

TIMO ESKOLA

A Narrative Theology of the New Testament

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*

350

Mohr Siebeck

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350



Timo Eskola

A Narrative Theology of the New Testament

Exploring the Metanarrative
of Exile and Restoration

Mohr Siebeck

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For Tiina

Preface

The field of investigating New Testament theology is flourishing. In two decades more than thirty monographs have been written on the subject. There are numerous ways to deal with the issue. Thematic, dogmatic, and book by book readings have been written. Some scholars have focused on important metanarratives that shape the overall thinking of the New Testament writers. The variety of approaches explains why new interpretations can—and need—to be written and can contribute to contemporary scholarship.

Ever since the days of writing my first dissertation on Christology under professor Lars Aejmelaeus in Helsinki, and during that time visiting Tübingen University and its outstanding professors, Peter Stuhlmacher and the late Martin Hengel, I have been interested in the great metanarratives of Second Temple theology. Later analyses on justification theology, the problem of theodicy, and dualistic views on predestination deepened my conviction that both Jesus and the apostles' gospel answered the burning problems of the fallen Israel. A study on resurrection Christology then widened my horizon concerning Israel's hope and restoration eschatology. What was needed, however, was a new perspective on Jesus' teaching. Only then could all these aspects be brought together in order to construct a more holistic understanding of both Jewish and Christian Second Temple theology.

At first I believed that I had myself found new grounds for interpreting New Testament theology before gradually realizing that the ideas of continuing exile and restoration eschatology had already before been key issues in Sanders' and Wright's Jesus-studies for a good many years (while remaining absent from Sanders' theory of covenantal nomism that prevailed in Pauline studies, and which I knew well enough). After becoming acquainted with the new narrative reading I could see a much larger picture. This is how I ended up writing a complete narrative theology of the New Testament by testing the new perspective on Jesus and investigating how the metanarrative of exile and restoration could decipher uniting features in Second Temple and especially Christian theological thinking. The methodology for this approach derives mostly from my second dissertation on comparative literature. This is where rhetorical narratology and semiotics became important for my work.

Several scholars and works have been significant for my investigation. In addition to N.T. Wright I want to mention Brant Pitre with whom I have had some correspondence, and whose monographs have inspired my work. For studies on narrative theory, Professor Hannu K. Riikonen, Professor Heta Pyrhönen and Professor Kai Mikkonen have helped me with patience and empathy. I wrote the analysis when working as a New Testament scholar at

the Theological Institute of Finland, and as a Privatdozent at the University of Helsinki, Faculty of Theology.

I also want to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Sydney Palmer C' de Baca, my dependable language revisor, who once more has put her best professional expertise at my disposal. For a Finn, this is a *conditio sine qua non* in order to be able to publish in English.

I further thank the Theological Institute of Finland, our former general secretary Rev. Henrik Perret (retired) and general secretary, Dr. Ville Auvinen, for making this investigation possible. It has been a privilege to work as a New Testament scholar at the Institute for two decades. My thanks will also extend to our secretary Kirsi Sell as well as the staff of the library.

Finally, I want to express my sincere thanks to Dr. Prof. Jörg Frey for the kind acceptance of my study for publication in this distinguished series, as well as to Dr. Henning Ziebritzki and the editorial staff at Mohr Siebeck for their professional assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication.

I dedicate this monograph to my wife Tiina who, over the years, has supported all my efforts in the area of New Testament studies.

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List of Abbreviations

1. Periodicals, Series, Reference Works

AASF	Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae
AGAJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AncB	Anchor Bible
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary
AGSU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANFa	Ante-Nicene Fathers
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
ASOR	American Schools of Oriental Research
ATD	Altes Testament Deutsch
AThANT	Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten und Neuen Testaments
AThD	Acta Theologica Danica
BA	Biblical Archaeologist
BAR	Biblical Archaeology Review
BBB	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
BBR	Bulletin for Biblical Research
BDR	Blass/Debrunner/Rehkopf, Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch
BETHL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BEvTh	Beiträge zur Evangelischen Theologie
BHTh	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
Bib	Biblica
BINS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BK	Biblischer Kommentar
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar. Altes Testament
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BZ	Biblische Zeitschrift
CB	Coniectanea Biblica
CB.NT	Coniectanea Biblica. New Testament Series
CB.OT	Coniectanea Biblica. Old Testament Series
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CCWJCW	Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200
CJAS	Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity Series
CNT	Coniectanea neotestamentica
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert (of Jordan)

