

Thinking Through Our Task: History and Methodology of New Testament Theology

Let me open us in a word of prayer.

Father, as we seek to plumb the depths of Your Holy Scriptures, and as we seek to be true to the original intent of the author inspired by You, we recognize that this is a task that is extremely difficult. We are thankful that You have given Your church Your Holy Spirit, and You have also given us a Word that speaks deeply and richly in ways that we cannot even imagine. Father, we ask that Your Holy Spirit would illumine to us the text of Scripture. We pray that we would be diligent in our pursuit of understanding You as You reveal Yourself in the pages of Your Holy Scriptures. We ask that through all of this we would bow the knee to You, worship You, and proclaim Jesus our Lord and Savior. In His name we pray. Amen.

We normally open with a homily, but for the sake of time I am going to plunge ahead. I am going to put off until next time what I was planning on bringing in that context. Instead I would like to plunge right into our discussion coming out of last time. Last time we looked at a drawing about the relationship between author and audience. We ended talking about the author, audience, and the cultural context and backgrounds. In the biblical context we are talking Greco-Roman and Jewish backgrounds. If the author is Paul, and he is speaking to an audience in Corinth, he is not so culturally immersed that he is just giving them culture. He is actually drawing his thought from at least two spheres: the Old Testament and Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes in by superintending the whole process. That is the normal means of inspiration. There are times when the Holy Spirit simply reveals and tells someone exactly what to say. But usually it is not that way. As the reader, we have our own cultural context, and last time we talked about trans-cultural application. I want to clarify any possible misunderstandings from last time. I am not trying to say that our culture constrains our interpretation of the New Testament in that we read our culture back into the New Testament. I am not trying to say that we only let things fit into our culture that we want to fit into our culture. In fact, I have heard at least one person use the term “transforming culture,” and we want to see our culture transformed for the sake of the Gospel. I am not saying that culture is static, but culture provides us with the situations in which we have to live out the trans-cultural truths of Scripture.

Let me give another example of that from 1 Corinthians 16:19-20. Paul is coming to a conclusion, so he says at the end of 1 Corinthians, “The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.” Do you practice that in your church? I know of a church that did practice it. When we were in England, near Cambridge, there was a charismatic church with a godly man who was preaching from the pulpit. He came across that passage and got a burning sense that he needed to preach this to his congregation. He instructed them to greet one another with holy kisses. He illustrated that on a regular basis on a number of weeks. He came in, and as soon as he saw a fellow believer from his church he would run up to the person and give him or her a peck. One of his friends came to him and asked, “Do you notice that you have a tendency to greet with holy kisses mostly females?” He did not intend anything intimate in it, but it was more natural. It was also noted to him that he was quicker to greet the kind of women that he might find more attractive. He did not mean anything wrong, and as soon as that was pointed out to him he stopped the practice. Unfortunately he had already unleashed it on his church, so they were still greeting one another with holy kisses. He realized he needed to stop it because a kiss in Western culture means something different than it did in the first century. Middle Easterners greet one another this way. The people who are good friends come up to one another and kiss each other on the cheek three times. Guys do this too. It is hard

to know the exact context in the first century, but it was probably much more akin to the Middle Eastern form of greeting than it would be for me to run up and give someone a kiss. When I look at that text I realize that the culture has changed, and people could misunderstand greeting one another with a holy kiss.

On the other hand, we do not decide that the text does not apply. That is not what I am saying, and that is not what this diagram says. The diagram says we need to look at the relationship between author and audience and understand what that meant there. Paul was saying to greet one another in a friendly, intimate fashion, as if you are good friends. You might even greet each other as if you are in the same family. That is what is trans-cultural. The kiss is the outward expression of the trans-cultural value that he is trying to convey to his audience. We have to ask what that means for us. This will have a different application for each culture. People often greet one another in different ways in each country. When I was in England the typical way to greet someone is not by shaking hands. You keep your hands firmly in your pockets. I came back to the United States, and I was interviewing for the position at Covenant Seminary. I was in the midst of a cultural adjustment because I had not been off the plane for that long. The first thing that happened as I walked across campus was that a guy who recognized me greeted me with a great big handshake. The expression of greeting changes from culture to culture. The point is that in the church we should greet one another and interact like we are really in fellowship. Your context may vary. It might mean a handshake, a side hug, a gentle nod from across the room, and a good bow to one another. But that is the idea. This is also supposed to transform our culture.

