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THE PRESUPPOSITIONAL HERMENEUTIC: AN ARGUMENT FOR INTERPRETING AND PREACHING THE BIBLE WITH AUTHORITY

A Dissertation

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Jonathan Daniel Anderson

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APPROVAL SHEET

THE PRESUPPOSITIONAL HERMENEUTIC: AN ARGUMENT FOR INTERPRETING AND PREACHING THE BIBLE WITH AUTHORITY

Jonathan Daniel Anderson

Read and Approved by:

_____
Robert A. Vogel (Chair)

_____
Hershael W. York

_____
Bruce A. Ware

Date_____

For His glory in Christ and in the church forever

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
BDAG	Bauer, Walter, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Accordance Bible Software, version 2.3. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BI	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
CTJ	*Calvin Theological Journal*
CTQ	*Concordia Theological Quarterly*
EmJ	*Emmaus Journal*
NA^{28}	Novum Testamentum Graece. Nestle-Aland, 28th rev. ed. Edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger. Accordance Bible Software, version 2.2. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.
GTJ	*Grace Theological Journal*
HALOT	Ludwig Koehler, and Walter Baumgartner. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 5 vols. Edited by M. E. J Richardson. Accordance Bible Software, version 3.4. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2000.
HMT	Hebrew Masoretic Text with Westminster Hebrew Morphology. Accordance Bible Software, version 1.8. Glenside, PA: J. Alan Groves Center for Advanced Biblical Research, 2016.
JAAR	*The Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBTM	*Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JTI	*Journal of Theological Interpretation*
LSJ	Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
LW	Martin Luther. *Luther's Works.* Vols. 31-54. Edited by Helmut T.

	Lehmann. Accordance Version 1.0. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1957-1975.
LXX	The Greek Septuagint. Edited by Alfred Rahlfs. Accordance Bible Software, version 5.4. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.
MSJ	*The Master's Seminary Journal*
NIDOTTE	VanGemeren, Willem, ed. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*. Accordance, Version 2.4. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.
RFP	*Reformed Faith & Practice*
SBJT	*Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*
SR	*Sociology of Religion*
TDNT	Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
TrinJ	*Trinity Journal*
VE	*Verbum et Ecclesia*
VR	*Vox Reformata*
VULG	Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam, 5th rev. ed. Edited by Robert Weber and Roger Gryson. Accordance Bible Software, version 3.1. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007.
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*

PREFACE

Many people were formative in the development of this project. I have been shaped by former pastors Scott Ardevanis, Richard Holland, and John MacArthur—thanks for modeling a hermeneutic built upon a biblical epistemology.

I lack the adequate words to express thanks to the pastors I serve under and alongside of, both the pastors at Grace Immanuel Bible Church and pastoral faculty at The Expositors Seminary: Jerry Wragg, Jay Pitts, Jim Kearney, Brian Arnold, Todd Muray, Daron Roberts, Dan Kreider, George Zemek, Matthew Waymeyer, Smedly Yates, Paul Lamey, Bob Whitney, and Whitney Oxford. You are all so patient. Who knew that every staff meeting could be turned so easily toward the issue of interpretive authority? It is not an overstatement to say that this project would never have seen the light of day without you men. Jay, your encouragement and zeal to see this project finished were unmatched. It is a privilege to serve alongside you in Grace Life. Jerry, thanks for being such a faithful pastor and shepherding me and my family towards faith, humility, and perseverance before God. I thank God that He brought my family under your ministry fourteen years ago. Matt, thanks for giving me writing lessons—your skill and advice improved this project and played no small role in its completion. Paul, thanks for proofing chapter one at a moment's notice in your busy ministry. Smed, thanks for being so passionate about this topic, and for pushing back and asking questions about my prospectus. Your input was helpful and clarifying. Dr. Z., you have always given me time, answers, and resources. Your two independent PhD seminars were critical for this project. I thank God for how He used your recorded lectures and writings to influence me since college, even though I had never been your official student until after serving on faculty with you at TES. Thanks for modeling a scholarship that is rigorous, reverent, and

humble, *exegetically derived and systematically expressed*.

Thanks to all the current and former students at The Expositors Seminary who have listened and asked for more answers in the realm of interpretive authority. Special thanks to Dave Corrente and Tim Moschera, who more than once introduced pertinent resources to me. Kevin Huang, thank you for your critical mind and helpful questions. Jason Girard, thanks for typing up dozens of my handwritten book indexes into a searchable format. Last but not least, Matthew Johnston, you virtually saved chapter 1 from writer's paralysis. Thanks for taking the time to compare my verbal articulation with my writing and helping me to achieve greater clarity. May Genoa, Italy, hear His gospel through you!

Fellow students at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary helped to shape the articulation of this project. I am especially indebted to Michael Dixon, Kevin Koslowski, Cole Feix, Tyshawn Gardiner, and John Fallahee for edifying discussions, feedback, and passionate, but godly, sparring. I will always appreciate those seminars.

Thanks to Albert Mohler, Keith Essex, Abner Chou (on multiple occasions), Marc Wragg, and Phil Johnson—you all helped my approach to this question and/or my articulation of the answer giving me your time and much-needed expertise. Thanks to Sam Klaus, several volumes with my handwritten indexes were typed up and made searchable. Thanks to you and your willingness to serve me, the diverse gifts in the church have multiplied ministry once again.

Thanks to Dr. Vogel, my supervisor and frequent professor throughout the program, this project was finished. Dr. Vogel, your love for the truth and passion to equip men for the church is evident—I have seen it firsthand. Thank you for your tireless insight, scrutiny, and keen ability to recognize areas where clarity could be improved.

Finally, my family has been an overwhelming encouragement. Dad, thanks for modeling this hermeneutic throughout my life. You have stood firm and remained steadfast through every trial the Lord has blessed you with. My memory of you reading

the Word virtually every morning of my childhood, and your adoration of its infinite depth impacted me since before my conversion. Micah, Owen, Miles, and Derek, thanks for praying for me and leaving me in "the shed" a little longer than normal. Most of all, April, thank you for being my wife and best friend, and for loving Christ more than life. Your love for His church cannot be questioned—you have sacrificed more than anyone for this project. Thanks for your constant encouragement to persevere and to balance priorities. It is my greatest earthly blessing to serve Christ with you.

Jonathan Anderson

Jupiter, Florida
May 2019

CHAPTER 1

EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE ΠΟΥ ΣΤΩ OF PRESUPPOSITIONAL HERMENEUTICS[1]

Introduction

The Scripture must stand as the only authority for interpreting the Scripture. This conviction demonstrates a vicious but necessary circularity. It requires the reading of the Scripture in order to know how to read the Scripture.[2] The only way to have certainty when interpreting the Scriptures is to ensure that one's hermeneutical presuppositions are the same as the Scripture's.[3] Further, to preach with authority, it is not sufficient to start with the text of Scripture if the understood meaning is contaminated by hermeneutical presuppositions that are foreign to the Scriptures. Instead, the Scripture must be read with the same interpretive presuppositions that God Himself holds. For a hermeneutic to have divine warrant, it must uphold the same interpretive presuppositions as Scripture. "The

[1] Portions of the research in this chapter were previously submitted to Dr. George Zemek in a paper titled "The Hermeneutical ΠΟΩ ΣΤΩ: An Epistemology for Interpreting the Scripture," for an independent study seminar "Presuppositionalism & The Epistemological Ground for Interpretation" (86977T), Fall 2016.

[2] See the discussion at the end of this chapter. This is not an impossible circularity, but a consistent one in that in order to read the Scripture, one must presuppose that it is knowable by reading. When one reads it, one discovers that the Scripture presupposes that it is sufficient to overcome the interpreter's presuppositions. For the circularity of all ultimate authority, see John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2010), 348; Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1987), 125.

[3] Certainty is expected and demanded by God, e.g., Luke 1:1-4; 2 Tim 1:12; 2:14-16; Prov 22:21; 1 John 5:13. See the many occurrences of "we/you know" (1 John 2:3, 5, 13, 14, 18, 20, 21, 29; 3:2, 5, 14, 15, 16, 19, 24: 4:2, 6, 13, 16; 5:2, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20). As far as the interpretive presuppositions of the Scriptures themselves, these are recognized and demonstrated in two distinct ways—both in the presuppositions that are demanded of the reader to make sense of the text, and in the presuppositions that are exhibited in the interpretive acts of the authors of Scripture. See the argument outlines under "Thesis" below.

surest way to an understanding of the true principles of interpretation is to first give attention to what the Scripture itself reveals."[4]

Yet many question whether the interpreter can truly know that his hermeneutics are right. On what basis can a reader of Scripture know how to interpret with certainty? Never has the discussion of epistemology been more important. As Vanhoozer notes, "The rise of hermeneutics parallels the fall of epistemology."[5] Likewise, Bloesch says, "It is now generally agreed that hermeneutics is concerned not only with the understanding of the text in question but also with the meaning of 'understanding' itself."[6] Since the Enlightenment, the discussion of interpretation has become increasingly complicated. It has become impossible to deal with hermeneutics without also dealing with epistemology. Skepticism about epistemology proliferates confusion about hermeneutics.

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[4] Ernest F. Kevan, "The Principles of Interpretation," in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 289. Kevan later says,

> It is not, therefore, a peculiarity of conservative evangelical theologians that they also are guided in their view of the Bible by what they think of it. Presuppositions there must be, but the difference between the presuppositions of conservative theology and the presuppositions of the other groups is that those of the former are provided by the Scripture itself whereas those of the other groups are not.
>
> The presupposition of conservative theology is that the Bible demands an approach in reverence and faith. It claims to be the Word of God and must be examined and interpreted in that light. This does not carry with it any preconceived notions of what it ought to contain, but merely anticipates that the book will be studied for what it has to say. This respectful attitude will therefore not require a resort to allegory to remove the 'inharmonious' or to invent the fanciful in an eisegetical manner; nor will it require that the supernatural be eliminated, as attempted by rationalism, nor the objective factor destroyed, as by neo-orthodoxy.
>
> The basic principle of Biblical interpretation which emerges from this point of view is that the sense of Scripture is to be found in the grammatical meaning of the words. To respect the grammatical sense is the fundamental rule in the study of all books, and the Bible, though rightly revered as 'the Book of books,' is nevertheless still a book. (Kevan, "The Principles of Interpretation," 293)

[5] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 19.

[6] Donald G. Bloesch, foreword to *A Hermeneutics of Ultimacy: Peril or Promise?*, ed. James H. Olthius (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987).

Thesis

The research question behind this project is this: How can the Scriptures stand as the exclusive authority for arriving at a God-given hermeneutic?[7] The thesis for the project is this: *The Scriptures give the reader an exclusive hermeneutic that is the only divinely authorized hermeneutic for interpreting and preaching the Scriptures themselves, 'the presuppositional hermeneutic'*—the hermeneutic that is consistent with the Scripture's own presuppositions about interpretation, including: language effectively conveys meaning, meaning is determined by authorial intent (with an identity between what the divine author and human author intended), and meaning consists of the literal, grammatical-historical sense of the text, accessible to the original audience. The presuppositional hermeneutic maintains that the self-attesting Scriptures govern hermeneutics by giving to readers the necessary interpretive presuppositions. This project defines 'presuppositions' as the convictions about interpretation that are presupposed by the reader before the act of reading takes place. This argument can be proposed and defended in opposition to those who hold that an exclusively biblical hermeneutic is impossible. The thesis can be proven from Scripture by means of two arguments: for a hermeneutic to be truly biblical, its presuppositions must be the same as those that are (1) *presupposed by the Scripture*, and (2) *exhibited by the Scripture*.

A preacher is authorized to say "Thus says the Lord" only if both his content and his interpretive authority are the Scriptures themselves. Only when a preacher's epistemology and hermeneutic are grounded on the Scripture can he know meaning with certainty and preach with authority.

Presuppositional hermeneutics presupposes that communication aims to reveal and not to conceal. Bound up with this notion is the fact that language is an ability of God that has been successfully given to mankind by virtue of the *imago dei*. Language is

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[7] Borrowing Christian Smith's pejorative term, the question might be, "How is Biblicism biblical?" This is the logical second question after answering "Can Scriptures stand . . . ?" in the positive.

capable of communicating the intention of the speaker/writer. Similarly, readers/listeners are capable of receiving clear communication.[8] When the speaker/writer is God, His human audience is obligated to respond to what God said, regardless of whether it is believed. Such views of language, man's language ability, potential clarity of language, and accountability to respond to God's Word are not foreign presuppositions brought to Scripture as an authority above Scripture, but rather, these are divinely-given presuppositions revealed in God's Word. Additionally, when the biblical authors exhibit the interpretation of previous revelation, they model faithful handling of the text for the Christian.[9] This sets the presuppositional hermeneutic apart from other claims that the Bible is its own interpretive authority.[10]

The transcendental argument for hermeneutics is this: no one can even attack or critique the presuppositional hermeneutic without borrowing from it in order to

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[8] This capability is reflective of what has *sometimes* been called 'Divine accommodation.' I do not mean a living accommodation where the meaning was accommodated to so specific of a generation that the meaning is changing as the text passes out of that generation (like P. Enns), but a static accommodation where the living God communicates once for all to sinful man in language adapted to man's ability to understand. As articulated by Calvin, this version of accommodation makes meaning transcendently accessible to the reader in a timeless and unchanging way. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), I.13.i; Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 30, 56, 105, 109.

[9] These convictions are typically in agreement with what is called the grammatical-historical method. I am convinced that the historical-grammatical method is the only method that enables the interpreter to arrive at God's intended meaning. In the framework of this project, it would be correct to say that the grammatical-historical method of interpretation is both *presupposed* by Scripture and *exhibited* by the apostles when they interpret the OT. However, the full defense and development of a hermeneutical method is beyond the scope of this paper. Due to space, this project must be content with a more modest sketch of methodology, merely articulating some of the obvious implications of the Bible's interpretive presuppositions where they pertain to preaching specifically. The lack of such a defense of a method does *not* reflect any openness to the idea that, once the Scriptures' presuppositions are shown, and the conclusions of apostolic interpretation are observed, multiple subjective methods can faithfully uphold the Scriptures' presuppositions. Similarly, the fact that there is a method that would exclusively uphold all of Scriptures' interpretive presuppositions does not rest on humanistic rationalism, in the school of Descartes, but rather it rests on the divine revelation. Nevertheless, this project must remain content to demonstrate Scripture's presuppositions for hermeneutics, while only hinting towards the methodology or interpretive process for maintaining those presuppositions.

[10] Contra David I. Starling, *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship: How the Bible Shapes Our Interpretive Habits and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), locs. 451-53, Kindle, who says, "The claim that Scripture is its own interpreter (*Scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres*, as the maxim came to be formulated) can itself be understood in a variety of senses." The argument in the second half of this project shows that to take something that God said in one place and time, and to impose it as an interpretive authority over what God said in a different place and time, is not biblically warranted.

disagree. In other words, post-moderns and traditionalists must borrow the Scripture's presupposed view of language and interpretation in order to articulate any other contrasting view.[11]

This dissertation furthers the discussion about the functional nature of Scripture as the authority for hermeneutics. Even beyond preaching, this project makes a contribution to the hermeneutical conversation at large.

Summary of the History of Research

Several authors have been influential and formative for this project. In presuppositionalism and epistemology, I have benefitted tremendously from Van Til, Zemek, Frame, Bloesch, Calvin, and Reymond.[12] In regard to tradition, history, and interpretation I have been impacted positively from authors as diverse as Wycliffe, Owen, Luther, Bavinck, Thompson, as well as negatively from Vanhoozer, C. Smith, J. K. A. Smith, Kelsey, and Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard.[13] Regarding hermeneutics and the NT

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[11] Of course, many interpreters claim that postmodernity is compatible with Christianity. They follow literary theorists who don't even claim to be Christian, such as Stanley Fish. See Carl Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004); Merold Westphal, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation? Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009); Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 303–4.

[12] Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1961); Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology: Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Revelation, Scripture, and God*, ed. William Edgar, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007); George J. Zemek, "Exegetical and Theological Bases for a Consistently Presuppositional Approach to Apologetics" (ThD diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1982); Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*; Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*; Donald G. Bloesch, *The Ground of Certainty: Toward an Evangelical Theology of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971); Calvin, *Institutes*; Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976).

[13] John Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, trans. Ian Christopher Levy, The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001); Robert Vaughan, *The Life and Opinions of John de Wycliffe, D.D. Illustrated Principally from His Unpublished Manuscripts; with a Preliminary View of the Papal System, and of the State of the Protestant Doctrine in Europe, to the Commencement of the Fourteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1831); Robert Vaughan, *Tracts and Treatises of John De Wycliffe, D.D. with Selections and Translations from His Manuscripts, and Latin Works* (London: Blackburn and Pardon, 1845); John Owen, "The Reason of Faith," in *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 4:1–115; Owen, "Causes, Ways, and Means of Understanding the Mind of God," in *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 4:117–234; Martin Luther, "Answer to the Hyperchristian, Hyperspiritual, and Hyperlearned Book by Goat Emser in Leipzig—Including Some Thoughts Regarding His Companion, the Fool Murner," in *Church and Ministry I*, *Luther's Works* vol. 39 (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 137–224; Luther; Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids:

use of the OT, I have resonated greatly and been benefitted by Kaiser, Wallace, Ellis, and Chou; as well, I have been sharpened by those who disagreed with what is articulated in this project, such as Enns, Hays, and many redemptive-historical authors.[14]

Several works critique the development of hermeneutics from a Scripture-only position.[15] Others uphold the notion that hermeneutics must be biblical, but additional authority is necessary (such as tradition, consensus, the Spirit's trans-textual revelation,

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Fleming H. Revell, 2004); Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003); Mark D. Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand: The Relation of Authority and Interpretive Method of Luther's Approach to Scripture* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2004); Mark D. Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word: The Clarity of Scripture*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 21 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005); Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016); Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011); James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012); David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert I. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. updated ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004).

[14] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985); Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998); Daniel B. Wallace, "A Very Brief Introduction to the Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament" (unpublished, n.d.); E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1981); Abner Chou, "A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 113–39; Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018); Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation*; Enns, *The Sin of Certainty: Why God Desires Our Trust More Than Our "Correct" Beliefs* (New York: HarperOne, 2016); Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (repr., Baylor University Press, 2017); Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000); Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007). Chou was a classmate of mine in seminary, and I have benefitted greatly from his seminars and personal correspondence regarding hermeneutics. While his *Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers* only came out around the time of my prospectus, he graciously gave me a pre-publication copy in December 2017. His thesis is encouragingly close to my second argument.

[15] For example, Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible*; Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*; James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Relativism? Community, Contingency, and Creaturehood* (Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group, 2014); Westphal, *Whose Community?*; Raschke, *The Next Reformation*. These authors variously stand on the shoulders of Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988); Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?*; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, 4th ed. (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); and Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

or the magisterium).[16] Some have even defended multiple hermeneutical approaches *even while claiming to build on Scripture alone*.[17]

Cornelius Van Til's *The New Hermeneutic* bears some interesting parallels to this project, in that he critiques the new hermeneutic on the grounds of an underlying *presuppositionalism*. However, this work never actually constructs a positive argument for any such presuppositional hermeneutic. Rather, it contains a penetrating critique of the failures of the new hermeneutic—more neo-liberal than postmodern—from a presuppositional perspective. Similarly, Abner Chou's *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers* deals with the second argument of this project, the hermeneutic exhibited by the biblical writers. Unlike Van Til's work, this work does demonstrate a constructive hermeneutic against the notion of theological interpretation, but nevertheless, it does not address the first presuppositional argument, let alone apply such findings to the task of preaching.

This project is primarily constructive. It examines what the Scriptures *presuppose* about interpretation (ch. 2), and what they *exhibit* by way of interpreting other passages (ch. 3). Each of these two arguments follows the same functional template: (1) the issue—what is the precise issue that distinguishes the presuppositional hermeneutic from others, (2) the positions—what other positions contend with

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[16] For example, Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001); Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*; Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity*; José Granados, Carlos Granados, and Luis Sánchez Navarro, *Opening up the Scriptures: Joseph Ratzinger and the Foundations of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008); Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*.

[17] E.g., writes,

> Simply to claim that one is starting with the Bible is not to say much. In the first place, most heretics have claimed as much. Second, we have to recognize the plurality of textual kinds in the Bible. There are two testaments, four Gospels and a dozen or so major types of literary genres. Can one approach to reading the Bible do justice to its literary, historical and theological variety? While we may wish to begin with the Bible as the 'most perfect Word,' this starting point alone does not tell us which of the many interpretative approaches to employ. What does it mean to do theology 'according to the Scriptures'? . . . Doing theology according to the Scripture, then, is harder than it first looks. (Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002], 28)

presuppositional hermeneutic,[18] (3) the presuppositional position—what argument demonstrates the biblical authority for the presuppositional hermeneutic, and (4) what are the potential objections and rebuttals to those arguments (with the exception of ch. 3).

Biblical Epistemology and Its Necessity for Knowledge

This chapter argues that the Bible alone possesses the epistemological[19] basis for interpreting the Bible. In other words, only the Scriptures answer the question, "How can the reader know that his hermeneutics are authorized by God?" This chapter examines why there is such a need for the presuppositional argument for hermeneutics (the argument itself is made in chapters 2 and 3). This section of this chapter explains the nature of biblical epistemology, and why it is necessary for knowledge. The second section of this chapter briefly surveys the increasingly epistemological nature of hermeneutics since the Enlightenment. Then, the final section examines the reasons why a biblical epistemology is necessary for divinely-warranted interpretation. As the discussion about epistemology becomes less grounded in Scripture as the starting point of knowledge, certainty about hermeneutics decreases. The interpreter must derive his hermeneutic from the Scriptures themselves in order to know whether the hermeneutic has divine warrant.

The epistemologies of any given era, be they as diverse as modern rationalism, phenomenological empiricism, or postmodern existentialism, have produced equally diverse hermeneutics. The question for hermeneutics is ever and always, *How does one know that his interpretation is correct?* The question of interpretive authority is a question of epistemology. What, or who, has the right to govern whether a hermeneutic is

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[18] Numbers 1 and 2 tend to be conflated in both of these chapters.

[19] Matthias Steup, "Epistemology," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2018, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/epistemology/, defines epistemology: "Defined narrowly, epistemology is the study of knowledge and justified belief. As the study of knowledge, epistemology is concerned with the following questions: What are the necessary and sufficient conditions of knowledge? What are its sources? What is its structure, and what are its limits?"

correct or not? Interpretive authority is a question of starting points. Where did the interpreter *get* his hermeneutic? Who authorized such a hermeneutic as legitimate?

Archimedes supposedly said, "Give me a place where I may stand, and I will move the earth."[20] This famous mathematician was marveling at the power of leverage. Even a sizable mass like the earth could be moved by as puny a power as Archimedes' arms, given a long enough lever. The Earth, Archimedes, and the long lever only lack one thing—a place to stand. Ποῦ στῶ means "Where may I stand?"[21]

As Jesus Himself acknowledged (Matt 7:24-27), foundations matter more than the structure above them. Interpretive authority reigns as the primary contributor to the legitimacy of interpretive methodology. The Scriptures *must* remain the authority for every Christian's notion of epistemology, language, and meaning—indeed, hermeneutics *in toto* must find its ποῦ στῶ in Scripture alone. Extra-biblical interpretive authority actually becomes more authoritative than God. As Bavinck says, "Tradition became a force alongside of, and, not long afterwards, superior to, Holy Scripture. Finally, when tradition even received its own infallible organ in the person of the pope, it also, in fact, took the place of the Word of God, for 'the *auctoritas interpretiva* is invariably the supreme and true authority.'"[22] Though he refers to the pope specifically, what Bavinck says applies to any appeal to an interpretive authority that is outside the Bible.

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[20] Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976), 30n7. Reymond helpfully comments,

> He was, of course, asking for a place outside the cosmos by such a request. Similarly, as this study will show, men need an *epistemological* 'Archimedean point of reference' to understand their cosmos and themselves; but only a revelation from One transcendentally outside of the cosmos can provide the *pou sto* essential to knowledge, since man can never break out of his finite cosmic perspective. (Ibid.)

See Reymond, "The Bible as the Ποῦ Στῶ for Knowledge and Personal Significance," in *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 111–26.

[21] Archimedes is usually quoted as saying literally, πᾶ στῶ, "somewhere I may stand." As a curiosity, που could be accented either as the question or the answer. While ποῦ στῶ asks, "Where may I stand?," πού στῶ, on the other hand, answers, "A place where I may stand."

[22] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, 63, quoting Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, 233. In an interesting comment pertaining to this discussion, John Bolt writes about Bavinck's first volume in the "Editor's Introduction," "What makes this prolegomena distinctive is

Where may the interpreter stand in order to have a place outside of himself where he may find leverage for objectivity? The Christian answer must always and only be Scripture alone. Scripture alone gives the Christian an authoritative ground for hermeneutics.[23] Scripture alone is the infallible, external location where the interpreter finds the leverage to get outside of fallible subjectivity.

Claiming to build a hermeneutic on Scripture is easier said than done. With legitimate concern, Vanhoozer writes,

> Simply to claim that one is starting with the Bible is not to say much. In the first place, most heretics have claimed as much. Second, we have to recognize the plurality of textual kinds in the Bible. There are two testaments, four Gospels and a dozen or so major types of literary genres. Can one approach to reading the Bible do justice to its literary, historical and theological variety? While we may wish to begin with the Bible as the 'most perfect Word,' this starting point alone does not tell us which of the many interpretative approaches to employ. What does it mean to do theology 'according to the Scriptures'?
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> . . . Doing theology according to the Scripture, then, is harder than it first looks.[24]

In spite of whatever perceived difficulties there may be, faithfulness to the God who wrote the Scriptures requires that the interpreter stand on, or submit to, the Scriptures in order to know whether his hermeneutic is approved by God.

A word about presuppositions is necessary. In a discussion about epistemology *and* hermeneutics, the nature of presuppositions must be kept in mind. Epistemological presuppositions are, by nature, *a priori*—what must be presupposed in order to know.

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the extent to which Bavinck confronts the profound epistemological crisis of post-Enlightenment modernity." Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, 20.

[23] This statement is not intended to evoke simplistic notions of *Scripturae interpres ipsum*, in the sense that more clear passages interpret less clear passages. Rather, this statement is pointing towards the view that Scripture must actually give the reader his hermeneutical convictions. Interpretive presuppositions that are not held by the Scripture are not divinely-warranted, and should not be imposed on the Scripture. It will become clear that this project disagrees with the sentiment of Starling, *Hermeneutics as Apprenticeship*, locs. 451-53, Kindle: "The claim that Scripture is its own interpreter (*Scriptura sacra sui ipsius interpres*, as the maxim came to be formulated) can itself be understood in a variety of senses."

[24] Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 28. See the related expression of David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 1: "Virtually every contemporary Protestant theologian along the entire spectrum of opinion from the 'neo-evangelicals' through Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, to Anders Nygren, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and even Fritz Buri, has acknowledged that any Christian theology worthy of the name 'Christian' must, in *some* sense of the phrase, be done 'in accord with scripture.'"

This presupposition may not be chronologically acknowledged *a priori*, but it will be a logical presupposition, whether acknowledged or not. When it comes to knowing, the Scriptures reveal that there is no biblically defined "knowledge" apart from the fear of God (Prov 1:7; 9:10; Ps 111:10).[25] This paper agrees with Van Til that man must presuppose the triune God in order to understand anything truly.[26] Van Til writes,

> I had for many years rejected the Thomistic-Butler type of approach to apologetics. I had done so because of the unbiblical view of man and the cosmos which underlay this apologetic. I had over and over pointed out that non-Christian schemes of thought, whether ancient or modern, presupposed a view of man as autonomous, of human thought or logic as legislative of what can or cannot exist in reality, and of pure contingency as correlative to such legislative thought. I had for years pointed out that for a Christian to adopt these non-Christian presuppositions about man, together with the dialectical interdependence of legislative logic and brute contingency, and then to join the natural man in asking *whether* God exists and *whether* Christianity is true would be fatal for his enterprise. If we allow that one intelligent word can be spoken about *being* or *knowing* or *acting* as such, without first introducing the Creator-creature distinction, we are sunk. As Christians we must not allow that even such a thing as enumeration or counting can be *accounted for* except upon the presupposition of the truth of what we are told in Scripture about the triune God as the Creator and Redeemer of the world. . . . If the unbeliever then points to the fact that non-Christian scientists and philosophers have discovered many actual "states of affairs," I heartily agree with this but I must tell him that they have done so with borrowed capital. They have done so *adventitiously*. The actual state of affairs about the entire cosmos is what the Bible says it is.[27]

Without a triune God, man cannot reasonably make sense of the unity of creation, or the diversity within it. He cannot reasonably answer for his reasoning faculties without such a presupposition.[28] Whether he acknowledges such a presupposition or not, is not the

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[25] See Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 28: "Our presupposition of God as the absolute, self-conscious being, who is the source of all finite being and knowledge makes it imperative that we distinguish the Christian-theistic method from all non-Christian methods." In the ensuing discussion about the Christian theology, Van Til clarifies that the *a posteriori* ("from the latter") is limited to the facts of Scripture and not facts in general. The *a priori* ("from the former") is the previous presupposition. As the editor, William Edgar, says (28n3), "At times, such as here, Van Til sounds sympathetic to an *a priori* method. Yet he is not an *apriorist*, that is, one who places human, autonomous propositions above revelation. Instead, he is a *presuppositionalist* (though he uses the expression sparingly), because his method begins with a self-authenticating God who is outside thought and reveals himself to dependent creatures."