EJ	Encyclopedia Judaica
EJTh	European Journal of Theology
EKK	Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar
EQ	Evangelical Quarterly
EvTh	Evangelische Theologie
EWNT	Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, ed. H. Balz, G. Schneider
ET	Expository Times
ExpT	Expository Times
FAT	Forschung zum Alten Testament
FzB	Forschung zur Bibel
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
GNT	Grundrisse zum Neuen Testament
GTA	Göttinger Theologische Arbeiten
HAT	Handbuch zum Alten Testament
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HR	History of Religions
HThK	Herders Theologischer Kommentar
HThS	Harvard Theological Studies
HThR	Harvard Theological Review
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IntB	The Interpreter's Bible
IVP	InterVarsity Press
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JR	Journal of Religion
JRS	Journal of Religious Studies
JSHJ	Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSJS	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSNTS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTS	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament, Supplement Series
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
JThS	Journal of Theological Studies
KAT	Kommentar zum Alten Testament
KEK	Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar
LCC	Library of Christian classics
LCL	Loeb Classical Library

MESJ	Missiologian ja ekumeniikan seuran julkaisuja
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament commentary
MS	Monograph Series
MSSNTS	Monograph Series. Society for New Testament Studies
NAC	New American Commentary
NCeB	The New Century Bible Commentary
NF	Neue Folge
NIBC	New International Biblical Commentary
NICNT	New international commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NSBT	New Studies in Biblical Theology
NT/NovT	Novum Testamentum
NTA	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTD	Neues Testament Deutsch
NTL	New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum testamentum et orbis antiquus
NTS	New Testament Studies
NT.S	Novum Testamentum. Supplements
NTTS	New Testament tools and studies
OTL	Old Testament library
OTP	The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha
PNTC	The Pillar New Testament Commentary
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha veteris testamenti Graece
RB	Revue biblique
RGG	Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart
RQ	Revue de Qumran
RTT	Reviews in Religion and Theology
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBL.DS	SBL Dissertation Series
SBLMS	SBL Monograph Series
SBL.SBS	SBL Sources for Biblical Study
SBL.SP	SBL Seminar Papers
SBM	Stuttgarter Biblische Monographien
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
ScEs	Science et esprit
SESJ	Suomen eksegeettisen seuran julkaisuja
SEÅ	Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology
SNT	Schriften des Neuen Testaments
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
StANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
STAT	Suomalaisen tiedeakatemian toimituksia

StB	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
StBL	Studies in Biblical Literature
STKSJ	Suomalaisen teologisen kirjallisuusseuran julkaisuja
StNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
StTDJ	Studies on the texts of the desert of Judah
StTh	Studia theologica (Lund)
StUNT	Studien zur Umwelt der Neuen Testaments
SVT	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
TB	Theologische Bücherei
TBLNT	Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
ThLZ	Theologische Literaturzeitung
ThR	Theologische Rundschau
ThSt	Theological Studies
ThW	Theologische Wissenschaft
ThWAT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament
ThWNT	Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament
ThZ	Theologische Zeitschrift
TRE	Theologische Realenzyklopädie
TS	Theological studies
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
TToday	Theology Today
TVG	Theologische Verlagsgemeinschaft
TyndB	Tyndale Bulletin
USF	University of South Florida
UTB	Uni-Taschenbücher
VT	Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	Westminster theological journal
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZNW	Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZThK	Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche

2. Technical and Other Abbreviations

AV	Authorized Version
cf.	confer
col.	columna
ed(s).	editor(s)
ET	English Translation
f	fragment
FS	Festschrift (Studies in Honour of, etc.)
H	Hebrew text of Sirach
KJV	King James Version
LXX	Septuagint
m	Mishnah tractate
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
MT	Masoretic text
n	footnote
n.d.	no date
NEB	New English Bible
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NT	New Testament
o.c.	opus citatum
OT	Old Testament
RSV	Revised Standard Version
v(v)	verse(s)
vol.	volume

Chapter 1

Introduction

The investigation of New Testament theology has flourished in the new century. While scholars in the post-Bultmannian vein, after the Second World War, assumed that the era of writing extensive overviews had gone for good, now more than thirty large monographs or even multi-volume works have been published. After such revitalization of the field, everything has changed. Scholars from different currents and backgrounds are invited to present their synthesis of the New Testament's message or, given the scholar's preferred approach, the theological spectrum that is contained in this canonical collection. There are numerous ways to perform the task and each of the different attempts can contribute to our understanding of this enchanting compilation of writings.