Let me give a point of specific application. I am a good Presbyterian, and I have been in Presbyterian churches for a long time. Therefore I know the proper way to enter into a pew! You are to give a vague acknowledgement to the person sitting next to you. If you are already seated, your main obligation when the person comes and sits down is to move your coat over a few inches so that they feel welcome to sit at the bench! I think there is something fundamentally wrong about that. We are not really applying this text in its real form. We need to really greet one another like we are sincerely in fellowship with one another. It does not mean we need to peck each other on the cheek, but we need to do something more than just move the coat.

That example was simply for the purpose of giving another illustration of how this diagram works. This is a lot more complex than simply reading Scripture and applying it exactly. It is also a lot more accurate to how we should approach Scripture. It is complex because at times it would be easy to write something off as if it is not culturally applicable when deep down it probably does apply. We have to be careful of that danger.

It has been noted that trans-cultural application seems so subjective. How do we know if something really applies? I wish there was a simple matrix for how to make application decisions, but it is not that easy. There are certainly things that we need to take in context. What is the author trying to say, and if he were to come to us, how would he say that in our categories? If you think about it in that way, it removes some of the subjectivity from the process. Our application has always been fairly subjective. This brings out the elements that should be subjective. You should look for cultural analogue. If you have an exact cultural overlap you can bring it right into your culture. If there is no overlap, there may be analogous things going on in the culture. This also allows us to bring this alive to contexts such as bioethical decisions. Honestly, Jesus and Paul did not directly address the issue of the cloning of embryos. That is not in the Bible. We have to ask if there are some trans-cultural principles that show up in multiple locations in Scripture that speak to the issue. Jesus and Paul do not directly speak to whether or not you should take care of personal e-mail on company time. That is an example in which it truly is subjective. There are a lot of things to take into account in something like that. You should find the right

principles in Scripture and then figure out exactly what your situation is. Some employers are happy for you to write personal e-mails. You have to take that into account. Application is corporate, and it is also individual. It depends on your context. It is subjective at times, but it is not purely subjective.

Let me remind you about the hermeneutical spiral. It says that we have enough reason to think that our pre-understanding does not over constrain an interpretation of a text. It disagrees with the idea that all we are doing in interpretation is confirming our own biases. We can spiral into a more accurate understanding of the text in terms of what it meant author-to-audience.

Let us move onto talk about history, task, and methodology of New Testament theology. In the diagram we just talked about I articulated a reason to understand New Testament history. You can see that we dare not just abstract Scripture immediately into our own context. We have to understand historically what Paul said historically to the church in the historic Corinth—historically! That is why we study New Testament history.

I want to move into the other half of the title of this lesson and talk a little bit about New Testament theology. On the way, I want to talk about the history of the study of the New Testament. When I talk about history I mean the eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century history of interpretation. That is what we are going to talk about for a minute.

In every field of academic study there are always some things that are assumed by the people engaging in that study. In other words, if you are a biologist there are things you know that a biologist has to know before you can start talking. If you are going to be a physicist there are things you have to know. It is beyond just knowing principles of physics. You have to know the history of the study of physics. For instance, you have to know something about Newton and Einstein. People who talk about physics might use phrases such as Newtonian mechanics, Einsteinium physics, or the theory of general relativity. If you do not understand those words and the history of association with those words, you will not be able to enter into the discourse or read the books on physics. Physics may not be your strong suit. One of the reasons you may not like physics is because you do not know enough of the history to enter into discussion. In biology you have to know something about Darwin. It is almost as though he is always behind the picture anytime someone starts talking about biology. In the news anytime a biological issue comes up, at some stage there is going to be at least one sentence in the article or the television interview in which the questions that Darwin raised are back there. The person may agree with Darwin, revise what he said, or completely throw his ideas out. But he is always there. If you do not know the history of that discipline and what Darwin did, you are lost. It is the same thing when you read the New Testament.