[26] Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 340.

[27] Van Til, "Response [to Herman Dooyeweerd]," in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E. R. Geehan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 1980), 90–91.

[28] Van Til explains,

> It may be said that for the human mind to know any fact truly, it must presuppose the existence of

issue. He may irrationally use his reason in order to attempt to build an epistemology by which he rejects God's revelation. This is like the child who has to sit on his father's lap in order to slap him in the face.[29] The unbeliever cannot find a reasonable basis upon which he thinks about God's existence without the presupposition of His existence. Without the presupposition of a personal, reasoning Creator, there is no reasonable explanation for how an individual creature can even reason consistently about anything in the universe. In other words, he must sit on God's lap as a creature that received his reasoning capacity as a gift, in order to use that reasoning capacity given to him by God in order to turn around and slap Him in the face by attempting to rationally deny His existence. This is the irrationality of unbelief.[30]

However, in the discussion of apologetics, the nature of presuppositions is slightly different than that of epistemology. Apologetic presuppositions are not the *a priori* of epistemology, but the *a posteriori* of exegetical conclusions.[31] When engaging the unbeliever in a discussion about the truth, the faithful evangelist must never deny what God has declared true by attempting to reason from a position of agnostic neutrality. To do so would effectively give up the whole enterprise of calling the sinner to repent of his intellectual autonomy at the outset. Man in his pride seeks to establish his own reasoning as an authority, rather than to submit his mind to the revelation of God. For the evangelist to seek to reason to God from a position of arrogant autonomy is the most

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> God and his plan for the universe. If we wish to know the facts of this world, we must relate these facts to laws. That is, in every knowledge transaction, we must bring the particulars of our experience into relation with universals. . . . But the most comprehensive interpretation that we can give of the facts by connecting the particulars and the universals that together constitute the universe leaves our knowledge at loose ends, unless we may presuppose God back of this world. (Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 58–59)

[29] Cornelius Van Til, *The Case for Calvinism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1979), 147–48.

[30] See the subsection titled "The Human Ποῦ Στῶ and Epistemological Futility," below.

[31] See Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 38; Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 17–19. Also, see the section titled "Theological Presuppositions and Hermeneutical Practice," in appendix 3, below.

hypocritical form of bait-and-switch. This is why the most biblical presuppositional authors frequently write about the idolatry of neutrality.[32]

In another sense, however, the Scripture's presuppositions for interpretation, as articulated in chapter 2, must also be held by interpreters who articulate a view of hermeneutics that contradicts the Scripture's presuppositions for hermeneutics. At this point, the reader should notice the similarity between epistemological presuppositions (the speaking God exists, without which man can predicate nothing[33]) and those of hermeneutics built upon a "revelational epistemology."[34] These hermeneutical presuppositions are the convictions about language, meaning, and interpretation without which no one can interpret. In fact, as this chapter proposes, critics of the presuppositional hermeneutic cannot even articulate a view of hermeneutics without borrowing from the Bible's presuppositions about hermeneutics. The presuppositional hermeneutic holds that unless man presupposes God's view of interpretation, interpretation is not possible. Fallen man can get interpretation "correct" in a superficial sense, but he has to "borrow capital" to do so.[35]

In another sense, proper presuppositions in the hermeneutic discussion also function in a similar way as in the apologetic discussion. In apologetics, presuppositions are not what must be presupposed in order to think, but rather, God's worldview that the

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[32] See the section, "The Appeal to Every Ultimate Authority Involves Circular Reasoning," below.

[33] Perhaps the clearest articulation of this can be found in Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 11–18. Also see Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 36.

[34] This term came from Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 55. It is intended to be both synonymous with "biblical epistemology" and opposed to the epistemologies of "rationalism," "empiricism," or "existentialism."

[35] See Van Til, "Response," in Geehan, *Jerusalem and Athens*, 91. With regard to knowledge about hermeneutics, unbelievers can interpret texts correctly. But when we speak of epistemology, the question remains, *On what basis can one say that he "knows" that his knowledge of hermeneutics is correct?* This is the strength of the presuppositional hermeneutic: unbelievers must borrow the hermeneutic that Scripture presupposes and exhibits, and they must do so without epistemological warrant, in order to articulate a denial of the proper interpretation of Scripture. It is not that the Scriptures reveal omniscient knowledge, but it is true that man cannot know anything truly without a revelational epistemology. See the section "The Transcendental Nature of the Presuppositional Hermeneutic," below.

unbeliever must embrace. These are the theological convictions that must never be denied or compromised in the application of evangelism, lest the evangelist be unfaithful to the Lord.[36] These presuppositions are not properly *a priori* for thinking in general, but rather *a posteriori* since they are revealed in the Scripture.[37] Similarly, in hermeneutics, presuppositions are the necessary elements that the interpreter must have in order to interpret properly. Not only must these presuppositions be the same presuppositions that the Scriptures hold for interpretation (the *a priori* presuppositions necessary for interpretation and all reasonable articulation of hermeneutics—comparable to the epistemological presuppositions), but these presuppositions must also be consistent with the *a posteriori* presuppositions that result from a close examination of how the Scripture actually interprets itself (the *a posteriori* presuppositions that are built upon the evidence of the Scripture's interpretation of itself). This concept will be no surprise to the theologian who is convinced that the same God whose mind is reflected in the laws of logic also wrote the Bible. The last section of this chapter introduces the epistemic environment that God has created for all men to understand language and interpret anything. The argument in chapter 2—the hermeneutic *presupposed* by Scripture—resembles the role of presuppositions in the discussion of epistemology, in so far as the chapter examines the necessary *a priori* presuppositions about language, meaning and interpretation on the basis of a revelational epistemology. Then, the role of hermeneutical presuppositions in the argument of chapter 3—the hermeneutic *exhibited* by Scripture—resembles those of the apologetic discussion, in so far as the presuppositions employed in

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[36] John M. Frame, *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief*, ed. Joseph E. Torres (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2015), 3, defines "presupposition" in the apologetical discussion: "If we adopt the Word of God as our ultimate commitment, our ultimate standard, our ultimate criterion of truth and falsity, God's Word then becomes our 'presupposition.' That is to say, since we use it to evaluate all other beliefs, we must regard it as more certain than any other beliefs."

[37] See Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 17–19, 27–29, 48. If there were a true *a priori* presupposition for hermeneutics, an excellent candidate would be "Communication intends to reveal, rather than conceal." Even Jesus' parables follow this presupposition. If He truly intended to conceal, He would have remained silent. Instead, the intention *was* to reveal, but only to those who had ears to hear, while concealing as a judgment on some (see Matt 13:10-17; Mark 4:10-12).

the practice [alternately *defending the faith* or *interpreting the Bible*] must stand on the conclusions properly found in God's Word.

Scripture, the Only Divinely-Warranted Ποῦ Στῶ for Epistemology

The only two possible sources for epistemology are God and creation. In the category of creation, candidates include human reason, human experience, and human existence. Instead of rationalism, empiricism, or existentialism, the only divinely-authorized ποῦ στῶ for hermeneutics is God's Word. When epistemology is grounded upon the Word of God, the thinker has a sure and certain place to stand. Only in submission to Scripture can man know that he knows a subject—God, man, or anything else—truly as it is. On any other epistemology, fallen man may achieve superficial knowledge of something that "happens" to be correct, but he cannot know that he is correct or incorrect because the foundation of his epistemology is fallible and futile (cf. Rom 1:18-23, below). Man's mind is prevented from reasoning properly by sin. God is the only being in the universe who knows *anything* and *everything* as it is in itself—"His understanding is infinite."[38]

Without apology, this project attempts to stand on the Scripture alone as an epistemological starting point. Perhaps the better picture is that of coming under the Scripture so that the interpreter's presuppositions are the Bible's presuppositions about interpretation. In other words, it is not so much that the interpreter builds these convictions upon the Scripture as it is the interpreter is given these presuppositions by the Scripture. However, this method might appear to be begging the question. After all, how can a reader interpret the Scriptures in order to learn presuppositions necessary for interpreting in the first place? Certainly, theologians do not agree, and many would have much to say about the problems of starting with the Scripture as a ποῦ στῶ for

[38] Ps 147:5. See also Job 38:2-40:2; 40:7-8; Ps 139; Isa 40:12-26; Jer 23:23-24.

hermeneutics.[39] Some scholars would seek to preempt the very attempt of starting with the Scriptures as a ground for hermeneutics.[40] Nevertheless, it would be unconscionable to start reasoning from an "authority" that is not recognized by God Himself. The self-attesting Scripture is the ultimate presupposition for the biblical interpreter. In other words, as the Scripture attests to its own divine origin, the proofs offered in the Scripture are sufficient to prove the divine nature of the writing. The Scripture never allows man to form criteria to judge its divine nature. Instead, God in His word gives man the proof or evidence by which he can recognize the Scripture's divine origin.[41]

For example, God says that foretelling the future before it occurs is what distinguishes God speaking in His word from the claims of idols (Isa 41:21-29; 46:8-11; 48:3-7). Paul rested his persuasion in the demonstration [ἀποδείξει] of the Spirit and power (1 Cor 2:4) and he told the Athenians that God's proof [πίστιν] of the gospel was Christ's resurrection from the dead (Acts 17:31).[42] God declares His word and gives His

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[39] See the first objection in the final section of ch. 2.

[40] E.g., Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible*, 150–51, says "Evangelicalsm itself actually bought into foundationalism whole hog—only instead of it founding universal truth on rationalism or empiricism, evangelicalism simply argued that the right foundation for indubitable knowledge is the text of the Bible and the Bible alone." That is certainty the task of this project. Although the label "foundationalism" may not apply—especially when foundationalism is pragmatically evaluated as truth embraced by a consensus—but the notion that the Scripture can and must function as the ground of knowledge is, in fact, biblical. The major thrust of Smith's critique is a pragmatic argument—pervasive interpretive plurality, or diversity in interpretive conclusions proves that Scripture cannot function as the ground of knowledge, according to Smith.

[41] For this project to be truly presuppositional it must stand firmly and exclusively on the Scriptures themselves. Methodologically, comparisons to Van Til and references to Wyclif, Flacius, or Owen does not prove the presuppositional argument—and even calling them presuppositionalists would be anachronistic (even though warranted, especially in Owen's case). It merely shows others who are also appealing to the same authority in a similar way in a much different time. This is why the most important research for this project was the careful reading of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, in just over two years, carefully assembling the information found in the Scripture on the issues of epistemology, interpretation, language, and meaning. Admittedly, such an approach will not be persuasive or compelling to those who refuse to acknowledge the Scripture as evidence. However, to erect an authority above that of Scripture is not only impossible, but unchristian. The skeptic's rejection of Scripture as evidence is not a weakness of the presuppositional argument, but an issue of anthropology. Lack of persuasion based on legitimate biblical evidence is only a problem if the Scriptures claim that they will produce persuasive consensus among fallen mankind. Instead, Scripture claims to divide its audience and only those who are being saved, possessing the Holy Spirit, will be ultimately compelled by what it says. See 1 Cor 1:17-2:16.

[42] Whether or not that is convincing to any individual is not the issue—and the consensus argument is a discussion that properly belongs to anthropology and soteriology, not epistemology.

proofs without asking His creatures whether they will allow Him the right to speak. Self-assertion is not the same thing as self-attestation. A sticky note that reads, "I, God, wrote this sticky note," deserves the label of *self-asserting*, but not *self-attesting*. Only the Scripture attests to itself with divinely-given criteria for recognizing its divine nature.[43]

For the Christian, the ποῦ στῶ is simple. The Scriptures clearly claim this role for themselves, "The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (Ps 119:130). Both verbals—יָאִיר and the participle מֵבִין—are causatives in the hiphil stem. יָאִיר used here without an object, simply means "to light up, to illuminate."[44] מֵבִין is a hiphil stem of בין**,** which can be accurately translated, "It makes the simple understand." It "carries the sense of teaching."[45] By way of comparison, the sun and the moon were given by God in order to give light (לְהָאִיר) on the earth (Gen 1:17). In a similar way that the sun illuminates the world physically, God's words illuminate the mind epistemologically. Their instruction is the *ground*, the ποῦ στῶ, for epistemology.

In Psalm 19:7-9, David uses five synonyms for the Word of God[46] (law, testimony, precepts, commandments, and judgments), followed by six adjectives or adjectival participles describing the Scriptures (perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, and true).

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[43] The distinction between the self-attestation of Scripture and its self-assertion needs to be upheld. See Matthew Scott Wireman, "The Self-Attestation of Scripture as the Proper Ground for Systematic Theology" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012); John Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture," in *The Scripture Cannot Be Broken: Twentieth Century Writings on the Doctrine of Inerrancy*, ed. John MacArthur (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 47–79; Owen, "The Reason of Faith"; Owen, "Causes, Ways, and Means of Understanding the Mind of God"; Owen, "The Divine Original of Scripture," in *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 16:296–343; John Piper, *A Peculiar Glory: How the Christian Scriptures Reveal Their Complete Truthfulness* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 205–6.

[44] *HALOT*, 1:24.

[45] *HALOT*, 1:122; *NIDOTTE*, 1:642; George J. Zemek, *The Word of God in the Child of God: Exegetical, Theological, and Homiletical Reflections from the 119th Psalm* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 293n16: "Concerning the root אור (*'wr*) in this and similar contexts, Pratt notes that it 'refer[s] to the light that comes chiefly to the *intellect* or *mind* through Divine instruction' (*ISBE* [*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1939], s.v. "Light," by Pratt, 3:1891). Through the gracious process of opening up the richness of revelation God transmits spiritual 'insight' (cf. Dahood, *Psalms*, 3:188) to need recipients. Only in His light do we see light (see Ps 36:9)."

[46] "Fear" (Ps 19:9a) refers to the response to Scripture, and it not properly attributive of the Scripture.

Then, each of these clauses is modified by a participle that explains the *function* of the Word of God.[47] Both verses 7b and 8b [Eng.] use a causative participle to describe what the Scriptures do. First, in "The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple" (7b [Eng.]), the participle מַחְכִּימַת is causative, meaning "make wise, teach wisdom."[48] Second, when David writes "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes," he uses another causative participle, מְאִירַת**.** Unlike Psalm 119:130 above, this occurrence of the word has an object, and could be translated "making light for the eyes."[49] In the context—in 19:1-6, the physical eye clearly sees general revelation—this refers to inward illumination, by which the soul can see with spiritual insight. Together, verses 7b and 8a testify that God's self-testimony and commandments *cause* knowledge and spiritual insight. The Scriptures are the epistemological ποῦ στῶ for wisdom and the spiritual insight to process what one experiences in the world.[50]

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge," and "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Prov 1:7a; 9:10). The noun *understanding* [בִּינָה] has a verbal cognate בין**.** This verb can have the connotation "to understand, to see" or "to pay attention to, to consider" something, when used with an accusative. In context it can connote significances such as "consider," "perceive," "discern," "know," and "think." In the niphal stem, this word means "to be discerning, to have understanding."[51] This discernment or understanding is equated with knowing the Holy One. God must reveal Himself and make Himself known if man is to know anything certainly. For mankind, the only ποῦ στῶ that gains him any

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[47] Verse 9b [Eng.] is the exception, being a verb. It also describes the function of the Scripture.

[48] *NIDOTTE*, 2:128.

[49] *HALOT*, 1:24.

[50] Also, see Pss 36:9; 119:105.

[51] *HALOT*, 1:122-23.

transcendence is divine revelation.[52] What can man be certain about? Certainty comes from infallible evidence; otherwise, one is left with probability. For man to answer that question with certainty, he needs an omniscient Creator who knows all things *as they are in themselves*, and a communicating God who tells him the answer.[53] There is no other ποῦ στῶ on which man can stand to start thinking with any certainty. Even Immanuel Kant agrees, when he says, "Now, I maintain that all attempts to make a merely speculative use of reason in regard to theology are entirely fruitless and are—by their intrinsic character—null and void, but that the principles of reason's natural use lead to no theology whatsoever . . ."[54]

Likewise, the New Testament declares that all wisdom and knowledge are to be found in special revelation. In the person of Christ, as revealed in the Scripture, the reader has all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, along with the full-assurance of understanding (Col 2:2-3). The revelation of the Spirit in the Scripture has been given to believers "so that we may know the things freely given to us by God" (1 Cor 2:6-16, esp. v. 12). According to both the OT and NT, God's word is the firm place on which man can stand in order to know.

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[52] Donald G. Bloesch, *The Ground of Certainty: Toward an Evangelical Theology of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 71: "Divine revelation should be seen as the basis of authority as well as the ground of certainty. It provides the criterion of faith as well as the assurance of faith."

[53] This is not ignoring the essential role of faith, but is discussing it only the sense of limited knowledge, even before the fall, sin, and necessity of faith.

[54] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason: Unified Edition*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), 613. Toward the end of the book, he says, "Human reason is humiliated by the fact that, in its pure use, it accomplishes nothing and indeed even needs a discipline to retrain its own extravagances and prevent the deceptions that these engender for it." Ibid., 728. The discussion following this quote can basically be summed up this way—for Kant, pure reason can only disprove something, but it cannot positively prove something as true.

The Human Ποῦ Στῶ and Epistemological Futility

The Scripture repeatedly says that man's propensity to rely on a created ποῦ στῶ leaves him in intellectual futility.[55] Perhaps Romans 1:18-23 remains the most important passage on this issue in the Scripture. This passage demonstrates the human need for a revelational epistemology if he is to avoid epistemological futility. Although this study will be brief, the details examined in the text establish that man's innate epistemological tendency is to reject the Creator's ποῦ στῶ for the creature's, leaving him in epistemological futility. It will also become clear that human trust in a human epistemology is indefensible, and properly deserves God's righteous wrath.

In Romans 1:18-23, Paul speaks directly to the Gentile world.[56] His conclusion in 3:19-20 summarizes all of 1:18-3:20. However, the distinctively Gentile emphasis should not be overblown. Indeed, this paragraph (1:18-23) appropriately applies to all men. In fact, when Paul transitions to apply the thought of 1:18-32 to the Jews in the Roman church (2:1), he uses διό, not οὖν. The significance is seen in the function of the two inferences, because the use of διό is inferential and *continuative*, whereas οὖν would have connoted inference and *development*.[57] In Paul's mind, this section on the Jews does not move on to the next logical development, but it actual develops the logical implications of these truths for the Jews. For Paul, Romans 1:18-23 has universal significance, and it should not be limited to the Gentiles.[58]

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[55] This is implied in the texts mentioned in the previous section. More explicitly, see Ps 36:1-2, 9; Isa 8:19-20; 1 Cor 1:19-21; 2:14; Eph 4:17-19; 2 Thess 2:10-12; 2 Tim 3:7-9; 2 Pet 2:12-22.

[56] John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 35.

[57] This distinction is persuasively argued and demonstrated in the Greek New Testament by Stephen H. Levinsohn, "'Therefore' or 'Wherefore': What's the Difference?" (paper presented at the Wales Evangelical School of Theology, November 2011), 2–4.

[58] Rightly, Richard H. Bell, *No One Seeks for God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Romans 1.18-3.20* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 94; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 1:105–6.

Paul explains why (γάρ) he could previously say that salvation is divinely powerful by means of faith alone (16b) and how the gospel reveals God's righteousness (17a). In some sense, the fact that God's righteousness is presently being revealed in the gospel (ἀποκαλύπτεται, 17a) is explained by the fact that God's wrath is presently being revealed as well (Ἀποκαλύπτεται, 18a). This divine wrath is *presently* being revealed against wicked men who are suppressing truth in unrighteous. The simultaneous act of suppression (κατεχόντων[59]) could be compared to a child trying to hold a beach ball under the surface of the pool. The buoyancy keeps fighting the suppression, but the child refuses to acknowledge the buoyancy of the ball. Similarly, the suppressor of the truth seeks to render the truth ineffective. Additionally, this suppression is *concurrent* with the revelation of wrath.[60] The present element of God's wrath is evident in light of verses 24-28. Here, Paul describes how God distributed justice on those who suppress truth[61] by giving them over to sexual immorality, homosexuality, and mental depravity (ἀδόκιμον νοῦν, a divinely-rejected mind, or "a mind that is rejected because deemed worthless"[62]). These past tense verbs pose a problem for the eschatological view, but not the present view. The aorist tense verb παρέδωκεν in verses 24, 26, and 28 shows that this wrath is already being manifested in each successive generation as suppressers reject a knowledge of God and attempt to reason autonomously and receive the judgment currently manifest

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[59] BDAG, 532: "to prevent the doing of someth. or cause to be ineffective, *prevent, hinder, restrain*."

[60] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 84–85; Zemek, "Exegetical and Theological Bases for a Consistently Presuppositional Approach to Apologetics," 19–20. The time of the participle is relative to the verb. Since it is a present tense participle, it is *contemporaneous* with the verb ἀποκαλύπτεται. See Daniel B Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 614. For an articulation of the eschatological view of wrath in Rom 1:18ff., see Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 14–16.

[61] This description from v. 18 serves as an appropriate label of vv. 18-23 since the entire paragraph unfolds in continuing subordination. In other words, vv. 20-21 explain (γάρ) how those who suppress truth actually had an internal knowledge of God to suppress in the first place. Then, verses 22-23 develop the consequence of the epistemological arrogance of these suppressers. But this is getting ahead of the argument.

[62] Murray, *Romans*, 49.

in their moral decline. The present aspect of wrath is important for epistemology (and hermeneutics as well). The present suppression of divine truth represents a wickedness in man that rightly earns God's wrath.

In verse 19, Paul indicts man as guilty for suppressing the truth.[63] Every man has access to what is known of God (τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ) because God, in turn, has made xit evident to man. Although some take this phrase as "what may be known about God,"[64] it is better to take it consistently with its other uses in the New Testament, "what is known about God."[65] This is the truth that man wickedly attempts to suppress like a ball under the surface of the pool. Man, by nature, suppresses the truth known about God and made evident by God. The potential nuances of ἐν αὐτοῖς in context all agree that man has a *sensus deitatis*.[66]

Verse 20 explains that what is known about God are His invisible attributes. In a play on words, Paul says that these invisible attributes are *clearly seen* (καθορᾶται). The participle that modifies this verb has significance for epistemology. Paul says, "For His invisible things [attributes] are clearly seen from the creation of the world, *being understood by the things made*" (translation mine). In other words, the clear perception is an understanding of these things that comes through the created works.[67] This is natural

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[63] This makes the best sense of διότι in the context. See Cranfield, *Romans*, I:113; Murray, *Romans*, 37.

[64] E.g., Cranfield, *Romans*, I:113, argues this on the basis of (1) the classical usage, "knowable," and (2) the meaning "known" leaves Paul with a tautology in 19b. However, in response to (1) Cranfield himself has to acknowledge that "known" is always the meaning of the word in the rest of the NT, and (2) this is not a proper tautology. Paul adds that the reason for this innate knowledge is manifest to man is by virtue of God's direct agency. He, and He directly, made it manifest.

[65] Zemek, "Exegetical and Theological Bases for Apologetics," 24; David L. Turner, "Cornelius Van Til and Romans 1:18-21: A Study in the Epistemology of Presuppositional Apologetics," *Grace Theological Journal* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 53.

[66] Murray, *Romans*, 37–38, takes it as "in us, namely, mind and heart." Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 37-38, takes it as the simple customary dative, "to them." Cranfield, *Romans*, I:113-14, prefers "within them" because the other views supposedly contradict Rom 1:21. Schreiner, *Romans*, 86, however, helpfully explains that regardless of the sense of this prepositional phrase, "this knowledge is mediated through observation of the created world."

[67] Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 42; Cranfield, *Romans*, I:114–15.

revelation, but, as verses 20b-23 explain, not natural theology.[68] This truth is an innate knowledge of God that all men share. Nevertheless, apart from divine grace, all men also suppress this truth as well.[69] The result of this epistemological situation is profound—"so that they are without excuse."[70] The suppression, or attempt to render the truth about God ineffective in one's mind leaves man guilty without an alibi.

In verse 21, Paul explains why those who knew God's eternal power and divine nature were without an alibi—"because (διότι) even though they knew God, they neither glorified nor thanked Him as God, but they were given to futility in their own reasonings and their heart that lacked understanding was darkened" (my translation). The concessive participle γνόντες cannot legitimately be conditional in light of 1:19.[71] According to Paul, man is created to think in subordination to the truth of God. That is true before or after the fall of man.[72] In spite of fallen man's innate knowledge of God, he inevitably slides into a culpable suppression of divine truth, whether that revelation is found in nature or Scripture. This leaves him in epistemological futility. His heart lacks understanding and his reasonings become vain, empty, useless, worthless or futile.[73]

When Paul writes "professing to be wise, they become fools and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God . . . " (Rom 1:22-23a), he contrasts the profession of

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[68] See Bell, "The Question of Natural Revelation and Natural Theology in Paul," in *No One Seeks for God*, 90–102. He rightly denies that Paul has a natural theology.

[69] Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge*, 25.

[70] BDAG, 290, takes εἰς with the infinitive as a result, here. However, even taking this as a purpose infinitive does not contradict the statement being made above. E.g., see Willam Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1902), 44.

[71] Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 47. He ends up taking this as a concessive participle, fortunately, but the conditional participle can hardly be a legitimate consideration.

[72] E.g., in Gen 2-3, God forbids man to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God created man upright (Eccl 7:29), but the question of whether this tree should be off limits represents a failure to love God with the whole mind. Adam and Eve questioned God's right and goodness to limit them, and then ultimately believed the opposite of God's testimony, judging that the serpent spoke truth instead of God (Gen 3:4-7). This is treachery against God (Hos 6:7).

[73] LSJ, 1084; BDAG, 621.

wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 1:19-23) with the actual achievement of folly and the exchanging of God for idolatry. Romans 1:23 makes clear allusion to LXX—to the idolatry of the golden calf at Sinai (cf. LXX Ps 105:20 [Eng. Ps 106:20]) and the idolatry of Jeremiah's generation (Jer 2:11). So, the profession of wisdom by exchanging God as the object of worship for creation is foolish. Taking verses 21-23 together, for Paul, the creaturely ποῦ στῶ brings futility to the reasoning faculties, darkness to the heart lacking understanding, and casts the entire person into folly. As Van Til said of human knowledge, "Man does not need the Scriptures because he is finite; he needs them because he is a sinner."[74] This paragraph proves the epistemological futility of the natural man's reasoning while refusing to worship God as God in his mind and life.[75]

Turner makes a helpful comparison between Aquinas and Van Til, regarding the antithetical views over the positive or negative ability of natural reason. "Aquinas interpreted Romans 1:18ff as indicating men could come to know about God's existence by their natural powers of reasoning. Van Til, on the other hand, says that men already know God and use their rational capacities to suppress this knowledge."[76] Only an exclusively revelational epistemology can avoid falling into the indictment of futility in Romans 1:21-23. Man at his rationalistic best will only suppress God's truth.[77] His evil is

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[74] Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 52.

[75] This does not mean that the natural man lives in epistemological nihilism. He still has the innate sense of God within him; however, in his sin he reasons in such a way to suppress that knowledge. Nevertheless, it is this divine sense that the Holy Spirit can use as a point of contact between the mind stuck in epistemological futility and the proclamation of the gospel. Van Til writes, "It is then possible to speak in biblical fashion of the point of contact for the gospel in the sense of need found in the natural man. It is this original and ineradicable revelation of God and of his will within men's minds that is the background and foundation for the work of the Holy Spirit. Without this background the gospel would speak into a vacuum." Ibid., 56. And again, he says, "With Calvin I find the point of contact for the presentation of the gospel to non-Christians in the fact that they are made in the image of God and as such have the ineradicable sense of deity within them." Ibid., 292.

[76] Turner, "Van Til and Romans 1:18-21," 56n36.

[77] This, of course, is no condemnation of man's reasoning faculties, per se, but it is a condemnation of reasoning that is not subordinate to special revelation. Paul never promoted irrationalism, let alone the subordinate use of reason to revelation (e.g., Acts 17:2; 18:4, 19; 19:8-9; see BDAG, 232, where διαλογίζομαι is defined as "to think or reason carefully, esp. about the implications of someth., *consider, ponder, reason*" or "to discuss a matter in some detail, *consider and discuss, argue*"), but he did condemn rationalism. Autonomous men, left to his reason as an authority will always crash on the

manifest in the rational attempts to suppress this knowledge. In this way, man becomes the fool, and falls into epistemological futility.

