißen separates what Wrede wanted to see combined, viz. a presentation of early Christian religion and theology.²⁹ A similar, shorter work is Walter Schmithals, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums* (1994).³⁰

3. *Historical-theological descriptions of NT theology.* Adolf Schlatter contrasted his approach to writing a NT theology with the "statistical" inventories of NT thought in Protestant orthodoxy, with the rationalistic concept of doctrinal method, and with the history-of-religions school, accusing them of separating the act of thinking from the act of living.³¹ He emphasizes in his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, published in 1909/1910, that the men of the NT

do not even create the appearance of laying before us timeless items of knowledge independent of historical conditions. Rather, their labor of thought stands in conscious and independent combination with their willing and acting; this labor has its foundation and its material in their experiences and serves them as a means for carrying out their profession. Their thoughts are components of their deeds and hence of their history. Therefore, the task of New Testament theology is not yet exhausted by setting up a catalogue of the thoughts of Jesus and his disciples. By doing this an historical caricature easily arises: a sum of abstract, timeless "doctrines," which are conceived as the content of a consciousness cut off from willing and acting.³²

Despite the fact that Rudolf Bultmann accepted many of the arguments and results of the history-of-religions school, he did not follow Wrede when he wrote his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1948–1953).³³ He acknowledges that since the NT

John Bowden; London: SCM, 1999); Gerd Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches: Creating a Symbolic World* (trans. John Bowden; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999). The book has its origins in the Speaker's Lectures given in Oxford in the spring of 1989 and 1999.

²⁸ Theißen, *Religion der ersten Christen*, 13; Theissen, *Religion of the Earliest Churches*, xiii.

²⁹ Johan S. Vos, "Theologie als Rhetorik," in *Aufgabe und Durchführung einer Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 247–71, 250.

³⁰ Walter Schmithals, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums. Eine problemgeschichtliche Darstellung* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994).

³¹ Cf. Adolf Schlatter, *Zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments und zur Dogmatik. Kleine Schriften* (ed. Ulrich Luck; orig. 1909; repr., Theologische Bücherei 41; München: Kaiser, 1969).

³² Adolf Schlatter, *Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Erster Teil: Das Wort Jesu. Zweiter Teil: Die Lehre der Apostel* (Calw: Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1909/1910), 1:10–11; the second edition appeared in two volumes: Adolf Schlatter, *Die Geschichte des Christus* (Stuttgart: Calwer Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1923); Adolf Schlatter, *Die Theologie der Apostel* (Calw: Calwer, 1922); ET Adolf Schlatter, *The History of the Christ: The Foundation of New Testament Theology* (trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997); Adolf Schlatter, *The Theology of the Apostles: The Development of New Testament Theology* (trans. Andreas J. Köstenberger; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999).

³³ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (9th ed.; ed. Otto Merk; orig. 1948, 1951, 1953; repr., UTB 630; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984); ET Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; 2 vols.; London: SCM, 1952/1955).

is a document of history, “specifically the history of religion,” the interpretation of the NT requires historical investigation; however, rather than analyzing the writings of the NT as the sources for a reconstruction of primitive Christianity as a phenomenon of the historical past, he opts for placing reconstruction at the service of the interpretation of the NT writings “under the presupposition that they have something to say to the present.”³⁴ Bultmann focuses on theological interpretation rather than on historical reconstruction. Still, the outline of his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* is decidedly historical rather than systematic, albeit in a non-chronological manner: after clarifying “Presuppositions and Motifs of NT Theology” in Part I, he presents an anthropological-soteriological analysis of the theologies of Paul and John in Part II³⁵ and “The Development toward the Ancient Church” in Part III. The historical situation of the witnesses of the *kerygma* is only tangentially significant since they share a common position in religion history (the relevance of the Gnostic redeemer myth) and a “deep relatedness in substance” that exists between John and Paul “in spite of all their differences in mode of thought and terminology.”³⁶

Most NT theologies written by German scholars follow a basic historical outline. Max Meinertz was the first Roman Catholic scholar to write a *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1950),³⁷ beginning with a long section on Jesus, in obvious contrast to Bultmann. Hans Conzelmann’s *Grundriss der Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1967)³⁸ largely followed the outline of Bultmann.

Werner Georg Kümmel, in his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1969)³⁹ includes, against Bultmann and Conzelmann, the proclamation of Jesus, before describing the theology of Paul and John. Joachim Jeremias, reacting against Bultmann, in his *Neutestamentliche Theologie. Erster Teil: Die Verkündigung Jesu* (1971),⁴⁰ focuses nearly exclusively on reconstructing the proclamation of Jesus; an “interpretation” of the message of Jesus is found at best in the “systematizing of the proclamation of Jesus.”⁴¹ The short *Grundriß der neutestamentlichen Theologie* (1974)⁴² by Eduard Lohse

³⁴ Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:251 (Bultmann, *Theologie*, 600), in the Epilogue.

³⁵ In Grobel’s translation separated as Part II and Part III.

³⁶ Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:9 (Bultmann, *Theologie*, 361).

³⁷ Max Meinertz, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (2 vols.; Die Heilige Schrift des Neuen Testaments Ergänzungsband I–II; Bonn: Hanstein, 1950).

³⁸ Hans Conzelmann, *Grundriß der Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Einführung in die evangelische Theologie Band 2; München: Kaiser, 1967); ET H. Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1969).

³⁹ Werner Georg Kümmel, *Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments nach seinen Hauptzeugen. Jesus–Paulus–Johannes* (NTD Ergänzungsreihe 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969); ET Werner Georg Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament According to its Major Witnesses: Jesus–Paul–John* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville: Abingdon, 1973).

⁴⁰ Joachim Jeremias, *Neutestamentliche Theologie. Erster Teil: Die Verkündigung Jesu* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1971); ET Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM, 1971).

⁴¹ Gerhard F. Hasel, *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* (orig. 1970; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 107.

⁴² Eduard Lohse, *Grundriß der neutestamentlichen Theologie* (Theologische Wissenschaft 5.1; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1974).

describes Jesus' proclamation, before analyzing Paul, the theology of the Synoptic writers, John, and the (assumed) later texts of the NT canon. A similar outline is found in Leonard Goppelt's *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1975/1976),⁴³ with an extensive presentation of Jesus' proclamation. Alfons Weiser, who wrote the second of two volumes of a Roman Catholic NT theology, entitled *Theologie des Neuen Testaments II. Die Theologie der Evangelien* (1993),⁴⁴ emphasizes Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection as establishing the essential unity of the theologies of the four Gospels.⁴⁵

Peter Stuhlmacher in his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1992/1999),⁴⁶ who also adopts an historical outline, emphasizes the tradition-historical continuity of the theology of the NT witnesses with OT and early Jewish traditions as well as the tradition-historical and theological coherence within the NT texts.