I admit that the first 28 pages of our textbook by Ladd are complicated. You probably did not understand it because he mentions all these historical figures known by anyone who has ever worked in the discipline. But you do not know them. That means that sometimes you do not understand why questions come up and are addressed. It is as though you came completely out of any context in association with the current teaching of biology. If you do not know anything about Darwin and you suddenly plunged in and heard people talking about why one species led to another and at what point in time that happened, you would be clueless. Why are they even asking that question? It is the same thing going on with New Testament history.

I want to talk about some of the movements, trends, and keys to understanding contemporary New Testament study. We will talk about the names that you do not know that you need to know. Regarding movements and trends, there is information you need to know that goes all the way back to the

Renaissance. The Renaissance was an intellectual movement, a classical revival, and a revival of language. It came out of the Middle Ages. Classical revival is a return to the classics, the glories of Greece and Rome. There was a fascination with Roman architecture, forms of politics, economics, literature, and art. That is the Renaissance revival. In the midst of the Renaissance, there was also a revival of the careful study of documents. Skepticism was not wholly missing before, but there was an added twist of skepticism that came in at times. One of the most important things was a document known as the Donation of Constantine. The Donation of Constantine was a document that had surfaced and had subsequently been employed by the Catholic Church. The great Emperor Constantine, the first great Christian emperor, donated certain territories to the church. The document was used to justify the ongoing work of the church in the Roman Empire. It represented giving the pope primacy over all the churches in the Roman Empire. But in the fifteenth century the document was shown to be a lie. It was probably written in the eighth century, which was 500 years after Constantine was actually alive. It was shown to be such on the basis of the use of language that was employed, the lack of knowledge of actual historical events in the fourth century, and other things. Suddenly this pretty important document that was used by the Catholic Church to substantiate the strength of the papacy was shown to be a completely artificial construct. One of the ramifications of that is then people began wondering what else in the church was a lie. Skepticism entered into the church. There was something good about that because the document was false. There is also something dangerous about the question.

From there we move into the Enlightenment. The basic principle of the enlightenment is that reason is the chief arbiter of all that is true. Faith is not, love is not, but reason is. If you want to know what is true, it needs to be able to be displayed in logical thought. That is the enlightenment. As the enlightenment progressed into modernity, there was an increasing skepticism about the historicity of the Bible. Modernity subsumed all faith under rationality. Here is a great title of one of Kant's books. This does not illustrate all of his thought; Kant was a great nineteenth-century philosopher. Emmanuel Kant wrote a book called *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone*. In other words, it is a book about what we can know about religion that comes to us simply through the dictates of reason and not through revelation. That is the Enlightenment at its highest. That was not all of Kant's faith, but the title itself is so illustrative of the Enlightenment. That is where we are in the nineteenth century. There are a lot of other names I could throw in there, but you just need to know that in the nineteenth century people were becoming skeptical. Not everyone was doing this, but some were.

Now let us talk about selected keys to understanding contemporary New Testament study. This is what I know. This is what I am almost always speaking to in the back of my head. If you hear me say something and then qualify it, I might be qualifying it because I know some of the trends in historical New Testament study. I am trying to negotiate those trends. You need to know what some of these trends are.

The first trend is the quest for the historical Jesus. If reason is the arbiter of all that is true, and if the New Testament documents are not fully historically reliable (as the century progressed they were considered less and less reliable), then the Gospels cannot produce an accurate picture of who Jesus is. Let me give you a key example of this. Reason dictates that events always happen via cause and effect. There is a lot of philosophical thought going into that whole issue. If you are an Enlightenment person, that is something that you would hold. Cause and effect is always understood in terms of natural sequences and natural causes. For instance, if I wake up in the morning and my car is no longer parked in the garage but in front of my mailbox, I do not immediately assume an angel moved it. I look for the natural cause that created that event. I go ask Tasha, my wife, I see if our nine-year-old kid has been practicing to drive, or I wonder if some thief broke in. That is what I am immediately thinking of. According to reason, miracles do not happen. You may not agree with that; I do not agree with it. It is a

logical consequence of Enlightenment thought. The Bible, again and again, and especially in the New Testament account of the Gospels of Jesus, has Jesus running around healing people, walking on water, and being raised from the dead. But we know (because we are good Enlightenment thinkers) that that does not happen.