I. A narrative theology: purpose and method

Why narrative theology? After the turn to linguistics in academia, the discussion concerning the nature of history and understanding the past has been lively. The question of interpreting ancient writings has been posed anew. In earlier scholarship, theoretical questions concerning "real" history were often directed by the debate about metaphysics. Then German historicism tended to play down all metaphysical issues and suggest different alternatives according to which reconstructions were made – as long as "divine" occurrences were reduced to explainable human or natural phenomena and interpreted in terms of social action. Later such premises have proven to be lacking. Just as there is no "real" Plato behind "Plato the Metaphysician," or no "real" Hegel behind "Hegel the Idealist," there can be no "real" New Testament theology behind the semantic meaning of New Testament texts. Theology is a matter of the content of the texts and, therefore, depends on the semiotic nature and narrative structure of the texts in question.

1. History and narrative

In the New Testament, however, theology is intertwined with history. History is a matter of history writing. The investigation of early Christian ways of explaining the events that the authors – and their predecessors –

experienced concerns meanings, beliefs, reasons and consequences. Historical investigation is completely dependent on sources and, in the case of the New Testament, most of these sources are written documents. Archaeology has little to contribute to these issues. In these documents the past is presented in the form of narratives, and most descriptions are directed by meta-narratives that provide the rationale of the presentation. Understanding theology, for the most part, depends on understanding these metanarratives.

The basic problems in “reading” history are simple: do we impose an order on the past, or do we read off an order that is already there? Historicists usually believe that they are doing the latter, and their critics claim that they are guilty of the former. Opinions vary on this question. While Hayden White supports a rather strong constructivist theory where the emphasis is on personal reconstruction, David Carr sees narrativity as means to understand the nature of human events: “Narrative is not merely a possibly successful way of describing events; its structure inheres in the events themselves.”¹ Advocating a mediating position, Meir Sternberg presents a post-historicist, structuralist understanding of writing history. He states that writing history always means an interpretation of the meaning of certain historical events.²

I prefer Carr to White, even though the latter’s ideas are often useful, at least when read in the light of Sternberg’s ideas concerning the signification process. History as a story, in this sense, does not at all mean legendary fictionalizing. One needs to understand that historical descriptions were never empirical documents of “what really happened.” Nowhere in ancient literature, be it Josephus, Tacitus, or Eusebius, can we find simple lists of brute facts. Truth – and especially historical truth – is not a matter of hammers and nails. Historical truth, not to mention theological truth, is about positions, relations, attitudes, and causalities. Truth is a matter of values, beliefs and doctrines. The significance of the world view and especially changes in world views – consider the primary element in the days of historicism – must now be seen relative vis-à-vis the treatment of truth. Not everything changed in the Enlightenment.³

Written history, found in various ancient documents, provides an interpretation of historical events by selecting a number of details and investing them with meaning. Therefore, narrativity must be seen as an epistemological element. Historical descriptions have always tended to be concise. Authors rely on the readers’ ability to fill in gaps, read between the lines, and put the story in a hermeneutical context. Many texts also guide and direct the

¹ Carr, *History and Theory*, 137; cf. White, *History and Theory*, 16.

² Sternberg, *Poetics*, 23f.

³ I have discussed the theory of writing New Testament theology in my assessment of Western biblical hermeneutics, especially focusing on the heirs of historicism and sociological reading (sociology of knowledge). See Eskola, *Beyond New Testament Theology*. Toward the end of the investigation, I discuss major currents in writing New Testament theology, see pp. 235–317.

reader's interpretation suggesting an ideal reader who understands the author's position. Nineteenth century historicism, playing with the "reliability" or "genuineness" of certain texts or historical details, misunderstood the nature of history writing somewhat. Ancient authors naturally based their presentation on historical details but, nevertheless, their writing focused the meaning of certain events and acts of important persons. What was Jesus' attitude towards the temple? Why did Jesus send his disciples to preach? Why did Jesus oppose the Pharisees? How did he expect the final tribulation to end? History is about meaning.