While Kümmel, Lohse, Weiser, and Stuhlmacher emphasize the unity of the theology of the NT in the context of the diversity of the NT texts, the historically arranged descriptions of the theology of the NT by Joachim Gnilka (1994),⁴⁷ Klaus Berger (1994),⁴⁸ and Georg Strecker (1996)⁴⁹ abandon the notion of the unity of the theology of the NT as they assess mutual interdependences and influences without arriving at a theological evaluation.⁵⁰

Hans Hübner presents, in the three volumes of his *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*,⁵¹ fundamental theological prolegomena (the question of canon, covenant, revelation, and the one God of both Testaments) and an existentialist interpretation

⁴³ Leonard Goppelt, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Erster Teil: Jesu Wirken in seiner theologischen Bedeutung. Zweiter Teil: Vielfalt und Einheit des apostolischen Christuszeugnisses* (ed. J. Roloff; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975/1976); ET Leonard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. John E. Alsup; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976/1982).

⁴⁴ Alfons Weiser, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments II. Die Theologie der Evangelien* (Kohlhammer Studienbücher Theologie 8; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1993). The first volume was supposed to be written by Helmut Merklein who passed away in 1999 at the age of 59 years.

⁴⁵ Weiser, *Theologie*, 217–226 (“VII. Der tragende Einheitsgrund: Jesus von Nazareth”).

⁴⁶ Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (2 vols.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992/1999); cf. Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Band 1: Grundlegung. Von Jesus zu Paulus* (3rd rev. ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005); ET Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Daniel P. Bailey; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018).

⁴⁷ Joachim Gnilka, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (HThK, Supplement-Band 5; Freiburg: Herder, 1994); cf. Joachim Gnilka, *Neutestamentliche Theologie. Ein Überblick* (NEchtB: NT Ergänzungsband 1; Würzburg: Echter, 1989). For an evaluation see Rudolf Hoppe, “Überlegungen zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments aus katholischer Sicht,” in *Aufgabe und Durchführung einer Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 59–61.

⁴⁸ Berger, *Theologiegeschichte*.

⁴⁹ Georg Strecker, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (completed and edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm Horn; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1996); ET Georg Strecker, *Theology of the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000). Strecker follows a redaction-critically established outline, beginning with Paul before presenting a reconstruction of the early Christian tradition of Jesus' proclamation, an analysis of the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine school, and what he regards as Deutero-Paulines and of the Catholic Epistles.

⁵⁰ For this verdict cf. Frey, “Aufgabe und Durchführung,” 35.

⁵¹ Hans Hübner, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Band 1: Prolegomena. Paulus. Band 2: Die Theologie des Paulus und ihre neutestamentliche Wirkungsgeschichte. Band 3: Hebräerbrief, Evangelien und Offenbarung. Epilegomena* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990/1993/1995) [1,251 pp.].

of Paul's letters, Hebrews, the Gospels, and Revelation, focusing on a reconstruction of the theological use of the OT, in particular the Septuagint, by the NT authors and on questions of continuity and discontinuity.⁵² He asserts in the Epilogomena that the NT authors who lived and wrote in the context of the authority of Holy Scripture and the Christian *kerygma* saw that the same God in his self-revelation, "the God who spoke in Israel's Scripture as the One who promises—and who continues to speak!—is also the God who revealed himself in the historical *event* Jesus Christ. Thus the God of Scripture is, for the NT authors, *their* God. The God of Scripture is *the divine Father of Jesus Christ*."⁵³

Historical chronological presentations of the theology of the NT have also been offered by Joseph Bonsirven (1951);⁵⁴ Archibald Hunter (1957);⁵⁵ George Eldon Ladd (1974);⁵⁶ Stephen Neill (1976);⁵⁷ and Leon Morris (1986),⁵⁸ who begins with the Pauline writings. Timo Eskola, in his *A Narrative Theology of the New Testament* (2015),⁵⁹ follows an historical sequence, beginning with Jesus' message, continuing with the teaching of earliest Christianity and Paul the theologian, and ending with a chapter on Jewish Christianity (Hebrews, James, 1–2 Peter, Johannine literature), seeking to "construct a synthesis of the theological thinking present in different New Testament writings by focusing on the metanarrative of exile and restoration."⁶⁰

While not billed as a NT theology, James Dunn's *Christianity in the Making* (2003/2009/2015)⁶¹ should be mentioned here as well, as suggested by the first two sentences in volume 1: "Christianity is without doubt the most significant and longest-lasting influence to have shaped the character and culture of Europe (and so also of 'the West') over the last two millennia. To understand Christianity better, its own character and the core elements which made its beliefs and values so influential, remains therefore an important task and a continuing challenge for historical inquiry."⁶² While Dunn writes a history of earliest Christianity in the first century, his description is often highly theological, as his chapters in the first volume on the kingdom of God and the character of discipleship demonstrate. A similar work is

⁵² Cf. description and critique by Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Band 1: Grundlegung. Von Jesus zu Paulus. Band 2: Von der Paulusschule zur Johannesoffenbarung. Der Kanon und seine Auslegung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992/1999), 1:36–37.

⁵³ Hübner, *Biblische Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 276.

⁵⁴ Joseph Bonsirven, *Théologie du Nouveau Testament* (Paris: Aubier, 1951); ET Joseph Bonsirven, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. S. F. L. Tye; London/Philadelphia: Burns & Oates/Westminster, 1963).

⁵⁵ Archibald M. Hunter, *Introducing New Testament Theology* (London: SCM, 1957).

⁵⁶ George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

⁵⁷ Stephen C. Neill, *Jesus Through Many Eyes: Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976).

⁵⁸ Leon Morris, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986).

⁵⁹ Timo Eskola, *A Narrative Theology of the New Testament* (WUNT 350; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

⁶⁰ Eskola, *Narrative Theology*, 14.

⁶¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Christianity in the Making 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); idem, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Christianity in the Making 2; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); idem, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity* (Christianity in the Making 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

⁶² Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 1.

the multi-volume *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (1992/1996/2003/2013) of N. T. Wright,⁶³ who states that he undertakes the project as a historian of the first century,⁶⁴ and that the climax of the volume on Paul is his account of Paul's theology.⁶⁵ Wright interprets the theological views of Jesus and Paul in the context of a reconstructed metanarrative of Israel's exile and restoration through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah.

A focus on historical reconstruction in OT theology can be seen, most prominently, in Gerhard von Rad's *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (1960),⁶⁶ and also in Bruce Waltke's *An Old Testament Theology* (2006),⁶⁷ despite its subtitle "An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach." Waltke analyses and describes "the opalescent theological details of the blocks of writing in the Old Testament."⁶⁸

4. *Recent thematic NT theologies.* Several NT follow the traditional loci method. Frederick Grant, in his *An Introduction to New Testament Thought* (1950)⁶⁹ discusses God, miracles, man, Christ, salvation, and the church. Alan Richardson, in his *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (1958),⁷⁰ presents sixteen chapters on faith and hearing, knowledge and revelation, the power of God unto salvation, the kingdom of God, the Holy Spirit, the reinterpreted messiahship, the Christology of the apostolic church, the life of Christ, the resurrection and ascension and victory of Christ, the atonement, etc., ending with chapters on ministries within the church, baptism, and the Eucharist.