By refusing to acknowledge God and to think in a dependent fashion, man has sought to function in his own autonomy. Such idolatry is culpable, and those who perform it are without excuse. This exchange of a divine πoῦ στῶ for a creaturely πoῦ στῶ is the very basis of their folly (Rom 1:22-23). Natural revelation is perspicuous, but fallen men will never see it correctly.[78] In fact, turning natural revelation into a natural theology will never work in the search for a πoῦ στῶ or certainty. For Paul, natural revelation is not an apologetic in Romands 1:18-3:20, but an accusation of guilt and a removal of every sinner's defense.[79] Man is guilty for seeking to establish himself as a judge over revelation, determining how and if he should make sense of it. Van Til said,

> The sinner wants to test that which presents itself as the revelation of God by a standard not itself taken from this revelation. He complains of the circular reasoning that would be involved in accepting the word of Scripture about the nature of Scripture. So then, to overcome this hostile attitude of the sinner it is necessary that the Holy Spirit convict him of his sin in not accepting the Bible as the Word of God. The miracles, the prophecies fulfilled, the symmetry of its parts, etc., will all be misinterpreted because interpreted by the wrong standard, unless the Spirit convicts and convinces the sinner that he is dealing with the Word of God.[80]

While this statement rightly points sinners toward their need for the Spirit, it does not excuse the guilt of sinners who reason circularly upon a creaturely πoῦ στῶ. In fact, this commitment to rely on personal judgment demonstrates how sinful human autonomy really is. "The kind of authority men will appeal to is one thing, but the kind of authority

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epistemological shoals of Rom 1:18-23. See Bavinck, *Prolegomena*, 104: "The shape of [Reformed] dogmatics was changed even more, however, by the influence of philosophy. . . . the prerogatives of reason were gradually and increasingly asserted over against revelation. Reason was no longer content with the modest role of servant and demanded a controlling voice."

[78] Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 290–91.

[79] See Zemek, "Exegetical and Theological Bases for Apologetics," 15–46; Bell, *No One Seeks for God*, 78–102. Zemek demonstrates the epistemological limitations of man apart from revelation. Bell compares and contrasts Pauline theology with that of Hellenism in a very helpful way. He maintains that Paul had a robust view of natural revelation, but rejected natural theology.

[80] Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 33–34.

they ought to appeal to is quite another thing. A brief indication may be given of the kind of authority that man who does not begin with Scripture will accept. The kind of authority that he will accept must, in short, be consonant with his own ultimacy."[81] Jesus Himself declared that sinful man does not accept anyone who stands on divine authority, but would accept a message only when the speaker of that message stands on personal autonomy that the listener stands on. He said, "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him" (John 5:43).

When man attempts to find a starting point for epistemology without standing exclusively on God's Word, he only has a limited number of alternative epistemologies.[82] Three are quite common: rationalism, empiricism, and existentialism. For the rationalist, human reason serves as his ποῦ στῶ.[83] And, for the empiricist, the ποῦ στῶ is experience.[84] The existentialist is the skeptic who doubts the reliability of reason and

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[81] Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 59. These words serve as a helpful epistemological commentary on Rom 1:21, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

[82] For works that address the problems of a creaturely epistemology, see Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*; Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*; Frame, *Apologetics: A Justification of Christian Belief*; Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge*; Bloesch, *The Ground of Certainty*; Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*; Cliff McManis, *Apologetics by the Book* (Sunnyvale, CA: GBF Press, 2017).

[83] The quintessential example of a rationalist might be Descartes. He attempted to deny everything but what he could know rationally as a sure ground on which to stand. He wrote,

> And when I said that the proposition, *I think, therefore I am*, is of all others the first and most certain which occurs to one philosophising orderly, I did not therefore deny that it was necessary to know what thought, existence, and certitude are, and the truth that, in order to think it is necessary to be, and the like; but, because these are the most simple notions, and such as of themselves afford the knowledge of nothing existing, I did not judge it proper there to enumerate them. (René Descartes, *A Discourse on Method*, trans. John Veitch, Everyman's Library 570 [London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1916], 168; italics original)

In hermeneutics, interpretative approaches that uphold certainty or appear to rest on the foundation of scientific methodology are often, rightly or wrongly, believed to be standing on the epistemology of modernistic rationalism—the hermeneutical parallel of the scientific method. See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[84] The works cited in note 82, just above, often discuss British empiricists such as John Locke, Francis Bacon, and David Hume. These philosophers did not deny that there must be reasoning or nothing can be known (after all, one must reason with the information gained through sense perception), but they assert that the starting point for thinking about thinking is the basic reliability of the sense perception.

sense experience. He is left with the πoῦ στῶ of his own isolated experience. Since man cannot know anything for certain through rationalism or empiricism, what is ultimate for the existentialist is personal subjectivity. On this notion, what is true for one may not be true for another.[85]

Additionally, Frame points out any rationalistic πoῦ στῶ ends in irrationality, and an irrationalistic πoῦ στῶ, like existentialism, ends up rationalistic. Both are self-refuting. For example, Frame shows how the irrationalism of existentialism is never consistent, but undoes itself by its end in rationalism:

> Subjectivism cannot be consistently asserted or argued. The subjectivist tries to convince others of his view, and thus he concedes that there is some truth knowable to others besides himself. But his theory denies such inter-subjective truth. He claims to know objectively the truth that there is no objective truth, and that is a self-defeating argument, a kind of contradiction. This argument goes back to Parmenides and Plato and has been used for centuries by rationalists and empiricists against subjectivism and skepticism. Because the subjectivist inevitably asserts his subjectivism in a dogmatic manner, his non-Christian irrationalism reduces to rationalism (just as non-Christian rationalism reduces to irrationalism).[86]

Inevitably, the subjectivist is unable to even deny objectivity without borrowing from the notion of objective certainty in order to assert that there is no certainty. This πoῦ στῶ is self-refuting.[87]

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[85] Examples of the existentialist in philosophy would be Rosseau and Sartre; in hermeneutics, Derrida; and in Christian philosophy, Kierkegaard—at least in one sense. Bloesch, *Ground of Certainty*, 68: "According to Kierkegaard faith consists in subjective certitude and objective uncertainty." For an example of a disastrous attempt to apply Kierkegaard's existentialism to the interpretation of the Bible, see David Crump, *Encountering Jesus, Encountering Scripture: Reading the Bible Critically in Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013). For instance, Crump believes that faith is existential, an experience of loyalty to the person of Christ in opposition to one's interpretation of experience or the text—even when the person of Christ and what he actually accomplished never conformed to, and even "subverted," the actual text of the Old Testament (see pp. 16, 20, 88). In fact, according to Crump, doubt aids faith, because "Without uncertainty there is no reason to believe, for then we would know, and there would be no risk in believing" (66).

[86] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 120.

[87] Frame borrowed an excellent illustration of this reality from Francis Schaeffer. John Cage is the famous composer who wrote the famous song "4'33"." True to its name, it is four minutes and thirty-three seconds long. What is neither obvious from the name of the song, let alone from actually 'hearing' the song, is that it is composed of three movements. The song itself contains no notes, only rests—four and a half minutes of them, to be precise. However, if the performer actually closes the cover on the piano keys each time, then the audience gets the distinct privilege of enjoying three distinct periods of non-music, punctuated by the sound of the closing and opening of the piano. Cage's philosophy says that all is chance and randomness. He employs this philosophy in his music, but not in other areas of life. Cage is also an amateur mushroom-grower. Here, Cage

> presupposes an order, a world of law. Some fungi are mushrooms, others toadstools, and it matters

The existential ποῦ στῶ just simply is not sustainable in God's universe. Similarly, rationalism resorts to irrationalism, and refutes itself as well.

> Rationalism flounders on the truth that is obvious to everyone: the human mind is not autonomous, not suited to be the final criterion of all truth. We are limited. The rationalist can defend his position, then, only by limiting his rationalism to certain truths of which he thinks there is no question—that we exist, that we think, and so forth. Then he seeks to deduce all other truth from those statements and to deny the truthfulness of anything that cannot be so deduced. But the result of this is that the mind turns out to know only itself or, more precisely, to know only its thinking. Thought is thought of thinking. Only that can be known for certain. Once some more specific content is specified, certainty disappears.[88]

Finally, Frame gives eight compelling reasons why empiricism is not a suitable justification for knowledge.[89] In spite of the sense of objectivity that comes from the scientific method, empiricism ultimately lacks certainty because our senses can deceive. Additionally, empiricism requires fallible senses to even affirm or validate the tests of the scientific method. Beyond this, any reality that is not sense-able cannot be a part of knowledge (like, for instance, an invisible God). Empiricists have failed to achieve certainty, along with the rationalists and the skeptics.

The Morality of Biblical Epistemology

The Bible makes it clear that epistemology is a moral issue, which raises the stakes on man's responsibility to make Scripture his epistemological starting point. Jesus said "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no

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> which ones you pick to eat! Thus Cage is unable to apply his philosophy of randomness to all of life; he cannot live with it. This fact casts doubt on whether he really believes it or not. I would say that he believes it, but not strongly or consistently; he also holds other beliefs inconsistent with this one (because he cannot escape God's revelation). Thus he is not able to apply his unbelief to all the areas of his life." (Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 150)

[88] Ibid., 60–61. Cartesian rationalism actually helped to pave the highway for subjectivism. Similarly, postmodern subjectivism is not something radically different than modernism, but it naturally develops from it—rationalism 2.0. This fits with the second perspective on postmodernity, described by Myron B. Penner, *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 18–19.

[89] Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 115–19.

unrighteousness in Him" (John 7:17-18). From Christ's perspective, if a reader has the will to obey God, then he will enjoy epistemological certainty about the divine nature of that message.[90] Christ regularly pointed out that the moral bent of man's will determines whether one knows or believes the truth as it is revealed in His Word (John 5:44; 12:36-46). As it is, His enemies would not listen to Him because He did not glorify Himself, but His Father. If He had spoken to glorify Himself, they would have listened. Jesus claims to be the light, which in the context of John's gospel, means intellectual understanding and clarity (John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:36-46; cf. John 9:41). His enemies claimed that His speech lacked clarity, but His reply exposed that their lack of clarity was due to unbelief, not His speech (John 10:24-25).

Jesus' epistemology is consistent with the Old Testament, where wisdom is declared to belong to those who submit to God's revelation. The psalmist gives a moral commentary on the epistemology of Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10. Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments." Zemek emphasizes the epistemological importance of this verse when he writes, "This truth undergirds presuppositionalism in all of its manifestations—'a humble dependence upon, and obedience to, Yahweh is the foundation of wisdom' (Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:775). This is the real starting point of genuine wisdom. Apart from this orientation all reasonings drift aimlessly upon a tossed sea."[91] The word *understanding* (שֵׂכֶל) is a synonym with יִרְאַת in Proverbs 9:10. It can also mean "insight," and—in anticipation of the hermeneutical significance—is even used in Nehemiah 8:8 for the meaning of the text. Ezra and the scribes translated the Scripture, giving the "sense"

[90] Cornelius Van Til, *Common Grace and the Gospel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1972), 72; Thom Notaro, *Van Til and the Use of Evidence* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co, 1980), 33–34.

[91] Zemek, "Exegetical and Theological Bases," 328; underline original.

or "insight" of the text [שֶׂכֶל], resulting in understanding. Again, epistemology is grounded in God's written revelation.

As it was mentioned previously, Psalm 19:7-9 shows that David's ποῦ στῶ was God's testimonies and precepts. Since epistemology is grounded here, David fears that the effects of sin on his own life in Psalm 19:10-14. These verses show the epistemological implications of sin. Moral guilt clouds one's perception of everything, especially the Word, which gives light to the soul.

Human commitment to a created ποῦ στῶ proves his guilt. Such autonomy must be repented of for the idolatry that it is. This discussion finds a sad parallel in the world of hermeneutics.[92] As R. Albert Mohler Jr. said,

> Without the Bible as the supreme and final authority in the church, we are left in what can only be described as a debilitating epistemological crisis. . . . Paul Helm rightly argues that "responsible Christian interpretation of Scripture, hermeneutics, exegesis, or whatever can only be carried on against a background in which the Scriptures themselves, understood as the revelation of an utterly faithful God, exercise a regulative influence."[93]

Epistemology Dawns on the Hermeneutical Landscape

This section surveys some pre-Enlightenment thinkers who appear to uphold the Bible as an epistemology for interpretation. Then, it examines some of the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers who have influenced the discussion about interpretive authority today. This descriptive nature of the survey benefits this project in two distinct ways. First, it shows the different perspectives about hermeneutics that arise from distinct epistemologies. Second, understanding the impact of epistemological history on hermeneutics enables the interpreter to appreciate more fully

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[92] Chapter 2 makes the parallel point. In the same way that epistemology is a moral issue, hermeneutics is as well. Sanctification always affects interpretative ability.

[93] R. Albert Mohler Jr., "When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks: The Classic Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy," in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 43–44, quoting Paul Helm, *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 250-51.

the potential critiques that are interacted with in chapter 2. Additionally, the survey has an implicit argument built in—the practice of building hermeneutics on creaturely epistemologies produces radically different conclusions than one built on a biblical epistemology. The hermeneutic that is divinely-warranted can be seen by its consistency with the mandates of the Scripture for handling the Word with precision and preaching it with authority (e.g., 2 Tim 2:15; Titus 2:15).

On the one hand, the conclusions of presuppositional hermeneutics do not differ from many faithful interpreters throughout the history of the church. Many have upheld the clarity of Scripture, the principle of single-meaning of a text, the dual authorship of the Scripture, the identity of the divine author's intention and the human author's intention. It is not uncommon to find interpreters throughout church history upholding the claim that the Scriptures must stand as the authority for interpretation. For example, pre-Enlightenment men like Nicolas of Lyra, Bradwardine, Wyclif, Luther, Zwingli, Tyndale, Calvin, Flacius Illyricus, John Owen, and William Whitaker[94] were all convinced that the Scriptures could function as the authoritative ground for hermeneutics.

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[94] Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 372–73; John Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, trans. Ian Christopher Levy, The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001); Mark D. Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand: The Relation of Authority and Interpretive Method of Luther's Approach to Scripture* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 185–86, 278; Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation: Bampton Lectures 1885* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961), 274, explains that Nicolas of Lyra was able to break the trend of exegetic commonplace, the medieval four-fold sense, by means of his Hebrew grammar; Martin Luther, "Answer to the Hyperchristian, Hyperspiritual, and Hyperlearned Book by Goat Emser in Leipzig—Including Some Thoughts Regarding His Companion, the Fool Murner," in *Church and Ministry I*, *Luther's Works*, vol. 39 (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1970), 157; Huldrych Zwingli, "Of the Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God," in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, The Library of Christian Classics XXIV (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 59–95; William Tyndale, "Pathway into the Holy Scripture," in *Works of William Tyndale* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2010), 1:1–28; William Tyndale, "Obedience of the Christian Man," in *Works of William Tyndale* (Edinburgh: Banner Truth Trust, 2010), 1:127–344; David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 25–37; R. Ward Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation: Calvin's First Commentaries*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions 127 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006); Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae, Seu De Sermone Sacrarum Literarum: In Duas Partes Divisae, Quarum Prior Singularum Vocum, Atque Locutionum Sacrae Scripturae Usum Ac Rationem Ordine Alphabetico Explicat, Posterior De Sermone Sacrarum Literarum Plurimas* (Frankfurt: Impensis Hieronymi Christiani Pauli, Bibliopolae Hafniensis, 1719), cols. 2–5, 14, 17, 45, 65–66, 113–15; Jack Kilcrease, "The Life and Theological Contribution of Matthias Flacius Illyricus," in *How to Understand the Sacred Scriptures from Clavis Scripturae Sacrae* (Saginaw, MI: Magdeburg Press, 2011), 26–31; Owen, "The Reason of Faith"; Owen, "Understanding the Mind of God"; Owen, "The Divine Original of Scripture"; William Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture Against the Papists Especially*

For example, in the fourteenth century, Wyclif declared that God alone holds interpretive authority over each word He spoke. He said "that each part of Holy Scripture is true according to the divinely intended literal sense" and "we should trust that our Bible is the law of God which God himself infused with meaning, and which nobody is allowed to infringe upon or refute."[95]

Similarly, in the sixteenth century, Matthias Flacius Illyricus held to an explicitly biblical epistemological starting point when he said,

> For this reason, all truth must be drawn from the fount of the Scriptures alone. We have built up on top of the foundation of the prophets and apostles alone. Therefore, we ought to rest on this alone, and to establish both the church and religion upon them. For this reason, we must imitate and hear them, lest we are excessively concerned about what other men should say or convey, or what sort of observations or scruples they may want to command or set forth for us.[96]

He acknowledged that when a man rests in a human ποῦ στῶ for epistemology, is left knowing nothing about God:

Bellarmine and Stapleton, trans. William Fitzgerald (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2000); Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 257–74; Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 109–14, 124–33; Gregg R. Allison, "The Protestant Doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture: A Reformulation on the Basis of Biblical Teaching" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1995); Richard M. Edwards, *Scriptural Perspicuity in the Early English Reformation in Historical Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, International Academic Publishers, 2009).

[95] Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, 93, 116. The editor, Ian Christopher Levy, comments on Wyclif's 1360 work, titled *On Logic*, with these words: "It is taken for granted that logic is an important tool to be put to use in the interpretation of the sacred text, which itself is understood to contain logical propositions. *For Wyclif, though, it is never a matter of imposing logical systems upon the text, but rather explicating a text replete with its own logic.*" Ian Christopher Levy, introduction to *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, 11; italics mine. Cf. with the words of Oberman,

> If for clarity's sake we call the single-source or exegetical tradition of Scripture held together with its interpretation 'Tradition I' and the two-sources theory which allows for an extra-biblical oral tradition 'Tradition II,' we may say that both Tradition I and Tradition II had their medieval partisans. . . . John Wyclif was undoubtedly deeply indebted to Bradwardine on this issue. It was Tradition I that provided him with the tools he used to evaluate medieval doctrine critically. (Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 371–73)

[96] Flacius Illyricus, *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae*, col. 14; translation mine [Quare, ex solo Scripturarum fonte, omnis veritas haurienda est: super illud solum fundamentum Prophetarum & Apostolorum, exstructi sumus. illi soli igitur inniti, ac ecclesiam religionemque super eam collocare, debemus. Quare, illos imitando & audiendo, ne nimium observationes, aut religiones, nobis praescribere aut praeformare conentur.]. It would be inappropriate to impose the notion of modern foundationalism or its rationalistic roots on Flacius Illyricus words here. Also, in the words of Kilcrease, "Matthias Flacius Illyricus," 43, the interpretive scheme defended by Flacius "was not something arbitrary imposed on the text… but rather part of the text and its deepest structure. By this method of studying the Scriptures, the inner and external clarity of Scripture were integrated with each other."

> Philosophies distinguish between knowledge and the things knowable. The one is known by itself, such as general principles and ideas; the other, such as common experiences, are things that happen to us. In this way also Paul glorifies the knowledge of God as something easy and obvious by itself, so that the things hidden might be able to be clearly seen by works. And we might enjoy innumerable benefits every hour. He, whom we might almost be able to grope, indeed even in Him we may exist, live, and move. But still, the so-accessible God, due to the sin of our blind hearts, nevertheless remains the unknown God to us. And when we must reason about him, we go astray and pass away. Rom 1:19ff; Acts 14:17; 17:23ff.[97]

As a result, Flacius Illyricus affirms knowledge and certainty as a reality in interpretation, without ignoring the very real presence of difficulty in understanding weighty truths or obscure language from our vantage point.[98]

Later in the sixteenth century, Whitaker articulated a biblical ποῦ στῶ for hermeneutics,

> It is written, John v. 39, Ἐρευνᾶτε τὰς γραφὰς, "Search the scriptures." Christ our Saviour said this to excite the Jews, and all of us also, to investigate the true sense of the scripture. . . . It is plain that this precept of Christ, wherein he bids us 'search the scriptures,' is to be understood of the sense and meaning of the scriptures, and not of the bare words alone. . . . Now we determine that the supreme right, authority, and judgment of interpreting the scriptures, is lodged with the Holy Ghost and the scripture itself: for these two are not mutually repugnant. We say that the Holy Spirit is the supreme interpreter of scripture, because we must be illuminated by the Holy Spirit to be certainly persuaded of the true sense of scripture; otherwise, although we use all means, we can never attain to that full assurance which resides in the minds of the faithful. But this is only an internal persuasion, and concerns only ourselves. As to external persuasion, we say that scripture itself is its own interpreter; and, therefore that we should come to the external judgment of scripture itself, in order to persuade others: in which proceeding we must also use means; of which more hereafter. But that the interpretation of scripture is tied to any certain see, or succession of men, we absolutely deny.[99]

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[97] Illyricus, *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae*, col. 18; translation mine [Philosophi, notitiam, & res scibiles, distinguunt: quod alia perse nota sint, ut sunt generalia principia, & idea: alia nobis; ut communia experimenta, ac res insensus incurrentes. Sic & Paulus celebrat notitiam Dei, tanquam per se facilem, nobisque obviam: ut cujus abscondita ex operibus perspici queant; cujus innumeris beneficiis, omnibus horis perfruamur; quemque ferme minibus palpare possimus; atque adeo in quo exsistamus, vivamus, ac moveamur. Sed tamen, vitio caecutientis cordis nostri ille tam obvius dominus, nihilominus nobis manet ignotus Deus; nosque ratiocinando ab eo aberramus, & evanescimus. Rom. I. v.19. & seqq. Act. 14. v.17. & 17 v.23. & seqq.].

[98] Matthias Flacius Illyricus, *How to Understand the Sacred Scriptures*, trans. Wade R. Johnston (Saginaw, MI: Magdeburg Press, 2011), 56–59.

[99] Whitaker, *Disputation on Holy Scripture*, 415.

Likewise, in the seventeenth century, Owen articulated a form of presuppositionalism[100] with regard to hermeneutics when he articulates the self-evidencing power of revelation,

> And wherever men do not receive the revelation intended in the way intended, that is, do not certainly conclude that what God teaches by his works of creation and providence,—namely, his eternal power and Godhead, with the essential properties thereof, infinite wisdom, goodness, righteousness, and the like,—is certainly and infallibly so, believing it accordingly, it is not from any defect in the revelation, or its *self-evidencing* efficacy, but only from the depraved, vicious habits of their minds, their enmity against God, and dislike of him.[101]

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[100] E.g., Owen wrote,

> There are two ways of *convincing unbelievers*,—the one insisted on by the *apostles* and their followers, the other by some *learned men* since their days. The way principally insisted on by the apostles was, by *preaching* the word itself unto them in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit; by the power whereof, manifesting the authority of God in it, there were convinced, and falling down acknowledged God to be in it of a truth, 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5, xiv. 24, 25. (Owen, "The Reason of Faith," 103)

Three works by Owen in particular deserve especial attention in the potential merger between presuppositionalism and interpretive authority—Owen, "The Reason of Faith"; Owen, "Understanding the Mind of God"; Owen, "The Divine Original of Scripture." In his prefatory note, William H. Goold said of the first work, "It has sometimes been questioned if Owen, with all his excellencies and gifts, has any claim to be regarded as an original thinker. This treatise itself substantiates such a claim in his behalf." Owen, "The Reason of Faith," 4.

Alvin Plantinga has contributed to the epistemological discussion by his notion of *warrant*, which he defines as "a name for that property—or better, *quality*—enough of which is what makes the difference between knowledge and mere true belief" (Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000], xi). 333 years earlier, Owen already discussed this distinction in "Reason of Faith," though with different terms. Owen points out the difference between believing the notion that the Scripture is the word of God on the basis of something fallible—like the church of Rome—and the believing this notion on the basis of God's testimony. The difference for Owen is the that of believing something that happens to be true on the basis of fallible and human proofs (leading to a fallible faith—similar to Plantinga's merely true belief that remains unwarranted) or that of truly believing what is true on the basis of the infallible and divine proofs (leading to an infallible faith—knowledge, for Plantinga).

Finally, Owen says,

> When we inquire after faith that is infallible, or believing infallibly,—which, as we shall show hereafter, is necessary in this case,—we do not intend an *inherent quality* in the subject, as though he that believes with faith infallible must himself also be infallible; much less do we speak of infallibility absolutely, which is a property of God, who alone, from the perfection of his nature, can neither deceive or be deceived: but it is that property or adjunct of the assent of our minds unto divine truths or supernatural revelations, whereby it is differenced from all other kinds of assent whereon we give this assent; for the nature of every assent is given unto it by the nature of the evidence which it proceedeth from or relieth on. This in divine faith is divine revelation; which, being infallible, renders the faith that rests on it and is revolved into it infallible also. . . . So it was with them who received divine revelations immediately from God. It was not enough that the things revealed unto them were infallibly true, but they were to have infallible evidence of the revelation itself; then was their faith infallible, though their persons were fallible. With this faith, then, a man can believe nothing but what is divinely true, and therefore it is infallible; and the reason is, because God's veracity, who is the God of truth, is the only object of it (hence saith the prophet, בַּיהוָה הַאֲמִינוּ וְתֵאָמֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, 2 Chron. xx. 20,—'Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established'); or that faith which is in God and his word is *fixed on truth*, or is infallible. (Owen, "The Reason of Faith," 17–18)

[101] Owen, "The Reason of Faith," 87.

Owen knew that everyone and everything needed to be evaluated on the basis of the testimony of God's word, referencing Isaiah 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them."[102] But what testimony does the reader look to in order to confirm the authority of the Bible? Owen recognizes that he is pointing to the Scripture's own testimony of itself, that he is leaving the authority in the God whom he believes has written the Scriptures, on the basis of God's testimony. He asks and answers the questions this way:

> But what doth this law and testimony—that is, this written Word—plead, on the account whereof it should be thus attended unto? What doth it urge for its acceptation? Tradition, authority of the church, miracles, consent of men? or doth it speak αὐτοκρατορικῶς, and stand only upon its own sovereignty? The apostle gives us his answer to this inquiry, (2 Tim. iii. 16,) Πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος. Its *plea* for reception—in comparison with and opposition unto all other ways of coming to the knowledge of God, his mind and will—founded whereon it calls for attendance and submission with supreme, uncontrollable authority, is its θεοπνευστία, or "divine inspiration.[103]

Contemporary authors have also agreed that a hermeneutic must be derived from the Scriptures, rather than imposed upon the Scriptures. For example, J. I. Packer said, "[Evangelicals] hold that view of the nature and *interpretation* of Scripture which they believe to be the Bible's own; and they reject views which they believe to be contrary to it."[104] Hermeneutics are implied in the second statement as well, so far as they are contrary to the Scripture's presupposed hermeneutic. Similarly, Ernest Kevan writes, "The surest way to an understanding of the true principles of interpretation is to first give attention to what the Scripture itself reveals."[105]

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[102] Owen, "The Divine Original of Scripture," 314.

[103] Ibid., 315.

[104] J. I. Packer, *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 74.

[105] Ernest F. Kevan, "The Principles of Interpretation," in *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), 285. For other examples, see Abner Chou, "A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 123; Donald G. Bloesch, *A Hermeneutics of Ultimacy: Peril or Promise?*, ed. James H. Olthius (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987), 8–9, 63.

Nevertheless, in spite of the common ground of biblical epistemology, the presuppositional hermeneutic proposes an argument that is distinct from such thinkers in a couple ways. First, the presuppositional argument for grounding hermeneutics in Scripture alone takes on a new shape, and faces distinctly different critiques from interpreters who have been affected by Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment epistemologies. The theologians above were writing against various hermeneutics, which, in turn, were built on various authorities.[106] A biblical epistemology is always relevant, but any articulation of it must address its own day.

Secondly, this author is not aware of another work arguing for the presuppositional hermeneutic in this way—a hermeneutic that is both *presupposed* and *exhibited* by Scripture. To be sure, numerous works have addressed various portions of the argument,[107] but together this seems to be a strong demonstration of the ability of the Scripture to function with the authority that they claim to possess over the discipline of hermeneutics.

While the conclusions of this project are practiced by a long heritage of previous interpreters, the argument itself is new in light of the current confusion over interpretive authority. In other words, the practice of grounding interpretation in the Scripture is not new. This has been practiced by the faithful throughout church history—and, conversely, professed by the heretics throughout church history. But the argument

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[106] For example, Wyclif took on medieval scholasticism and the theological four-fold sense of Scripture; Flacius and Whitaker were writing against the tradition and magisterium of Roman Catholicism; and Owen was opposing modern rationalism in its theological forms.

[107] This is especially true for the second argument (ch. 3). Most notably, Chou, "A Hermeneutical Evaluation of the Christocentric Hermeneutic," has done an excellent job in proposing a hermeneutical argument based on the example of the biblical authors themselves. He builds upon the legacy of single-meaning, grammatical-historical approach of others, such as Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998); Kaiser, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 45–89; D. A. Carson, *Collected Writings on Scripture*, ed. Andrew David Naselli (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 280–83. These discussions have already advanced some excellent discussion about the second argument of this project—the hermeneutic *exhibited* by Scripture.

for grounding interpretation in the Scripture is needed now more than ever. The defense for the presuppositional hermeneutic must not only ground interpretation in a biblical epistemology, but it must respond and answer any postmodern presuppositions (chapter 2) and theological hermeneutics (appendix 3) within Christianity that are not warranted by Scripture. The presuppositional hermeneutic is not articulating a new form of certainty, but a new argument for that certainty. It takes its stand on the same presuppositions about interpretation that the Scripture shares.[108]

Many agree that epistemology has never been more important for hermeneutics than right now. For example, Bloesch says, "It is now generally agreed that hermeneutics is concerned not only with the understanding of the text in question but also with the meaning of 'understanding' itself."[109] Similarly, Vanhoozer said,

> Hermeneutics has of late exercised a certain hegemony over other disciplines. We now look at hermeneutics not only as a discipline in its own right but especially as an aspect of all intellectual endeavors. *The rise of hermeneutics parallels the fall of epistemology*. Instead of making robust claims to absolute knowledge, even natural scientists now view their theories as interpretations.[110]

Since the Enlightenment, it has become necessary to deal with hermeneutics by also dealing with epistemology. The thinkers surveyed below have contributed to the

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[108] Understandably, this sentence will appear to be smug and hopelessly naïve in the mind of the postmodern or existential reader. It will appear to be nothing more than an arrogant self-assertion—that a reader of Scripture can know how to read Scripture by objectively getting presuppositions from the Scripture. The postmodern interpreter may likely find such a statement hopelessly arbitrary, ignorant of one's own inescapable situatedness, and standing on the ποῦ στῶ of modernist rationalism. For a rebuttal to this potential objection, see the end of ch. 2.