2. On the changes of methodology

It is interesting to note that, during the last twenty years or so, many important fields of New Testament study have changed essentially. Two decades ago the current called Third Quest finally ended the era of historicism and especially the study of the "historical Jesus." The real Jesus had been sought by attempting to produce a critically sound reconstruction of his life or by deciphering a theological kernel of his proclamation, cleared of all apostolic, post-Easter enthusiasm, assumedly corrupting the gospels. The first effort drifted into minimalism where practically nothing was known about Jesus himself. Käsemann's and Robinson's Bultmannian New Quest hoped for help from existentialism but, following existentialism, it became unpopular.⁴ The Third Quest for the historical Jesus focused mainly on his social environment. Speaking of a fourth quest today would be inaccurate. Instead, one could call the change a new theological turn. Scholars today often use narratological or semiotic approaches in order to overcome the deficiencies of the historical-critical heritage. New methodology opens new doors. These approaches want to shed light on the "eclipse of narrative" (Frei) which has separated the gospel story from history. They concentrate on Jesus' message, not merely on his environment.⁵

Methodological changes have been more profound than people first expected. The new narrative analysis or rhetorical narratology have little to do with the descriptive narrative interpretation that was popular in systematic theology towards the end of the twentieth century. The interpretation of

⁴ In my previous investigations I have noted that standard theories on New Testament theology have often been indebted to different philosophical stances, starting with Deism and Wolffian rationalism and continuing through Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger. These commitments teach scholars the old lesson: if all you have is a hammer, the world starts to look like it's made of nails. If the discussion in New Testament theology wants to continue the dialogue, scholars must be ready to submit their philosophical premises to open discussion. See Eskola, *Beyond New Testament Theology*, 316-317.

⁵ For the history of the research into the gospel material and the question of the so-called historical Jesus, see Reventlow, *History of Biblical Interpretation 4*; Witherington, *The Jesus-Quest*; Frei, *Eclipse of Narrative*.

narrative discourse today takes a semiotic approach where the dynamics of expression are addressed, and study endeavors to open the process and to explicate the emergence of theological thoughts and claims.⁶

There are several phases in a tradition process. Naturally, many passages contain Jesus' "original" speech, at least as a translation.⁷ The role of the translator, as regards the extant text, is also a fact, though. The most important phase, for narrative analysis, is that of the original author/narrator. The author/narrator is the one who selects features, produces historical settings, introduces characters and roles and, probably the most important task of all, sets Jesus' words into place.⁸ Even though one would assume that a distinction should be made between the author and the narrator, at least in a theoretical sense, this will not alter the situation of the reader essentially. Gospel stories are short and economical. They usually contain only a few details. They are almost like preliminary sketches drawn before the painting of a more colorful picture of the event. The narrator is doing what the author usually does. Despite this, gospel stories are still quite informative. They are striking and impressive, and they also usually have a specific aim.

A re-evaluation of methodology means that one needs to be critical of the theological redaction criticism popular especially in the historical-critical tradition. In that vein, gospel stories have too often been treated merely as theological constructions of the church. This is how both Jesus' proclamation and that of his (pre-Easter) disciples were lost.⁹ Sanders already pointed out that a credible reconstruction based on standard criteria cannot be made: "The test rules out too much."¹⁰ Therefore, scholars must assume that there is a positive relationship between Jesus and his contemporaries in Judaism. Then Sanders uses a term that could well be a new standard in Jesus-studies. One needs a "satisfactory reconstruction" of the life and teaching of Jesus,

⁶ For the new methodology in general, see e.g. Bal, *Narratology*; Keen, *Narrative Form*; Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*; on rhetorical narratology especially Chatman, *Story and Discourse*.

⁷ This kind of discussion may, at least in part, sound elementary. It needs to be thought through for narratological analysis, though. It is no longer possible simply to adopt the rhetoric and approaches of traditional form criticism since most of the concepts used in that methodology have now changed and many are completely different.

⁸ Authors of short gospel pericopes are usually also narrators of the story. For questions concerning the role of the author, the implied author, and the narrator in narrative, see e.g. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 151–157. This field has developed quickly; see Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, and Watson, *Gospel Writing*.

⁹ The problems of the so-called criterion of dissimilarity are obvious. Haacker remarked that if one separates all Jewish and Christian features from the "authentic" Jesus-tradition, it would not result in a historically grounded picture of Jesus but in an "unhistorical" picture of Jesus ("unhistorischen Bild von Jesus"), namely a Christological abstraction. Haacker, *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 76.