Karl-Hermann Schelkle, in his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1968–1976)⁷¹ also follows the loci method, discussing in four volumes God, creation, God's revelation in Jesus Christ, ethics, and the church.

Maximiliano García Cordero, in his *Teología de la Biblia II et III: Nuevo Testamento* (1972)⁷² presents a thematic theology of the NT based on the conviction that the

⁶³ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 1; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); idem, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 2; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); idem, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 3; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); idem, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 4; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013).

⁶⁴ Wright, *People of God*, 468; Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, xiii.

⁶⁵ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, xv.

⁶⁶ Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Band 1: Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels. Band 2: Die Theologie der prophetischen Überlieferungen Israels* (München: Kaiser, 1960); ET Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology. Volume I. The Theology of Israel's Historical Traditions. Volume II. The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; Edinburgh/Westminster: Oliver & Boyd/Westminster John Knox, 1962/1965).

⁶⁷ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006).

⁶⁸ Ibid., 143.

⁶⁹ Frederick C. Grant, *An Introduction to New Testament Thought: A Comprehensive Survey of the Key Ideas* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1950).

⁷⁰ Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1958).

⁷¹ Karl Hermann Schelkle, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments. I. Schöpfung. II. Gott war in Christus. III Ethos. IV. Jüngergemeinde und Kirche* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1968–1976); ET Karl Hermann Schelkle, *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. William A. Jurgens; 4 vols.; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1971–1978).

⁷² Maximiliano García Cordero, *Teología de la Biblia II et III: Nuevo Testamento* (Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos 335/336; Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1972).

theology of the NT is mainly Christology. He begins with a section on the person of Jesus Christ, followed by sections on the Kingdom of God and the church of Christ; the mystery of God who is one God in three persons; the mystery of redemption; the Christian hope; the Christian calling in terms of faith, hope, and charity; the sacraments; and the religious and moral obligations of the Christian. In his exposition of these themes, García Cordero follows the historical development from the message of Jesus as presented in the Synoptic Gospels to Acts, Paul, the other epistles, and Johannine literature.

Donald Guthrie, in his *New Testament Theology* subtitled “A Thematic Study” (1981),⁷³ combines the loci method with a presentation, for each theological theme, of the historical focus of the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine literature, Acts, Paul, Hebrews, and later NT texts.

Wilhelm Thüsing, in *Die neutestamentlichen Theologien und Jesus Christus* (1981/1998/2001),⁷⁴ seeks to establish the unity of the diverse NT texts and theologies in the proclamation of the historical Jesus who is the Risen One, highlighting continuity and identity.⁷⁵

George Caird, who died in 1984, wrote a *New Testament Theology* (1992)⁷⁶ which begins with the Apostolic Conference and proceeds to present the theology of the NT in eight substantive chapters on the divine plan, the need of salvation, the three tenses of salvation, the fact of salvation, the experience of salvation, the hope of salvation, the bringer of salvation, and the theology of Jesus.

François Vouga, *Une théologie du Nouveau Testament* (2001),⁷⁷ presents the theology of the NT in chapters on salvation, the human condition, politics and the church, the establishment of the church on the foundation of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and eschatology, analyzing the contribution of these themes of the Gospels, Paul, Ephesians, Hebrews, James, First Peter, and the Apocalypse. Vouga asserts that research into the truth of the gospel takes the form of an open dialogue if and when it adopts the reality of the NT texts and their authors whose theological unity is expressed in terms of conflicting interpretations of the history of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.⁷⁸

Philip Esler’s *New Testament Theology: Communion and Community* (2005)⁷⁹ is an unconventional attempt of a thematic presentation of the theology of the NT, based on social identity theory meant to help modern readers of the NT writings to

⁷³ Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology: A Thematic Study* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity, 1981).

⁷⁴ Wilhelm Thüsing, *Die neutestamentlichen Theologien und Jesus Christus. Grundlegung einer Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Band I: Kriterien aufgrund der Rückfrage nach Jesus und des Glaubens an seine Auferweckung, Band II: Programm einer Theologie des Neuen Testaments mit Perspektiven für eine Biblische Theologie. Band III. Einzigkeit Gottes und Jesus-Christus-Ereignis* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1981/1998/2001) [1,211 pp.].

⁷⁵ Cf. Hoppe, “Überlegungen,” 62.

⁷⁶ George B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (ed. L. D. Hurst; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

⁷⁷ François Vouga, *Une théologie du Nouveau Testament* (Le Monde de la Bible 43; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 2001).

⁷⁸ Vouga, *Théologie*, 442.

⁷⁹ Philip F. Esler, *New Testament Theology: Communion and Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

“engage with the authors of these texts on an interpersonal and intersubjective basis that involves hearing their voices as much as reading their words.”⁸⁰

Thomas Schreiner’s *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (2008)⁸¹ has four main sections. Part 1 analyzes the fulfillment of God’s saving promises: the already-not yet, with chapters on the kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels, eternal life in John’s Gospel, and inaugurated eschatology outside the Gospels. Part 2 is entitled “The God of Promise: The Saving Work of the Father, Son, and Spirit,” with chapters on the centrality of God and of Christ, on Jesus as Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God, on Jesus’ saving work, on Paul’s Christology and soteriology, on the Christology of Hebrews through Revelation, and on the Holy Spirit; this is essentially a section on theology proper, Christology, soteriology, and pneumatology. Part 3, entitled “Experiencing the Promise: Believing and Obeying,” discusses the problem of sin, faith and obedience, and the law and salvation history, that is, anthropology and Christian ethics. Part 4 treats the people of the promise and the future of the promise, that is, ecclesiology and eschatology.

Greg Beale’s *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (2011)⁸² overlaps with comprehensive biblical theologies as it analyzes the theological storyline of the OT which is then traced “into and throughout” the NT, with the bulk of the discussion consisting of “attempts to elaborate on the main plotline categories of thought through surveying the places in the New Testament where that thought is expressed.”⁸³ For example, Part 3 is entitled “The Story of the Inaugurated End-Time Resurrection and New-Creational Kingdom as a Framework for NT Theology,” and Part 5 is “The Story of Salvation as Inaugurated End-Time New Creation,” with chapters 15 and 16 entitled “The Inaugurated Latter-Day Justification” and “Inaugurated Latter-Day Reconciliation as New Creation and Restoration from Exile.” If one were to use traditional systematic labels, Beale covers anthropology and soteriology in Part 4, soteriology in Part 5, pneumatology in Part 6, ecclesiology in Parts 7 and 8, and ethics in Part 9.

The thematic approach to an OT theology received a major impetus from Walter Eichrodt’s *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (1933–1939).⁸⁴ He uses “covenant” as the organizing principle, which is of particular significance in the first main part—“God and Nation”—which is followed by “God and World,” and “God and Men.” The thematic organization can readily be seen in the five chapters of Part Three, which in turn discuss the individual and the community in the OT God-man relationship, the fundamental forms of man’s personal relationship with God, the

⁸⁰ Esler, *New Testament Theology*, 8.

