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Course: New Testament Theology
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Assignment: **Summary of “Unity and/or/in Diversity? A Survey of Recent New Testament Theologies” by Wendel Sun**

Introduction

Proliferation of ideas on or in New Testament Theologies (NTT), has grown up as a result of two major factors observed by Wendel Sun which include: the growth of interest in biblical theology and the surge of concern for the theological interpretation of Scripture. So, going about this, the students of New Testament Theology might find it easier but for those outside this sphere might still have to work harder in order to grasp the essence of this discipline. In this article Wendel teaches us some current approaches to doing New Testament Theology. Wendel Sun, as a professor from the university of Chester and associate professor of Biblical Theology in China, has worked out a very outstanding guide on how to go about the intrigues of this particular discipline. According to Him, one common feature is their attention to the issue of the unity and diversity of New Testament Theology (NTT). The purpose of this article is to briefly survey some of the more important recent contributions to NTT, highlighting the ways in which they address this topic. And that is why he defended the fact that although the theme of unity and diversity has been treated in nearly every NTT publication, it has yet to be articulated in a way that does justice to the unifying narrative structure of the NT message while simultaneously taking account of the unique contribution of each NT document. To this point, He attempt to present the discipline in an observation on recent trends in NTT and suggestions for future study.

Unity and Diversity in Recent New Testament Theologies

Wendel acknowledge the fact the continuation of the publication of new titles has never been without critics. However, Heikki Räisänen has advised all scholars on NTT to abandon theological issues, while focusing on early Christian thought. In his articles tilted “A Survey of Recent New Testament Theologies 7; Wendel argues that the work of the biblical scholar is not theological and normative, but strictly historical and descriptive.

More recently, even Thomas Hatina supported this idea of Wendel. In short, for both Räisänen and Hatina, unity and diversity is a non-issue, since a unified NTT is neither desirable nor even possible. That is why Räisänen believes that scholars should avoid all theological construction. While Hatina encourages theological reflection.

Howard Marshall in his article, “*New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel*” focuses on exposition of the theology of each book of the NT. Its subtitle has a unique point to make and this is addressed in four primary issues:

1. the place of the NT in its canonical context;
2. the place of NTT in the early church’s missionary context;
3. the distinctive theology of each NT book;
4. the theological unity of the NT as a whole.

The chapter 9 of Wendel’s article: “*A Survey of Recent New Testament Theologies*” serves as a theological entryway into the study of any portion of the NT. But for Frank Thielman, in his work “*Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach*”, claims that the primary concern is to allow each book of the NT to speak for itself, thereby highlighting its unique theological contributions.

The **Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology 19:2 (2015)**, emphasizes the theological unity of the entire NTT and that is why it is identify in the following themes.

1. the significance of Jesus;
2. faith as a response to Jesus;
3. the outpouring of God’s Spirit;
4. the church as the people of God;
5. the consummation of all things.

Frank J. Matera, in his work “*New Testament Theology: Exploring Diversity and Unity*” shares the same point with Thielman. Matera seeks to do justice to the diverse contributions of the various NT texts while showing that within this diversity there is a core of theological unity. Also like Marshall and Thielman, he starts with diversity and moves toward unity.

Continuing with the *Journal of Asian Evangelical Theology 19:2 (2015)*, Matera notes that the unity of the NT is a given in the sense that the Unity of the NTT is undebatable. And that is why Matera identifies the NT’s key theological themes as

1. humanity in need of salvation;

2. the bringer of salvation;
3. the community of the sanctified;
4. the moral life of the sanctified;
5. the hope of the sanctified.

In the same vein, Wendel Sun, in *A Survey of Recent New Testament Theologies* chap.13 holds the same view with NT being a unity in diversity. Hence, Thomas R. Schreiner in his work “*New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*” argues that this will aid in understanding both the overall unity of the NT and the individual contributions of its authors.

For Udo Schnelle, in his work: “*Theology of the New Testament*,” the authors of New Testament Theology are trying to make the different areas in the discipline thematic by presenting them in their theological, literary, and history of religion dimensions. In addition, Schnelle researches into the historical Jesus. And that is why he examines what he believes to be major transitions in the development of NTT.

Conclusion: The Way Forward

Having surveyed several recent New Testament Theologies, it might be of good interest to conclude with the observation on current trends in the discipline. That is to say that the way in which one approaches the study of NTT directly influences the results of that study. This is clearly true in relation to the issue of unity and diversity. While there is no one “right” way to do NTT, some approaches are better than others. In summary, though they are different perspectives through which NTT could be approached yet there is unity in diversity.