[109] Bloesch, foreword to *A Hermeneutics of Ultimacy*, 7. Also, Stanley Porter and Jason Robinson write,

> While many hermeneuts are inclined to think of hermeneutics as a literary method for reading texts, others—an ever-growing majority—take hermeneutics to represent a description of human understanding generally, a way of thinking about our ontology, and the means of challenging dominant ideals of truth, reason, and knowledge that do not capture the full range of human experience. Hermeneutics has become a way of describing our encounters with art and our own self-understandings as historical beings. What is hermeneutics? The simple answer is that we are doing it right now. It is our mode of understanding the meanings on this page, a mode in which truth is disclosed by virtue of incorporating our previous experiences and understandings. (Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011], 297–98)

[110] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 19; italics mine. Vanhoozer seems to be observing that in light of the declining epistemological certainty, hermeneutics has become more prominent because interpretation has become less and less a firm conclusion, and more and more a situated theory.

current tendency to look for clarity or objectivity in interpretation in authority outside the Scripture.[111] Regardless of other differences, these thinkers do not restrict their epistemological ποῦ στῶ for hermeneutics to Scripture alone.[112]

Immanuel Kant. Kant remains one of the foremost influences on epistemology from the Enlightenment era.[113] He was responding to the pure rationalism of the Renaissance, exemplified by Rene Descartes. In the face of such optimistic rationalism, Kant proposed a much more sober-minded epistemology. Kant's epistemology is one that requires both rationalism and empiricism. His famous *noumenal* and *phenomenal* realms basically correlate to his *a priori* (reason) and *a posteriori* (experience) forms of argument.[114] Kant weds reason and experience when he points out the fact that they cannot function apart from one another.[115]

The foundation for postmodern hermeneutics lies in this merger between reason and experience. Several of the implications that are important for interpretation

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[111] The selection of names on this list is admittedly arbitrary. The author selected the names most commonly appealed to in the potential antagonists of a presuppositional hermeneutic. Not all of these thinkers claim to follow Christ, but contemporary interpreters often appeal to these thinkers, or are demonstrably indebted to their thought. Some examples of the extra-biblical authority would be philosophy, consensus, traditions such as historical creeds and confessions, or the contemporary community.

[112] For an insightful historical commentary on epistemology and hermeneutics, see D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1996), 57–92.

[113] In his essay "What is the Englightenment?", Kant said,

> Enlightenment is man's leaving his self-caused immaturity. Immaturity is the incapacity to use one's intelligence without the guidance of another. Such immaturity is self-caused if it is not caused by lack of intelligence, but by lack of determination and courage to use one's intelligence without being guided by another. *Sapere Aude*! Have the courage to use your own understanding! is therefore the motto of enlightenment. (Immanuel Kant, *The Philosophy of Kant: Immanuel Kant's Moral and Political Writings*, trans. Carl J. Friedrich, The Modern Library of the World's Best Books [New York: Random House, 1949], 132)

[114] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 44.

[115] Kant writes,

> Our *intuition*, by our very nature, can never be other than *sensible* intuition; i.e., it contains only the way in which we are affected by objects. *Understanding*, on the other hand, it our ability to *think* the object of sensible intuition. Neither of these properties is to be preferred to the other. Without sensibility no object would be given to us; and without understanding no object would be though. Thoughts without content are empty; intuitions without concepts are blind. (Ibid., 106–7)

are already obvious to Kant himself. First, the question "What is truth?" is an ignorant question.[116] It becomes absurd because it can only be a relevant question for those who remain unaware that they are never able to reason about anything apart from experiencing it. Their experience actually prevents them from knowing the thing in itself. This is connected to the next two implications. Second, all reasoning, even common understanding, is impossible without *a priori* reasoning.[117] These presuppositions are necessary for all understanding and they are personally innate. Third, a man cannot reason beyond nature, because he cannot objectively observe his own mind.[118] In other words, he cannot know his own mind as a thing in itself without an external ποῦ στῶ to get outside and objectively evaluate himself. Finally, when the foundation of epistemology is found *within* man, as opposed to *outside* man and given to him (divine revelation), man will never have an infallible ποῦ στῶ. Such an epistemological foundation can only lead us to possibility, never certainty.[119]

Kant mentions the possibility of knowing something beyond experience on the basis of revelation.[120] He certainly critiques theology based on speculative reason alone—

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[116] Kant wrote,

> *What is truth?* is an ancient and famous question with which people meant to drive logicians into a corner, trying to get them to the point where either they must let themselves be caught in a pitiful circle, or they must confess their ignorance and hence admit the futility of their whole art. In asking logicians this questions, these people took for granted, and they presupposed, the explication of the name *truth*, viz., that truth is the agreement of cognition with its object. They demanded to know, instead, what is the universal and safe criterion of the truth of any cognition. [They failed to see, however, the absurdity of their own question.] (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 111-12)

[117] Ibid., 46–48.

[118] For example, he says, "But those transcendental questions that go beyond nature we would, despite all this, still never be able to answer, even if all of nature were uncovered for us. This is so because we have not been given [the ability] to observe even our own mind for in it lies the secret of our sensibility's origin—by means of an intuition other than that of our inner sense." Ibid., 335–36.

[119] Kant writes, "The critical investigation—as carried out in the Transcendental Analytic—of all propositions that can expand our cognition beyond actual experience has, to be sure, sufficiently convinced us that these propositions can never lead to anything more than a *possible* experience." Ibid., 661–62. The Transcendental Analytic is the *a priori* reasoning. By itself, without sense experience, it is unable to come to any conclusions. Although Kant is only critiquing reason without sense, because theology and the supernatural are beyond experience, this quote still applies to the pursuit of theology. Later, Kant explains that pure reason can only be used to negate, or disprove a notion, but never to prove something positively. Ibid., 728.

[120] Ibid., 609: "If by theology I mean the cognition of the original being, then this theology is

both transcendental or rational, and natural. But Kant does not discuss the notion of God knowing everything as it is in itself, and then telling man about it.[121] His notion of the enlightened mind is at odds with the notion of receiving God's revelation by faith upon the basis of God's trustworthy character.[122]

Friedrich Schleiermacher. James Duke explains why Schleiermacher was a watershed in the study of hermeneutics:

> How is a text to be understood? How does understanding itself occur? These questions lie at the heart of Friedrich Schleiermacher's theory of interpretation, his hermeneutics. Fundamental to his view is the conviction that the first question can be answered only in terms of the second, so that the notes and drafts of his theory represent his persistent efforts to plot the relations between understanding texts and understanding as such.[123]

This is demonstrably true of Schleiermacher in his own writings on epistemology for hermeneutics.[124] In a few areas, Schleiermacher follows Kant and applies his philosophy to hermeneutics. First, Schleiermacher's epistemology is a dual complex, involving both

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of two kinds. One kind is based on mere reason (*theologia rationalis*); the other kind is based on revelation (*theologia revelata*)." However, Kant does continue the related discussion of persuasion based on faith,

> If the assent has its basis only in the particular character of the subject, then it is called *persuasion*.
>
> Persuasion is a mere illusion; for the judgment's basis, which lies in the subject, is regarded as objective. Hence such a judgment also has only private validity, and the assent cannot be communicated. Truth, however, rests on agreement with the object; consequently, in regard to the object the judgments of every understanding must be in agreement. (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 747-48)

[121] Ironically, Descartes, whose rationalism Kant is pushing back against in general, can be said to have opened the door for the human autonomy that characterizes Kant's epistemology. E.g., D. A. Carson writes,

> Not that Descartes himself envisaged such an outcome—but such an outcome is precisely what occurred. This is quite different from a view that holds there is an omniscient God (who by definition truly knows everything), so that from his perspective all human beings are 'objects,' and all their true knowing is but a subset of his knowing. In other words, the Cartesian subject/object disjunction, by disallowing God at this foundational step, unwittingly set the stage for a later rising skepticism. (Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 59)

[122] See note 113, above. Such a reliance would be the vice of intellectual immaturity, requiring man to rely on God for knowledge.

[123] James Duke, translators' introduction to *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 1. Duke later remarks, "For the first time in the history of hermeneutics Schleiermacher calls attention to the phenomenon of understanding itself, and he seeks to ascertain its universal laws." Ibid., 29.

[124] Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics: The Handwritten Manuscripts*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle, trans. James Duke and Jack Forstman (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 95–97.

speculative (grammatical interpretation) and empirical (psychological interpretation) aspects.[125] For Schleiermacher, the grammatical interpretation has to do with the text—correlating to the speculative reasoning, or understanding. The psychological aspect of interpretation has to do with the author, and this pertains to the domain of the intuition or the sense experience. Second, the technical, or grammatical, portion of interpretation can only come to an approximate conclusion, never a certain one. In fact, even the psychological portion of interpretation is imperfect because no reader ever fully identifies with the psyche of the author. [126]

Schleiermacher takes Kant's philosophy and brings it into the hermeneutical discussion with some fascinating consequences. First, in light of Kant's necessary merger of speculative and experiential reasoning, Schleiermacher introduces the "art" of *psychological* interpretation, alongside of the technical or grammatical interpretation that pays attention to the grammar and historical context of a text.[127] Second, in line with Kant's emphasis on the limit of speculative reason within experience, Schleiermacher believes that meaning cannot be determined without the psychological aspect of hermeneutics. This requires a reader to enter into the feminine side of evaluation, which is to identify psychologically with the author.[128] Third, Schleiermacher appears to agree

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[125] Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics*, 215. Speaking of the merger of the grammatical and psychological task of interpretation, he weds the speculative reasoning with the empirical sense, using the terms "linguistic" and "personal." On page 216, he explains that he is not eradicating the grammatical-historical hermeneutic, which attempts to understand a text as its original audience would have understood it. He is *adding* psychological interpretation to the technical/grammatical portion.

[126] Schleiermacher wrote,

> The goal of technical interpretation can only be approximated. Despite all our progress we are still far from the goal. There are still conflicts over Homer, and the three tragedians still cannot be perfectly distinguished. —Not only do we never understand an individual view [Anschauung] exhaustively, but what we do understand is always subject to correction. This becomes evident when we consider that, beyond doubt, the best text is the attempt to imitate an author. But since imitation is so rarely successful and since higher criticism is still embroiled in disputes, we know we are quite far from our goal. (Ibid., 149)

[127] Ibid., 42, 150, 202.

[128] Ibid., 76–77, 150 (the masculine side is the comparative function, where the reader contrasts the author with others), 215.

with Kant's necessary and inescapable need for presuppositions for any reasoning. He articulates that the only presupposition that is needed in hermeneutics is language.[129] Finally, this leaves Schleiermacher in the same Enlightenment epistemology as Kant—he must rely on personal, independent judgment. For the sake of grounding hermeneutics, the most important insight gained from Schleiermacher is that his uncertainty due to psychological interpretation rests upon the epistemological foundation of personal judgment.[130] His epistemology is neither purely rationalistic, nor is it based in revelation. In such a scheme, he loses certainty, because all interpretation rests on the fallibility of man—namely, the reader's (in)ability to identify perfectly with the infinite intuitions of the author.[131]

Ludwig Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein's influence on hermeneutics pertains to his views of language and his epistemology. He renounced his earlier work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, which upheld a propositional or syntactical view of the structure of language. Wittgenstein rejected the picture-theory of language—as though our mental image could replicate a truth objectively. "The meaning of a word is its use in the language," which lies in the hands, or mouth, of the author/speaker.[132]

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[129] E.g., Schleiermacher says, "Language is the only presupposition in hermeneutics, and everything that is to be found, including the other objective and subjective presuppositions, must be discovered in language." Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics*, 50. However, it is interesting that, several years later, he complains of the positivistic view of philology: "Moreover, philology had become positivistic. Thus its way of treating hermeneutics results in a mere aggregate of observations." Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics*, 97.

[130] Schleiermacher wrote,

> Therefore, the interpreter must be familiar with the whole sphere of life and the relationships between author and audience. Without such complete knowledge, we encounter difficulties which we had hoped to avoid. Commentaries anticipate and try to resolve such difficulties. *Whoever relies on them is submitting to an authority, and in order to arrive at an independent understanding one must subject these authorities to one's own judgment*. (Ibid., 216–17; italics mine)

[131] Schleiermacher explains, "No aspect of interpretation can be final. 'Language is an infinite domain because each element is determinable by the others in a special way. The same is true for psychological interpretation, for each intuition of an individual is infinite.'" Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi, introduction to *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works,* vol. 4, *Hermeneutics and the Study of History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 8, quoting Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, 80.

[132] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§23, 115, 43.

His term for the arbitrary construction of words to convey meaning is "language games," [*Sprachspiele*] which meant that language was not something that correlated with reality, but rather a construct that changes with whatever rules one happens to use. An empty field can be used for soccer, football, or rugby—each have distinct rules imposed by those who use the field. The use of language is not governed by universally verifiable rules, but by whatever rules the user happens to employ.[133]

Wittgenstein's view of language reveals his epistemology. Knowledge is something that is only provisional, and never certain. The only certainty is particular to the individual.[134] In other words, one can only be certain about what he believes, never about what he knows. Knowledge outside of oneself is impossible, for Wittgenstein. He struggles with the notion of an epistemological starting point.[135] He tests empiricism, but questions this. His epistemology leaves him with no ground to question anyone else or call anyone else wrong.[136] When this thought is applied to interpretation, readers could never know for sure if they are using the same language game as God. No one can judge another's interpretation. Interpretations are relatively equal because different interpreters are equally entitled to different language games.

Martin Heidegger. Heidegger is challenging to read because he created his own technical lexicon for common words. He held a distinction between *being* [*Dasein*—

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[133] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§7, 23, 31, 65-66, 81.

[134] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), §174: "I act with *complete* certainty. But this certainty is my own." And he writes, "It would be correct to say: 'I believe . . .' has subjective truth; but 'I know . . . ' not." Ibid., §179.

[135] Ibid., §§170-71: "[Here there is still a big gap in my thinking. And I doubt whether it will be filled now.] It is so difficult to find the *beginning*. Or, better: it is difficult to begin at the beginning. And not try to go further back."

[136] Ibid., §§602-3, 425-26, 609: "Supposing we met people who did not regard that as a telling reason. Now, how do we imagine this? Instead of the physicist, they consult an oracle. (And for that we consider them primitive.) It is wrong form them to consult an oracle and be guided by it?—If we call this 'wrong' aren't we using our language game as a base from which to *combat* theirs?"

being there] and *existing—ontological* v. *ontic*. Human *being* is thrown into a sea of facticity, or actuality. The facticity of being should be contrasted with true possibility of being. It is this *possibility*, this project for change, and ability to choose between various possibilities that distinguishes *being* from *existence*. Something that is self-aware not only *exists*, but enjoys capacity for *being*. What is distinct in human *being* from mere *existing*—like Heidegger's example of a tennis ball—is the self-awareness that can project possibility by way of planning and preparing, even changing, the future. This notion of *care* or *concern* is what sets apart ontological *being* from mere factual *existence*.[137] One important point for understanding Ricoeur's connection with Heidegger is the distinction between *authentic* being and *inauthentic*. Basically, to the degree that a human fails to project, or achieve one's possibility/potentiality, is the degree that a human *being* falls out of authentic *being* into inauthentic *being,* though he does not cease to experience *ontic existence*.[138]

Rudolf Bultmann. Bultmann wrote:

> THE QUESTION whether exegesis without presuppositions is possible must be answered affirmatively if "without presuppositions" means "without presupposing the results of the exegesis." In this sense, exegesis without preuppositions [*sic*] is not only possible but demanded. In another sense, however, no exegesis is without presuppositions, inasmuch as the exegete is not a *tabula rasa*, but on the contrary, approaches the text with specific questions or with a specific way of raising questions and thus has a certain idea of the subject-matter with which the text is concerned.[139]

Bultmann goes on to explain that the historical method has always been and must continue to be presupposed as part of the hermeneutical method. However, the continuity

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[137] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (repr. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2008), 27, 32, 82–83.

[138] Ibid., 182–88, 220. Heidegger says, "This leveling off of Dasein's possibilities to what is proximally at its everyday disposal also results in a dimming down of the possible as such. The average everydayness of concern becomes blind to its possibilities, and tranquillizes itself with that which is merely 'actual.'" Ibid., 239.

[139] Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?," *Encounter* 21, no. 2 (January 1960): 194.

or connectedness of all historical events presupposes a closed unity and true historical happenings cannot be interfered with by supernatural power or miracles.[140] Bultmann—following Kant and Schleiermacher, anticipating Gadamer—claims that the only way to understand history is through one's own encounter with history [*existentiell*].[141] Bultmann's personal experience becomes the ground for understanding the meaning of someone else's experience. For Bultmann, no one can understand or interpret properly outside of his historical experience.

Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer says of *Truth and Method*, "My real concern was and is philosophic: not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing."[142] For Gadamer, the benefit of interpretation is the exposure of prejudice. Rubbing up against other historically-situated prejudices exposes one's own. He emphasized that fundamental to the enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice.[143] Everyone has historically-situated prejudices[144] that have been effected by history.[145]

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[140] Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?," 196. The result of such an approach is a religion devoid of the historical fact of signs, wonders, miracle, including the resurrection, atonement, and hope for the afterlife. Most importantly, for the present purpose, Bultmann's presupposition is *not* embraced by the Scriptures. Bultmann is entitled to refuse to believe miracles, and separate them from the historical account in the Scriptures, but he cannot legitimately claim to be building a hermeneutic on a biblical foundation do so.

[141] Ibid., 198.

[142] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), xvi.

[143] Gadamer writes,

> And there is one prejudice of the enlightenment that is essential to it: the fundamental prejudice of the enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which deprives tradition of its power. . . . 'prejudice' means a judgment that is given before all the elements that determine a situation have been finally examined. In German legal terminology a 'prejudice' is a provisional legal verdict before the final verdict is reached. . . . What is necessary is a fundamental rehabilitation of the concept of prejudice and a recognition of the fact that there are legitimate prejudices, if we want to do justice to man's finite, historical mode of being. Thus we are able to formulate the central questions of a truly historical hermeneutics, epistemologically its fundamental question, namely: where is the ground of the legitimacy of prejudices? What distinguishes legitimate prejudices from all the countless ones which it is the undeniable task of the critical reason to overcome? (Ibid., 239-40, 246)

[144] These prejudices could be called "presuppositions," yet Gadamer is not talking about biblical presuppositions that the interpreter must yield to, but rather the historically situated ones that he

It should be no surprise that Gadamer claimed that the question of legitimation (*question iuris*), or how do we know what is right, has disappeared.[146] For Gadamer, hermeneutics is not about coming to interpretive conclusions regarding meaning of texts. Gadamer believes this historical situatedness is inescapable, but the reader still remains in control of which presuppositions he chooses to let in. By granting the reader the right to choose, he refuses to allow the Bible the right or ability to give the reader divinely-warranted presuppositions for interpretation. In fact, Gadamer erects his hermeneutics upon an epistemological ποῦ στῶ that is found *within* the interpreter, when he says,

> The concept of prejudice is closely connected to the concept of authority, and the above image [of a reader enclosed within a wall of prejudices that can never let anything new through its narrow portals] makes it clear that it is in need of hermeneutical rehabilitation. Like every image, however, this one too is misleading. The nature of the hermeneutical experience is not that something is outside and desires admission. *Rather, we are possessed by something and precisely by means of it we are opened up for the new, the different, the true.*[147]

Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur is known for his *world in front of the text*.[148] Ricoeur developed a philosophical anthropology in which he formulates the idea of the "capable

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cannot know until they are exposed by divergent presuppositions from other times or cultures. He writes, "The isolation of a prejudice clearly requires the suspension of its validity for us. For so long as our mind is influenced by a prejudice, we do not know and consider it as a judgment. How then are we able to isolate it? It is impossible to make ourselves aware of it while it is constantly operating unnoticed, but only when it is, so to speak, stimulated. The encounter with a text from the past can provide this stimulus." Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 266.

[145] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 13. His term, *wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*, could be translated "historically-effected consciousness."

[146] Gadamer says,

> The epistemology that was still the basic discipline in the Neo-Kantian epoch and that anyone wanting to do philosophy had to study first is disappearing. The epistemological inquiry appealed to Kant and asked: With what right do we use concepts we have produced ourselves for the knowledge of things and for the description of experience? The question of legitimation, the *question iuris* stemming from the Cartesian tradition, acquired a new face in our century through phenomenology—or better, it lost its face. (Ibid., 117–18)

[147] Ibid., 9; italics mine.

[148] Ricoeur writes,

> The sense of a text is not behind the text, but in front of it. It is not something hidden, but something disclosed. What has to be understood is not the initial situation of discourse, but what points towards a possible world, thanks to the non-ostensive reference of the text. Understanding has less than ever to do with the author and his situation. It seeks to grasp the world-propositions opened up by the reference of the text. To understand a text is to follow its movement from sense to reference: from

human being."[149] For Ricoeur, faith, human ability and language are grounded in the possibility to become and imagine. Faith is the imaginative appropriation of the world in front of the text, untouched by questions of historical fact. The threat to man's ability to interpret is not so much his sin, but rather an atrophied imagination. With regard to language, Ricoeur agrees with Wittgenstein's notion of language games and abandons the picture theory of language as naïvely idealistic.[150]

Ricoeur critiques Heidegger's pessimism, but appeals to man's imagination as the way to maintain the power of Heidegger's possibility. For Ricoeur, imagination enables man, and particularly the reader to perceive of the *world in front of the text*, where the ideals projected by the text become the possibility for man to live out his authentic existence. In fact, literal language is dangerous because it limits one to reality and fails to describe the possible. Indeed, metaphor, poetry, and ambiguity are superior to literal, because multiple meanings [*polysemy*] and potentialities are more real than the literal language, because it opens up more possibility.[151]

Ricoeur rejects rationalistic epistemology.[152] Because man is impossibly engulfed in presuppositions, they prevent scientific objectivity. Ricoeur looks to human imagination, metaphor, poetry, and he laments that fiction has fallen into epistemological disrepute.[153]

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what it says, to what it talks about. (Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* [Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976], 88-89)

When narrative theory discusses *ostensive reference* or subject matter in narrative, the question is whether or not the story leads to a direct, demonstrable doctrine that legitimately comes from that narrative. See Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 256.

[149] David Pellauer, Bernard Dauenhauer, and Edward N. Zalta, "Paul Ricoeur," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter ed. 2016, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/ricoeur/.

[150] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 233, 239, 58.

[151] Vanhoozer, *Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*, 30, 40, 59–61.

[152] Ibid., 60.

[153] Vanhoozer says, "Ricoeur laments the *epistemological disrepute* into which fictions, like metaphors and the imagination itself, have fallen." Ibid., 96; italics mine. Earlier, Vanhoozer described how

Contemporary interpreters. Many contemporary theologians build on postmodern/existential epistemologies, in order to arrive at their conclusions. For example, James K. A. Smith writes:

> As I've already hinted, I actually think there is something for us to learn from these philosophers—that pragmatism can be a catalyst for Christians to remember theological convictions that we have forgotten in modernity. Granted, none of these pragmatists have any interest in defending orthodox Christianity; I won't pretend otherwise. But I will suggest that taking them seriously might actually be an impetus for us to recover a more orthodox Christian faith—a faith more catholic than the modernist faith of their evangelical despisers.[154]

Smith finds a particular benefit in Ludwig Wittgenstein and Richard Rorty, who follows Wittgenstein in his rejection of the mirror theory of knowledge. For Smith and Rorty, the only epistemological hope is found in community.[155] Smith holds to a creational hermeneutic which has been called a "hermeneutical Pelagianism" regarding the ability of man to be creative in interpretive understanding in a good way.[156]

Similarly, David H. Kelsey evaluates thinkers as diverse as Warfield, Schleiermacher, Tillich, and Bultmann in order to observe the many *uses* of Scripture as "authority." In the discussion of proving interpretive conclusions, Scripture is relevant

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"the productive imagination . . . serves as the cornerstone of the epistemology presenting in the first *Critique* [*of Judgment*]," and, in Ricoeur's work, "With regard to epistemology, metaphor appears as a unique cognitive instrument for exploring the real." Ibid., 44, 57.

[154] Smith, *Who's Afraid of Relativism?*, 18.

[155] Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 315–19; Smith, *Who's Afraid of Relativism?*, 81–84. See Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 181–87, 220–21, where he explains that the experienced world outside of us becomes the limitation for interpretive possibility. Experience of the world seems to be more certain than the text of God's word. Nevertheless, he reiterates a communal view of interpretive authority. For Smith, all interpretation is a product of the interpretive community "both globally and across time," and, "our hermeneutics of Scripture will require, first and foremost, an ecclesiology." Ibid., 220-21. The challenge, of course, is that no doctrine has *never* been denied both globally and across time; not even his example of Jesus as the Son of God. But in order to define the church, he needs to interpret the Scripture first. So, Smith, in these two works, becomes guilty of Bavinck's accusation that interpretive authority becomes more authoritative than God Himself. Cf. Bavinck, *Prolegomena*, 63.

[156] Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 141–42. Smith has to emphasize that man was not fallen by nature at creation. He places great weight on the fact that man remains *creation* after the fall, and since he was created good by nature, he still retains the opportunity to interpret creatively. For Smith, it seems that certainty denies the fall of man, but the innate goodness of man is the ground for avoiding total skepticism. This is why John Webster can say that, for Smith, "the myth of immediacy [understanding without interpretation] is countered by a sort of hermeneutical Pelagianism." John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 100.

but not decisive, and the question is not "What does the Bible say?" but "What does God use the Bible to say?"[157] He recognizes that there are many uses of Scripture and he concludes that "the authority of the Scripture" is not a reference about a property of the Scriptures, but rather a functional, or pragmatic decision, about Church practice.[158] For Kelsey, since authority is functional, not ontological, man decides how to use Scripture, and which community he will join.

Carl Raschke builds on Derrida, Nietzsche, Kant and Heidegger. He critiques anything that resembles structuralism or certainty. He upholds subjectivity, but not nihilism, and says that faith and ontology share nothing in common.[159]

Kevin J. Vanhoozer offers helpful criticism of many postmodern thinkers.[160] His dissertation on Ricoeur and personal testimony demonstrate the influence of many thinkers who do not ground their epistemology for hermeneutics in the Scripture alone. Since he remains one of the most prolific and articulate proponents of an interpretive authority that appeals to both the Scripture and Tradition in the sense of the Spirit's governance over the church, he warrants a much more thorough interaction than can be done here.[161]

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[157] Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine*, 206, 213.

[158] Ibid., 89–109. Kelsey believes that Scripture and church are dialectically related concepts. However they are set and subset. For Kelsey, "Scripture as authoritative" is a phrase that is indelibly marked, even defined, by the tradition (church) in which that statement is made. So, distinct traditions use the Scripture differently, which means that his view is siding away from Protestant *sola scriptura*. For scripture to remain authority in hermeneutics, it must determine the method of use, not tradition. In spite of his claim that "The essay makes no Christian theological proposals" (ibid., 9), Kelsey presupposes both human autonomy with regard to how one uses Scripture, and also that the Scriptures cannot actually be authoritative, but that every claim to submit to the Scripture as an authority is merely functional (ibid., 106, 145, 147). For example, Kelsey says, "The utterance, 'This scripture is authority for this theological proposal' is self-involving in that by it a speaker commits himself to follow this rule when he does theology. Accordingly, such expressions do not ascribe a property to scripture; instead, they locate scripture in a certain way in the context of the activity of doing theology." Ibid., 109.

[159] Raschke, *The Next Reformation*, 35–98, 99–104, 110, 113–14, 123, 127, 135.

[160] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 37–195.

[161] Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in Ricoeur*; Vanhoozer, *Who Has Influenced Me?*, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1OwvRVxAEE; Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 22n70: "I consider not only tradition but Tradition, together with the argument that the latter is a divinely superintended by the Spirit as the Bible itself." Appendix 1 gives a more thorough evaluation of

Merold Westphal builds an epistemology on Kant, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur. He critiques tradition and consensus as sources of knowledge. For Westphal, interpretation is always provisional and unending due to the reader's unshakeable, historically-situated presuppositions.[162]

In conclusion, the description of the rise of epistemology in hermeneutics carries an implicit argument. The epistemological foundation determines the divine-warrant for that hermeneutic. Only a hermeneutic built consistently upon the Word of God can rightly claim to be divinely-warranted, which is the remaining argument of this and the next chapter.

Biblical Epistemology for Hermeneutics and Its Necessity for Divinely-Warranted Interpretation

A divinely-warranted hermeneutic must stand on a biblical epistemology lest interpretation become subjective, uncertain, and provisional. Such is all knowledge that comes from a human ποῦ στῶ. Only a revelational epistemology provides the epistemic environment to think rightly about anything. In this discussion, the object of knowledge is limited to hermeneutics. For man to know something infallibly requires divine illumination. This comes when man submits his mind to the light of God's Word. In the same way, for man to know that he interprets rightly, his knowledge of hermeneutics must come from an infallible source.

