

# NORMATIVE TOPICS

## PART 4

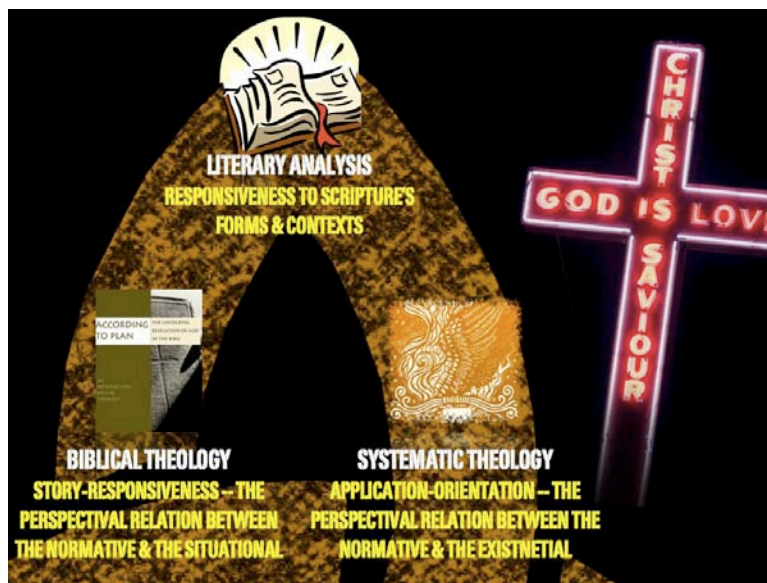
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### Three Ways of Reading Scripture:

**Systematic Theology (Scripture as a Mirror or FAQ)**

**Biblical Theology (Scripture as a Window or Script)**

**Literary Theology (Scripture as a Picture or Canon)**



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### Biblical Theology

Stanley Hauerwas on the Great and Truthful Story

Four 18<sup>th</sup>-early-21<sup>st</sup> century developments that led to beginning of BT:

- Archaeology — Bible became a part of the human world

- Evolution — we know humanity by knowing beginnings
- Rejection of Biblical historicity because of the sciences — axe heads don't float
- Sociology of Knowledge — where does authority lie? Emile Durkheim: “Society is god” (i.e., truth is mediated by our communities), thus the quest to find “*our truth*” in “*our story*” — from Wagner to Hollywood to Disney

### **This fed into the theological quest**

- Where does human history fall on the Biblical History timeline, vice versa?
- Where did humans come from? and are they going anywhere?
- Is the Bible a *reliable* history? How so?
- Does the Bible present a stable meta-narrative that trumps, stands above, critiques, unites, and resolves all others?

### **Four Names to Know**

- **B.B. Warfield** (1851-1921, Princeton Sem.)
  - Systematic Theology comes to scripture with preconceived agenda; Hodge didn't believe the Bible had its own theology
  - Warfield wanted to come to scripture and see what its agenda is; see the variety of theologies there and find a way to tie them all together.
  - “Systematic Theology is not a concatenation of scattered theological data furnished by the exegetic process; it is a combination of the already concatenated data given to it by Biblical Theology ... so we gain our truest Systematics not by working together the separate dogmatic statements in the Scriptures, but by combining them their due order and proportion as they stand in the various theologies of the Scriptures. (B.B. Warfield, “The Idea of Systematic Theology” *Studies in Theology*, 66-67)
- **Geerhardus Vos** (1862-1949, Princeton Sem)
  - First to make a discipline out of Biblical Theology
  - See the history of Scripture through lens of redemption, aka Redemptive History
  - “Biblical Theology identifies the Bible's own revelatory structure ... the main stem of revelation. In Biblical Theology the principle is one of historical; in Systematic Theology it is one of logical construction. Biblical Theology draws a *line* of development. Systematic Theology draws a *circle*... The Bible is not a dogmatic handbook but a historical book full of dramatic interest.” (G. Vos, *Biblical Theology* 5, 15-16)

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- **Meredith Kline** (1922-2007, Gordon-Conwell & Westminster/CA)
  - ◉ Looks at Ancient Near East treaties to make sense of “covenant lordship”
- **Herman Ridderbos**
  - ◉ Brings BT to bear on the New Testament
  - ◉ Read the New Testament according to Kingdom of God meta-theology
  - ◉ “So it can be established that the New Testament as a whole is the book of the revelation of the Kingdom of God....the Kingdom of God is a transcendental entity...it is beyond the power of man and...it represents a new and other world, the world of God.” (*When the Time Had Fully Come*, 9, 11).
  - ◉ “The authority of the New Testament cannot be expressed in one word. We have to approach it from the real nature of the New Testament revelation: kerygma, the witness and the teaching of what God did in His Son, when the time has fully come. From this center the light beams forth all around, illuminating the history and life of man.” (*WTHFC*, 96).