⁸¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008); cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Magnifying God in Christ: A Summary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010).

⁸² Gregory K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁴ Walther Eichrodt, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Teil 1: Gott und Volk. Teil 2/3: Gott und Welt/Gott und Mensch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933/1935/1939); ET Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (2 vols.; trans. J. A. Baker; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961/1967).

effect of piety on conduct (OT morality), sin and forgiveness, and the indestructibility of the individual's relationship with God (immortality). The thematic approach of Walter Kaiser (1978)⁸⁵ uses the concept of promise as organizing principle, while Walther Zimmerli (1972),⁸⁶ Claus Westermann (1978),⁸⁷ Horst Dietrich Preuß (1991/1992),⁸⁸ Robin Routledge (2008),⁸⁹ and John Walton (2017)⁹⁰ use God's revelatory actions as organizing principle.

5. *Reconstructions of the theology of NT writings and authors.* Most NT writings and authors have received theological treatments. The literature on the theology of the apostle Paul is hardly manageable. This is not the place to provide a survey.

Several evangelical publications entitled "Theology of the NT" present the theology of the individual authors of the NT writings: Roy Zuck, Darrell Bock, and other members of the Dallas Theological Faculty in a volume entitled *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (1994);⁹¹ I. Howard Marshall in his *New Testament Theology* (2004);⁹² and Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (2005).⁹³

Both Marshall and Thielman provide synthetic, that is, thematic summaries at the end of larger sections on the (Synoptic) Gospels⁹⁴ and Acts, on Paul's letters, and on the non-Pauline letters, as well as in a concluding chapter on the theological unity of the NT. Marshall briefly comments on the biblical context of the NT writings and on the missionary situation of their authors, before presenting, under the heading "Through Diversity to a Common Theology,"⁹⁵ the main theme of the NT, focusing on redemption; the framework of thought within which the NT writers operated; and the ways they developed the main theme. Within this last item, Marshall treats the following subjects: (1) the context of mission—God the Father, and the story of God and humanity; (2) the center of mission: Jesus Christ and the sav-

⁸⁵ Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).

⁸⁶ Walther Zimmerli, *Grundriss der alttestamentlichen Theologie* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1972); ET Walther Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline* (trans. D. E. Green; Atlanta: John Knox, 1978).

⁸⁷ Claus Westermann, *Theologie des Alten Testaments in Grundzügen* (Grundrisse zum Alten Testament 6; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978); ET Claus Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. W. Stott; Atlanta: John Knox, 1982).

⁸⁸ Horst Dietrich Preuß, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Band 1. JHWHs erweählendes und verpflichtendes Handeln. Band 2. Israels Weg mit JHWH* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1991/1992); ET Horst Dietrich Preuss, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. Leo G. Perdue; OTL; Louisville: Westminster, 1995/1996).

⁸⁹ Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).

⁹⁰ John H. Walton, *Old Testament Theology for Christians: From Ancient Context to Enduring Belief* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017).

⁹¹ Roy B. Zuck, ed., *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1994).

⁹² I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004); cf. I. Howard Marshall, *A Concise New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008).

⁹³ Frank Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

⁹⁴ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 491–601, treats the Gospel of John, and Revelation, in Part 4 on the Johannine literature.

⁹⁵ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 710–26.

ing event; (3) the community of mission: the renewed Israel, the response of faith, the Holy Spirit, the church, and the love command; and (4) the consummation of mission: the fullness of salvation. Thielman divides his synthesizing chapter into five sections:⁹⁶ the convergence of the human problem and God's answer to it in Jesus (anthropology and Christology), faith as response to God's gracious initiative (soteriology), the Spirit as the eschatological presence of God (pneumatology), the church as the people of God (ecclesiology), and the consummation of all things (eschatology).

6. *Combination of historical reconstruction and synthetic interpretation.* Four NT theologians combine a reconstructive/descriptive with a synthetic/systematic presentation of the theology of the NT. Eberhard Hahn, who passed away in 2015, published at the age of 76 his *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (2002).⁹⁷ Volume 1 presents in eight parts the diversity of the NT as the history of theology of early Christianity: the proclamation of Jesus and the reception of the Jesus tradition; the proclamation and theology of the oldest Christian churches; the theology of the apostle Paul; the theology of the Pauline school (2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, Pastoral Epistles); the theological concepts of the Hellenistic-Jewish writings independent of Paul (James, 1 Peter, Hebrews, Revelation); the theological concepts of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts; Johannine theology; and the transition to the history of theology of the second century (Jude, 2 Peter, Apostolic Fathers). Hahn presents the results of historical-critical NT research, in the context of repeated methodological discussions, including source critical and tradition historical discussions, in discourse that is close to the (Greek) text of the NT. Volume 2, entitled "The Unity of the New Testament: A Thematic Presentation," has five main parts: (1) the OT as the Bible of early Christianity; (2) God's revelatory activity in Jesus Christ, which includes a section on the work of the Holy Spirit and on the implicitly Trinitarian structure of the NT witness; (3) the soteriological dimension of God's revelatory activity, with a discussion of human beings as created beings and sinners, the problem of the law, salvation, and the gospel as proclamation and actualization of salvation; (4) the ecclesiological dimension of God's revelatory activity, which includes a discussion of NT ethics; and (5) the eschatological dimension of God's revelatory activity. The discussion in Volume 2 is not exclusively systematic but includes sections, for example, on emphases in Jesus' proclamation, in Paul, or in John. Hahn consistently includes sections on the unity of the various themes and their relevance for the church today; for example, the discussion of Christology in §8 presents in four sections the diverse emphases of NT concerning Jesus' person and history from preexistence to his resurrection and ascension, while section five describes the unity of NT Christology and section six includes reflections on the ecclesial traditions and on the tasks of Christology today.

⁹⁶ Thielman, *Theology*, 681–725.

⁹⁷ Ferdinand Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Band 1. Die Vielfalt des Neuen Testaments: Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums. Band 2. Die Einheit des Neuen Testaments: Thematische Darstellung* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002).

Ulrich Wilckens finished the last volume of his six-volume *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (2002–2009),⁹⁸ with a total of 2,134 pages, at the age of 81. Wilckens decided to finish this project with the goal of helping the discipline of NT studies to find its way out of its fundamental crisis and to renew academic theological studies for the faith and life of the church. The first four volumes have the subtitle “history of early Christian theology” which is analyzed in thirty sections; the final two volumes describe “the theology of the New Testament as foundation of the teaching of the church” in sixteen sections. The first and second volumes analyze the life, proclamation, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth; the third volume presents a history of the early church and of Paul’s ministry before providing theological summaries of the NT letters; the fourth volume analyzes the theology of Q and the Gospel of Mark, of the Gospel of Matthew, of the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, of the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles, and of John’s Revelation, ending with a discussion of the emergence of the canon as Holy Scripture. The two systematic volumes analyze and explain the theological significance of the canon for faith and for the life of the church; the one true God in the OT; God’s consummation of salvation in the person and life of Jesus; the death and resurrection of Jesus as the fundamental events of salvation in the proclamation and theology of the early church; the Holy Spirit; the gospel, and its emissaries; baptism as integral reality of the Christian life; the Lord’s Supper as center of the life of the church; the nature of the church; the salvation-historical horizon of the church, with a discussion of unbelieving Israel; the meaning of the law for Christians; the persistence of the church in the truth of the gospel, with a discussion of the offices of the church; the persistence of the church in prayer; creation and the world; eschatology; and the triune God.