¹⁰ Sanders, *Jesus*, 16.

and today narratological analysis can come to the rescue. It allows the scholar to pay attention to the whole process. When Jesus, for instance, preaches against the temple, or presents a parable about Israel, his words have a point of their own.

Stories may, however, have different emphases in different gospels. They may have been connected with different kinds of Old Testament passages or other interpretive traditions. The original story may have been given different theological interpretations during the process of transmission. In a similar way there must have been development in early Christology. The construction of theology is a process and, in a limited way, it is possible to detect these processes in the extant texts. Today it should be admitted, though, that the importance of such processes – or theories concerning them – is not particularly significant for writing a New Testament theology.¹¹

New Testament theology, thus, builds on a new reconstruction of Jesus' teaching. Proper investigation of the gospel narratives is vital for a successful treatment of the content of his message. The analysis will inevitably lead to a reconstruction of certain metanarratives that open up the basic nature of the theology that influences his followers' thinking. This is how particular steps toward the Christology and soteriology of the early Christianity can be deciphered. Focusing on this kind of process also helps one to understand Paul's more refined theological thinking.

3. *Semiotics and signification processes*

The study of theological themes, in turn, is a matter of semiotics. Anyone dealing with theological subjects must concentrate on processes of signification.¹² As regards the New Testament, and Jesus' teaching in particular, the focus lies in the interpretation and re-interpretation of Old Testament passages and in the treatment of Jewish tradition, temple ideology and zealous Second Temple soteriology. Jesus' proclamation is exemplary for its

¹¹ Chester asks whether a narrative approach leaves the issues concerning historical processes too far behind the texts and so without consideration. Chester, *Messiah*, 40–43. This should not be the case. Seeing the narrative as a part of the original historical record helps scholars to evaluate the tradition from a new point of view. This transformation in historical research, however, is parallel to the more essential change in methodology where both the minimalist views of historicism and over-enthusiastic redaction criticism have been abandoned. The issues of narratology and processes should not be set at odds, however, and narratology as a tool should not be rejected as if it were interested only in the extant text – thus making it one-dimensional.

¹² Semiotics, to give a short definition, is a field where the meaning of (especially linguistic) signs is investigated. Signs can of course be any tokens that are invested with meaning. Semiosis, in turn, means the signification process itself, and semioticians often focus on discerning details in such processes. Semiosis then overlaps a bit with narrative analysis on this point. For a general introduction, see Deely, *Semiotics*.

skillful appropriation of scriptural quotations, allusions and revisions of Jewish tradition. It is a masterpiece of intertextual innovation, and this is something every vibrant analysis should be able to tackle.¹³

As noted, processes of signification usually occur in narratives. Therefore, narrative analysis has a central role in the methodology of the present investigation. Stories about reality are not mere fiction. History is about interpretation. This epistemological aspect of narrativity can be detected most clearly when signification processes are studied. If one wants to explain meanings in ancient documents, one has to explore how signs are given a particular meaning. The most important thing that takes place in “reading the past” is that narrators and authors introduce new interpretants. According to Charles S. Peirce, both a progress in knowledge and a progress of culture is based on interpreting signs like ideas, words, statements, and actions. Investing meaning in some event or tradition takes place in a process of signification, *semiosis*. Jesus’ followers, producing a story, or formulating a theological statement, are producing an interpretant. This interpretant is a thought, a new “sign,” which interprets the former sign, former clause, thought, or act.¹⁴

As the author/narrator, for instance, selects features, produces historical settings, and introduces characters, he is involved in semiosis. When Old Testament passages are connected with different aspects of Jesus’ life and teachings, new interpretants are brought into the picture. The process of signification, thus, is an interplay between former signs and new significations produced in their reception. Therefore, one may say that the investigation of Jesus’ message is, partly, also an investigation of this semiotic process in the texts themselves. Jesus’ message can be discerned and defined on the basis of the reciprocal relation between his intentions and the new signs, the readings of the reception.¹⁵

The investigation of New Testament theology, and of Jesus’ teaching as its integral core, is not a one way, deductive study from the early post-Easter Church to some assumed, “historical critical” Jesus. Instead, it is an investigation of the dynamical process, semiosis, that has been taking place in the text production of the messianic movement Jesus founded. Today any

¹³ For a more detailed discussion of semiotics and the role of linguistic methods in the service of studying Christology, see Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne*, 17–42.