That is a small example. We are going to return to the whole issue of the quest for the historical Jesus. The idea is that we approach the New Testament document skeptically. It is reasonable for us to ask what Jesus was really like because we cannot trust the Gospels. That was a huge question in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. It is still being asked, for example, by the Jesus Seminar, in the twenty-first century. That is one thing I know about the history of New Testament interpretation: people ask that question.

Second, let us talk about Ferdinand Christian Baur and the Tubingen School. Tubingen is a city in southern Germany. It has a very fine university. I spent five months studying the New Testament there. In the nineteenth century, Tubingen was all abuzz about Ferdinand Christian Baur. He was the teacher there in terms of theological studies and especially of the New Testament. Baur was very much a man of his day. He loved Hegel, who was a philosopher. Hegel was known for his dialectical thinking. For Hegel, “being encounters nothingness and the result is becoming.” If you have never studied Hegel, that makes no sense. The two are juxtaposed with one another, and they reach a higher synthesis. Hegel’s thought was gigantic in Europe in the nineteenth century. It was also big in the United States where there were a lot of Germans. A major center for Hegelian scholarship in the world was Texas. There were a lot of Germans in Texas.

Karl Marx is a familiar example of someone who followed Hegel but then completely turned him on his head. Instead of applying it to the life of the mind, he applied it to the life of economics in society. He said things like feudalism encounters its antithesis, which results in capitalism. Capitalism eventually is going to result in its antithesis of the proletariat uprising because they are being suppressed in a capitalist society. The synthesis is going to be communism. It is the idea that you have thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Those are not Hegel’s terms, but that is the idea.

Ferdinand Christian Baur asked where in the New Testament we saw thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. He said we see this in the life of Paul and Peter. In particular, we would have to say Peter came first because he represents Jewish Christianity. Paul came next, and he represents Gentile Christianity. They disagreed with one another strongly and vehemently about issues such as whether or not Gentiles needed to be circumcised or keep the Law. In Galatians you see that Paul explicitly says he opposed Peter to his face. That is what Baur was looking for: opposition, thesis, antithesis. He would argue that basically Paul and Peter never got along. It was not until later in the second century church that you ended up with a synthesis. That synthesis is represented in later writings such as the writings in Acts. It is also in the supposed 1 Peter document. Baur found his dialectic. The problem with that comes if you look at the writings that are associated with Peter, like 1 and 2 Peter. In 2 Peter, Peter explicitly says the writings of Paul are Scripture. Though some are hard to understand, Peter says ignorant people trample over them like they do the rest of Scriptures. So 1 Peter does not work in Baur’s dialectic. Actually, not all the Pauline documents work either, because there are just a few that are really focused on this issue of Law. Baur singled out Galatians and Romans, but he also included 1 and 2 Corinthians. (We will talk more about this in the lesson about Paul.) Those four documents (Galatians, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians) Baur called *Kopfbrief*. *Brief* is German for “letter,” *kopf* is for “head.” These are the chief letters. The rest of the New Testament books are not written by Paul. We know this because they do not fit into what we expect Paul to interact with. In order for all of this to work, neither 1 nor 2 Peter are written by Peter. Most of the Pauline letters are not written by Paul, and Acts is a mid-second-century

document. This is well after the time that Luke, the supposed companion of Paul, would have been in the grave. Immediately you wonder what is going on. It seems to be very theory laden, and we will talk about that later. Baur is so driven by Hegelian philosophy that he is making the canon of Scripture fit. That is true.

What you need to know is that every New Testament scholar knows about Ferdinand Christian Baur. All of Pauline scholarship has been either praising or reacting against Ferdinand Christian Baur for decades. The legacy of that continues now. That is another thing you need to know. In Tübingen, where we lived for five months, they name the streets after famous scholars and other famous people. There is a Beethoven Way. One of the longest streets, which goes up a very important hill, is called Ferdinand Christian Baur Strausse. They wanted his whole name on there. The print is so small you cannot even read it. They got the whole name there. It is because he was that important. He changed scholarship in his day.