Ben Witherington’s *The Indelible Image: The Theological and Ethical World of the New Testament* (2009/2010),⁹⁹ entitled *New Testament Theology and Ethics* in the second edition of 2016,¹⁰⁰ also treats the theology of the NT in two volumes, first presenting the NT evidence in an historical perspective before offering a systematic analysis. In volume one,¹⁰¹ he analyzes the person, identity, and teaching of Jesus; Paul’s theology; the epistles of Jude, James, and Peter; Hebrews, the Gospel of John, and 1 John; the Synoptic Gospels and Acts; and Revelation and 2 Peter. Volume two

⁹⁸ Ulrich Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Band I. Geschichte der urchristlichen Theologie. Teilband 1: Geschichte des Wirkens Jesu in Galiläa. Teilband 2. Jesu Tod und Auferstehung und die Entstehung der Kirche aus Juden und Heiden. Teilband 3. Die Briefe des Urchristentums. Teilband 4. Die Evangelien, die Apostelgeschichte, die Johannesbriefe, die Offenbarung und die Entstehung des Kanons* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2002/2003/2005/2005); Ulrich Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments. Band II: Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments als Grundlage kirchlicher Lehre. Teilband 1: Das Fundament. Teilband 2: Der Aufbau* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2007/2009).

⁹⁹ Ben Witherington, *The Indelible Image: The Theological and Ethical World of the New Testament. Vol. 1: The Individual Witnesses. Vol. 2: The Collective Witness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009/2010).

¹⁰⁰ Ben Witherington, *New Testament Theology and Ethics* (2 vols.; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016).

¹⁰¹ The chapter headings in the first volume, entitled “The Individual Witnesses,” are less cryptic in the second edition; e.g. chapter five, which was entitled “Beloved Theology and Ethics” in the first edition, now has the title “John: Eyewitness testimony from ‘the One Whom Jesus Loved.’”

presents what Witherington calls the symbolic universe and the narrative thought world of Jesus, and—each heading beginning with “The New Testament consensus on”—the Christology, theology proper, pneumatology, soteriology, eschatology, and ethics of the NT.

The brief *New Testament Theology* of Jon Isaak (2011)¹⁰² presents chapters on Paul, the Synoptic writers, John, and the remaining canonical witnesses before describing NT Christology, revelation, theology proper, anthropology, pneumatology, ecclesiology, and eschatology.

Many authors do not write comprehensive biblical theologies but analyze particular themes or authors. A recent example for the former is Andreas Köstenberger and Peter O’Brien’s *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (2001),¹⁰³ for the latter Larry Helyer’s *The Witness of Jesus, Paul, and John: An Exploration in Biblical Theology* (2008).¹⁰⁴

A recent theology of the OT which combines narrative-theological description with thematic presentation is John Goldingay’s *Old Testament Theology* (2003–2009).¹⁰⁵ Volume one provides a theological commentary on the OT story from creation to exile and restoration, with the concluding chapter on the coming of Jesus; each of the eleven chapters, which adopt a narrative approach to the OT texts, begins with the word “God” followed by a verb, which highlights the theological focus of the work. The next two volumes are thematic: volume two describes “Israel’s Faith”: God, Israel, the nightmare (faithlessness and its consequences), the vision (hope, transformation, renewal), humanity, the world, and the nations; volume three describes “Israel’s Life”: living with God (submission and celebration, prayer and thanksgiving), living with one another (family and community, city and nation), and living with ourselves (spirituality and character, leaders and servants).

7. *Comprehensive biblical theologies.* Millar Burrows, who was Professor of Biblical Theology at Yale Divinity School, offered the brief *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (1946).¹⁰⁶ He conceived of biblical theology as a description of “the essential nature and basic features, the real fundamentals of biblical religion,”¹⁰⁷ seeking to combine the descriptive task with establishing the significance of biblical religion for the present. The book consists of a discussion of theological topics taken from systematic theology, such as authority and revelation, God, Christ, the universe, man, the people of God, the divine judgment, sin, judgment and salvation, eschatology, the way of salvation, the Christian life, offices and functions, public worship, Christian service, and moral and social ideals. In order to avoid the impression of conveying

¹⁰² Jon M. Isaak, *New Testament Theology: Extending the Table* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011) [381 pp.].

¹⁰³ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Peter T. O’Brien, *Salvation to the Ends of the Earth: A Biblical Theology of Mission* (NSBT 11; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001; 2nd ed. in preparation).

¹⁰⁴ Larry R. Helyer, *The Witness of Jesus, Paul, and John: An Exploration in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008).

¹⁰⁵ John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology. Volume 1: Israel’s Gospel. Volume 2: Israel’s Faith. Volume 3: Israel’s Life* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003/2006/2009).

¹⁰⁶ Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1946).

¹⁰⁷ Burrows, *Outline*, 3.

unchanging ideas, he seeks to consider each topic “in its chronological development and with reference to its historical background.”¹⁰⁸

Geerhardus Vos, who taught from 1893–1932 in the newly-created Department of Biblical Theology at Princeton, published his *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (1948) a year before his death.¹⁰⁹ Vos defines the discipline of biblical theology as “the study of the actual self-disclosures of God in time and space which lie back of even the first committal to writing of any Biblical document, and which for a long time continued to run alongside of the inscripturation of revealed material.”¹¹⁰ He delineates four main features of biblical theology: the historic progressiveness of the process of revelation, the actual embodiment of revelation in history, the organic nature of the historic process, and the practical adaptability of revelation. The book first discusses the OT in two parts: the Mosaic period of revelation, and the prophetic epoch of revelation; the second, much shorter part of the book treats the NT, discussing revelation connected with John the Baptist, Jesus’ temptation, and Jesus’ public ministry.

Edmund Clowney, in his *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (1961), asserts, in the tradition of Vos, that “the development of biblical theology is redemptive-historical. The divisions of biblical theology are the historical periods of redemption, marked by creation, the fall, the flood, the call of Abraham, the exodus, and the coming of Christ.”¹¹¹ Joseph Blenkinsopp’s *A Sketchbook of Biblical Theology* (1968)¹¹² is a collection of essays on themes and problems of biblical theology, providing a thematic treatment of motifs the author deems important. Hartmut Gese’s *Zur biblischen Theologie* (1977)¹¹³ offers analyses of the biblical understanding of Scripture, death, law, atonement, the Lord’s Supper, the prologue of the Gospel of John, and the question of worldview.

