

Unity and diversity in the new testament religion essay



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The author of this article on Unity and Diversity in the New Testament, D. A. Carson, develops a reflection in defending the unity of the New Testament having in consideration the diversity of it. He starts his reflection by describing and then criticizing some works done by others scholars to be able to state his position on the matter. One of the works was the book *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* written by W. Bauer, which Carson strongly criticizes because of his “ abandonment of the New Testament” based on disagreement of the existence of the first century church (66). According to Carson, “ this critical reconstruction of early church history, coupled with other developments that equally depreciate the truthfulness of the New Testament have generated a host of writings exploring the nature of New Testament theology” (67). Carson proposes that systematic theology and biblical theology are necessary for the understanding of such unity in the New Testament even when there is diversity.

Contribution to the Idea of Doing Biblical Theology

Carson defines biblical theology as “ the branch of theology whose concern it is to study each corpus of the Scripture in its own right, especially with respect to its place in history of God’s unfolding revelation” (69). For him it is very important to his readers to know that biblical theology has played an important role in the development of the unity of the New Testament because of the historical facts that go with it. On the other hand, Carson defines systematic theology as “ the branch of theology that seeks to elaborate the whole and the parts of Scripture” (69).

In my analysis, I noticed that systematic theology has to do with logical instead of historical links. However, I also noticed that there is a connection between biblical theology and systematic theology. Carson asserted, “biblical theology must be systematic; even if it focuses on the historical place and significance of each corpus; and systematic theology, if it turns on fair exegesis, must perforce rely on historical considerations” (70). In my understanding, it seems that the author is emphasizing the need for unity in the New Testament to be able to apply either biblical or systematic theologies.

In Carson’s criticism, he cites the works of J. D. G. Dunn especially the “kerigma of Jesus” (72). Not only does Dunn develop the idea of the use of the kerigma but also the use of the Old Testament manuscripts, other worship concepts, and the study of the life of Christ. However, Dunn excludes the evidence in the Gospel of John. He eliminates the kerigma. He avoids discussing about this topic. On the other hand, Carson asserts that the factor that determines the unity of the New Testament is the person of Jesus as a man and Jesus as the glorified one and concludes that there was “diversity” among the Christians in the first century (72). He disagrees, as do I, about Dunn’s conclusion that “Jesus was not, in His own teaching, the object of faith” (74). No wonder Carson labels Dunn’s book as “superficial” (77).

In spite of all of his criticism to Dunn’s works, the author switches viewpoints to discuss the importance of systematic theology in being coherent to the culture or context being studied. In this sense, he develops four positions to back up his statements. The first position is that the Scripture is faithful and <https://assignbuster.com/unity-and-diversity-in-the-new-testament-religion-essay/>

historically testable (79). The second position is that the laws of logic help in the integration of knowledge and communication of the truth (80). The third position is that systematic theology requires documentation to deal with the Bible topics (81). The last position is that systematic theology needs to have biblical data including the sixty-six books of the canon (82).

He also discusses the topic of diversity in the New Testament characterized by synthesizing the truth found in the Bible in “ contemporary terms” (83), and the distinction of how a writer records and interpret that truth (84). In addition, the diversity also includes the own personal interests and ideologies of the writers, which means that two authors could be talking about the same topic but with different words and writing styles.

Implications for My Ministry

The author helped me to understand the differences between biblical and systematic theology and the importance in applying correct methodology when analyzing biblical texts. He showed me through this article that exegesis interacts with biblical theology; biblical theology interacts with historical theology; and historical theology interacts with systematic theology. All of them interact with each other.

Another implication in my ministry is that I need to teach the Scripture and transmit to my congregation and youth group that it is trustworthy. In addition, I need to legitimize that there is harmony in both theologies, biblical and systematic theologies. This understanding will help me to have a better interpretation of biblical passages.

Finally, something that I learned from D. A. Carson is to have a broad analysis and criticism about works of other authors in order to make the truth be revealed through the processes involved in systematic theology. This analysis will help me to think critically with the purpose of deciphering truth.