Another thing you need to know is that Walter Bauer wrote a book by the English title of *Orthodoxy and Heresy*. Walter Bauer was a brilliant scholar, especially in patristics and New Testament studies. We still use a lexicon that is much indebted to him in New Testament studies. He is a very important man. I am not sure if Walter Bauer was the first to argue this, but he was certainly one of the most popular people to argue this. Typically when we look back on church history, we think of Orthodoxy and heresy. If you study church history and early patristic history, you will start talking about Christological heresies. There were people who did not appreciate the deity of Christ and people who wanted Him adopted. They wanted a subsequent adoption, a lesser deity, and an Arian view. Then there are issues about the dual natures and the way that they interact with one another. They will be framed in terms of the history of Christological heresies.

Prior to the Christological heresies was the Gnostic heresy. It taught that there was private knowledge that Jesus taught to some of His disciples. This is not in your New Testament at all. The disciples whispered on the sly, and this private knowledge is extremely mystical. That is early Gnosticism. The early church saw that as a heresy, and they were not embarrassed to call it a heresy. Therefore church history has typically said there is Orthodoxy, and there is heresy. Bauer said that was a bit pejorative. These are just alternative Christianities. Undoubtedly if you were a Gnostic, you were not looking around and proclaiming you were a heretic. You were probably thinking you had the true Christianity, and the other people were wrong. The study of Orthodoxy and heresy, as we contemporarily use these terms, is really just a study of who won. That is very twenty-first century. I say that because I can name a half dozen people who are major New Testament scholars, often on the television and the radio, who live this way. They say there were a variety of Christianities in antiquity, and the victor has arbitrarily labeled the losers heretical. This is a legacy that we have in New Testament scholarship. Is it correct? We need to be willing to ask that question.

Next, let us talk about Rudolph Bultmann. He is another fine New Testament scholar. He is known for a variety of things but especially for the slogan, “the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.” Coming out of the quest for the historical Jesus, he had to simply acknowledge that the Gospels are not good historical sources. The Jesus of history was probably very different from how the Gospels represented Him. That is not to say that the Gospels are of no use to us. They testify to the faith of the early church and to what they believed. Whether it was historically accurate or not, we do not care. This was the Christ of faith. He pronounced a declaration of separation between the Jesus of history, how Jesus really was, and the Christ of faith, how the early church represented Him. Bultmann was therefore willing to encourage his people to preach the Christ of faith, even if he believed that that was not historically accurate. He had other things he did; he demythologized. That is another term that is associated with

him. We will talk more about Bultmann later. He brought another major historical milestone in the history of New Testament understanding.

Another milestone is one that precedes Bultmann, so these are taken a little out of order. It is what is known as source, form, and redaction criticism. When we get to our study of the Gospels, we will talk about all this in a lot more detail. Let us hypothetically suppose that the Gospels are not wholly accurate historically. They are a composite mosaic of a variety of teachings that were known in the early church. They were then reframed by the Gospel writers in light of their Christ of faith. If this were true then it would be hypothetically possible to try and go back to the original source documents, containing what Jesus really said, and ask whether He said this parable or not. When you ask that question, you are not asking if He said everything that is said in Matthew. You are asking if that parable goes back to an earlier source that could potentially go back to Jesus. Then you start thinking of the Gospels as a mosaic quilt of a variety of ancient sources. Your job as a New Testament scholar is not to understand Matthew, but to try and figure out Matthew's sources. You want to delineate them into different groups. One of Matthew's sources might be the Gospel of Mark. Another of his sources might be a different source that he had in common with Luke. We would call this Q. The letter Q is an abbreviation for the German *quelle*, which means "source." Matthew might have his own distinct set of sources. You can delineate whether they come from M1 or M2, which are special Matthew sources. That is your job. At the end of the day you have a commentary that says what came from Q, M1, M2, or Mark. Then you are done. The edification factor is fairly low. Source criticism also assumes that these are all written documents. Q was a written source; Mark was a written source.