Willem VanGemeren’s *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Testament* (1988)¹¹⁴ is treated by Goldsworthy as a biblical theology because it “seeks to uncover the whole story of the Bible from creation to new creation.”¹¹⁵ Like Vos and Clowney, VanGemeren outlines his project in terms of salvation history, which he divides into twelve periods: creation in harmony, creation in alienation, election and promise, a holy nation, a nation like the other nations, a royal nation, a divided nation, a restored nation, Jesus and the kingdom, the apostolic era, the kingdom and the church, and the New Jerusalem.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁰⁹ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2003).

¹¹⁰ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 5; for the following see *ibid.*, 5–9.

¹¹¹ Edmund P. Clowney, *Preaching and Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 16.

¹¹² Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A Sketchbook of Biblical Theology* (London/New York: Burns & Oates/Herder, 1968).

¹¹³ Hartmut Gese, *Zur biblischen Theologie. Alttestamentliche Vorträge* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1977).

¹¹⁴ Willem VanGemeren, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).

¹¹⁵ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 90.

Hans Klein's *Leben neu entdecken. Entwurf einer Biblischen Theologie* (1991)¹¹⁶ was written for a broader audience. The book is divided into two parts: "Life: Theology of the OT," and "New Life: Theology of the NT," each divided into four chapters. The outline of the two parts, which follow a thematic approach, is symmetrical, and sometimes the headings of chapters and sections are virtually identical. For example, in Part I, chapter 1 is "The God who gives life," with chapter 4 entitled "God gives new life," with the sections: "The renewal of creation"; "The renewal of the people of God"; "The renewal of the individual"; "Eternal life in the presence of God"; and "The theological meaning of the expectation of new life." Correspondingly, Part II, chapter 2 is "The God who gives new life," with chapter 4 entitled "The victory of the new life," with the sections: "The time of the events of the last days"; "The place of the final events"; "The resurrection of the dead"; "The final judgment"; and "The consummation."

Brevard Childs's *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (1992)¹¹⁷ combines reconstruction and interpretation. He first describes "The discreet witness of the OT," which follows first a general chronological outline from creation to Babel, the patriarchal traditions, Mosaic traditions, possession of the land, the judges, the monarchy, the divided kingdom, and exile and restoration, before discussing the prophetic tradition, the apocalyptic tradition, the wisdom tradition, and the tradition of the Psalms. The section "The discreet witness of the NT" describes the church's earliest proclamation, Paul's gospel, the formation of the Gospels, the theology of the four Gospels, the witness of Acts, and the post-Pauline age. A third major section presents "Theological reflection on the Christian Bible," with ten systematic chapters on the identity of God; God the creator; covenant, election, the people of God; Christ the Lord; reconciliation with God; law and gospel; humanity: old and new; biblical faith; God's kingdom and rule; and the shape of obedient life: ethics.

Scott Hafemann's *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith: Understanding the Heart of the Bible* (2001) summarizes the theology of the OT and NT with the purpose of presenting "the one true God."¹¹⁸ In the two volumes that he edited—*Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect* (2002)¹¹⁹ and *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (2007)¹²⁰—he presents methodological and thematic studies. The latter volume has thematic essays on the covenant relationship, the commands of God,

¹¹⁶ Hans Klein, *Leben neu entdecken. Entwurf einer Biblischen Theologie* (Calwer Taschenbibliothek 23; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1991).

¹¹⁷ Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (London: SCM, 1992); cf. Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology: A Proposal* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2002).

¹¹⁸ Scott J. Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith: Understanding the Heart of the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 20.

¹¹⁹ Scott J. Hafemann, ed., *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002).

¹²⁰ Scott J. Hafemann and Paul R. House, eds., *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping Unity in Diversity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).

the atonement, the servant of the Lord, the day of the Lord, the people of God, and the history of redemption.

Charles Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (2003),¹²¹ after 100 pages of prolegomena, provides “A Sketch of Biblical Theology” in 800 pages, following a thematic outline with four main parts—“God’s Order,” “God’s Servant,” “God’s People,” and “God’s Way.” Each of the twenty chapters is organized symmetrically in four parts—“OT: Proclamation,” “OT: Promise,” “NT: Proclamation,” and “NT: Consummation.” For example, in Part 1, “God’s Order,” chapter 3 discusses “The Lord of History.” In the section “OT: Proclamation,” Scobie’s discussion is structured by the following headings: “Salvation history,” “The story line,” “God acts in history,” “God speaks in history,” and “Remember the former things.” Subsequently, the section “OT: Promise” discusses “Prophetic eschatology,” “Signs of the times,” “Judgment in history,” “Salvation in history,” and “The time of the end.” In the section “NT: Fulfillment,” Scobie’s discussion headings are “The climax of salvation history,” “The story line,” “God acts in history,” “God speaks in history,” and “Do this in remembrance of me.” Finally, the section “NT: Consummation” analyzes “Prophetic eschatology,” “Signs of the times,” “Judgment in history,” “Salvation in history,” and “The time of the end.” The chapter ends with theological reflections on “The Lord of History.”

James Hamilton’s *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (2010)¹²² is an example of a biblical theology which focuses on a particular theme that is regarded as fundamental, or descriptive, of the entire Bible. Hamilton argues in chapter 1 that the unity that holds the diverse biblical writings together is the concept of “God’s glory in salvation through judgment,” a phrase that is repeated in each of the following six chapters which treat the Torah, the Prophets, the Writings, the Gospels and Acts, the Letters of the NT, and Revelation; chapter 8 replies to objections to the suggested centrality of “God’s glory in salvation through judgment” as the theme of the Bible, and chapter 9 discusses “God’s glory in salvation through judgment in ministry today.” A similar treatment is offered by Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (2012).¹²³

Thomas Schreiner, in his *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (2013),¹²⁴ presents central themes of the biblical writings by analyzing, in thirty-four chapters, the books of the OT and of the NT; the twelve minor prophets are treated in a single chapter, the Gospel of Luke is combined with Acts, and Paul’s letters are treated in a single chapter.

¹²¹ Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

¹²² James Hamilton, *God’s Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010).

¹²³ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

¹²⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013).

Jeffrey Niehaus's three-volume *Biblical Theology* (2014–2017)¹²⁵ employs the concept of God's covenants with humankind and with Israel to outline the structure of biblical theology. The result is a general salvation-historical outline from the creation covenant and Noahic covenant via the Abrahamic covenant and the Mosaic covenant to the new covenant. In each volume the reality of the respective covenants is described in thematic terms.

John Goldingay's *Biblical Theology* (2016),¹²⁶ as did his OT theology, focuses on God's revelation and actions, as the subtitle "The God of the Christian Scriptures" indicates. Goldingay discusses in eight chapters God's person, God's insight (embodied in the world, declaratory, testified to, imperative, inspiring, diverse), God's creation (the heavens and the earth, the human community, the nation, human beings, the person, waywardness and its consequences), God's reign (in Israel, through Jesus), God's Anointed (Christology), God's children (the congregation and its servants), God's expectations (ethics, worship), and God's triumph (eschatology).

III. METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

This survey of publications that present a theology of the OT, a theology of the NT, or a biblical theology confirms that what John McKenzie wrote nearly 45 years ago is still true today: "Biblical theology is the only discipline or sub-discipline in the field of theology that lacks generally accepted principles, methods, and structure. There is not even a generally accepted definition of its purpose and scope."¹²⁷ More recently, James Mead says that there are two kinds of water: muddy water and deep water, asserting that "biblical theology is deep water" which all too easily can appear to be also muddy water.¹²⁸ I want to offer the following methodological observations.

1. *Biblical theologies cannot be purely historical reconstructions.* I use the phrase "biblical theology" here as shorthand for OT theologies, NT theologies, and comprehensive biblical theologies. Wrede's demand of an uninterested "pure" historical investigation is hermeneutically naïve. All exploration of historical texts is shaped in one way or another by the historical context and the theological convictions of the exegete.¹²⁹ It was not Wrede himself, but the reality of the progress and regress of the historical-critical investigation of the OT and NT in the twentieth century which caused scholars to focus nearly exclusively on historical questions, that is, on historical reconstructions. These reconstructions largely remained speculative, as Childs

¹²⁵ Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Biblical Theology, Volume 1. The Common Grace Covenants. Volume 2. The Special Grace Covenants: Old Testament. Volume 3. The Special Grace Covenants: New Testament* (Wooster: Weaver, 2014–2017).

¹²⁶ John Goldingay, *Biblical Theology: The God of the Christian Scriptures* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016).

¹²⁷ John L. McKenzie, *A Theology of the Old Testament* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 15; quoted by Scobie, *Biblical Theology*, 3.

¹²⁸ Mead, *Biblical Theology: Issues, Methods, and Themes*, 12.

¹²⁹ Thus, forcefully, Frey, "Aufgabe und Durchführung," 28.

and Stuhlmacher have repeatedly reminded us.¹³⁰ Most scholars came to believe that the study of the OT and of the NT showed their content to be historically and theologically diverse, even contradictory. When writing an OT theology, should one include a section on the theology of “P” or on the theology of a reconstructed recension of “P”? A section on the theology of various redactional levels of what critics call Second Isaiah whose “textual habitat” has “decreased quite substantially”?¹³¹ A section both on canonical Mark and on the recension of Mark that Matthew and Luke used?¹³² A section on traditional Q¹³³ or on the version of Q which Matthew used and on the version of Q that Luke used?¹³⁴

As a result of the increasingly and confusingly diverse hypotheses on oral and literary sources and traditions which even experts have a hard time keeping track of, the suggestion of a consistent OT theology, or NT theology, let alone an overall biblical theology, hovers, for many, somewhere between impossible and ludicrous. It is not a coincidence that it is scholars who are less concerned about the purity of their reputations as scholars than about the health of the church who have written OT theologies, NT theologies, and comprehensive biblical theologies.

2. *The historical character of the biblical writings must be recognized in a biblical theology.* Since there is agreement on the above criticism of Wrede—our understanding of historical texts is shaped by our historical and hermeneutical context—it seems obvious, whether or not we accept that Gabler should determine the character of biblical theology, that a theology of the Hebrew Scriptures, a biblical theology of the NT, and a comprehensive biblical theology would explore the theological convictions of the biblical authors in historical context. If the church believes that God revealed himself “to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son” (Heb 1:1–2), summaries of the theological content of God’s revelation, as inscripturated in what we call the OT and the NT, should plausibly take into account both the stages of salva-

¹³⁰ Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970); Peter Stuhlmacher, “Historische Kritik und theologische Schriftauslegung,” in *Schriftauslegung auf dem Wege zur biblischen Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 59–127; Peter Stuhlmacher, *Historical Criticism and Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Toward a Hermeneutics of Consent* (trans. R. A. Harrisville; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

¹³¹ Ulrich Berges, “The Book of Isaiah as Isaiah’s Book: The Latest Developments in the Research of the Prophets,” *OTE* 23.3 (2010): 559.

¹³² On the latter see Andreas Ennulat, *Die ‘Minor Agreements.’ Untersuchungen zu einer offenen Frage des synoptischen Problems* (WUNT 2/62; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1994), esp. 417–28.

¹³³ Cf. Christopher M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity. Studies on Q* (Edinburgh/Peabody, MA: T&T Clark/Hendrickson, 1996); John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

¹³⁴ For the latter see Dieter Lüthmann, *Die Redaktion der Logienquelle* (WMANT 33; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1969); Migaku Sato, *Q und Prophetie. Studien zur Gattungs- und Traditionsgeschichte der Quelle Q* (WUNT 2/29; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988); Daniel Kosch, *Die eschatologische Torä des Menschensohns. Untersuchungen zur Rezeption der Stellung Jesu zur Torä in Q* (NTOA 12; Freiburg/Göttingen: Universitätsverlag/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990); cf. Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (EKK 1/1–4; Zürich/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger/Neukirchener, 1985–2001), ET Ulrich Luz, *Matthew* (3 vols.; trans. W. C. Linss; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001–2005).

tion history and the historical character of the biblical writings and the historical location of their human authors.

The OT theology of Goldingay, the NT theologies of Hahn and Wilckens, and the biblical theology of Childs are good models for how this can be done. At the same time, it should be noted that the multivolume publications of Goldingay, Hahn, and Wilckens serve as a warning about the scope of combining historical reconstruction and synthetic interpretation. A narrative or canonical approach helps reduce or avoid altogether the need to take into account hypothetical and diverse reconstructions of the tradition history of, for example, the Pentateuch and the Gospels. Eskola has shown how to do this.

3. *The theological content of the biblical writings determines the content of a biblical theology.* Theological significance is found in God's verbal revelation and in God's interventions in history. It has been a challenge to provide a plausible outline of an OT theology, a NT theology, and a comprehensive biblical theology. It is surely fair to say that the audience helps determine the outline of such projects: popular audiences may benefit from a book-by-book treatment; students and scholars will likely benefit from an outline that focuses on major periods such as the patriarchs, the exodus and early Israel, the monarchy, the exilic period, or the proclamation of Jesus, the Jerusalem church, and Paul; a combination of an historical outline with a theological synthesis will be of interest to all audiences, depending on the length of the project. The theology of writings of particular historical periods is easier to outline than thematic sections or projects, especially if the author works with a controlling center or theme of the OT, the NT, or the entire Bible. It is self-evident that in writing a biblical theology one describes what the biblical texts say about God; while beginning every chapter heading with a reference to God is consistent with this goal, it is also tiring. The imposition of categories from systematic/dogmatic theology was a problem in the early decades of the loci method and continues to be a challenge.