¹⁴ Peirce, admittedly, is a highly controversial scholar – especially because he did not publish much. Ideas concerning his semiotics are based on analyses of his huge number of unpublished papers, preserved unsystematically. It must suffice to rely on certain general presentations of Peircean semiotics, such as Deledalle, *Charles S. Peirce’s Philosophy of Signs*; and the collection *Peirce’s Doctrine of Signs: Theory, Applications, and Connections*, edited by Colapietro and Olschewsky. For Peirce’s original definitions, see Peirce, *Essential Peirce 2*, 4–10, 272–279.

¹⁵ In my analysis in previous works, I have noted that where there is textuality, there is intertextuality. These issues have now become significant in writing New Testament theology. Eskola, *Beyond New Testament Theology*, 310–317.

discussion concerning New Testament theology must start with Jesus himself. A great change has taken place in scholarship since the days of Bultmann and Käsemann.

Signification processes involve the construction and use of meta-narratives. Particular metaphors, topoi, and motifs are invested with meaning as they are put in a context. This is why, in the present work, focus will be on the testing of one influential metanarrative, that of exile and restoration. The subject has been chosen for a number of reasons. Firstly, it has been able to explain the motivation to construct soteriology both in Second Temple Judaism and in early Christianity. Secondly, it is a growing issue in New Testament theology today, as we shall see later, and, thirdly, it has a central role in canonical theology where it has a profoundly heuristic power.¹⁶

Narrative analysis is quite popular in contemporary scholarship, and so other metanarratives could have been adopted. The metanarrative of exile and restoration has been used especially by N.T. Wright but, for instance Frank Matera, in his New Testament theology, focused on a larger metanarrative concerning the fall and redemption.¹⁷ James Hamilton, in turn, investigates what the title of his work proclaims: God's glory in salvation through judgment. Ben Witherington, in his *Paul's Narrative Thought World*, considers different points of view but finds unity in theology.¹⁸ And finally Desmond Alexander has written an ingenious New Testament theology discussing the idea of restoring the garden-temple of Eden in New Testament writings.¹⁹

Why narrative theology, then? The first reason for adopting a new approach, as stated above, is the linguistic element. Methodology has changed, and our understanding of written texts has improved. In the wake of a post-liberal reading of the New Testament "real" history is no longer seen as something hiding behind allegedly corrupted texts which are laden with supernatural intentions. History, as it appears in ancient documents, has been

¹⁶ Even though I have arrived at this methodological approach following a path different from Wright's, it is proper to note that, in his *New Testament and the People of God I*, he provides a thorough presentation of a narrative and even structuralist reading of gospel material, and there is much for me to learn from it in the future. See Wright, *People of God*, 113–115, 215–232. My literary approach is dependent on my research into recent Jesus-novels, *Evil Gods and Reckless Saviours: Adaptation and Appropriation in Late Twentieth Century Jesus-novels*.

¹⁷ Matera provides a five point definition of his "master story": "I make use of five categories to summarize the master story of the New Testament: (1) humanity in need of salvation, (2) the bringer of salvation, (3) the community of the sanctified, (4) the life of the sanctified, and (5) the hope of the sanctified." Matera, *Theology*, xxx.

¹⁸ To pick up a selection of his thoughts: "It is a Story about creation and creature and their redemption by, in, and through Jesus Christ. It is a Story about a community of faith created out of the midst of fallen humanity." Witherington, *Narrative Thought World*, 2.

¹⁹ These monographs will be presented more closely below.

presented to us in the form of narratives. A proper understanding of New Testament theology depends on a proper reading of narratives. This leads us to the second reason. History as an explanation of ancient events is always already an interpretation. Narrative theology investigates such interpretations especially by focusing on metanarratives. These premises also dictate the approach of the work. One does not need to focus on chronological order. Neither will a dogmatic system be adopted here. The writing of this narrative theology shall begin by opening the narrative structure that directs Jesus' proclamation and explaining the role of restoration eschatology in his mission.

II. Testing Sanders and Wright's challenging hypotheses

New Testament theology, building on the new paradigm in Jesus-studies, must start with a credible reconstruction of Jesus' teaching in the context of Second Temple Jewish theology. There are several ways to introduce the development of the latest quest. It is proper to begin with E.P. Sanders' *Jesus and Judaism* which has been a watershed in gospel studies.