The reasons that a divinely-warranted hermeneutic must be grounded in a biblical epistemology are listed out below. At the same time, these reasons also illustrate why a hermeneutic grounded on an extra-biblical epistemology represent arrogance and rebellion against the God who spoke. Ultimately, the presuppositions of the Scripture

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Vanhoozer's interpretive authority.

[162] Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 19, 34–35, 140, 47, 74–75; Westphal, "The Philosophical/Theological View," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 79, 84.

about interpretation must be the presuppositions of the interpreter. Those who quarrel against the Scripture's presuppositions about interpretation and meaning must borrow illegitimately from those presuppositions in order to oppose those presuppositions.

The Appeal to Every Ultimate Authority Involves Circular Reasoning

The first reason that a divinely-warranted hermeneutic must stand on a revelational epistemology is because this is the way to avoid a hermeneutic that rests on the authority of human autonomy. So, the reasoning must be viciously circular if the hermeneutic is to be warranted by God—the interpreter must read the Scripture according to the hermeneutic given in those selfsame Scriptures. This is because God speaking in Scripture is the ultimate authority for hermeneutics. All argumentation starting from an ultimate authority is necessarily circular. Reformed theologians regularly acknowledge this reality.[163] In apologetics, and especially epistemology, this question is one that refers to the ultimate starting point. On what basis does one knows what he knows? Similar to the apologist, the faithful interpreter must also ask this important question regarding the interpretive authority for hermeneutics. Where can the interpreter initially stand in order to start interpreting? Initial starting points reveal ultimate authorities. Since God's testimony is ultimate, it cannot be judged by any other authority. If there were another authority to judge Scripture or its interpretation, Scripture would not be ultimate.[164]

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[163] E.g., Wireman, "Self-Attestation of Scripture," 267; Kevan, "The Principles of Interpretation," 285, 293; Bloesch, *Ground of Certainty*, 68–77; Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge*, 14–17; Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 130–32, 143, 145–46; Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, 24.

[164] John Murray is exceptional here:

> The real question then becomes: What is the witness of Scripture with reference to its own character? It is important to appreciate the precise scope of this question; it is to elicit from the Scripture the evidence it contains bearing upon its origin, character, and authority. It is often said that we must not go to the Bible with an a priori theory of its infallibility, but we must go to the Bible with an open mind and find out what the facts are and frame our theory from the facts rather than impose our theory upon the facts. There is an element of truth in this contention. It is fully granted that we should never approach Scripture with an a priori theory of its character and impose that theory upon the evidence. We just as vigorously repudiate any such method, as do others, and we have to impute to many liberal and radical students the very fault which they are too ready to impute to the orthodox believer. But while the a priori method of approach must on all accounts be

This parallels what happens in epistemology. In the search to answer the question, "How do I know what I know?", man looks to various things as a starting point, an ultimate place of reference for knowing. Every πoῦ στῶ is circular in the sense of an ultimate authority or ultimate starting point for the simple reason that no "ultimate" authority can be proven by another authority without the other authority becoming ultimate. No matter what man upholds as a πoῦ στῶ, there are ultimately only two categories: God or creation. At the metaphysical level, these are the only two categories of existence: Creator and creature (John 1:3; Col 1:16-17).[165] The three major alternatives to a revelational epistemology—rationalism, empiricism, and existentialism—originate in man—his mind, experience, or internalized existence. Since any epistemological argument for an ultimate authority entails circular reasoning, man has two options—circular reasoning starting with the God who reveals Himself, or with creation.

> condemned, it does not follow that the proper approach is that of the alleged inductive and scientific method. We do not elicit the doctrine of Scripture from an inductive study of what we suppose determines its character. We derive our doctrine of Scripture from what the Scripture teaches with respect to its own character—in a word, from the testimony it bears to itself.
>
> This might seem to be arguing in a circle. It might seem analogous to the case of the judge who accepts the witness of the accused in his own defense rather than the evidence derived from all the relevant facts in the case. We should, however, be little disturbed by this type of criticism. It contains an inherent fallacy. It is fully admitted that normally it would be absurd and a miscarriage of justice for a judge to accept the testimony of the accused rather than the verdict required by all the relevant evidence. But the two cases are not analogous. There is one sphere where self-testimony must be accepted as absolute and final. This is the sphere of our relation to God. God alone is adequate to witness to himself. And our discussion with respect to the character of Scripture belongs to this category. Our discussion is premised upon the proposition that the Bible is the Word of God and therefore premised on the presupposition that it is unique and belongs to the realm of the divine. For this reason the argument from self-testimony is in order and perfectly consistent. Indeed, it is the only procedure that is consistent with the uniqueness of the question with which we are dealing. (Murray, "The Attestation of Scripture," 52–53)

[165] See Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 97n40; Greg L. Bahnsen, "At War with the Word: The Necessity of Biblical Antithesis," *Antithesis* 1, no. 1 (1990): 6–11, 48–54. And, as Bavinck rightly observes,

> It is therefore noteworthy that Holy Scripture never refers human beings to themselves as the epistemic source and standard of religious truth. How, indeed, could it, since it describes the 'natural' man as totally darkened and corrupted by sin in his intellect (Ps. 14:3; Rom. 1:21-23; Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:14; 2 Cor. 3:5; Eph. 4:23; Gal. 1:6, 7; 1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:8), in his heart (Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Jer. 17:9; Ezek. 36:26; Mark 7:21), in his will (John 8:34; Rom. 7:14; 8:7; Eph. 2:3), as well as in his conscience (Jer. 17:9; 1 Cor. 8:7, 10, 12; 10:28; 1 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:15)? For the knowledge of truth Scripture always refers us to the objective revelation, to the word and instruction that proceeded from God (Deut. 4:1; Isa. 8:20; John 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:19; etc.). (Bavinck, *Prolegomena*, 80-81)

The discussion of ultimate starting points among theologians regarding apologetics parallels the discussion that needs to happen among interpreters regarding hermeneutics. The implications for hermeneutics are immense. If an interpreter holds to the authority of the Scriptures for doctrine, systematic theology, etc., but uses a hermeneutic that lacks divine warrant, he becomes agnostic about whether his conclusions are divinely-warranted. In other words, the interpreter might profess the sufficiency and authority of Scripture with his lips, but deny it by his hermeneutic.

For example, in a current textbook on hermeneutics, the authors reject the presuppositional argument for unproven assertions. They say,

> Why do Christians presuppose that the Bible is foundationally true?
>
> Thoughtful Christians insist that accepting the Bible's truthfulness is not merely a prejudiced dogmatism, an undefended presuppositionalism that simply assumes its stance. That is to say, we do not position ourselves within the camp of those whom apologists technically call 'presuppositionalists' (e.g., C. Van Til). In this view, one starts by assuming such tenets as God's existence or the truthfulness of revelation in the Bible. We are happier with a modified evidentialist or verificationalist stance. N. T. Wright calls this approach 'critical realism,' and with him we agree. That is, we believe we must start with certain hypotheses that we test and either accept or reject. We must evaluate the evidence for the Christian claims in light of all the alternative truth claims.[166]

This quotation illustrates confusion about the nature of presuppositionalism, and the circularity of human autonomy. While the presuppositional hermeneutic does not arbitrarily make Van Til an authority—even though this author finds Van Til generally faithful to a biblical epistemology—a response to this quotation requires a clarification about Van Til's presuppositionalism.

First, presuppositionalism does not assume truth without any warrant—this would be something more akin to fideism.[167] Van Til did not simply assume truths

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[166] William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert I. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 163.

[167] Usually, Christianity should be distinguished from fideism. As always, definitions are critical. If fideism means assuming something without evidence or in such a way as to be irrational, then Christians are not fideists because they have biblical evidence for their faith and biblical revelation is never irrational. God's testimony is infallible evidence, which refutes any charge of fideism. See John M. Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1995), 300. However, if fideism means merely trusting in the reasons God gives in His word, then God calls us to be fideists by

without evidence. He believed that the only legitimate evidences are divine evidences. Evidences originating from the mind, experience or existence of man are not divine, and only lead to probability arguments. In apologetics one cannot legitimately give up theological conclusions and attempt to argue from a neutral position with the unbeliever, because neutrality is impossible.[168] When Van Til (and Bavinck) spoke of presuppositions for the apologist, they spoke of truths revealed in Scripture which must be presupposed in evangelism.[169] These presuppositions were firmly planted in the exegesis of the Scripture. Certainly, Van Til has been critiqued for his lack of exegesis.[170] Nevertheless, when he spoke about hermeneutics, he believed that the application of hermeneutics in exegesis precedes and grounds every gospel articulation. In addition, he also refused to let theological conclusions function as an *a priori* before the inductive exegesis of the text.[171]

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taking Him at His word—Luke 6:46; John 5:47. See Wireman, "Self-Attestation of Scripture," 351; Carl F. H. Henry, *Toward a Recovery of Christian Belief: The Rutherford Lectures* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 40; Duane Litfin, *Paul's Theology of Preaching: The Apostle's Challenge to the Art of Persuasion in Ancient Corinth*, rev. and exp. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 337; Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge*, 61–62.

[168] Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 19. Van Til speaks of the impossibility of neutrality, here. The neutrality that Van Til calls impossible has nothing to do with neutrality about hermeneutical conclusions. Rather, the impossible neutrality is the notion of thinking without submission to God on the one side, or without the defiance of human autonomy on the other. There is no middle ground. See Greg L. Bahnsen, *Always Ready: Directions for Defending the Faith*, ed. Robert R. Booth (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Foundation, 1996), 7–9; Bahnsen, *The Myth of Neutrality* (Covenant Media Foundation, 2011), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWKDF0TbfxQ.

[169] Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 58, 90, 98.

[170] E.g., G. C. Berkouwer said,

> One can understand, therefore, that I approached Van Til's book on the *Sovereignty of Grace* in the expectation that here *exegesis of Holy Scripture would play a decisive role.* That this was not the case disappointed me theologically. That Van Til is a philosophy and dogmatician and professionally not an exegete does not solve the Reformed problem. Certainly each dogmatician has this problem—he is not an expert in the exegesis of the Old and New Testaments—but this does not diminish his responsibility to be occupied with the *interpretation* of the Scriptures. If he fails to do so, he must certainly be found on the way of an unreformed sanctioning of tradition. (G. C. Berkouwer, "The Authority of Scripture (A Responsible Confession)," in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E. R. Geehan [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 1980], 200)

Van Til graciously responded, "I agree that my little book on *The Sovereignty of Grace* should have had much more exegesis in it than it has. This is a defect. The lack of detailed scriptural exegesis is a lack in all of my writings. I have no excuse for this" (Van Til, "Response [to Berkouwer]," in *Jerusalem and Athens*, 203).

[171] Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 17. Elsewhere, Van Til writes,

Second, according to Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, the authority for determining truth does not rest in God's self-testimony. Instead, it rests in man's judgment of the facts. When they say, "We believe that to accept the Bible's veracity best accords with the evidence",[172] they have, perhaps unwittingly, subjected God's testimony to their autonomous evaluation of the evidence. Who is the authority? In this case, it is man. Man determines what presuppositions are necessary for interpretation by a heuristic process of trial and error. In the end, authority belongs to the one who makes the judgment. The truth of the Bible is not believed on the basis of God's self-testimony that it is true, but rather, it is believed on the basis of their own judgment to verify the facts and the evidence when all true and false presuppositions are laid before them.

When man builds a hermeneutic upon his own judgment about the best way to interpret, he reasons in a circle. When man submits to divine revelation and receives that truth as the starting point for knowing whether his interpretation is correct or not, he also reasons in a circle. Both arguments are circular, but the difference is that one trusts the testimony of God, who is completely trustworthy (Titus 1:2), while the other trusts in his own heart, which cannot be trusted (Prov 28:26; Jer 17:9). This latter option is not neutral, but wickedly defiant against God's self-testimony. The postmodern epistemologist may not accept His testimony as proof, but the presuppositionalist gladly has no other option. The previous historical survey shows that differing epistemologies have distinct starting points leading to distinct conclusions about hermeneutics.[173]

> In the Westminster Confession of Faith the statement is made that that is true which by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture. *This statement should not be used as a justification for deductive exegesis*. One must not start with the idea of the sovereign control of God over all things and deduce from it the idea that there is no human responsibility. Nor must one begin with the doctrine of human responsibility and deduce from it the idea that there is no absolute control by God over the wills of men. *But to say that one must not engage in this sort of deduction is not to say that the Bible can teach that which is contradictory*. (Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 38; italics original)

[172] Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 163.

[173] For some older material that respond to the Kantian influence on hermeneutics, see Hendrik Krabbendam, "The New Hermeneutic," in *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible: Papers from ICBI Summit II*, ed. Earl D. Radmacher and Robert D. Preus (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984), 533–58;

Divine Proofs Are at Least Certain, But Human Proofs Are at Best Probable

This discussion will be developed in greater detail in response to the objections at the end of chapter 2. For the present purpose, it is sufficient to explain why this reason proves that a biblical πού στῶ is necessary for a divinely-warranted hermeneutic.

Arguments for probability result from standing on a man-made πού στῶ. Van Til said,

> When man seeks to identify himself as the final reference point in predication, he will deny that it is possible to know *anything* about such a God as Christianity presents. He will say that mystery is ultimate, that *any* God of which man speaks must be merely a limit and an ideal, and ideal of which when anything positive is said at all, it is admittedly said by way of symbol or allegory.[174]

The nature of divine proofs differs vastly from the nature of human proofs in argumentation. Knowledge based on human wisdom is flawed, probable at best. What God says remains a sure and firm ground on which to stand. As Owen explained, man can believe that the Bible is inspired simply because the Roman magisterium says so. Such a conclusion may be true, but on that authority, one's faith is quite fallible. However, on the basis of infallible, divine testimony in the Scripture, one arrives at an infallible and certain belief.[175]

Cornelius Van Til, *The New Hermeneutic* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1974).

[174] Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 50. In fact, for Van Til, the probability of human proofs are an insult to the God who cannot *but exist*:

> A theism that is merely said to be more probably true than its rivals is not the theism of the Bible. It is the God who cannot but exist that is the one who is clearly and unavoidably present to every man created by this God. Man's sense of deity speaks of this God, not of *a* god who *probably* exists and probably does not exist. . . . It is an insult to the living God to say that his revelation of himself so lacks clarity that man, himself through and through revelational of God, does justice by it when he says that God *probably* exists. (Ibid., 251, 291)

Cf. with his comments about probability, when he says,

> David Hume has shown, I think, that Bishop Butler's argument to the effect that Christianity is more probably true than other views is based on a view of the world in which Chance is ultimate. Clearly any view of probability which is based on the ultimacy of Chance cannot possibly contact reality in any way, for it can say nothing about the probability of any *particular* event, for all events proceed equally from the belly of Chance. Therefore all 'probably argument for any particular event is of no more value than an improbable one, for both arguments are meaningless in terms of that one 'event.' A probable argument is not better than an improbable one if the very idea of probability is without meaning. (Cornelius Van Til, "Response [to Pinnock]," in *Jerusalem and Athens*, 426–27; italics original).

[175] Owen, "The Reason of Faith," 17–18; Bavinck, *Prolegomena*, 76–79.

Since the Enlightenment, hermeneutics have become increasingly uncertain. Why is this the trend? What is to blame for this doubt and uncertainty? The hermeneutical trend is to look within man for a ποῦ στῶ, rather than to look outside of one's own self for a place to pry the lever of interpretive power. Such an internal fulcrum is doomed to subjectivity.[176] The fear of the Lord is the begining of wisdom, but this is not the path of contemporary hermeneutics. Human epistemologies imprison the interpreter behind the bars of subjectivity and drown him in a sea of uncertainty. Just as the rationalist, empiricist, and existentialist have each lost certainty of knowledge, the reader has lost certainty in interpretation. When man builds on a man-made epistemology, he is suppressing the truth about God, by attempting to interpret the visible things of the world on the authority of his own mind or sense-experience. Such conclusions are tentative, at best. Due to the fallen nature of man, such conclusions are easily deceptive (cf. Jer 17:9). Stephen Wellum succinctly analyzes how post-Enlightenment principles affect interpretation: "The [first] principle of methodological doubt states that all historical judgments (including biblical ones) are only statements of probability and, as such, are always open to doubt, criticism, and revision."[177]

The Transcendental Nature of the Presuppositional Hermeneutic[178]

Van Til said, "*All the disciplines must presuppose God, but, at the same time, presupposition is the best proof*."[179] Van Til was speaking of the fact that all the disciplines—systematic theology, apologetics, and church history—required the

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[176] See Ps 36:9; Prov 3:5-6; Isa 8:19-20; Jer 17:9-10; Rom 1:21-23.

[177] Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 58.

[178] As Frame, *Apologetics*, 74, says, "Now, you notice that Van Til's formulation of [the Transcendental argument for God] states a set of conclusions to be reached, but not an argumentative strategy for reaching those conclusions." This is also true of the transcendental nature of the presuppositional hermeneutic. It is included here *at the outset* in order to help the reader to understand the transcendental nature of the presuppositions as the argument is developed in ch. 2.

[179] Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 19; italics original.

presupposition of the triune God. In fact, without presupposing this God, man has no ground for imagining the unity that holds creation together (one God), or the diversity that consists in creation (three persons). Even Kant admitted the need to presuppose a transcendental principle where such systematic unity is assumed *a priori* as necessary.[180] Man as creature, cannot reason reasonably without presupposing a divine Creator who gave him reason in the first place. The irony is that unbelieving man must presuppose the God that they reject in order to think about how to reject him.

In a similar way, both the interpretation and the expression of that interpretation presuppose that man can use language responsibly and that meaning can be transferred to others. Of course, interpretation can be practiced without offering any justification for the act, but nevertheless, there are significant presuppositions *necessary* for the act of interpretation to even occur. For instance, Wilhelm Dilthey arbitrarily based this unity and possibility on the sharing of a "general human nature."[181] But if a common nature is the root of all ability to communicate, then God can never communicate with man.

Without a revelation from God about language, meaning and interpretation, man cannot be certain about his interpretation. Chapter 2 examines what Scriptures reveal about God's eternal existence as three persons, and that these three communicated with each other. Then, God created man in His image, and communication was extended between God and man. Finally, being created in God's image, man could communicate man-to-man. This reality must be presupposed for man to interpret or express that interpretation. Otherwise, there is no ground for doing so.

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[180] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 624. Nevertheless, the philosophical *a priori* and Van Til's presuppositionalism are not the same—one claims to be governed by man, while the other claims to be given by God. See Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 28–29.

[181] Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Rise of Hermeneutics," in *Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works*, vol. 4, *Hermeneutics and the Study of History*, trans. Fredric R. Jameson and Rudolf A. Makkreel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 248.

The God of the Scripture and His view on language, meaning, and interpretation must be presupposed by any interpreter—even by those who argue that certainty in meaning is not possible. For them, however, this is self-refuting because it is a certain statement. Nevertheless, the fact that the presuppositional hermeneutic is presupposed by every other articulated hermeneutic is a strong argument. Without presupposing some ground for understanding, articulation would never be attempted. The question is this—"Is the presupposed ground for understanding and the reality of successful communication warranted by God?"

Or, again, to say it differently, the interpreter who denies the divinely-authorized meaning of His Word must presuppose God's view of language, meaning, and interpretation, in order to twist the meaning of His Word. In fact, the presuppositional hermeneutic is transcendental because no interpreter can even write against it without presupposing it. In order to prove philosophical and traditional hermeneutics, practitioners must illegitimately borrow biblical presuppositions about interpretation in order to judge or correct the meaning of the Scriptures themselves. Interpreters with hermeneutics built on extra-biblical epistemologies have a difficult, if not impossible, task if they intend to communicate their hermeneutic to anyone without borrowing the Scripture's presuppositions about interpretation.

Conclusion

The only way for the hermeneutical argument to go forward is to stand firmly on the ποῦ στῶ of Scripture. No other epistemological foundation can leave the interpreter with a divinely-warranted hermeneutic. A man-made hermeneutic will deceive the interpreter into thinking that he possesses the meaning of the Bible when that meaning was actually imposed on the Bible. In reality, the what-God-*said* will have become what-God-*never-meant*.

There are no such things as "brute facts," because every fact is an interpreted fact. In order to know any fact, man needs God's interpretation of that fact to know it truly. In the same way, in hermeneutics, there are no such thing as "brute texts," because all texts are interpreted texts. Man needs God's interpretation to know the meaning of a text truly. A postmodern thinker might say, "Amen! That's why you can never know." But this would presuppose—without divine warrant—that God lacks the ability to instruct man with a hermeneutic presupposed and exhibited in His own Word.

The only way forward is to argue for a hermeneutic that can claim to be divinely-authorized upon the basis of God's self-attesting Word. Two lines of argument demonstrate the presuppositional hermeneutic. For a hermeneutic to be warranted by God, it must share the same presuppositions about interpretation that are *presupposed by the Scriptures* (ch. 2), and it must be consistent with the hermeneutic *exhibited by the Scriptures* (ch. 3).

CHAPTER 2

THE HERMENEUTIC PRESUPPOSED BY SCRIPTURE

Chapter 2 explains the argument for the presuppositional hermeneutic. The only presuppositions for interpretation that are consistent with a revelational epistemology are the those that are also presupposed by the Scripture. For a hermeneutic to be divinely-authorized, it must share the same presuppositions about interpretation and language as the Scriptures. A hermeneutic with presuppositions that are not found in the Scripture imposes an unwarranted interpretive authority over the top of Scripture. On the basis that such a presupposition comes from man, not God, such a hermeneutic has no warrant for claiming that its interpretive conclusions are either divinely authorized or correct. The first half of this chapter examines the Scriptures' presuppositions regarding language, meaning, and interpretation. The second half of this chapter answers the strongest potential objections against a presuppositional approach to hermeneutics.

The hermeneutic presupposed by Scripture is a hermeneutic that comes with divine warrant. Chapter 1 showed that a hermeneutic built on a merely human epistemology is a futile ποῦ στῶ that is not warranted by God. In turn, every hermeneutic built on such a foundation also lacks divine warrant—even those that seek to mix other grounds for epistemology with the Bible.[1] Postmodern hermeneutics have crept into the church to the degree that many in the church would have concerns and critiques of what is proposed here as the presuppositional hermeneutic.[2]

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[1] E.g., Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 85: "Theory of meaning is equivalent to theory of knowledge, and to understand is identical with being able to distinguish between what is true and what is false."

[2] Several interpretive positions look outside of Scripture for an interpretive authority for the Scripture, including, but not limited to, the Roman Catholic magisterium, Protestant interpretive consensus,

Three of the Scriptures' presuppositions about hermeneutics will be defended here.[3] Not only are these convictions biblical, but they must also be presupposed by anyone who proposes a hermeneutic to others, regardless if that hermeneutic is biblical or not: (1) language effectively conveys meaning between persons, (2) authors determine meaning, and (3) the single meaning of the text is the literal, grammatical-historical sense.

At the conclusion of this chapter, the strongest potential objections against the presuppositional hermeneutic will be evaluated in light of the presuppositional

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and philosophical hermeneutics. The Roman Catholic church is largely outside the scope of this project. Rome's insistence on magisterial interpretation throughout history (notably at The Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, and at Vatican II in 1962; see the section *Dei Verbum*) and its adherence to liturgy have prevented this interpretive schema from having much impact on expository preaching. Additionally, the magisterium is tangential to this project, which is primarily hermeneutics applied to homiletics. Of course, Catholic churches may retain a homily in their worship service; the theological emphases of Rome exalts other aspects of worship over the preaching of the Word. Other works address Rome's view of interpretive authority. E.g., compare and contrast William David Webster, *The Church of Rome at the Bar of History* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1997); William Whitaker, *A Disputation on Holy Scripture against the Papists Especially Bellarmine and Stapleton*, trans. William Fitzgerald (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2000); John Owen, "The Reason of Faith," in *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 4:1–115; with the positions of former Pope Benedict XVI in Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 166–68; José Granados, Carlos Granados, and Luis Sánchez Navarro, *Opening up the Scriptures: Joseph Ratzinger and the Foundations of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 1–29, 126–36. Also, see Matthew Levering and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Was the Reformation a Mistake? Why Catholic Doctrine Is Not Unbiblical* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 35–52.

The tradition of the Roman Catholic magisterium finds a remarkable parallel in the Protestant tradition of previous interpreters and historical articulations. This consensus view could be called a "democratic" view and it follows Vincent of Lérins. He said that true doctrine is "that which we should hold to, which everywhere, always, has been believed by everyone" (as quoted by Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics*, Church Dogmatics vol. I.2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1970), 550; translation mine [*ut id teneamus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*]. In response to Christian Smith's *pervasive interpretive pluralism*, Vanhoozer responds with *plural interpretive unity*. Vanhoozer's view sees a parallel between the Spirit's providence over the text and the church in an equal way, referring to this as "Tradition" with a capital "T." See Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), xii–xiii, 22n70, 153, 345, 351. Tradition infuses the performance of the church throughout the ages into the meaning of the Vanhoozer's version of *sola scriptura*. His interpretive authority will be examined in appendix 1. The role of historical theology as a potential interpretive authority will be discussed, to the degree that it intersects with Luther's view, in appendix 2. Nevertheless, the postmodern hermeneutic is much more pervasive and influential on Protestant pulpits today. For this reason, postmodernism will be the better conversation partner for this argument. Postmodernism is better viewed as the logical development of modernism, rather than its contradictory position. It is the natural result of the human autonomy exalted modern rationalism, and then enlightenment empiricism. The move to existentialism is not a different direction, but a more desperate consistency with the original modernist principle of human autonomy common to both Descartes and Kant. See Myron B. Penner, *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 18–19.

[3] At the conclusion of the first half the chapter, several other presuppositions/implications are listed, along with biblical citations as examples of the presupposition on display.

hermeneutic. The strongest critiques that have been leveled against an exclusively biblical interpretive authority[4] will be evaluated and answered from the presuppositional perspective—that is to say, by appealing to the text of Scripture interpreted with the Scripture's own hermeneutical presuppositions. Four of the strongest arguments are: presuppositions always interfere with proper interpretation of the scripture, interpretive diversity is pervasive, certainty is interpretive pride, and certainty is rooted in modern rationalism. The chapter will, ironically, give a rebuttal by taking these objections literally—according to their grammatical-historical sense. This is the strongest argument for the presuppositional hermeneutic—the antagonists cannot argue against such an interpretive scheme without borrowing from it inconsistently.

The Presuppositions of Scripture about Interpretation

That the Scriptures could even possess a self-conscious view about the interpretation of itself finds parallel in the discussions about bibliology and inspiration of the previous generation. Forty years ago, the question was whether one could consistently speak of the Bible's view of itself. Sinclair Ferguson summarizes and responds to that discussion quite succinctly. He quotes James Barr's critique of fundamentalism and its claim that the Bible has a self-conscious view of itself:

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[4] E.g., David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012); Smith, *Who's Afraid of Relativism? Community, Contingency, and Creaturehood* (Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group, 2014); Merold Westphal, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation? Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009); James H. Olthuis, ed., *A Hermeneutics of Ultimacy: Peril or Promise?* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987); Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001); Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011); Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?," *Encounter* 21, no. 2 (January 1960): 194–200; Carl Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004). On the other hand, some authors would attempt to articulate that Scripture is the norm for interpretation, but with varying difficulty, including Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002); N. T. Wright, "How Can the Bible Be Authoritative?," *Vox Evangelica*, no. 21 (1991): 7–32; Wright, *Justification: God's Plan & Paul's Vision* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 19–53.

> According to conservative arguments, it is not only Jesus who made 'claims'; the Bible made 'claims' about itself. The Book of Daniel 'claims' to have been written by a historical Daniel some time in the sixth century BC; the Book of Deuteronomy 'claims' to have been written by Moses; and more important still, the Bible as a whole 'claims' to be divinely inspired. All this is nonsense. There is not 'the Bible' that 'claims' to be divinely inspired, there is not 'it' that has a 'view of itself.' There is only this or that source, like 2 Timothy or 2 Peter, which makes statements about certain other writings, these rather undefined. There is no such thing as 'the Bible's view of itself' from which a fully authoritative answer to these questions can be obtained. This whole side of traditional conservative apologetic, though loudly vociferated, just does not exist; there is no case to answer.[5]

Ferguson responds, "This argument has the appearance of devastating power; but in fact it fails to take account of the direction of the evidence Scripture provides. In what follows, our intention is (1) to demonstrate the legitimacy of speaking of 'Scripture's view of itself', and (2) to expound briefly what this view entails for the doctrine of Scripture."[6] Ferguson points out that to cite 2 Timothy 3:16 in order to prove the Scripture's view of inspiration is inadequate. It requires the additional evidence that the OT is in view, that the verse itself is Scripture, and that other NT writings are in view here. Of course, these are demonstrable on the basis of what Timothy knew to be Scripture from his Jewish mother (cf. 2 Tim 3:15 and Acts 16:1), and the network of mutually self-attesting claims among the apostolic documents, written by eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection.[7] Ferguson outlines a fourfold response: (1) the OT demonstrates a canonical self-consciousness, (2) the NT recognizes the OT canon as divine, (3) the NT is self-conscious of its divine origin and equality with the OT, and (4) the NT recognizes other non-OT literature that shares this same canonical/divine status.[8] Likely, this

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[5] James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (London: SCM, 1977), 78, as quoted by Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Some Pastors and Teachers: Reflecting a Biblical Vision of What Every Minister Is Called to Be* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2017), 350.