Using biblical categories as engines for the classification and outline of a biblical theology is not without potential pitfalls: the category of "the kingdom of God" is referred to in the OT and the NT only occasionally, rarely in Paul's writings;¹³⁵ the term "covenant" is frequent in the OT (284 references) but not a controlling term in the NT (33 references); if "covenant" is taken as a controlling category, care should be taken that the outline and content of "covenantal theologies" of the OT and NT do not owe more to existing hermeneutical and ecclesial presuppositions of the interpreter than to the analysis of the biblical texts. The terms "exodus" and "exile" are exceedingly rare: they occur more often in headings inserted by editors of editions of the Bible rather than in the biblical texts; biblical theologies that use "exodus" or "return from exile" as controlling categories seem to rely more on reconstructions of tradition history than on the biblical material. More complex categories used to present the material may reflect the personal in-

¹³⁵ Only in Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 4:20; 6:9; 15:24, 50; Gal 5:21; Eph 5:5; Col 4:11; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:5; 4:1, 18; cf. Col 1:12, 13.

terests of the biblical theologian; this seems to be the case in Greg Beale's *New Testament Biblical Theology*, as the subtitle—"The Unfolding of the OT in the New"—indicates: a look at the table of contents demonstrates a controlling interest in salvation history, the already and not-yet of creation and new creation, with the result that the term "eschatological" is used ten times and the phrase "inaugurated end-time" thirteen times, while the word "Jesus" occurs only once and the term "Christ" twice. Biblical theologies which work with a controlling thematic center are helpful in highlighting the unity of the OT, the NT, and of Scripture, but more often than not this comes at the expense of describing the diversity and contingency of God's revelation in specific historical contexts.

It might be understandable that an OT scholar jokes that the NT is "a series of Christian and ecclesial footnotes to the OT,"¹³⁶ but this assertion is a serious theological misjudgment and surely an insult both of Jesus' proclamation and Paul's theology. The statement, "The New Testament is an interpretation, or series of interpretations, of the OT in the light of the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth,"¹³⁷ is less seemingly polemical, but still inadequate when we take into account the literary genres and the purposes of the NT texts: the four Gospels are biographies of Jesus which contain biblical interpretation but were not written for that purpose, and neither the long Book of Acts nor Paul's letters are interpretations of the OT, irrespective of the fact that these authors regard the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the fulfilment of God's revelation in Israel. Much more helpful is Goldsworthy when he asserts, "If we are correct in maintaining that the NT sees the death and resurrection of Jesus as the *telos*, the intended goal of history, then we have to conclude that the meaning of history is to be found in Christ."¹³⁸

While the author of an OT theology may plausibly decide not to put Jesus Christ at the beginning or at the center of his outline and presentation, authors of NT theologies and of comprehensive biblical theologies must take at least three realities seriously: without the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, there would be no NT writings and no church and thus no audience for an NT theology or a comprehensive biblical theology; the divine identity of Jesus, the crucified and risen *Kyrios*¹³⁹ is by necessity a fundamental reality in a plausible description of the theology of the NT witnesses; the fact that the NT canon begins with four biographies of Jesus firmly anchors at least a NT theology in the person, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. Models for a such a fundamental focus on Jesus are the NT theologies of Goppelt, Stuhlmacher, Schnelle, Hahn, and Wilckens.

4. *The literary character of biblical texts should shape in some way biblical theology.* Since biblical theology is pursued in service to the church which, historically, has accept-

¹³⁶ Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, 1:24, awkwardly defended in 2:13. Goldingay does not explain the literary genre of this statement: he may not have meant it as a joke.

¹³⁷ Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, 151.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹³⁹ Cf. Richard J. Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Richard J. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

ed the authority of the Scriptures, literary analyses are relevant as well: sapiential sayings, parables, and psalms of lament and praise, have different implications for the life of the church than the imperatives in didactic texts in the Gospels and in Paul's letters. The Gospels are not narrative compositions modeled on fiction, nor theological tracts addressing problems in a particular church, but biographies of Jesus the Messiah: the Gospel of Mark should be read with a primary focus on Jesus, and only secondarily with a focus on Mark's theology.

Since present readers of the OT and NT, depending on denomination and theological socialization, may be tempted to read scriptural statements as law, or as personal promise, or as ancient history, comments on a proper understanding of biblical historiography, legal texts, poetry, wisdom literature, genealogy, metaphor, etc., however brief, would seem to be indispensable in theologies of the OT and NT.

5. *The historical audiences of the biblical writings should be taken into account.* The date of composition of the biblical texts should not be ignored, as is sometimes the case, although in some instances it may be difficult if not impossible to establish a plausible date. The historical situation of the audiences of the biblical writers cannot always be determined, especially with regard to the OT writings; we are on firmer ground for most of the NT texts.

It would be helpful if and when, for example, OT theologies comment on how Psalm 119 would have been heard not only by the faithful but also by Israelites and Judeans attracted to the worship of Baal; or if NT theologies comment on how Rom 3:21–31 would have been understood not only by the believers but also by worshippers of Isis who visit one of the Roman house churches. Such an outsider perspective would be a helpful tool in the communication of biblical theology today.

6. *The present readers of the biblical texts require some attention.* While it is not the task of a biblical theology to incorporate a full interaction with systematic theological questions which arise in the contemporary cultural context of the author, which is the task of dogmatic/systematic theology, and while a biblical theology is not the same as Christian proclamation, the description of a biblical theology which makes truth claims must be meaningful both for students and pastors, as well as for missionaries, evangelists, and even non-Christians who are looking for reasons regarding the plausibility of the convictions of the biblical authors.¹⁴⁰ For authors and readers who accept that the Scripture consisting of the OT and NT is the inspired and authoritative word of God, the distance between the historical meaning of the biblical text and the contemporary significance of the biblical text generally should not be a deep crevasse on a glacier from which there is no escape.

In a biblical theology that seeks to be relevant for the church, the salvation-historical "point in time" of modes of faith, worship, and behavior will be spelled out: Israelites were required to bring sin offerings, but followers of Jesus are not

¹⁴⁰ See generally Frey, "Aufgabe und Durchführung," 43–45.

required to do so since their faith unites them with the reality of Jesus' death on the cross as *hilasterion*, the atoning presence of God.

7. *Writing a comprehensive biblical theology is an exercise in humility.* If a comprehensive biblical theology includes a full OT theology and NT theology, and if it includes both reconstruction and interpretation, it can easily become a massive, say, ten-volume work which includes historical, literary, and theological reconstruction and systematic interpretation. This is possible, given the length of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* which includes exegesis, historical reconstruction, and theological analysis, published in four sections with a total of seventy-three paragraphs in twelve volumes (the study edition has thirty volumes) and a total of 9,000 pages (of the German original); however, Barth's project also serves as a warning that the attempt to write a comprehensive presentation may never be completed. Since most authors want to finish projects, a truly comprehensive biblical theology—one that does justice to the requirements of historical, literary, and theological analyses of the OT and the NT—will not be able to provide detailed exegetical justifications for every item of its theological analysis. The author of a comprehensive biblical theology thus must have the courage to build much of his presentation on the historical, literary, and theological work done by other OT and NT scholars. Humility is a biblical virtue, as the psalmist says, "The Lord sustains the humble but casts the wicked to the ground" (Ps 147:6), and as Jesus teaches, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt 11:29–30).