1. From Meyer to Sanders to Wright

Many ideas in recent scholarship and explanations derive from Sanders' monograph.²⁰ Sanders belongs to the vanguard of scholars who wished to apply the new expertise in Jewish studies to New Testament criticism. Both his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* and his other studies in Jewish writings prepared the ground for his monograph on Jesus. This is probably the reason why Sanders, in his studies of the background of Jesus' teaching, emphasize the essential role the exile still played in the writings of Second Temple Jewish theologians.²¹

Sanders was in fact following the ideas of his Canadian mentor Ben Meyer who had already in 1979 written a rather original monograph, *Aims of Jesus*. In this investigation Meyer wrote about Jesus' relation to the temple and suggested that Jesus' attitude had to do with the belief that the exile was not entirely over yet. Many of Meyer's ideas found a developed formulation in Sanders' work.

²⁰ See especially Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 77–81. The standard monograph on the subject of exile and restoration as such has been Peter Ackroyd's *Exile and Restoration* (1968). It was later followed by Raymond Foster's *The Restoration of Israel* (1970), and Ralph Klein's *Israel in Exile* (1979) among others.

²¹ Sanders in fact wanted to revitalize Albert Schweitzer's eschatological interpretation of Jesus' message. See Schweitzer's own description in his *Quest*, 385–388. For Sanders' reflection on this, see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 23–24.

In his own book, Sanders starts by referring to George Nickelsburg's *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah* (1981) in order to remind his readers that, according to several ancient Jewish writers, Israel's essential institutions had never been fully restored.²² The majority of people in the diaspora were still expected to return. The continuation of the exile was a discussion that had remained alive within Jewish theology itself. Most of the tribes had never returned to Israel. Even the status of the rebuilt Second Temple had been questioned by some Jewish groups. Jewish identity at the time of Jesus was in no way monolithic. Many Jewish preachers in the Second Temple period still believed that the exile was not over. For Sanders, we can easily see how Jesus was able to use in this in his own criticism and denunciation of the present Israel, as well.

The idea of a continuing exile was then made an explanatory factor for Jesus' teaching in N.T. Wright's *Jesus and the Victory of God* (1996). Here Wright connected the idea with Jesus' proclamation of a renewed eschatological Temple. Wright's basic view has been summarized in many different passages in his writings, for example: "one of the main kingdom-themes informing Jesus' retelling of Israel's story was his belief that the real return from exile, and the real return of YHWH to Zion, were happening in and through his own work."²³ Furthermore, following the ideas of Meyer and Sanders, Wright suggested that: "in his work the Temple was being rebuilt."²⁴ It will be the task of the present work to test Wright's hypothesis and the task itself will be defined in more detail in the next subchapter.

In fifteen years this Wrightian view became so popular that we can justifiably speak of a new paradigm in Jesus-studies. It should be noted, however, that we are not speaking of completely new discoveries. It would be presumptuous to claim that all relevant ideas were the product of the present generation. Even though no complete history of research is needed here, it is useful to refer to some persuasive historical and theological works, such as Joachim Jeremias' *Jesus als Weltvollender* (1930).²⁵ Jeremias already focuses on Jesus' actions in Jerusalem and on his prophetic demonstration in the temple. Jeremias interprets Jesus' triumphal entry and the cleansing of the temple in terms of ancient Babylonian and Jewish cultic messianism. Enthronement and temple reform go together. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem as a triumphant Son of David and then attacked the temple, he

²² Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 79–80; Nickelsburg, *Literature*, 18. The role of Sander's colleague Ben Meyer will be discussed below.

²³ Wright, *Victory*, 428.

²⁴ Wright, *Victory*, 434.

²⁵ Later Martin Hengel developed such ideas in his *Was Jesus a Revolutionist?* (in German originally in 1971, *War Jesus Revolutionär?*).

claimed eschatological messiahship and even proclaimed his anticipated enthronement and the revelation of a heavenly temple.²⁶

Hence the renewed eschatological hypothesis. Jesus' message can be best explained when it is understood as prophetic proclamation against the sins of Israel. Jesus stands in line with Isaiah and Zechariah when he states that the present Israel does not represent the true Israel as seen in patriarchal times or the time of the faithful kings. Instead, Israel still lives under God's wrath. This is why any prophetic warning presented by the great prophets in their own time is valid also in Jesus' time. The Jerusalem temple does not yet serve the joyous gospel that God promised through the prophets. Priests and scribes cannot redeem people from their guilt. The exile still enslaves the people of Israel. Therefore, a new temple will be built when the promised Messiah enters the eschatological scene.