People began to ask questions about that, though. Given the nature of oral communication in the ancient world, is it not possible that at least some of these sources were just oral sources? So they began to compare the idea of oral sources to what we know about other oral sources in the modern world. For instance, myths, good stories, or fables are passed down. It would be interesting to see how fairy tales changed over the centuries. They may have changed to meet different expectations in their individual communities. There were certain problems in the seventeenth century that caused the fairy tale to tend toward one direction. In the eighteenth century it was a little different. In the nineteenth century it was different still. Once you get to the twentieth century you have Disney, and *The Little Mermaid* does not look at all like Grimm told it. Through the process of oral tradition, things change and get adapted to their different communities. Certain forms will stand out and speak to different communities. For instance, if your community is going through a time of persecution, a story about persecution will really resonate with you. You are more likely to pass it on than you would be if it were just a regular time. Form criticism developed in which they isolated different forms. Instead of asking about written sources, they are asking about oral sources. They are asking how oral sources change through tradition. They are doing tradition history. That is another thing that happened in New Testament studies.

This also is very intellectually interesting, but you cannot take it to a congregation. Partly due to that practical concern and partly due to scholarly awareness, someone finally sat back to ask about the community in Matthew's day. If we are interested in all the communities through time and what they looked like, why are we not interested in the community in Matthew's day? Yes, Matthew was an editor, also known as a redactor, but we could still be interested in what his point of view was. We are not most likely to find it in his sources because those are "plug and play." Take the source and stick it in. We are most likely to see it in the ways that he weaves together sources and the connections that he uses to take one source and transition us to the next one. Those little connections are known as redactional seams. The question in redaction criticism is what is Matthew's point of view? That is source, form, and redaction criticism. We are going to return to those again when we talk about the Gospels. I want to introduce it to you now, and then I will give more written definitions. We will see this in practice later.

That is something else you need to know about the history of New Testament scholarship. When your university professor gets up and starts talking about Matthew, in the back of his or her mind he or she is thinking about several things. He or she is thinking about the history of source, form, redaction criticism, Jesus of history, and Christ of faith. All of that is what is going on, whether he or she is reacting to it or embracing it.

When scholars bring in stories from other religions it might be related to form criticism. They are looking at how forms develop over time. There is another thing known as the history of religion research. Comparing Islam stories to Christian stories is comparing religions. The main goal of history of religion research has typically been to show the striking parallels. It is as if there is something inherent going on in the person's soul that calls forth these parallels apart from whether there is any reference to the deity or not. That is something else that has been going on since the nineteenth century in New Testament scholarship.

The quest for the historical Jesus had trends that were already prevalent by the end of the eighteenth century. It was in the nineteenth century that it really started taking off. It continues to this day. Ferdinand Christian Baur lived in the last half of the nineteenth century. That is a little later than the quest for the historical Jesus. Walter Bauer lived at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Rudolph Bultmann takes us into the twentieth century. Source, form, and redaction criticism pushes us back into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. C. H. Dodd is the twentieth century, and the current one is happening today. We have gone through them roughly in chronological order except for the source, form, and redaction criticism.

Let me move into C. H. Dodd and realized eschatology. You probably think eschatology is about the study of the future. There is a lot of stuff in the New Testament where the author comes out and identifies those living in the first century with "the last days." It is as if the first-century church was living in the last days. They are living in the eschaton. Dodd came up with the idea of this realized eschatology. The earliest church teaching coming out of the teaching of Jesus is that the Messiah has come, the resurrection is here, and the eschaton is here. We are not looking for something in the future. It has already happened. At any moment Christ is going to be back, and we will see that it has all happened. As time progressed there was a crisis in the church. They thought Jesus was going to be back any day now. They were waiting. It produced a crisis in the early church that moved them to a need to realize that the end was now a future orientation. The church has then subsequently taken eschatology into the future. In the first-century expression, the earliest expression of eschatology, it was realized eschatology. The end is now. That was C. H. Dodd's point. This is big for you if you are reading Ladd's book. A lot of what Ladd does is talk about what he calls inaugurated eschatology. He argues that the end is now and in the future. The earliest expression in the early church was not that it is all now, and it was not that it was all in the future. It was both/and. We are in the last days, and they are future. If you have been around our systematic theology department, Dr. Mike Williams loves to talk about inaugurated eschatology. He is heavily indebted to Ladd, and that is a good thing. Ladd is indebted to this crisis that came out of examining Dodd and realized eschatology. You see that even Ladd's teaching, which is fundamentally correct, comes out of the awareness of the history of New Testament scholarship up to this point.