[6] Ferguson, *Some Pastors and Teachers*, 351.

[7] For example, NT authors call other NT writings Scripture (1 Tim 5:18; 2 Pet 3:16). Nevertheless, proving the Scriptural status of every passage examined in this project is beyond the scope of this project. For a helpful discussion on the biblical approach to such a question, see Matthew Scott Wireman, "The Self-Attestation of Scripture as the Proper Ground for Systematic Theology" (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012); Owen, "The Reason of Faith"; Owen, "The Divine Original of Scripture."

[8] Ferguson, *Some Pastors and Teachers*, 351–57.

evidence was known to James Barr. The point is not that he would find this evidence persuasive—if he was (surely) aware of such texts and arguments, he was uncompelled by them.

This forms a parallel with the critique that the Bible could have a self-conscious view about the interpretation of itself. Such an approach is the only one that is consistent with presuppositionalism and the principle of faith. The question is not whether every skeptic is persuaded—this will never be the case. The question is whether an argument can be given for a presuppositional hermeneutic from the Scriptures themselves, in such a way that it answer the objections of its opponents on the basis of the Scriptures' own presuppositions. The success of the argument is not based upon persuasion of those who refuse to accept Scripture as infallible evidence, but whether, upon accepting the Scripture as infallible evidence, such an argument can stand.

Language Effectively Conveys Meaning between Persons

This presupposition is not only upheld by the Bible, but, ironically, it is shared by every author/speaker who claims to disagree with it. For those who disagree with this view, the only rational and consistent response must be to be quiet and refrain from using language to communicate their opposition.[9]

The Scriptures presuppose this conviction on every page. The self-attesting Scriptures are composed entirely in human language. This conviction is presupposed in every sentence of the Scripture. Nevertheless, the nature of language as presupposed by

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[9] See the section on Ludwig Wittgenstein in ch. 1. James K. A. Smith explains,
> The only social constructionism that will be able to evade [Christian] Smith's critique [*What is a Person? Rethinking Humanity, Social Life, and the Moral Good from the Person Up* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010] will be a pragmatist version that emerges from Wittgenstein's more radical critique of *representationalism* (or *referentialism*). These are roughly synonymous ways of describing a particular view of relationship between language, reality, and knowledge as a relation of ideas ('representations') in my mind that 'correspond' to reality 'outside' my mind. . . . And this I/O [inside/outside] representationalist picture has even become sedimented into our 'folk' epistemologies, our everyday assumptions about how we relate to the world. (Smith, *Who's Afraid of Relativism?*, 24)

the Scripture starts with God. As Poythress says, "Approaches that conceive of language *only* with reference to human beings are accordingly reductionistic."[10]

By way of illustration, linguists rightly acknowledge the universal and innate ability of man to learn language. For example, Noam Chomsky said,

> No one holds that the rules of language are innate. Rather, the faculty of language has a crucial genetic component. If that were not true, it would be a miracle that children acquire a language. That is obvious from the first moment of birth, when the child begins to pick out linguistically relevant information from the noisy environment, then following a predictable course of acquisition which, demonstrably, goes far beyond the evidence available, from the simplest words on to complex constructions and their interpretations. An ape with essentially the same auditory system, placed in the same environment, would detect nothing but noise. Either this is magic, or there is an innate component to the language faculty, as in the case of all other aspects of growth and development.[11]

Chomsky's assertion is fine, as it is worded, but his conclusion is based on his own experience. Regardless of the *potentially* correct nature of this conclusion, the grounds are quite fallible. The grounds of this assertion are exposed by the following questions: Does Chomsky have all the pertinent information, or is this an assumption based on a sampling of language learners? Are Chomsky's observations infallible? On the basis of what authority does he make these assertions?

Although this author agrees with the quotation, the agreement is superficial. This is due to the fact that Chomsky's conclusion stands on the authority of his own interpretation of language phenomena, rather than God's interpretation of language. By way of contrast, the Scriptures presuppose that man can transfer meaning interpersonally through language, and it reveals that this is due to his creation in the *imago dei*.[12]

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[10] Vern S. Poythress, *In the Beginning Was the Word: Language—A God-Centered Approach* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 18.

[11] Noam Chomsky, "Chomsky: We Are Not Apes, Our Language Faculty Is Innate," interview by Filomena Fuduli Sorrentino, October 4, 2016, accessed October 11, 2018, http://www.lavocedinewyork.com/en/2016/10/04/chomsky-we-are-not-apes-our-language-faculty-is-innate/?utm_content=buffer774be&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook.com&utm_campaign=buffer.

[12] Such a presupposition goes beyond theistic worldviews with mono-personal deities like Markduk or Allah, because such gods could not be both unchanging and eternal unless they were communicating eternally in the past. See Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 35–40. Reeves makes this point with the

Genesis 1:26-27. The Scriptures explain the epistemic environment that produces this universally innate phenomena of human language ability. It lies in the fact that man is created in the image of God. The *imago dei* is important for understanding the use of language by both God and man. The *crux interpretum* is Genesis 1:26-27, where the *imago dei* is explicitly connected to interpersonal relationship, and then implicitly, to the interpersonal transfer of meaning. In order to see this connection, the reader of Scripture needs only the Scripture's presuppositions. The Scriptures presuppose that language is effective for transferring meaning between different people on the basis of the fact that this is a divine ability, and, as a result, a human ability because man is created in God's image. Two overall arguments bear this out.

First, this passage is the first instance of a plurality of persons with regard to God the Creator. In it, God is found speaking in an interpersonal way. Meaning is being transferred from at least one divine Person to Another in an effective way.[13] God possessed and used the ability to transfer meaning between persons through language before He created man.

At least six potential interpretations of the plural verb and pronouns in Genesis 1:26 have been proposed.[14] The presence of multiple divine persons remains the simplest explanation of the grammar. The argument proposed here has occasionally been quickly

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application of a loving God. Allah, for example, cannot be both eternally unchanging and loving because he did not have anyone to love until other persons were brought into existence. Such a change would preclude his claim to either eternality or unchanging nature. The same could be said for language.

[13] Cf. Gen 1:26-27 with 3:22 and 11:5-9. The last instance is particularly significant, because the wickedness of man seeking to promote his own name, at the expense of God's, caused the curse of the multiplication of languages, which inhibited the transfer of meaning between persons. Similarly, this prepares the reader of the Torah for the other instances of multiple divine persons, e.g., Gen 19:24; Exod 23:20-23 (see the discussion of 1 Cor 10:4 in ch. 3).

[14] The major views are (1) polytheism, (2) angels, (3) God addressing the earth in light of verse 24, (4) plural of majesty, (5) self-deliberation, (6) plurality within God. See Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 133–34; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary 1 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 27–28. Both lists have six options which do not exactly line up. However, rather than totaling these two lists at seven, Wenham's distinction between Trinity and plurality within God seems unnecessary. What Hamilton describes as position no. 3—God speaking to the earth as taking a role in creation—is unique to Wenham's list.

passed over on the assumption that it imports the later Christian doctrine of the Trinity into Genesis 1.[15] However, this confuses the issue. The context requires a plurality of divine Persons, regardless of the actual number, every time the Torah documents a plurality of divine persons. In and of itself, these passages make the plural of majesty interpretation unlikely.[16]

The most common Jewish view since Philo is that the plurality refers to angels. Job 38:4, 7 may be cited as evidence that the angels were there at creation.[17] Several problems make such an interpretation untenable. First, the fact that angels attended the creation of man as an audience is much different than the hypothesis that God consulted angels about creating man. Additionally, it appears to be irreconcilable with Isaiah 40:12-14. Finally, the first common plural of the verb in verse 26 must be identified with the first common plural suffixes modifying both "image" and "likeness." Yet nowhere does Scripture articulate that man was created in the image of angels. As will be shown below, the image involves the role of dominion. Assuming that the plural refers to God and His angels, then man's dominion must function under the supposed dominion of angels, which goes against the evidence.[18]

In light of the plurality within God, this interpersonal communication is a divine ability that is revealed to man in the very same text that reveals that man is created in the image of God. Up to this point in the narrative, God has been speaking into non-

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[15] G. W. Bromiley, "Image of God," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 804; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 27.

[16] E.g., Gen 1:1-2; 18:33; 19:24; Exod 23:20-23.

[17] Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 27–28. However, one notable Jewish exception is Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Skokie, IL: Varda Books, 2012), 55, who writes, "The best explanation, although rejected by the majority of contemporary commentators, is that we have here the plural of exhortation. When a person exhorts himself to do a given task he uses the plural: 'Let us go!' 'Let us rise up!' 'Let us sit!' and the like." Earlier, he argued persuasively against the angelic view of the plural. The rhetorical nature of the "plural of exhortation" would be much more plausible if it were not for the multiple passages in the Torah itself which recognize a distinction in divine persons.

[18] E.g., Heb 1:5-14 (esp. v. 14); 1 Cor 6:3.

existence, and things-yet-to-exist obey His voice.[19] Now, the first instance of language that successfully conveys meaning between persons is also the revelation that man's nature is patterned after the God who speaks interpersonally.

Second, the nature of the *imago dei* grounds the Scripture's presupposition that human language is capable of transferring meaning between persons. The image and likeness of God consist of two aspects—dominion and interpersonal relationship.[20] The first relates to man's dominion over creation, and it is an explicit part of the image of God in Genesis 1:26, 28.[21] The second aspect pertains to man being male and female. Genesis 1:27 says, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Both the function of dominion and interpersonal relationship require language ability like God.

The dominion or ruling of verses 26 and 28 is described as subjugation or subduing[22] of the earth in verse 28. This reality has many important biblical implications but the function of language to fulfill this role is important for the present purpose. The fact that man names the creatures in Genesis 2:19-20 reflects the *imago dei*. This reflects

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[19] John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 1:91: "Hitherto God has been introduced simply as *commanding*; now, when he approaches the most excellent of all his words, he enters into *consultation*. God certainly might here command by his bare word what he wished to be done: but he chose to give this tribute to the excellency of man, that he would, in a manner, enter into consultation concerning his creation."

[20] Bromiley, "Image of God," 804. For discussion about the lexemes צֶלֶם and דְּמוּת, see Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 29–32; Hamilton, *Genesis*, 134–38; George J. Zemek, "Exegetical and Theological Bases for a Consistently Presuppositional Approach to Apologetics" (ThD diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1982), 40–43. The etymology and finer points of semantics do not affect the implications on man's language ability. Nevertheless, this author takes these prepositional phrases as parallel and synonymous because (1) there is no conjunction between the prepositional phrases, and (2) the prepositions בְּ and כְּ are flipped with the corresponding nouns in Gen 5:1-3.

[21] This is traced out in biblical theology (e.g., Ps 8; Heb 2:5-8). Man's dominion over creation was frustrated by God at the fall, and restored in Christ when He reverses the curse on creation through His reign (Gen 3:14-19; 1 Cor 15:20-28). This is the basis of man's co-reigning with Christ in His unique rulership and judgment of creation, even angels (see 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 20:6; 1 Cor 6:3). This has significance for the Christ's Messianic title, "The Son of Man." See Paul Twiss, *What's in a Name?: Understanding Jesus as Son of God and Son of Man*, Shepherds' Conference 2017 (Grace Community Church; Sun Vally, CA, 2017), accessed October 18, 2018, https://www.gracechurch.org/sermons/12953?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1.

[22] *HALOT*, 2:460.

God's naming His creation five times up to that point.[23] God names His creation because He is creator.[24] But when man does the same under the Creator's authority, this action reflects the dominion that man is called to exercise since his nature reflects the *imago dei*.

Additionally, to enjoy interpersonal relationship, man needs language. Twice, the image of God is demonstrably connected to man's gender distinction, male and female (Gen 1:26-27; 5:1-3). Certainly, this distinction has to do with fertility and procreation, as Genesis 1:28 and the genealogy of Genesis 5 prove. However, regardless of the mandate about multiplying and filling the earth, it is the unity of relationship among the divine persons that most precisely reflects the plural possession of the *imago dei*. This need not imply any sexual distinction with God.[25] Yet the distinction between male and female man, and the other male and female animals can be seen in man's unique ability to use language and enjoy interpersonal relationships. Even when man sees woman for the first time, he responds in a way that is distinct from the male gender among any other animal species, and in a way that is reminiscent of God—he names her calling (קרא) her "woman" (Gen 2:23).

Furthermore, as the remainder of revelation bears out, God has the unique ability to speak with man and man with God.[26] Then, man has the ability to speak with other humans. Language ability enjoys a progression—it begins with God-to-God, then God-to-man, then man-to-God, and finally man-to-man. Every effective use of language presupposes that man was given given the gift of language as he was created in the image of God.[27] The union between a husband and wife is actually patterned after Christ's love

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[23] קרא is repeated in Gen 1:5 (2x), 8, 10 (2x).

[24] See Cassuto, *Genesis*, 26: "According to the conception current in the ancient East, the name of a thing was to be identified with its essential nature and existence; hence to name a thing meant to bring it into being."

[25] Bromiley, "Image of God," 804.

[26] E.g., Gen 1:28-30; 2:16-17; 3:9-13.

[27] This should not be pressed as the *only* basis for language ability. E.g., in Num 22:28, a donkey uses human language. Of course, this is attributed to the supernatural power of the Angel of the

for the church, as God reveals in Ephesians 5:22-32. In Christ's relationship with His bride, the church, He seeks to make her holy "by the washing of water with the Word" (Eph 5:26). This type of intimacy requires a language ability that is possessed by God and given to man. The Scriptures presuppose that this divine ability to transfer meaning between persons is shared by man because he is created in His image.[28]

Finally, other passages of Scripture develop the *imago dei* doctrine introduced in Genesis. For the purpose of hermeneutics, it is important to note that after the fall of man, he still remains a creature created in that image of God (cf., Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9). Then, the uncreated Creator who *is* the image of God and existed with God forever (cf. Col 1:15; John 1:1-3) became man (John 1:14).[29] Fallen men are being redeemed and restored back to the image of the Creator by virtue of union with Christ (Col 3:10; cf. Eph 4:24). The work of special grace restores the image of God and the righteous character of his innate language ability progressively through sanctification. Romans1:18-23 connects with the doctrine of the *imago dei* in an important way. By virtue of common grace, fallen man still retains the ability to use language and interpret language rightly at times. Nevertheless, fallen man will never consistently interpret God's language in special revelation because he is actively suppressing the truth about God. So when it comes to an epistemology for hermeneutics, human interpretation never becomes as irrational or inconsistent as it does when interpreting the Word of God. By virtue of the *imago dei*,

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Lord (cf. Exod 23:20-23). More importantly, the serpent uses language in Gen 3:1-5. This serpent is none other than Satan. His overthrow is connected to the victory of the Seed of Eve over all opposition to God's redemptive promise in order to establish enmity between man and Satan, who, at the time of the curse were allied in their opposition against God (Gen 3:15; see Num 24:9, 17-19; Ps 68:21; 72:4, 9; Isa 27:1, 7; Mic 7:10, 17, 19; Hab 3.14-15; Rom 16:20; Rev 12:9; 20:2). This does not require that Satan be created in the image of God. Instead, he has personality (intellect and will—the ability and desire to use language) that distinguishes him from the donkey, while lacking the image of God that distinguishes him from man, among other things.

[28] Jas 3:9-10 explains the profound culpability of using language to curse man who is created in the image of God. Furthermore, it documents the hypocrisy of using the same speech faculty to bless God, in whose image the object of cursing was created.

[29] Bromiley, "Image of God," 805: "It is paradoxical that as Adam bears the image of God and yet lives a sinful life, so Christ bears the image of man and yet lives a sinless live (Heb 4:15)."

man in unbelief can still interpret intended meaning correctly,[30] but he will never accept it or embrace it as divinely revealed or submit to it with joy as binding on his life.[31]

Leviticus 8-10. The Scriptures presuppose that language is such a successful medium of transferring meaning between people that God can actually transmit His precise words through man. That the transfer of meaning is presupposed in the transmission of His message can be seen in every instance where human prophets mean exactly what God meant. In other words, the notion of a transmission of meaning without the transfer of meaning does not fit with the biblical evidence. The meaning is not transmitted without the human author's understanding, but God's meaning is transferred to the reader through the human author's cognizant understanding. The success of this medium is shown in the fact that in Leviticus 8-10, the words of Moses and the words of God becomes indistinguishable from one another.

First, the Lord speaks to Moses (Lev 8:1). Then, Moses says to the people, "This is the thing which the Lord has commanded to do" (8:5). Throughout the priestly ordination a refrain develops. Sometimes Moses describes God's revelation in the passive voice, occasionally without any agency expressed—"for so I have been commanded" (8:35). Alternatively, the instruction of God can be active in the third person through the explicit agency of Moses—"which the Lord had commanded through Moses" (8:36)—or with agency described—"Moses then said to Aaron . . . 'just as the Lord has commanded'" (9:7). The actions of Moses or the people can be synonymously described as being "just as the Lord commanded him," "just as the Lord had commanded Moses," "just as I [Moses] commanded," "just as the Lord had commanded Moses," "just as Moses had commanded," "as Moses had said," "So they did according to the word of

[30] E.g., the Jews in John 8 rightly understood Jesus' claim of deity, as is shown in their attempt to stone him. Embracing the meaning as true and yielding to the implications of that truth is something that sin prohibits without the gracious intervention of the Spirit of God.

[31] See the discussion on 1 Cor 2:14 below.

Moses," "which the Lord has spoken to them through Moses," "for thus I [Moses] have been commanded," "just as the Lord has commanded," and "just as I [Moses] commanded" (8:4, 9, 13, 17, 21, 29, 31; 9:10, 21; 10:5, 7, 11, 13, 15, 18).

The commands of Moses functioning in his prophetic role are indistinguishable from the direct commands of the Lord. The Scriptures presuppose that language is an effective mechanism for transferring of meaning.[32] When God seeks to transfer meaning to mankind, human language is a perfectly suited mechanism to do so.

Various passages. The Scriptures base God's ability to speak through man in the fact that God created man. For example, when Moses complains about his own (in)ability for serving as God's mouthpiece, God says, "The LORD said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say'" (Exod 4:11-12). In Exodus 7:1-2, God presupposed that His own speech was clear enough to be understood, and Moses and Aaron could speak the same content so precisely that Moses would be God and Aaron would be Moses' prophet to Pharaoh. Also, the univocal nature of God commanding through men can be seen in passages where (dis)obeying the prophet is rebuked as (dis)obedience towards God.[33]

There are several other passages that demonstrate the consistency of this Scriptural presupposition about language.[34] King Jehoshaphat said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, put your trust in the LORD your God and you will be

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[32] This does not mean that language always remains free and clear from abuse of human limitation (e.g., ignorance of a referent or syntax) and sinfulness (e.g., deception). What preserves the divine meaning in the human articulation is the act of inspiration (see 2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:16-21—for the latter passage see appendix 3).

[33] E.g., Exod 16:22-29; 19:7-8; 20:19; 24:3-7; 39:32, 42.

[34] E.g., 2 Chr 20:20; 30:12; 35:6, 12, 16; 36:16 (a negative context where scoffing at God's prophets *equals* despising His words), 21.

established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed" (2 Chr 20:20b). The King does not recognize a distinction between trusting the message of the LORD and his prophets.

Similarly, in the NT, Paul can write in the human language of the day, "So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you" (1 Thess 4:8). Earlier, he said, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe" (1 Thess 2:13).[35]

In conclusion, if language was originally God's ability given to man in the *imago dei*, and God determines the meaning of the Scripture, then He knows how to speak in His word so that His meaning is clear and accessible to man.

Meaning Is Determined by the Author's Intention

The Scriptures repeatedly presuppose that meaning is determined by the author or speaker. The reader does not have authority over the meaning of the text. Nor is the text autonomous—texts do not "intend." Nor does the author himself have a right to go back to his own text and change the meaning, claiming that it now means something different than what he once intended. Instead, what the author intended by the words he chose to use *determines* the meaning. An author may communicate poorly, unclearly, or unethically (e.g., deception, exaggeration, flattery), but what he intends to say by the words he used is the meaning of that writing. The poorer the communication, the more obscure the meaning.

The very idea of authorial intent and meaning is controversial. Some postmodern interpreters call this pursuit the intentional fallacy, a notion that goes back at

[35] These passages touch on inspiration and inerrancy, which is properly a distinct topic that cannot be dealt with here. However, the overlap with the effectiveness of language as a God-given ability to transfer meaning contributes directly to the purpose at hand.

least as far as a 1946 article by the same name.[36] Regardless of the postmodern problem of intentionality, the article is *not* necessarily calling the pursuit of meaning, as determined by the authorial intent, a fallacy. Instead, Wimsatt and Beardsley are writing from the vantage point of literary criticism. The intentional fallacy is the notion that one should critique a piece of literature according to an external intention.[37] The authors are convinced that true literary criticism (specifically poetry) does not consist in the biographical study, but rather it deals with the writing in and of itself.[38] The intentional fallacy consists of the notion that the critic is to evaluate the poem on the basis of an external evidence of authorial intent, instead of simply critiquing the internal evidence of the poem itself.[39] The issue is that a poem must be pragmatic—it must work.[40]

Wimsatt and Beardsley do not hold that the intention is always discoverable

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[36] W. K. Wimsatt Jr., and M. C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review* 54, no. 3 (July 1946): 468–88.

[37] Ibid., 469: "One must ask how a critic expects to get an answer to the question about intention. How is he to find out what the poet tried to do? If the poet succeeded in doing it, then the poem itself shows what he was trying to do. And if the poet did not succeed, then the poem is not adequate, and the critic must go outside the poem—for evidence of an intention that did not become effective in the poem."

[38] Wimsatt and Beardsley write,

> There is criticism of poetry and there is, as we have seen, author psychology, which when applied to the present or future takes the form of inspirational promotion: but author psychology can be historical too, and then we have literary biography, a legitimate and attractive study in itself, one approach, as Mr. Tillyard would argue, to personality, the poem being only a parallel approach. . . . There is a difference between internal and external evidence for the meaning of a poem. (ibid., 477)

The internal is in the poem itself and correlates to the public information, "discovered through the semantics and syntax of a poem" (477), while the external is private, consisting "of revelations (in journals, for example, or letters or reported conversations) about how or why the poet wrote the poem—to what lady, while sitting on what lawn, or at the death of what friend or brother" (477-78).

[39] They explain,

> Nevertheless, we submit that this is the true and objective way of criticism, as contrasted to what the very uncertainty of exegesis might tempt a second kind of critic to undertake: (2) the way of biographical or genetic inquiry, in which, taking advantage of the fact that Eliot is still alive, and in the spirit of a man who would settle a bet, the critic writes to Eliot and asks what he meant, or if he had Donne in mind. We shall not here weigh the probabilities—whether Eliot would answer that he meant nothing at all, had nothing at all in mind—a sufficiently good answer to such a question—or in an unguarded moment might furnish a clear and, within its limit, irrefutable answer. Our point is that such an answer to such an inquiry would have nothing to do with the poem 'Prufrock;' it would not be a critical inquiry. Critical inquiries, unlike bets, are not settled in this way. Critical inquiries are not settled by consulting the oracle. (Ibid., 486–87)

[40] Ibid., 469.

through the poem alone.[41] However, they explain that criticism requires internal evidence "discovered through the semantics and syntax of a poem, a poem, through our habitual knowledge of the language, through grammars, dictionaries, and all the literature which is the source of dictionaries, in general through all that makes a language and culture . . . "[42] Instead, they reject the private intention which could never be known except from external sources.[43] They recognize that the evidence for evaluation of a text cannot be found outside the text itself. In their literary world, biographical information about the poet must not to be confused with the evaluation of the literature itself.[44]

In its traditional discussion, meaning means the sense intended by the author. Ogden and Richards' classic triangle shows that the meaning is *true* when the symbol used and the referent intended equal the thought of the author. The relationships between each of the three elements of meaning are described in italics. The explicit relationships are marked by a solid line, whereas the dotted line is an imputed relationship—imputed by the thought or intention of the author. The imputed relationship between symbol and referent is not direct, but indirect, through the means of the author's thought.

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[41] Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," 468: "We argued [in the authors' article "Intention" for a *Dictionary* of literary criticism] that the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art, and it seems to us that this is a principle which goes deep into some differences in the history of critical attitudes."

[42] Ibid., 477.

[43] Ibid., 479–80. "But it would seem to pertain little to the poem to know that *Coleridge* had read Bartram. There is a gross body of life, of sensory and mental experience, which lies behind and in some sense causes every poem, but can never be and need not be known in the verbal and hence intellectual composition which is the poem."

[44] E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 233–34, rightly critiques Wimsatt and Beardsley for virtually neglecting the reality that meaning requires a "meaner," an author as opposed to a community.

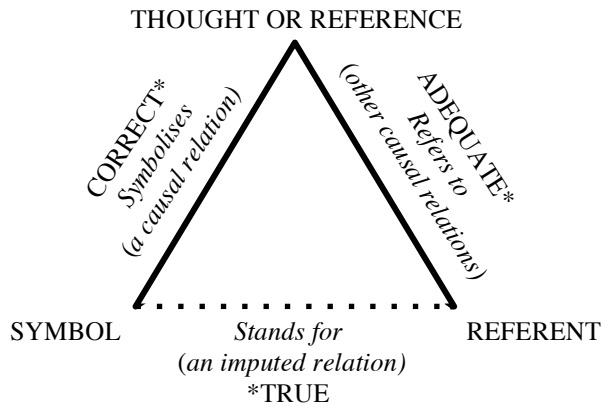

Figure 1. Ogden and Richards' triangle of meaning[45]

The symbol is correct when its use in context is caused by the author's thought. In this way, it becomes clear how the sense of a symbol can be distinct from its referent, but always determined by the author's thought (i.e., "intent"). This fictional scenario illustrates the distinction:

> One way to illustrate the distinction between "sense" and "reference" is to note that two words may be used to refer to the same extra-linguistic reality and yet have very different meanings with regard to semantic content. Consider, for example, the following paragraph: "Mr. Richard Smith was a *judge* on the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. Although well-respected by his fellow colleagues on the bench, the *judge* was suspected of taking bribes in exchange for lighter sentences in scores of cases. After a two-year investigation by the FBI and a federal grand jury, the disgraced *judge* became a *defendant* and was found guilty on 23 counts of corruption." The terms "judge" and "defendant" here refer to the same person, a specific corrupt judge. But we recognize that the terms do not have the same meaning, and are usually so clearly distinct that we have to come up with a unique scenario like this in order to use them in a co-referential manner. The extra-linguistic ontological reference of these terms is identical, and yet the precise sense of each is quite distinct.[46]

Meaning as determined by authorial intent has a long heritage. This model must not be pushed over the top of the Scripture, but some of its articulation is quite

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[45] C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1927; repr., Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2013), 11.

[46] Charles Lee Irons, *The Righteousness of God*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament - 2. Reihe 386 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 63.

consistent with the presupposition of the Scripture.[47] The Scriptures presuppose this reality throughout—it is the very fabric of its view of meaning.

Repeatedly, God holds man accountable for the meaning He intended when He revealed His word. For example, in Jeremiah 1:12, God tells Jeremiah how deliberately He is watching over His word in order to perform it. Unfortunately, the nation of Israel has not been so careful with His revelation. In Jeremiah 31:29-30 (cf. Ezek 18:2ff.), God holds the nation culpable for its failure to interpret the meaning of Exodus 20:5 and Deuteronomy 5:9 properly. God's intended meaning is determinative and fixed. Chou concludes, "Finally, this passage does not indicate that God revises the meaning of past revelation. Rather, the meaning of the passages are upheld and clarified to silence misinterpretation. . . . The prophets were hermeneutically accurate with past revelation. They did not twist the Scriptures, nor did God move them to do so."[48]

God does not permit the response of the listener/reader to merge with His own articulation without holding the one who does this responsible for adulterating the message. God determines the meaning of His message, and when subjectivity affects that meaning the result is a message that belongs to the prophet, not the LORD: "'The prophet who has a dream may relate his dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw have in common with grain?' declares the LORD" (Jer 23:28). Author and reader cannot mix when it comes to determining the meaning of a message.[49]

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[47] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 38–39, 62; Hirsch, *The Aims of Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 90–91; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 106–14; Kaiser, "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 55–69; Robert H. Stein, "The Benefits of an Author-Oriented Approach to Hermeneutics," *JETS* 44, no. 3 (September 2001): 451–66; Robert L. Thomas, "The Principle of Single Meaning," *MSJ* 12, no. 1 (Spr 2001): 33–47.

[48] Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 66.

[49] Contra Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 54: "But are these the only two options? Might not the meaning(s) of a text be coproduced by author and reader, the product of their interaction? Might not each contribute to the determinacy of meaning without requiring that it be absolutely determinate?" He is responding to E. D. Hirsch's black-and-white dichotomy between author vs. reader and the determination of meaning.

