

**Dominican Institute, Ibadan**

**Department of Theology**

**First Semester Examination**

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1. "The New Testament Theology" is the title of some academic syllabi (courses). Does it exist?
2. A. The importance of the Old Testament for the theological study of the New Testament.

### **1st Question (compulsory question)**

Since the eighteenth century, the discipline of New Testament theology has been under close scrutiny. Wrede argued vigorously that NT theology is a purely historical discipline, designed to disclose only the religion of the biblical authors. Schlatter, while recognizing the demands and limitations of historical criticism, stressed the normative quality of NT theology by arguing that history itself became the medium of revelation and by postulating a Christological center to the NT writings. In addition to the tension between purely historical description and normative interpretation, a number of other issues make NT theology a sometimes elusive enterprise. Hence, within the NT itself is there a center which provides a unifying motif? while there can be Theology of Mark, Theology of Revelation etc, can we really have Theology of the New Testament?

According to Moran Hooker, who argues against New Testament Theology, the real problem with talking about New Testament theology, however, is that it suggests something static and complete, whereas what we have in the New Testament is a number of different people all 'doing theology' in different situations. We do not have an inanimate corpse, labelled New Testament theology. However, what Hooker forgot to understand is the fact that diversity doesn't necessarily mean that there is no unity. The diverse writings of the New Testament can indeed be compiled into a single New Testament Theology. Christ is a common character in the books of the New Testament. So Christ is the unifying element in NT but with different approaches. Therefore, this clearly prove the existence of New Testament Theology.

Another argument against New Testament Theology according to Wrede is that there is little or no Theology at all in the New Testament. Most of what we have in the NT are practical advices, direction advices, moral advices...etc. New Testament Theology according to some scholars makes doctrine out of what in itself is not a doctrine and fails to bring out what it really is.

Many other scholars like Räisänen, seems to be agreeing with Wrede in this point. But what they seem to forgot is that they are large portion of New Testament books dealing with theological issues (Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, 1Corinthians, the Synoptic Gospels and even other letters of Paul contain solid theology). Because, even where there is emphasis on practical aspects; it is often based on theological aspects. As it is often said that Christian ethics is based on theology. From this point of view, it will be absurd to argue that there is no or even little theology in the New Testament and that it full of practical advice. In summary, New Testament Theology can be arrived in the sense that there are no contradictions in that. There is one message. In addition, there is also unity in the overall message of Jesus the savior of both Jew and Gentile. while there are diversities due to various reasons: leitmotifs, emphasis, audience and even personal experience of the authors there is one single New Testament Theology.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Question (Optional Question “A”)**

The word “Testament” is the English equivalent of the Latin “*testamentum*”, meaning “the last will, covenant.” It designates the fundamental pact that God made with his people, Israel. However, the Old Covenant reached its climax in God’s self-revelation to the Israelites on Mount Sinai. The Old Testament is very necessary for the theological understanding of the New. Because, the New Testament is the *fulfilment* of the Old Testament or the Old Testament is in a sense a parent to our new faith in Christ. The New Testament proclaims the life and message of Jesus Christ as “good news” for all peoples, and sees in Jesus the continuation and fulfilment of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament is a critical foundation for the New Testament. Books like the Synoptic Gospels, Romans, and Hebrews are more easily understood with a working knowledge of the

Mosaic Law, Israel's history, and Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. According to Lawrence Boadt, there should be no confusion in the study of the New Testament with that of Old. For any theological study of the New Testament to be successful one needs first to understand the Old Testament on its own terms. Because it is only in this way that the believing Christian will have a faithful insight into the full story of God's relationship with the human race and with Israel, from its earliest relation to its further relation with Christ. This shows that there is continuity between the New and the Old Testament. And the understanding of the Old Testament will open doors for the theological understanding of the New Testament.

According to Richard Clifford, "Christians should be aware that Jesus and the very earliest Christians were Jews and that the New Testament is in large measure an interpretation of God's promises to Israel in the Old Testament." Therefore, God revealed himself in human history, and the Old Testament gives testimony of this essential fact. God, through his actions, made himself known to the people of Israel. However, if we separate the New Testament from the Old, and we only study the revelation of God in Christ, without considering how He revealed himself to mankind before the birth of Jesus then our understanding of God, of the World, of the human race and its destiny will be partial. Because the Old Testament is foundational to the New, it brings credibility to some of the things stated in the New Testament. For example, much of what Jesus said and did fulfilled prophecy stated about Him in the Old Testament. In the letter to the Hebrews (Heb 1:1-2), the author, through his Epistle, gives an eloquent testimony of the importance of the Old Testament for the New. Finally, to understand fully and appreciate the New Testament we should not separate it from the context or the wealth that derives from its relation to the Old Testament. The New Testament is built on the foundation of the Old. Together they form one complete story which is the story of God's deep love for mankind and his plan of salvation.