Friedrich Schleiermacher was in the nineteenth century. He was a romantic in many ways. He assumed the quest for the historical Jesus. He assumed that the Jesus of the New Testament is inaccurate. He also assumed that religion was a lot less about just reason and much more about the romantic living of life. You engage in life. That is a gross oversimplification.

Dodd would locate the shift from a realized eschatology (the end is now) to a futuristic eschatology somewhere in the first century into the second century. It was not like it just shifted overnight. There was a gradual realization in the church that they were still waiting. Ladd does an excellent job of pointing out in every New Testament book that the end is now and it is future. I think he is fundamentally right about that. His book is a good corrective.

Let us talk about current multiplicity of methods and goals. I have given you six principles up to now. I have also come up with a list of 20 modern hermeneutical approaches. We may go through some of these at a later point, and I will talk about some of them now. At this point I just want to show you how many methods could be employed. Source, form, and redaction criticism seems so abstract. It talks about the history of the back-story of early Christianity. You cannot bring that to the church today. Therefore there has been a major shift from historical study to literary study of the New Testament. You no longer ask historical questions; you just read the Bible like a book. You read Matthew like a narrative. You read the book of Romans like a great rhetorical exercise. The break from the historical approaches to the literary approaches is a major shift that has gone on. It happened academically because there was an awareness that if you looked at the English or French department at the university, they were asking very different questions about the text than the historians were asking. The historians decided to adopt the most recent literary methodology. The problem is that the literary methodologies have been shifting so much.

We talked a little bit about moving to reader response and then out to deconstructionism. Then you move into feminist deconstructionism, then into queer theory, then into intertextual readings, which is not necessarily as biased as feminism and queer theory. The feminists say they are just going to read the text as feminist. They want to see how the text instantiates a patriarchal hegemony. When you go into intertextuality you are interested in other things. There is a plethora of literary critical methodologies. This is great for Ph.D. students; I think that is one of the things that is driving it. If you think about it, the New Testament has just over 600,000 words in it. The number of people who are writing Ph.D.s on the New Testament is phenomenal. In writing a Ph.D. you have to say something new. That is the bottom line; you cannot get the Ph.D. unless you say something new. How do you say something new about 600,000 words? One of the ways that you do it is that you do not say anything new about what the text means, but you use a different approach. Whatever is currently going on in the English department, you try and get there before anybody else does. I am being very cynical, but that is some of what is going on. There is a constant change in approaches.

There is a very common thing going on now in publications of books about the Old and New Testament. You can buy books on the shelf, on the book of Revelation especially, and they will have eight different readings of the book of Revelation. They will get somebody who is avowedly a reader-response critic, a deconstructionist, a feminist, and a different reader. Every chapter is going to come from a wholly different methodology. The conclusion to the book is that it is great that there are so many different approaches, viewpoints, and ways to read the text and appropriate it for ourselves. There is therefore a multiplicity of goals out there. There is a crisis if you want to come to the "right" interpretation. People are beyond that. They are still fighting over which method to use. That is the scenario today.

Some of you who studied religious studies or the New Testament in a secular university saw these methods come out in the classroom. Some professors say there are no truth claims. They make religious studies a scientific approach, and it is distanced from us. Therefore it is boring in some respects. Others have been taught that the Bible is literature. You cannot ask what it means, but you are studying its different literary forms like you would any work of literature. One of you told me you had the experience of talking to a professor who teaches the methods we have been talking about, but he really

wishes he could believe the truth. He broke down crying because he could not believe. So many of the teachers in the religious studies departments started off as believers and even missionaries. They have moved far away from the faith in the process of studying further and teaching in the universities. I do not want to talk down about the university system. There are wonderful Christian believers in the university structure. We need more who are willing to engage in the university structure. It is hard because, as in most fields of academia, in order to get into the system you have to get your Ph.D. in the system. The Ph.D. in the system weeds you out if you are going to think differently than the current thinking is in the university. There are some wonderful Christian believers making a stand for the Lord in the context of the university. We can also learn from these things too. There is actually something about nearly every one of these categories that is worth considering. It took C. H. Dodd to come up with the idea of realized eschatology before someone came back and realized that it was inaugurated eschatology in the New Testament. That is right. The end is here, and the end is future. You can learn, adapt, and engage people. I am not saying that we need to come up with a knee-jerk reaction. Second, to the extent that we do critique these viewpoints and reject aspects of them, we have to do so intellectually responsibly. We cannot just simply say we are going to believe the truth and not look at these viewpoints. We need to develop some apologetics and some reasons for rejecting. We will come up with some of these things later in the course.