This Scriptural presupposition about meaning can be seen every time God highlights the culpability of interpreters who ascribe a new meaning that He never intended. Scripture documents in the past, and anticipates in the future, misinterpretation of itself at the hands of dishonest interpreters. Before the fall of man, but after the fall of Satan, Genesis 3:1-2 records that Satan begins by casting question on the *meaning* of God's word, before finally categorically denying God's word. This practice is matched by those who handle the Scripture from a position of unbelief, as mankind follows the god of this world.[50] For example, among the rabbis in Israel were men who twisted the meaning of the Torah by their own errant commentary on the text: "How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us'? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie. The wise men are put to shame, they are dismayed and caught; behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD, and what kind of wisdom do they have?" (Jer 8:8-9). The pen, which is a metonymy for writing or commentary, has caused, by effect, what is perceived as the Law in the minds of the audience, to actually be nothing more than deception.[51] Similarly, the combination of the reader's response with the original message perverts God's word: "For you will no longer remember the oracle of the LORD, because every man's own word will become the oracle, and you have perverted the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God" (Jer 23:36).

In a distinct contribution to the definition of meaning as presupposed by the Scripture, Jeremiah 34:10-11 explains that the people turned back against their own word. Authors are culpable for the fixed meaning of their words which represent their intention canonized in text. Since authors can violate their own words, there is no authorial autonomy to change the meaning, or twist original intentions of words into new

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[50] See John 8:44; 2 Cor 4:3-6; Eph 2:1-3; 2 Tim 2:24-26.

[51] *HALOT*, 2:890; Peter C. Craigie, *Jeremiah 1-25*, Accordance Version 2.5., Word Biblical Commentary 26 (Waco, TX: Word, 1991), 132.

intentions. The Scriptures do not presuppose such a view. Instead, they categorically denounce such a practice.[52]

Similarly, in the NT church, false teachers will parallel the previous example of false prophets among the nation (2 Pet 2:1). The function of these men is described in the last two chapters of 2 Peter, culminating in the description that in Paul's letters "are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Pet 3:16). These "ignorant . . . incompetent interpreters" are "unstable" and not established or firmly fixed in the truth.[53]

These passages lead to the conclusion that there is a fixed sense, rather than a dynamism, to language. The Scriptures do not recognize an independent dynamism outside of the speaker's control and intention. Jesus said that man is accountable for every word uttered (Matt 12:36). A dynamic view of language means that a word uttered in integrity out of biblical motives for the welfare of his neighbor could in the end come back to haunt the speaker in the day of judgment. Potentially, the dynamism of language could change what was intended to be edifying into a deceptive and destructive word. It is unlikely that one would argue that language is not powerful, but the philosophy described here must prove that language has an autonomous power, an intrinsic dynamism that is independent of the speaker.[54]

God holds people accountable to His intended meaning. As the next section will demonstrate, God speaks in human language, and then those who disobey are judged

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[52] E.g., 1 Sam 15:13, 20, 24-25; 1 Kgs 13:18; Deut 5:27-29; Ps 89:30-37; Jer 34:10-11; Acts 5:1-11.

[53] BDAG, 49, 145, 945 (the α-privative, ἀστήρικτος, comes from the root στηρίζω).

[54] This view is untenable with Scripture. God was not surprised by the "dynamism" of his words in Gen 1. Instead, the biblical view of language leaves the speaker accountable for words and meaning. God spoke intentionally, and then that meaning became reality. See Cassuto, *Genesis*, 26: "In the present verse [Gen. 1:3], this formal repetition assumes its tersest form (fiat: 'Let there be light'; execution: and there was light) to show the precision and celerity with which the injunction was carried out: as He commanded, and as soon as He commanded."

guilty regardless if their misinterpretation was deliberate or not. His intended meaning is recognized in the literal, grammatical-historical sense of the text.

Meaning is the Literal, Grammatical-Historical Sense of the Text

Scripture presupposes both that meaning is the literal, grammatical-historical sense of language in its context, and that its meaning is singular. God's intended meaning is determinative, fixed, and singular.[55] The term "literal" comes with the greatest liability (see below), and it will be dealt with last. Whenever the terms are used with regard to hermeneutics, the grammatical-historical sense is an integral part of the literal sense. This study concludes that the Scriptures presuppose what could be called a literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutic. The phrase seems to have originated with Karl A. G. Keil .[56] Walter Kaiser describes the term well:

> The term *grammatico-*, however, is somewhat misleading since we usually mean by 'grammatical' the arrangement of words and construction of sentences. But Keil had in mind the Greek word *gramma*, and his use of the term *grammatico-* approximates what we would understand by the term *literal* (to use a synonym derived from

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[55] Thomas, "The Principle of Single Meaning"; Kaiser, "The Single Intent of Scripture." Elsewhere, Kaiser says,

> It would seem that these [critical] contemporary authors would like to borrow the single meaning and the traditional linear-movement hermeneutic just long enough to establish their own theses. . . . The best argument for a single-meaning hermeneutic is to be found in observing what happens when it is removed from current conversation or writing. Communication itself is severely handicapped if not made impossible. (Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 47)

And again, he writes,

> Had we not used just such a [single-meaning] hermeneutic, we would never have heard the complaint against our own position with any degree of accuracy. It never ceases to amaze me how those interpreters who wish to fight the theory that meaning is singlefold and always a return to the author's own meaning demand that all who read their own papers and books do so with the understanding that their meaning is singlefold and must be understood literally." (Ibid., 113)

By way of contrast, medieval scholasticism regularly maintained that the practice of multiple *senses* of Scripture was consistent with single meaning because the single, literal meaning contained the spiritual senses. Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture,* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998) with the position of John Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, trans. Ian Christopher Levy, The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001). Some are retrieving the medieval practice and calling it single meaning; e.g., Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 161–90.

[56] Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1990), 203.

> Latin). Thus the grammatical sense, in Keil's understanding, is the simple, direct, plain, ordinary, and literal sense of the phrases, clauses, and sentences.[57]

Grammatical sense. The Scriptures regularly point out the meaning of something derived from what the text says or does not say *grammatically*.[58] There is a consistent pattern of significance that is part of every human language. Recognition of these patterns is an essential part of understanding any language. The significance of certain syntactical constructions, a familiarity with the semantic domains associated with a particular lexeme, and the unique connotation associated from synonyms with semantic overlap, all contribute to an understanding of the meaning of a passage.

The Scriptures presuppose that grammar makes a difference in meaning and, in part, determines that meaning. The Scripture's presupposition about the grammatical sense can readily be seen in the nature of prophecy and fulfillment, commands and obedience or disobedience. Inevitably, the corollary requires the grammatical sense of the first half of the pair to match the grammatical sense of the latter passage. For example, the following two passages share an identical grammatical sense:

> Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with *the loss of* his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and with *the loss of* his youngest son he shall set up its gates." (Josh 6:26)

> In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; he laid its foundations with the *loss of* Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the *loss of* his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun. (1 Kgs 16:34)

These two passages have significant grammatical parallels. Both passages discuss building (בנה) Jericho, laying its foundations (יסד), and setting up (נצב) its gates (דְּלָתֶיהָ). The significant grammatical difference is the *addition* of the names of the firstborn and the youngest sons included in the fulfillment (1 Kgs 16:34). However, regardless of the

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[57] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 87–88.

[58] *Grammaticus* means "*literary, grammatical*; as subst[antive], m[asculine] *a philologist, grammarian*; f[eminine] sing[ular] and n[euter] pl[ural] *grammar, philology*" (*Latin Dictionary*, Accordance XII [OakTree Software, Inc., 2017]).

additional information, the senses of what action is condemned and the nature of the curse are identical.

Alternatively, the same is true of disobedience. 1 Samuel 15:3 records God's command given to Saul through Samuel. Saul was supposed to "go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and to not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey." What Saul *actually does* accords precisely with the grammatical sense of "utterly destroy" and "put to death," as 1 Samuel 15:8b records. However, Saul's actions did not agree with the literal, grammatical sense of "all," or "ox and sheep," as 1 Samuel 15:9 explains. As a result, Saul convinced himself that he actually obeyed (1 Sam 15:13, 15b, 20), even though his actions only correlated with a portion of the command. Finally, Saul has to agree with God and acknowledge that his actions did not accord with the full scope of the adjective or nouns to which this action was supposed to occur (cf. 1 Sam 15:9, 11, 14, 22-23, 24-25).

Historical sense. The historical sense of the text refers to the significance that the words had as intended by the author in the historical context.[59] As Provan writes about the historical sense, " . . . the intention is to underline that what authors mean they always mean in historical contexts."[60] This historical situation includes Scripture previously revealed to the author and the audience. What has been called the "Analogy of (Antecedent) Scripture," has been championed by Walter Kaiser for years.[61] Regularly, the Scriptures presuppose that the historical sense is determinative of the meaning of a

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[59] Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 231, describes the historical standpoint this way, "Herein we note the import of the term grammatico-*historical* interpretation. We are not only to grasp the grammatical import of the words and sentences, but also to feel the force and bearing of the historical circumstances which may in any way have affected the writer."

[60] Iain Provan, *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 89.

[61] Kaiser, *Toward an Exegetical Theology*, 131–46. Also, see the section on Matthew's use of Hos 11:1 in ch. 3.

passage. First, the Scriptures regularly ascribe the word of God to the human author who wrote in his historical context, acknowledging the importance of the historical situation for the meaning that bears on the NT passage.[62]

Second, the Scripture presupposes a precision of the text that only the historical sense can provide. For example, God promises, "Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete" (Gen 15:16). This is spoken to Abraham about the return of his seed to the promised land after their oppression (Gen 15:13ff). In this context, the word דּוֹר means "cycle, lifetime, **descent, generation**, (all the people who have grown up in the period from the birth of a man until the birth of his first son . . .)."[63] Without paying attention to the historical sense, contemporary readers might regard the term "generation" as something like 40-60 years. Four generations of a contemporary family tree would certainly contradict the fulfillment described in Exodus 12:40, "Now the time that the sons of Israel lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years." But, in the grammatical context, the four generations is also described as 400 years in verse 13.[64] Taken together, the prophecy of Genesis 15:13-16 and the fulfillment of Exodus 12:40 contain a triple combination of 400 years, four generations, and 430 years. Yet, the grammatical *and* historical sense combined contains no contradiction. In fact, the 400 and the 430 are not equal in sense because Genesis 15:13 refers to the time of slavery and oppression, whereas Exodus 12:40 refers to the

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[62] E.g., while all of the following passages apply, the italicized references also highlight the human author as the divine agent of the speech, emphasizing both the divine origin as well as the historical-situatedness of the writing: Matt *2:17*; 3:3; *4:14*; *8:17*; *12:17*; 13:14; 15:7 (significantly, the human author, Isaiah, is declared to have been prophesying of Jesus' antagonists); 22:24; *27:9*; Mark 7:10; 12:36, 37; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:25; 3:22; *4:25*; 7:35, 37; Rom 4:6; 9:15, 25; 10:16, 19, 20, 21; 11:9; 15:12; Heb *4:7*; 7:14; 12:21; Jude 14.

[63] *HALOT*, 1:217-18; bold original.

[64] See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 325n13.b-b. Wenham points out the chiasmus between Gen 15:13 and v. 16: oppress . . . 400 years . . . fourth generation . . . return, citing the F. I. Andersen's *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew*, 133. It remains unclear if this is due to the cognate וְעִנּוּ (Gen 15:13) and עָוֹן (v. 16). But this still does not explain the inclusion of *return* nor the exclusion of *iniquity* from the chiasmus. If a chiasmus is intended here, a conceptual one would be preferable: "be strangers . . . 400 years . . . fourth generation . . . return."

length of Israel's total stay in Egypt. The 430 includes the 400 years of slavery, *plus* the thirty years where they still enjoyed favor from the Pharaoh who knew Joseph (cf. Exod 1:8). Additionally, the historical sense of a generation in Abraham's day would have been much longer than a contemporary life span. W. F. Albright wrote,

> The early Hebrews . . . dated long periods of lifetimes, not by generations (which replaced the count by lifetimes about the tenth century B.C. at latest). Heb. *dôr* (for older *dahru>dâru*, properly 'lap in a race, cycle of time') means 'lifetime' in Gen. 15:16; the 400 years of 15:13 is simply the translation of the archaic terminology into classical Hebrew.[65]

Abraham's father Terah died at the age of 205, when Abraham was 130 years old (cf. Gen 11:26, 32). Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born, and exactly 100 years old when Isaac was born (cf. Gen 16:16; 17:1, 17; 18:10, 14; 21:5). The meaning of "life cycle" certainly requires a historical sense, and, in Abraham's day, the equivalence of four generations and 400 years requires the grammatical *and* historical sense of both prophecy and fulfillment. The grammatical and historical *sense* of both the prophecy and the fulfillment are *equal* in spite of the fact that they are not grammatically *identical*.[66]

Third, the Scripture presupposes the historical view of meaning whenever it explains that a historical meaning of a word differs from the current practice. For example, 1 Samuel 9:9 is a parenthetical explanation: "(Formerly in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, he used to say, 'Come, and let us go to the seer'; for he who is called a prophet now was formerly called a seer.)" The term "seer" had fallen out of disuse by the time the author wrote 1 Samuel.

Finally, the fact that scribes translated the Scripture recognizes that meaning was encapsulated in a historical language so that understanding the meaning would be

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[65] W. F. Albright, "Abram the Hebrew: A New Archaeological Interpretation," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 163 (1961), 50-51, as cited by Hamilton, *Genesis*, 436. See Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967), 125.

[66] Jesus presupposes that the meaning is what the historically-situated human author knew and wrote, e.g., John 5:46-47; 8:58. See ch. 3 for further discussion of these important texts.

lost on those who are not fluent in that language. Such was the case in the post-exilic period, when the scribes translated the Torah for an Aramaic speaking generation (cf., Neh 8:8).

Literal meaning. The term "literal" has been debated so vigorously that using it requires tremendous definition.[67] For the remainder of this project, "literal" will be used as a comprehensive term that includes both the grammatical and historical sense. This has at least two significant benefits: (1) it allows for the meaning of the language to embrace idioms, exaggerations, metonymy, metaphorical and figurative uses of terms to be included in the definition of literal interpretation, and (2) those uses of language which go beyond "literalism" must be determined by the actual literary context and grammar of the human language in the original historical context.

'Literal' is a helpful term for contrasting the four-fold sense of Scripture—*literal, analogical, tropological,* and *allegorical* sense—that was popular among medieval scholastics. 'Literal' should also be distinguished between the 'literal' sense of the text that includes both the historical meaning plus the spiritual meaning in the resurgence of medieval senses of Scripture today.[68] The use of the term 'literal' should not be confused with a 'literalistic' mishandling of the text that refuses to recognize 'literal' figures of speech such as anthropomorphism, metonymy, exaggeration, or metaphor. A 'literal' metaphor of God's protection—such as "Hide me in the shadow of Your wings" (Ps 17:8)—does not mean, literalistically, that God has physical wings, but

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[67] Muddled thinking on both sides of the traditional continuity-discontinuity spectrum has convoluted the discussion about "literal interpretation" at times. E.g., Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1993), 78–96, rightly warns dispensationalists like Ryrie that the claim of "literal interpretation" can become a watchword or banner (read, "excuse") for reading theological discontinuity into a passage without warrant (see pp. 84-86, 94, 96). However, Poythress should beware lest his reading of ecclesiology and divine-meaning theology into the OT leads to a *sensus plenior* that is not textually-warranted (or divinely-warranted). His view is summarized and evaluated in the section on *sensus plenior* in appendix 3.

[68] E.g., Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, 161–90.

that the original intent of the Psalmist, and the meaning accessible to the original audience, was that 'wings' were literally a metaphor for God's refuge and protection.

Meaning is the grammatical sense intended by the author in the historical context. When these details yield an idiom, metaphor, or analogy, then the text contains a literal idiom, metaphor, or analogy. This does not constitute two meanings. In other words, a literal sense of a text will include terms with metaphorical meanings and literal meanings, as the context demands.[69]

For example, when Poythress uses Isaiah 27:1-4 as an example, he claims that the Lord will wage a metaphorical battle against Israel's enemies, and this depends on the literal meaning of a farmer battling briers and thorns. Even if this battle that the Lord is waging were *only* metaphorical with an allusion to the literal battle that a farmer wages against thorns, the literal *meaning* or *sense* of the passage would not be multiple. There is only one meaning, even if that metaphorical meaning presupposes a knowledge of a farmer's literal battle with thorns.[70] The literal[71] interpretation takes the text according to the plain language, recognizing the various senses of the word or word picture (literal or metaphorical) as determined by the grammar and the context of the passage in the narrative, prophecy, psalm, or epistle in which it occurs. The grammatical and historical

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[69] Contrast this with the communal interpreters, e.g., Hans W. Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, ed. George Hunsinger and William C. Placher (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 15: "The literal meaning of the text is precisely that meaning which finds the greatest degree of agreement in the use of the text in the religious community. If there is agreement in that use, then take that to be the literal sense."

[70] Poythress might agree with this, but that is questionable, when he writes,

> The word will have only one intended sense *unless the context activates more than one sense.* We have seen in the analysis of Isaiah 27:2-4 that some contexts can activate more than one meaning simultaneously. . . . Hence the total impact of the words 'thorns' and 'briers' depends on the simultaneous presence of a metaphorical and literal connection.
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> In fact most metaphors depend for their success on a simultaneous presence of two or more planes of meaning. (Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 92–93)

[71] Consistent with the meaning of *littera*—from which English derives the word "letter"—the Latin adverb *litterate* means "*in clear letters, legibly; literally, word for word*," or "literally, to the letter; in plain language," *Latin Dictionary*, Accordance XII (OakTree Software, Inc., 2017), para. 8264; Mendoza, *Interpres*.

sense of the original writing are determinative of the literal meaning because they are presupposed by Scripture as determinative of that meaning.

The first recorded instance of speech is found in Genesis 1:3, "Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light." A few questions help to draw out the significance of this verse for the definition of meaning. When this was spoken what was the lexical domain of the word "light" (אוֹר)? Grammatically, what was the meaning of this word, when the referent for this word did not yet exist? Historically, how would this phrase have been understood? Did God even speak Hebrew, or did that come into existence at Babel?

There was no established semantic domain from which to draw interpretive possibilities. Furthermore, there was no interpreter to scrutinize, doubt, question, or make conclusions about God's meaning. Since it is the earliest speech on record, there is no body of speech to draw from in order to establish the meaning of "light." There is no audience to misunderstand this word. The meaning of light originates in the mind of God, and then subsequently, as a result of God's speech, it becomes reality. In other words, the meaning exists in God's mind, and what He intends by the term "light" determines the meaning of that term. Granted, God may not have been speaking the Hebrew that Moses wrote. Nevertheless, God's spoken symbol bore the meaning that He assigned to it. Even between Babel and Moses, human language had corollary symbols that referred precisely to the reality of light and sun, etc., so defined because God defined these notions by creative power, and assigned them to a symbol which possessed the potential for that significance in the proper contexts and constructions. Furthermore, humans could not know God's mental conception of light unless He spoke. His word determines both meaning and reality.

Additionally, the rest of Genesis 1 explains that the terms God uses are defined by Him exclusively. For example, "heaven" is a term that refers to the expanse between waters below and waters above (vv. 6-8). Why? The answer is "Because God said so."

That is simply what God named the expanse. The literal meaning "heaven" intended by God is recognized by the grammatical-historical sense of "expanse in the midst of the waters." Again, why does the term "vegetation" mean "plants yielding seed and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them" (v. 11)? And, who is to determine that the meaning of "seasons," "days and years" refers to periods of time designated by the signs and relationships of bodies that illumine the expanse (vv. 14-15)? God alone is the arbiter of meaning. These terms have these meanings because God said they do.[72]

The Scriptures presuppose that the literal meaning is the grammatical-historical sense, as intended by the author. When God speaks, His creation conforms to the definition of that expression; but here, in Gen 1, non-existence conforms to God's intended meaning of the expression. That which did not exist save in the mind of God alone, becomes reality through God's Word. His speech reveals His mind, and He determines the meaning of that speech.

By way of contrast, without presupposing that language originates with God's ability, one must see language as an autonomously determined construct without right or wrong, lacking the ability to possess determinative meaning. In this view, the arbitrary nature of language makes it a tool effective for internal speculation but not for effective and concrete transfer of meaning. This is aptly described by Vawter:

> Man not only uses language but is used by it: language has a force and meaning of its own, so that there is an interaction of the user and the used. Even if he would an author could not exclude from language the fullness of meaning that it possesses and has acquired from its history and its own dynamism, when he makes use of it. If such is the instrument that has figured in an inspired work, then it is much easier to

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[72] See Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 1: "Western Christian reading of the Bible in the days before the rise of historical criticism in the eighteenth century was usually strongly realistic, i.e., at once literal and historical, and not only doctrinal or edifying. The words and sentences meant what they said, and because they did so they accurately described real events and real truths that were rightly put only in those terms and no others." Such a notion as "realism" became associated with a distinctly Western hermeneutic that violently forced itself over the Scripture, rather than a biblical one that arose from the text itself.

> see how in the economy of a *Heilsgeschichte* a significance may legitimately be discerned in some given word that went unrecognized by its original author.[73]

Genesis 1 illustrates how the literal meaning is the grammatical-historical sense, as determined by authorial intent. Throughout, the fact that the Scripture presupposes the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation can be seen in two major ways: (1) commands must be obeyed literally and they yield literal blessings and curses, and (2) fulfilled prophecy always had a literal fulfillment.

Additionally, the reasons that these passages demand a literal, grammatical-historical interpretation are just as, if not more, important than the ways the Scriptures evidence these presuppositions. There are four reasons why the evidence proves that the Scripture *presupposes* a literal, grammatical-historical hermeneutic: (1) the evidence demonstrates a correlation of words and reality (both past examples and future exhortations, especially with ways 1 and 3), (2) these passages demonstrate the grammatical sense of meaning in that the fulfillment/obedience is grammatically *equal* to the prophecy/command, although not grammatically *identical*, (3) they demonstrate the historical sense because of the timelessness of applicability based on a fixed/determined meaning, and (4) they are demonstrably grammatical-historical in that the univocal meaning transcends culture. Examples of these arguments are given throughout the discussion of the textual evidence. The remainder of this section examines the two major ways the Scripture demonstrates its presupposed hermeneutic, concluded by a brief list of significant implications the evidence yields about hermeneutics.

First, commands must be obeyed literally and they yield literal blessings and curses. When the Scriptures describe the nature of obedience and disobedience of man in response to God, they presuppose that the lives and deeds of men either conform or fail to conform to God's words in a literal way. This is verifiable in several descriptions of

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[73] Bruce Vawter, *Biblical Inspiration* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 116. This is not Vawter's view, but rather his summary of a view of language developed in philological circles outside of biblical studies.

obedience and disobedience throughout the Scripture.

The very notion of obedience to God bears this out. The word "obey" is used with regard to God's Word[74] in a positive sense 28 times.[75] Thirty-four occurrences bear a negative connotation.[76] Twenty-seven of the 62 occurrences are documenting factual obedience or disobedience in the *past*.[77] The remaining 35 occurrences are either exhorting or warning for the future, expression of intent/purpose, or else they refer to timeless, axiomatic categories of those who (dis)obey.[78] There are many synonyms which explain God's intended meaning of "(dis)obedience": keep, observe, serve, perform, transgress, fear, show reverence, believe.[79] And, God views disobedience to His commands as hostility, rebellion and moral evil that are deserving of punishment.[80]

These references give insight into the presupposition of Scripture for interpretation. Man's conformity (or failure to conform) to God's voice is recognizable only on the presupposition that God determines the meaning of His message, and therefore has the right to judge whether man obeyed or disobeyed. For instance, in the passages referencing the past, God is extolling or condemning based on whether the

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[74] With the "NASB (1995)" module on Accordance XII, the search string "'obey*' <AND> (=Me <OR> =My <OR> God <OR> Lord)" yields 69 verses. However, 7 verses describe obedience to man *only* (Josh 1:17; 1 Chr 29:23; Jer 35:18; Luke 17:16; Eph 6:1; Col 3:22; 1 Pet 3:6), and 1 verse describes *listening* to God's voice (Jer 35:14), which is discussed below. The remaining 61 verses discuss this reality 62 times (1 Sam 15:22 mentions it twice).

[75] Gen 22:18; 26:5; Exod 5:2; 19:5 23:21; Deut 27:10; 28:1, 2; 30:2, 8, 10, 20; Josh 24:24; Judg 2:17; 3:4; 1 Sam 15:20, 22 (2x); Ps 103:20; Isa 50:10; Jer 7:23; 26:13; 38:20; Hag 1:12; Zech 6:15; Acts 5:29, 32; 1 Pet 1:2.

[76] Lev 26:14, 18, 21, 27; Deut 28:15, 45, 62; Judg 2:2; 6:10; 1 Sam 15:19; 28:18; 2 Kgs 18:12; Ps 81:11; Isa 42:24; Jer 3:13, 25; 7;28; 9:13; 18:10; 22:5, 21; 25:8; 34:14, 17; 42:21; 43:4, 7; 44:23; Dan 9:10, 11, 14; John 3:36; 2 Thess 1:8; 1 Pet 4:17.

[77] Gen 22:18; 26:5; Judg 2:2, 17; 6:10; 1 Sam 15:19, 20; 28:18; 2 Kgs 18:12; Ps 81:11; Isa 42:24; Jer 3:13, 25; 7:28; 9:13; 22:21; 25:8; 34:14, 17; 42:21; 43:4, 7; 44:23; Dan 9:10, 11, 14; Hag 1:12.

[78] Exod 5:2; 19:5; 23:21; Lev 26:14, 18, 21, 27; Deut 27:10; 28:1, 2, 15, 45, 62; 30:2, 8, 10, 20; Josh 24:24; Judg 3:4; 1 Sam 15:22 (2x); Ps 103:20; Isa 50:10; Jer 7:23; 18:10; 22:5; 26:13; 38:20; Zech 6:15; John 3:36; Acts 5:29, 32; 2 Thess 1:8; 1 Pet 1:2; 1 Pet 4:17.

[79] Gen 22:18 and Exod 19:5 and Deut 30:10; Deut 18:15 and 30:8; Josh 24:24; Ps 103:20; Jer 3:13; Isa 50:10; Hag 1:12; John 3:36.

[80] Exod 23:21; Lev 26:18, 21, 27; Jer 18:10.

person's actions conformed to what He intended by what He said.

This argument requires a brief explanation of the second reason listed above. Namely, these passages presuppose the grammatical sense of meaning when the fulfillment/obedience is grammatically *equal* to the prophecy/command, although not grammatically *identical*. At this point, Ogden and Richards' triangle of meaning in figure 1, above, is again helpful. When the grammatical sense of the prophecy (or command) equals the grammatical sense of the fulfillment (or act of obedience) while at the same time they are *not* grammatically identical, then it becomes clear that the imputed relationship between symbol and referent are true. In other words, another equal but different expression proves that the grammatical-historical senses match. This is because the causal relationship between them is the original thought of God.

For example, when God says that Abraham obeyed His voice (Gen 22:18), this commendation proves that God was pleased with Abraham's actions. However, when we read the command (Gen 22:2), it is *not* grammatically identical with Abraham's response (Gen 22:3-10). The grammatical senses of Genesis 22:2 and 22:3-10 are *synonymous* in that they have the same referent. In other words, God's commendation of Abraham's obedience in Genesis 22:18 demonstrates that the referent of His command matched the referent of Abraham's response. To use Ogden and Richards' nomenclature, the referent of the command [the action intended by God with the symbol—the text of Gen 22:2] matches the referent of the response [the action of Abraham intended by the symbol—the text of Gen 22:3-10]. The fact that the symbols are *not* identical is very important. The symbol of the command [the text of Gen 22:2] and the symbol of the response [the text of Gen 22:3-10] are very different. In fact, a different verb is used in the command (עלה, "to offer," v. 2) and the response (שחט, "to slay," v. 10). Nevertheless, God commends Abraham on his obedience. In spite of the fact that the verb in verse 10 has a narrower connotation than the verb in verse 2 (in both the HMT and NASB), in the context they function synonymously. God's commendation of Abraham proves that the grammatical-

historical sense of 22:2 *equals* the grammatical-historical sense of 22:3-10. Regardless of whether the reader recognizes the verbs as grammatically synonymous, *God does*. The Scriptures presuppose that the reader will recognize the synonymous relationship of two verbs, even with distinct connotations. In this manner, the Scripture demonstrates its grammatical-historical presupposition.

Although Genesis 22 is only one example, the fact that this phenomena happens over and over again throughout the Scriptures makes an overwhelming case for the grammatical-historical presupposition of the Scripture. For instance, the search for synonyms yields a significant amount of material. The synonyms included several forms of various verbs, such as "keep," "listen," "follow," and "observe," and it expanded the predicate to include various forms of nouns such as "command(ment)(s)," "precept," "voice."[81] The search produces 478 verses. Not all of those passages were relevant however. The verse had to document that someone *did* or *did not* conform to a message (command, word, etc.) so that it could be said that the Scripture exonerated or condemned one's actions as obedient or disobedient. 421 of those were valid for demonstrating the grammatical-historical presupposition of Scripture, while 57 verses did not fit the criteria—usually because they were examples of a cognate or homonym. For example, 1 Chronicles 25:1 was discarded because the search "command*" also yields "commanders." The verb "performs" also occurs later in the verse. However, this is not an instance of acting according to one's word, or a commandment, but of performing music ministry in the temple. Joshua 6:8 was discarded because of the homonym "ark of

[81] With the "NASB (1995)" module on Accordance XII, the search string was: (keep* <OR> kept <OR> "give ear" <OR> perform* <OR> listen* <OR> follow* <OR> observe*) <AND> (command* <OR> precept* <OR> covenant* <OR> statute* <OR> word* <OR> voice <OR> law* <OR> way*). The majority of results contained a noun and verb combination, such as "observed His law." This search yields 478 verses. This number could legitimately be much higher. For example, 2 Kgs 21:8 is properly a legitimate result of this search. However, 2 Kgs 21:9 is also a legitimate instance, but it does not show up in the search results because in this occurrence the verb "listen" *implies* the object "all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them," from verse 8. This should demonstrate that the results of such a search are *very modest*.

the *covenant*" coupled with the description of God *following* the nation. Other examples were discarded because they communicated no necessary grammatical-historical correlation between the meaning of the passage and the response of the audience. Exodus 34:10 was discarded for this reason—God simply states that He is making covenant, while in a different sentence in the same verse, God promises to perform miracles. Finally, those 421 relevant passages contained 101 additional examples, totalling 522 examples.