**How do we reconcile the different theologies in the different parts of the Bible?**



Adam	Noah	Abraham	Moses	David	New Covenant
<p><b>Grace</b> — Humanity is spared its death-sentence.</p>	<p><b>Grace</b> — Family of 8 saved to re-found humanity.</p>	<p><b>Grace</b> — God chooses one family through whom to redeem humanity.</p>	<p><b>Grace</b> — Rescue of Israel, "My Son, My Firstborn" (Ex 4:22), from Egypt.</p>	<p><b>Grace</b> — A single, righteous Ruler, God's son (2Sm 7:14; Ps 2), raised from shepherd boy to king ... for a united people.</p>	<p><b>Grace</b> — I will put my Law ... I will write ... I will forgive ... I will remember their sins no more. I will be their God &amp; they will be my people (Jer 31:31-33; 33:21-22; Ezk 34:23-31; 36:24-28).</p>
<p><b>Law</b> — Cultural Mandate stays intact. Trust God for the Seed that will crush the Serpent's head.</p>	<p><b>Law</b> — Build an ark. Renewal of Cultural Mandate, with adjustments. Trust God that he will not destroy again by flood.</p>	<p><b>Law</b> — Come out from Ur ... Circumcise yourself &amp; your sons. Offer your son.</p>	<p><b>Law</b> — Decalogue (a path of life and a magnet for sin). Circumcise your hearts. Perform sacrifices.</p>	<p><b>Law</b> — "You (David) and your sons must be faithful" (2Sm 7:14; Ps 89:30-37).</p>	<p><b>Law</b> — The law will be in us, on our hearts. We will know God.</p>
<p><b>Promise</b> — Children will come. The land will produce. A Redeemer will come.</p>	<p><b>Promise</b> — God won't do this again ... the dove &amp; the olive branch.</p>	<p><b>Promise</b> — A homeland. A seed (Isaac, not Esau). A ram in Isaac's place.</p>	<p><b>Promise</b> — The Promised Land. Redemption by blood (under ceremonial pictures of animal sacrifices, feasts, prophets, priests, kings).</p>	<p><b>Promise</b> — A Greater Son (Pss 2, 22, 72 &amp; 110)</p>	<p><b>Promise</b> — A final sacrifice that will once and for all deal with sin (Heb 8-10). God will be present (incarnation, pouring out of Spirit, <i>parousia</i>). We will receive a better homeland (compare Jer 31 :27, 38-40 with Heb II:13-16; 12:18-24; Rev 21-22)</p>

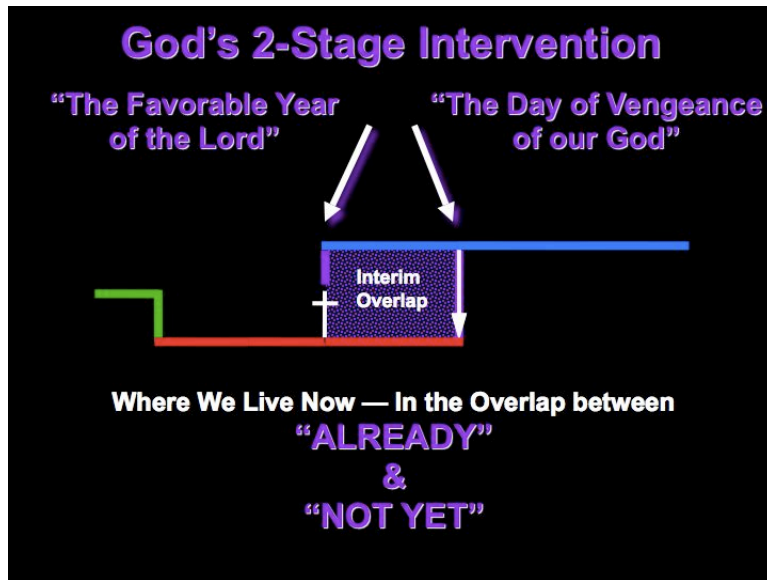
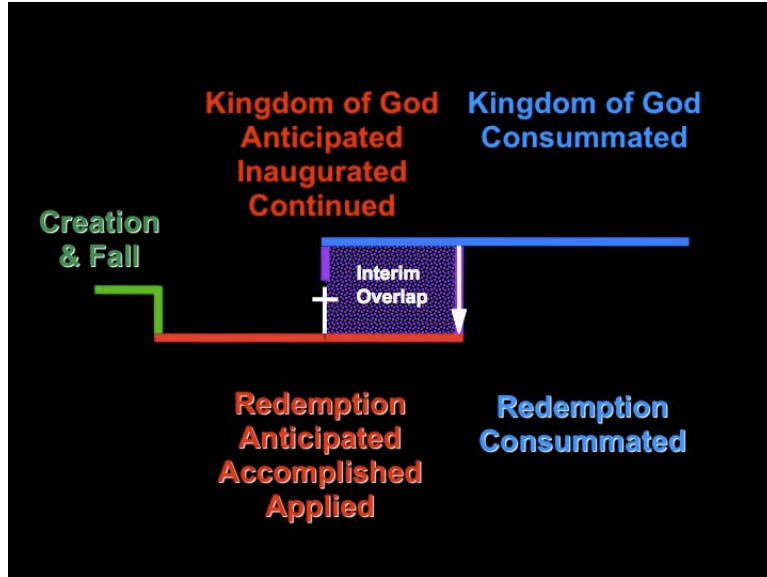