We are going to move into a very different thing now. I am going to state what I think is the task of New Testament theology. This is the New Testament theology part of our course. Let us talk about what it means to do New Testament theology. I suggest that there are two working goals. The first is to inductively synthesize the major theological themes in each New Testament author within his historical backdrop. I expect to see different New Testament authors have certain themes and things that they really care about. Luke talks a lot about poverty and the rich. James does too, but it is not as prevalent in some other authors. That is a theme that they bring out. That is a real and honest theological theme. It is an emphasis that is appropriate in the whole inspiration of God. We should not approach Scripture and ask where we can find justification by faith in 1 Peter, here, or there. Instead of approaching with a category and looking for it, we are going to approach it inductively. We are going to ask what some of the major themes in Luke, Paul, and James are. In the process we are going to encounter some things that we may not have seen even in our systematic theology.

Systematic theology is often driven by controversies and responses to controversies. When you talk about Christology (the dual nature of Christ, fully God/ fully man), a lot of that discussion is still indebted to this series of early Christian heresies. I used the “h” word because I think it is right. There is a sequence in the early Christian heresies, so you go through that in your theology. Doing that also has a danger in it. If there has not been significant disagreement earlier on in the church, then your systematic theology may not emphasize something that is important. Everybody just assumes it, but they never engage it theologically. Let me give an example. I confess that I am a good Presbyterian. I like the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. There is a little thing in the New Testament called Jesus’ resurrection! Do you know how many times in the Larger Confession of Faith Jesus’ resurrection is mentioned? It is mentioned once in passing, as one of His states of exultation. It just mentions that it happened. It seems to be a little more important than that, though. There was never a controversy about the resurrection of Jesus in the main Orthodox church. So it has not gotten a lot of contemplation. The fact that it is not in the Westminster Standards makes you look at the major theology books in the Reformed tradition. Louis Berkhof wrote a systematic theology book that is about 800 pages. There are only three pages on the resurrection! Hodge wrote 1500 pages in his systematic theology, but there are only five pages on Jesus’ resurrection. There is an imbalance in our systematic theology. We are going to correct an imbalance like that by doing really good exegesis and interpretation of the New Testament. You should see themes that should be a part of our theology. We should inductively approach the New Testament texts and see

what Luke and Matthew emphasize. We will see that pretty much everybody has something to say about the resurrection. Then you look at your systematic book and realize that, in our Reformed tradition, we have very little to say about it. So we better change something there. One of the great benefits of doing New Testament theology inductively like this is it can help correct our systematic theology. That is one of the things I am thinking about. Notice I said “to inductively synthesize the major theological themes in each New Testament author *within his historical backdrop*.” We are still discussing history when we do our interpretation. We are not isolating something into some sort of absolute theological proof text.

The second working goal is to further appreciate the organic unity in New Testament theology in the midst of the diversity of its expression. In other words, Luke emphasizes the poor and the rich. James does as well. There is a little bit in Paul, but we tend to overlook that because it is mostly in the pastoral Epistles, especially 1 Timothy. That is a theme. It is not generally in our systematic theology, and it might not even be in our systematic approach to ethics. But it is there; it is in the New Testament, and we need to see it. We can also synthesize it and realize that it is not just something that Luke talks about. It is something that is in the whole mind of God. Another example is the concept of Jesus dying for our sins. All the New Testament documents might have different ways of speaking of that, different emphases, and different perspectives on it. But they all speak to the same reality. They are trying to understand how a man hanging on a cross for a few hours can suddenly change the whole of redemptive history. You and I, sinful human beings, now belong in God’s family. That is what each author is trying to communicate. We can see all the different perspectives and emphases, but we also expect there to be a synthesis. Those are the two working goals: inductive author by author and synthesis.