2. Responses and developments

A direct response to the abovementioned work was published in the edited collection *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel* by Carey C. Newman (1999). In Newman's collection, Craig A. Evans, after an extensive survey of Jewish writings, concluded that Wright's statement was justified. Firstly, even many Jewish theologians assumed that final restoration had not yet begun. Secondly, Jesus undoubtedly understood his ministry as the beginning of the end of Israel's exile.²⁷

After Wright, several scholars have contributed to the issue and their work will be discussed during the analysis. Several examples of these texts are Steven Bryan's dissertation *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgment and Restoration*, written under Andrew Chester in Cambridge, Dale Allison's *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet*, and Nicholas Perrin's *Jesus The Temple*. The metanarrative of exile and restoration is essential for James Hamilton in his New Testament theology called *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment: A Biblical Theology*, as well as for Thomas Schreiner's *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ*.

The new/renewed hypothesis is essentially theological since it no longer discusses Jesus' social environment to the exclusion of all else. Scholars focus on Jesus' teaching and proclamation. Therefore, Sanders and Wright's theory attempts to shed light on Jesus' identity as a prophetic preacher and of course as a messianic figure who has developed an eschatological program.

²⁶ Jeremias, *Jesus*, 35ff. Jesus' royal entry is a fruitful point of departure as his identity is assessed, since this is the point where his contradiction with Jewish leaders and temple authorities appears in its sharpest form. These kinds of subjects were further investigated by many Catholic scholars, such as Yves Congar in his *Le mystère du temple* (1958).

²⁷ Evans, *Restoration*, 98–100. Another collection discussing Wright's views has been published, namely *Jesus, Paul and the People of God: A Theological Dialogue with N.T. Wright*, edited by Perrin and Hayes.

Applying new views to New Testament theology is a challenge, naturally. Rudolf Bultmann's extensive *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (1953) dominated the field for decades. It was a long time before novel attempts began to flourish. In Great Britain George Caird finally started a new line of inquiry and, in the United States, Brevard S. Childs introduced the idea of canonical theology, gaining many followers.²⁸ In Germany the Bultmannian tradition has continued to be quite strong, with thorough books by authors such as Hans Hübner, Georg Strecker, Walter Schmithals, and Udo Schnelle.

A new Tübingen tradition opposing that of the Bultmannians comprises above all Peter Stuhlmacher's work on biblical theology. One could probably count Ferdinand Hahn's and Ulrich Wilckens' works among these, even though they come from other universities. Furthermore, there are some "Wredean" works attempting an early Christian history of religion. The one delving into this ground was Heikki Räisänen, with Gerd Theissen providing a helpful contribution. In the present work, it will be quite impossible to discuss all the views proposed for New Testament theology in recent years. In crucial passages, however, an attempt will be made to compare the new views to other important interpretations of early theology and its meta-narratives despite the fact that most of these authors have not yet commented on the new paradigm.²⁹

The crucial element is that the metanarrative of exile and restoration opens up a new horizon in New Testament theology as such. Sanders and Wright have started a fruitful new tradition. And as Hamilton and Schreiner have proved, we can use this to interpret the narrative structure of the entire corpus of texts. Now that Wright himself has expanded his own interpretation to the field of Pauline studies, any attempt to write a complete New Testament theology is more than justified.³⁰ Most monographs to date have focused on some particular aspect in the metanarrative. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate how the metanarrative of exile and restoration shapes the basic structure of New Testament soteriology.

3. *Studies expanding the paradigm: continuing exile and temple criticism*

Wright's book, as well as his numerous writings thereafter, have aroused much discussion among scholars. Literature on the themes of exile and restoration is plentiful, and we will glimpse this by making a few remarks on different approaches here. In the first phase, Meyer stated that in the

²⁸ In the English speaking world, then, we will need to discuss the monographs written by Roy Zuck and Darrell Bock, Frank Thielman, I.H. Marshall, J. Julius Scott Jr., Ben Witherington III, Philip Esler, Jon M. Isaak, and Gregory Beale, as well as Catholic scholars such as Joachim Gnilka and Frank J. Matera. For the discussion on canon, see Frey, *Aufgabe*, 46-48.

²⁹ For detailed information concerning the books behind these long lists, see the bibliography. I have discussed most of the books in Eskola, *Beyond*, 235-317.

³⁰ See Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (later indicated by: *Paul*).