**Meta-narrative: Redemptive History (Vos)**

- Creation** — ("in our image" ... expressive of God's rule)
- Fall** (not upright representatives of God's rule)
- Redemption** (from proto-evangelion; Abrahamic family; Mosaic/ David nation — God bringing us back into relationship with himself for the sake of expressing his rule again)

**Consummation** (God will fully rule in, over, and through his people

**NT (making sense of the fact that we're not yet in the consummation): Inauguration → Continuation → Consummation**



• "I tried BT as a method for the longest time until I realized it's the story of the Kingdom; it's not the method that's compelling, it's the story it's

telling that makes me want to do this kind of theology.” Richard Pratt to Reggie

- Image bearers, co-regents
- History of kingdom expansion; God’s rule and reign over all creation

**Distinction between act and word revelation** — Vosian distinction — God reveals by doing — words are secondary — main stem is history, not words about history; but words are necessary for us to understand — Vos nudges evangelical, reformed theologians away from a Word-driven theology — the Cross is the height of God’s revelation

- Act revelation
- Word revelation
  - Predictive (pointing forward) — e.g., “I’m going to work through you “ — “here’s what’s going to happen after exile”
  - Reflective (pointing backward) — e.g., “here’s what I’ve done for you — here’s what it means, and here are the implications”
- BT’s burden: Revelation is about what God has actually done to fix the mess Adam left us. It’s *not*: “Moses I’ve got some thoughts I’d like to share with you about how the phenomenal and the noumenal can be related. I know you’re confused about “the one and the many” and I’d like to explain it.” Rather, it’s: “Moses, my world is a mess, you’re a mess, and I’m in the business of setting things right ... here’s what you need to know about how I’m going about that.”
  - Example: see Kidd (borrowing from Futato) on the shape of the Psalter — not just songs for processing your stuff — songs that put you in the flow of God’s story
- Note that given the scope of human history, the Bible is a fairly short and focused book — every **thing** it says is important and every **way** it says is important

**Different ways of Exegeting in BT** (see the Frame chart — you can go north-south or east-west)

- Synchronic Slice (North-South)**: One era in redemptive history, what did God DO and SAY in this period?
- Diachronic Trace (East-West)**: Focus on developments among associable events
  - Theme of redemptive history and seeing what it looks like in the ebb and flow in of Biblical history
  - Example, Covenant (also, Sabbath, Land, Holy War, etc)E

**Dangers of BT**

- ST is half-step away from deism, BT is half-step away from open theism
- Competing historical accounts can seem inconsistent

- Example, Manasseh
  - 2 Kings account = 21:1-18, evil, reason for exile
  - Chronicler account = 2Chr 33:1-20, example of repentance, way out of exile
  
- Example — Kidd's treatment of David — Samuel/Kings remembers as suffering singer and soother of Saul's soul (an apt remembrance for a people in exile) — Chronicler remembers David as "Architect of Praise" (an apt remembrance for a people on the cusp of redemption-accomplished).
  
- Priorities, claims to arrange priorities according to Scripture's, but gives preference to historical books; sometimes lacks a place altogether for the Wisdom literature. Genesis is featured, but Judges barely makes an appearance.
  
- Name is maybe a little presumptive; it's a mediated way of studying
  - Not necessarily getting closer through this than other methods
  - Vos prefers the name, "History of Special Revelation" but...

### **Benefits/Values of BT**

- Task of the interpreter becomes perceiving and not imposing; requires greater humility — the first question isn't: "What's in it for me?"
- Brings fresh insight to the study of theology — e.g., Paul's pastoral energy in the letter to the Romans: Paul's not just parsing the relationship between justification and sanctification — he's trying to bring Jews and Gentiles together as a sign of the great turning of the ages
- When you read Scripture, get larger context
  - Presses us to consider culture, etc.
  - See ourselves in larger context
    - Same history as Adam, Moses, Jesus
    - Same humanity, need for redemption as Manasseh because God is still relating to us as his Images
    - Share same hope because we are still in Continuation