An exhaustive list is difficult to achieve. For instance, one passage that does *not* show up on the search results, 2 Samuel 7:25-26, nevertheless proves that God's faithfulness to the meaning of His word requires a grammatical-historical sense of that word: "Now therefore, O LORD God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and his house, confirm it forever, and *do as You have spoken, that Your name may be magnified forever*, by saying, 'The LORD of hosts is God over Israel'; and may the house of Your servant David be established before You." The glory of the Lord depends upon the precise correlation between God's word and His action. If God has the freedom to fulfill His word in ways that could not have been understood from the word itself, then God's gets no glory from the retrospective fulfillment. Such a fulfillment is no different than making whatever was said into a retrospective match with subsequent realities. This is a merely-human and positively-deceptive use of words.

Similarly, 2 Chronicles 30:1-4 does not show up in the search results, but this is an another clear example of a literal application of the grammatical-historical sense of Numbers 9:10-11—including the nature of consecration for the feast, the timing of the celebration in light of the circumstances, etc. This response receives commendation from the Lord (2 Chr 30:4). The literal application of the grammatical-historical sense abounds in Scripture, both by way of application (from past examples) and exhortation (for future

response).[82]

Finally, the notion of human action being a faithful corollary to the words of the command demonstrates that God interprets His word literally. In other words, God praises man's response to His commands on the basis of whether man's actions *equal* the grammatical-historical sense of the command or not. 1 Samuel 15 is a notable example of this. The Scriptures presuppose that meaning is objective and fixed. God does not hold any sympathy for readers whose subjective understanding has been altered from the objective meaning of a text. The command (1 Sam 15:3) was disobeyed in at least three ways: Saul spared Agag, the best of the livestock, and whatever they valued. Everything else was destroyed utterly (15:9). The grammatical sense of the verb "utterly destroy" was applied literally to the despised objects, but not to whatever served selfish purposes. The grammatical sense of the command includes all the syntactical details—in this case, the adjective "all" has been ignored, and the verb was applied literally to the objects of Saul's own choosing. Regardless of motives, Saul was adamant that he did obey the LORD (15:13, 20), but the people were responsible for sparing plunder, and this was only for the purpose of sacrifice (15:15, 21). Saul blamed the people and justified the disobedience on the basis of sacrifice. Regardless of motives, Saul's intentions, or his sincerity,[83] God condemns the failure to obey the grammatical-historical sense of His own voice as equal to divination and idolatry (15:19, 22-23). Finally, Saul admits that he violated the command as given. Saul tampered with the meaning of the command (15:9-21) because he feared man (15:24). His "interpretation" was not grammatical-historical

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[82] I.e., in addition to 2 Sam 7:25-26 and 2 Chr 30:2 and Num 9:10-11, see also, Num 1:2ff and 1:19; 2 Chr 30:9 and Deut 30:2; 2 Chr 31:20-21; 34:32; Jer 13:1 and 2; 13:4 and 5; 13:6 and 7; 17:19-23 and 24-27 (the message—vv. 19-23—brings literal curses—v. 27—and blessings—vv. 24-26—when literally obeyed or disobeyed).

[83] See 1 Sam 10:8 and 13:8-14. Saul's sincerity in doing what he was convinced would please the LORD was not the issue. If it were, the LORD would have exonerated Saul for acting consistently with his own personal presuppositions (reader- or listener-response) to the command. Instead, because he violated the grammatical-historical sense of 1 Sam 10:8, he was guilty and God took away the kingdom as a consequence.

because of the sin in his heart. The remedy was not more sophisticated hermeneutics but pardon from sin (15:25). Of course, it would be proper to call Saul's action "disobedience" rather than "misinterpretation." However, that proper observation proves the Scripture's presupposition that meaning is accessible and the audience is accountable to the grammatical-historical sense of His Word. To disobey the grammatical-historical sense of the command is declared to be a rejection of God's word (15:26). Ultimately, Samuel pushes Saul into a corner with the grammatical-historical sense of the command until Saul himself cannot deny that he has sinned by violating that same grammatical-historical sense.

The presupposition of the grammatical-historical sense of meaning is also demonstrated by the Scriptures in the expectation it holds for future obedience. The Scriptures anticipate that what will be rewarded as obedience in the future matches past demonstrations of obedience. "According to all" occurs 101 times in 98 different verses of the NASB.[84] Twenty-eight verses do not apply to the correlation of action to words (e.g., acting according to one's abominations).[85] The remaining 70 verses all demonstrate a correlation (obedience) or lack of correlation (disobedience) between the grammatical-historical sense of words and action. They can be divided between those that point to a past action (not) according to the words,[86] or the future expectation of action (not) according to the words.[87] It is no overstatement to say that these examples can be

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[84] New American Standard Bible Update (NAS95S) module (version 4.0) of Accordance.

[85] The following passages are not applicable: Num 3:26; 4:33; Josh 10:32, 35, 37; 1 Sam 23:20; 1 Kgs 6:38; 8:39; 9:11; 2 Kgs 16:10, 11; 18:3; 23:32, 37; 24:3, 9, 19; 2 Chr 6:30; 26:4; 27:2; 29:2; Neh 5:19; Ps 138:2; Isa 63:7; 21:2; Ezek 18:24; 24:24; Zeph 3:7.

[86] A past-orientation occurs 42 times in 41 verses: Gen 6:22; 7:5; Exod 39:32, 42; 40:16; Num 1:54; 2:34; 8:20; 9:5; Deut 1:2; 18:16; Josh 4:10; 8:34; 11:23; 21:44; Ruth 3:6; 1 Sam 25:9, 12; 2 Sam 7:22; 9:11; 1 Kgs 8:56; 14:24; 21:26; 22:53 2 Kgs 10:30; 11:9; 14:3; 15:3, 34; 16:16; 22:13; 23:25; 1 Chr 6:49; 16:40; 17:15 (2x), 20; 2 Chr 34:21; Esth 8:9; Jer 35:10, 18; 36:8.

[87] A future-orientation occurs 31 times in 29 verses: Exod 25:9; 29:35; 31:11; Num 9:3 (2x), 12; 30:2; Deut 17:10; 20:18; 24:8; 26:13, 14; 29:21; 30:2; 31:5; Josh 1:7, 8; 1 Sam 25:30; 1 Kgs 5:6; 8:43; 9:4; 2 Kgs 17:13; 21:8 (2x); 2 Chr 6:22; 7:17; 23:8; 33:8; Jer 11:4; 50:21, 29.

multiplied hundreds of times. Actions that equal the grammatical-historical sense of commands (past or future) are praised by the Scripture as "obedience," while actions that violate the grammatical-historical sense (past or future) are condemned as a rejection of God's word. This reality forms the very basis of the Scripture's view of language and meaning hundreds of times over.

Second, biblical prophecy always receives or expects a literal fulfillment. Like the discussion with commands and the human response, the grammatical-historical sense of prophecies are always *equal* to the grammatical-historical sense of its fulfillment, even if they are not grammatically *identical*. Although this is consistent with the Scripture's presupposition of the grammatical-historical sense, even stronger evidence comes from instances where there is an equivalence of grammatical-historical sense *without* the grammatical identity. In other words, many instances do not simply record the fulfillment with the same words, but require a grammatical-historical interpretation in order to appreciate the univocal sense of prophecy and fulfillment. Additionally, unfulfilled prophecies often receive further reiterations that are not grammatically *identical* with the initial prophecy, but those additional prophecies are either equal to the grammatical-historical sense of the original or build on it in such a way that the grammatical-historical sense of the original prophecy is necessary to understand the reiteration. A brief discussion of some examples should demonstrate the significance of this evidence for the grammatical-historical sense that is presupposed by the biblical fulfillment or biblical anticipation of fulfillment.

All of the examples of prophecy that have been fulfilled already in the Scriptural record evidence the literal nature of both—that is, both the prophecy and the fulfillment share an equivalent grammatical-historical sense, even if not a grammatical-historical identity. Of course, several examples *do* share equivalent sense *and* identity,

where the expression of the fulfillment is grammatically identical to the prophecy.[88]

The fulfillment of prophecy requires the presupposition of the grammatical sense of both the prophecy and the fulfillment. For example, English readers may be confused by the comparison of Genesis 48:21 with 50:24-25. At first glance, this looks like it was not fulfilled literally. However, Jacob is speaking of the whole family/nation when he says "you" and "your fathers" with the second person plural pronominal suffix (אֶתְכֶם and אֲבֹתֵיכֶם; Gen 48:21). In reality, the plural prophecy is fulfilled literally in Joshua.

As a further example, the prophecies of Jeremiah 3:11-14; 31:18-20; 50:4-5 are fulfilled literally, as is clear in Ezra 6:17; 8:35; and Luke 2:36-38. However, this presupposes the grammatical-historical sense. For instance, how does a remnant from the tribe of Asher prove that God is going to restore "faithless Israel"? The historical situation—Jeremiah prophesies after the kingdom is divided under Rehoboam—is critical for appreciating what the Scriptures say. Furthermore, Asher is one of the ten northern tribes who went to Assyria.

Additionally, precise attention to grammar is necessary for determining true prophecy from false prophecy. The grammatical sense of meaning is presupposed in the very nature of the test given for divine prophecy—literal fulfillment and literal correspondence with previous revelation.[89] Such criteria presupposes that the grammatical sense be upheld for recognizing the fulfillment. For example, when Jeremiah prophesied that Babylon would prevail against Judah (Jer 27), the false prophet Hananiah contradicted Jeremiah's message (Jer 28). Hananiah declared boldly that Babylon had been broken by the Lord. He predicted,

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[88] E.g., Josh 6:26 and 1 Kgs 16:34 are virtually identical word-for-word as far as nouns and verbs, with the addition of the name of both the firstborn and the youngest in the fulfillment parallel.

[89] See Deut 13:1-11; 18:19-22.

> "Within two years I am going to bring back to this place all the vessels of the LORD'S house, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried to Babylon. I am also going to bring back to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles of Judah who went to Babylon," declares the LORD, "for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon." (Jer 28:3-4)

Jeremiah contradicted this message and reminded Judah of the Deuteronomy 13 and 18 principle that *actual* fulfillment proves the divine source of the message (Jer 28:5-9). Then, Hananiah contradicted Jeremiah's contradiction, and Jeremiah left without saying anything more (28:10-11). Finally, God speaks again to Jeremiah (28:12-14) and he relays the revelation to Hananiah (28:15-16). Because Hananiah spoke a lie, God is going to remove him from the face of the earth—"This year you are going to die, because you have counseled rebellion against the LORD" (28:16b).

The grammatical specificity of the respective prophecies is important for two reasons: (1) the Scriptures presuppose that the grammatical sense is legitimately observable criteria in order to successfully obey Deut 13:1-11 and 18:19-22, and (2) Jeremiah's prophecy demonstrates that the grammatical sense of the prophecy *equals* the grammatical sense of the fulfillment even though they are not grammatically identical.

First, Hananiah's prophecy would not necessarily be proven or disproven until two years time (28:3, 11). If Zedekiah were to listen to the false prophets (see 27:14, 16) like Hananiah, he would be convinced to rebel against Nebuchadnezzar. If he did so, then Judah would be burned with fire and utterly destroyed (as Jeremiah prophesied seven times—Jer 32:29; 34:2, 22; 37:8, 10; 38:18, 23—and it was fulfilled literally—Jer 39:8; 52:13; 2 Chr 36:19). God gave Zedekiah a sign to demonstrate who was speaking the truth even before the shelf-life on Hananiah's prophecy expired in two years time. Whether Hananiah died or not was an observable phenomenon based on the grammatical sense of that prediction in that context.

Second, Jeremiah's prophecy alerts the reader that fulfillment must be "this year" (28:16), but the fulfillment records that it actually comes in the seventh month of that same year (28:17). Obviously, the grammatical senses of the prophecy and

fulfillment *match*—they are equal—even though they are not *identical*. In other words, the sense *intended* is equaled by a different grammatical construction with a different connotation. The obvious nature of such an observation borders on embarrassment, but the implication is important. Even though the grammatical sense of "this year" and "the seventh month of this year" are not grammatically identical (the latter being more specific than the former), the Scripture presupposes that the reader will recognize them as being grammatically equal. This is why Zedekiah is culpable for rejecting the Word of God given through Jeremiah (cf. Jer 32:1-5; 39:5-7).

Conclusion. To say that these examples can be repeated 1,256 times is no exaggeration, but rather an understatement.[90] This view of language and meaning is woven into the very fabric of the Scripture's presupposition. The Scriptures contain an abundance of data where its own presuppositions about interpretation are on clear display.[91] This section has outlined a very basic argument for the Scripture's presupposed hermeneutic in three basic categories. In conclusion, several implications result from the evidence that also deserve to be mentioned.

First, the addition of meaning is incompatible with faithful interpretation. For example, in Deuteronomy 4:2, God says, "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." The Word God gave is, in itself, sufficient for the purpose He had in revealing it. The addition of meaning to the text is not divinely warranted, but divinely condemned.

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[90] To be specific, this number only accounts for the passages connected to a literal, grammatical-historical fulfillment, or expectation of fulfillment from Genesis through Lamentations.

[91] This author's record of biblical references that pertain to hermeneutics totaled 23 pages, recorded over two years of reading the Scriptures cover-to-cover. Of course, not all of these references reveal the Scripture's presuppositions (i.e., some of them pertain to epistemology or the Scripture's *exhibited* hermeneutic), but the evidence for what the Scriptures *presuppose* about hermeneutics is by no means scant.

Second, to listen obediently means to listen with all of one's heart, soul, and mind.[92] The kind of listening, reading, or interpreting of the Scripture that God desires does not stop at understanding, let alone speaking. Inevitably, proper hearing leads to proper living, according to James 1:19-25.

Third, the grammatical-historical meaning transcends culture.[93] There is a univocal meaning, an identical significance of Scripture for all regardless of cultural background and personal presuppositions. In the Numbers 9:14 example, it becomes clear that the Scriptures do not presuppose that culture and personal background prevent the worshipper from arriving at the proper interpretation of the Scripture. Instead, they presuppose the exact opposite. While interpreters can assert that culture and personal background prevent objectivity in interpreting the Scripture, the Scriptures themselves do not appear to teach or presuppose such a view. If they do not, then this view does not stands on a revelational epistemology.

Fourth, historical meaning transcends time.[94] This is true with regard to future expectation of the current revelation (e.g., Gen 17:9; Exod 31:16) and in the future with regard to the past revelation. For example, in 2 Kings 23:21, King Josiah reigned from 641/640-609 B.C. If the restoration of Passover occurs in the same year as the reforms instituted in the eighteenth year of his reign (cf. 2 Kgs 22:3; 2 Chr 34:8; 35:1), and if the first Passover took place in 1446 B.C., then the national obedience to this law was extolled by God as obedience because it was celebrated on the proper day and in the proper way prescribed more than 820 years earlier. Interpreters can follow Gadamer and claim that the distance of time between the author and reader prohibits the totally

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[92] E.g., Deut 11:13, 22; 30:10; 1 Kgs 8:58, 61; 14:8; Ps 119:69.

[93] E.g., Num 9:14; Ezra 7:26; Neh 12:45.

[94] E.g., Gen 17:9 (plus "according to" [his father]); Exod 31:16; Deut 29:29; Judg 3:4; 2 Kgs 23:21; Neh 12:45; (cf. Exod 23:31-33; 34:12-16; Deut 7:3 and 1 Kgs 11:1-11).

successful convergence of horizons, but they cannot legitimately claim that the Scripture presupposes such a notion.

Going back at least as far as E. D. Hirsch, interpreters have discussed the distinction between *meaning* and *significance* as a way to describe how a text with fixed meaning can enjoy timeless relevance. For Hirsch, *significance* is a "meaning-to" not a "meaning-in." The significance may well change for a reader at each new reading, but this must not be imagined as referring to a new meaning being construed.[95] This distinction between meaning and significance contributes directly to the third and fourth categories listed here. The presuppositional hermeneutic must observe what the Scriptures *does* with commands where the fixed meaning appears to be inapplicable to the current reader.[96]

For example, in light of the third implication, what would the presuppositional hermeneutic do with passages that do not seem applicable because of a difference in culture? What is the *meaning* of this passage, "But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved"? If the criteria for handling texts came from outside of the Scripture, then that source would become a more ultimate authority than the Scriptures themselves. As it is, the passage itself lends itself to a helpful understanding of how this applies. Certainly the argument is a trans-cultural issue, because the headship of men and the role of women is rooted in the Trinity and creation (1 Cor 11:3, 7). So, regardless of the degree of cultural elements involved in Paul's exhortation, the *significance* of this exhortation is not culturally limited; rather, it transcends each specific culture. However, there are elements in this passage that reveal that Paul is aware of the

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[95] Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation*, 39, 62–64.

[96] For a helpful discussion on the presupposition of meaning and significance, see Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 30–34. John Frame calls "meaning" the "application" of a text, because functionally, meaning is what the reader does with the text; John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, A Theology of Lordship (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2010), 292–96.

cultural application of head coverings themselves. First, Paul calls the head covering a symbol of authority. That is what the head covering signified in the Greek context.[97] Second, Paul alludes to nature (1 Cor 11:14-15)—there is an intuitive sense that men wearing their hair like women violates the God-given distinction between male and female. Third, wherever a church sought to be contentious, Paul pointed to the fact that they would be rejecting the accepted practice of the churches. This indicates that for a church to throw off a cultural symbol of headship, authority, and masculine/feminine distinction would be contentious against God's design. So, the *significance* of the *sign* is an important distinction. The *significance* is headship, authority, and gender distinction, but the *sign* is head coverings. From culture to culture, whatever *signifies* androngony or defiance of submission to God-given authority may vary, but the *significance* of this passage requires each culture to protect the meaning of this passage. The *meaning* of this passage is fixed, but the *significance* is as virtually limitless as the number of ways that difference cultures will manifest male/female distinction and/or androgeny.

Fifth, the Scriptures claim intrinsic clarity.[98] Although it properly lies outside the evidence of a *presupposed* hermeneutic, the explicit claims of the Scripture regarding clarity and certainty are helpful to note as well. For example, in Jeremiah 40:2-4, Jeremiah's prophecy was so clear that Nebuzaradan, the pagan captain of the Babylonian bodyguard, could understand the prophecy *and* the reason for its fulfillment. He let Jeremiah go free, citing the fulfillment of God's prophecy given to Jeremiah *and* blaming the Jews for disregarding the meaning of that message.

Sixth, God's words correlate precisely with the human words he inspired.[99] This denotes that there is no distinction regarding interpretation of the meaning of God's

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[97] In countries like Ukraine, for example, married women wear head coverings and single women do not. It signifies headship and authority in that culture in a way that it does no in other cultures.

[98] E.g., Num 4:17-20 (clarity is presupposed and failure to follow the revelation will result in death); Ezek 3:6.

[99] E.g., Deut 34:9; Josh 4:8; 22:2; Ruth 3:6 (see "according to all" God's commands); 1 Sam

speech in human words and interpretation of human speech in human words. The difference between Zephaniah speaking personally, and God speaking through Zephaniah is a difference of authority, morality, and obligation, not meaning.

Seventh, God's intended sense remains accessible in skilled translation.[100] This implication can be demonstrated in many passages, when one considers the successful implementation of any text of the Torah among Jews who did not speak Hebrew. In the post-exilic period, most Jews spoke Aramaic. In the diaspora, most Jews outside of Israel spoke Greek. When it says "Because they understood the words which had been made known to them" (Neh 8:12), the Scriptures presuppose that Aramaic speakers would not have known the meaning of a Hebrew text without translation. Accurate translation of the sense of the original into the audience's language is necessary for understanding. Once again, the Scriptures presuppose *both* a grammatical sense (the translation) *and* the historical sense (the language was unknown to this generation, as distinct from the original generation under Moses).

Eighth, Scripture presupposes epistemological certainty about what constitutes conformity to God's word.[101] This means that the audience can just as easily recognize past examples of conformity to the meaning of God's word as they can recognize or know obedience in their own lives.

Ninth, the act of interpretation is moral in nature.[102] In other words, the presuppositions of a reader that inhibit proper interpretation are sinful presuppositions not shared by the Scripture. The misinterpretation that leads to disobedience is called

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15:24; 2 Kgs 21:8; 1 Chr 15:15; 2 Chr 20:20; 33:8; Jer 23:16; 35:14, 18; 37:2; Amos 7:10-17; 2 Pet 1:20-21. The so-called distinction between human intention and divine intention is further discussed in ch. 3, in the section on 2 Pet 1:20-21.

[100] E.g., Neh 8:8.

[101] E.g., Exod 39:42-43; Deut 26:13-14; 1 Kgs 9:4; Ps 119:136.

[102] E.g., Exod 23:21; Lev 26 (cf. vv. 2-3, 14-15, 18, 21, 27); Num 15:39; Deut 1:43; Neh 9:16; Jer 7:28; 18:10; Ps 18:21; Isa 65:2; Jer 6:10, 19; Mark 7:9; 2 Pet 2:2. See the rebuttal to the objection "Interpretive Diversity is Pervasive" below.

idolatry, divination, and arrogance. God judges such a response to His word as guilty, requiring judgment, rather than an intellectual yet honest mistake, requiring more instruction in hermeneutics.

Tenth, personal integrity requires acting consistently with the grammatical-historical sense of one's own word—whether God or man.[103] That is to say, one does not have the liberty to change the meaning of words after the fact. Otherwise, the only potential way to truly lie or be guilty of deception is to admit that one deliberately lied. The liberty to change meaning after speaking means that liars who change their original intent could no longer be liars. On this supposition, those tell a lie have the liberty to change that lie—or lie about the lie—and, thus, are no longer liars. This has *significant* implications for hermeneutics in view of interpreters who say, for example, that the Christian hermeneutic is a "radical reinterpretation" and "What John needed to learn, as did Jesus' disciples at a later point (Acts 1:6-8), was that God reserves the right to fulfill his promises in his own way, even if his ways should contradict our natural, normal, ordinary, literal reading of those promises."[104]

Finally, covenant faithfulness requires conformity to God's word, whether the faithful subject is God or man.[105] God acts in accord with the literal meaning of His word. This defines faithfulness, conformity, and obedience and it becomes the pattern for what constitutes man acting in accord with the literal meaning of His word.

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[103] E.g., Num 30:2; 1 Kgs 8:23, 25; 9:4; Jer 1:12; Ezek 12:25, 28; Dan 9:4; Rom 3:4; 2 Cor 1:17-20; Titus 1:1.

[104] Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 142, 143. See ch. 3.

[105] E.g., 1 Kgs 8:23, 25; 9:4; 2 Chr 6:14, 16: Neh 1:5; 9:32; Ps 89:28; Isa 55:3; Dan 9:4; Jn 8:51, 52, 55.

Potential Objections and Presuppositional Rebuttals

Potential objections to the presuppositional hermeneutic are virtually innumerable. In principle, the antagonists tend to uphold an interpretive authority outside of or in addition to the Scriptures. Postmodern interpreters of the Bible attempt to mix man-made epistemologies—be that rationalism, empiricism, or existentialism—with a biblical one. These accusations or objections are not of the *de facto* variety, which claim that there is certain evidence against the truth of the presuppositional hermeneutic, but rather these objections are of the *de jure* variety, claiming that the Scriptures cannot legitimately be upheld as the ground for hermeneutics. In other words, the first type of argument argues that the opposing position is false, whereas the second argues that such a position is unjustified.[106]

To claim that the presuppositions articulated above are false, one would have to demonstrate that the Scripture actually holds opposing presuppositions, or else that this author has made a mistake in observation of the Scripture's presuppositions. For the postmodern interpreter, the first option is not possible because it requires dogmatism and certainty that are inconsistent with its own subjectivism. However, the second option is certainty a viable option, because the strongest potential defeater of the presuppositional hermeneutic is the notion that everything articulated so far in this chapter, has been irretrievably affected by personal traditions. Such an argument does not prove that the presuppositional hermeneutic is *false* so much as that it is *not possible* and *not able to be justified*. The following three objections would appear to be the strongest potential objection to the presuppositional hermeneutic, as proposed up to this point.

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[106] For example, this is described by Plantinga with reference to epistemology and applied by Kruger to canonicity in very helpful ways. See Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), viii–x; Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 20–22.

Presuppositions Always Interfere with Proper Interpretation of the Scripture

This objection could be expressed this way: "Everyone is situated in a context, with a tradition, community, assumptions and presuppositions from which he cannot escape. Inevitably, no one ever completely articulates the Bible; the closest one can come is to be faithful to articulating your take on the Bible from within your own interpretative community/tradition."[107]

An important qualification is necessary to clarify the nature of this objection. This objection should not be confused with the view that everybody has presuppositions. This objection is raised by Keith Mathison when he says,

> No one approaches Scripture without any preconceived notions or presuppositions, and if someone believes that he is able to do so, he has already implicitly adopted the position we have termed Tradition 0—which itself is a presupposition. It is perhaps unavoidable that a certain amount of circularity will be involved in any discussion of Scripture's doctrine of Scripture.[108]

The objection that no one approaches the Scripture without presuppositions is not an objection to the presuppositional hermeneutic because the Scriptures themselves never presuppose that man is morally neutral without any presuppositions. On the contrary, the Scriptures teach that by nature man is hard-wired to presuppose *against* the truths revealed in them.[109] So, this objection properly pertains not to the presence of interpretive presuppositions, but whether or not a reader can successfully overcome them to arrive at the right interpretation and proper convictions from the Scriptures.

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[107] E.g., Bulmann writes,

> THE QUESTION whether exegesis without presuppositions is possible must be answered affirmatively if 'without presuppositions' means 'without presupposing the results of the exegesis.' In this sense, exegesis without preuppositions [*sic*] is not only possible but demanded. In another sense, however, no exegesis is without presuppositions, inasmuch as the exegete is not a *tabula rasa*, but on the contrary, approaches the text with specific questions or with a specific way of raising questions and thus has a certain idea of the subject-matter with which the text is concerned. (Bultmann, "Is Exegesis without Presuppositions Possible?," 194)

[108] Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*, 157.

[109] 1 Cor 2:10-16. Cf., John 3:19-21; Rom 8:5-8; Eph 4:17-19.

Instead, this objection claims that one's presuppositions prevent the reader from arriving at a proper reading, one that is unconstrained from the cultural interference of the interpreter. For example, James Barr explains how the set of inescapable presuppositions becomes a tradition that is imposed upon the Scripture, in the case of Protestants, especially fundamentalism:

> My argument is simply and squarely that fundamentalist interpretation, because it insists that the Bible cannot err, not even in historical regards, has been forced to interpret the Bible wrongly; conversely, it is the critical analysis, and not the fundamentalist approach, that has taken the Bible for what it is and interpreted it accordingly. The problem of fundamentalism is that, far from being a biblical religion, an interpretation of scripture in its own terms, it has evaded the natural and literal sense of the Bible in order to imprison it within a particular tradition of human interpretation. The fact that this tradition—one drawn from older Protestant orthodoxy—assigns an extremely high place to the nature and authority of the Bible in no way alters the situation described, namely that it functions as a human tradition which obscures and imprisons the meaning of scripture.[110]

However, what used to be articulated from the position of skepticism of Christianity has now been taken up on the lips of professing Christian scholars. For example, James K. A. Smith explains that the situatedness of the interpreter prevents the notion of interpretive bliss, as though we can understand language without interpretation like Adam and Eve in the garden. Smith calls such a notion "interpretive immediacy." He says,

> It is this traditionedness [referring to Thomas Kuhn, who explained that even the scientific method is not exempt from interpretive tradition of the scientific community[111]] that is denied in immediacy models, particularly in evangelical theology, which proposes to read Scripture apart from the 'distortion' of presuppositions or biases and which claims that 'Scripture itself' can stand over and correct our presupposition. . . . The problem with much of evangelical theology is that it does not perceive itself as being governed by such an interpretive tradition, much as scientific research claims to deliver the world as it 'really' is (scientists themselves have not been fond of Kuhn's conclusions). The myth of a pure, objective reading prevents evangelicals from appreciating the impact of their tradition on their reading, particularly with regards to the Bible.[112]

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[110] James Barr, *The Scope and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), 79.

[111] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[112] Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 165–66.

Similarly, N. T. Wright agrees that "The naïvely realistic view of that stage—the 'reader' simply reading the 'text'—can itself be made to collapse: in good phenomenalist style, all I am really aware of in the presence of this text is my own sense-data."[113] Both Smith and Wright would likely argue that the presuppositions articulated above are not the Scripture, but only personal "sense-data" which come from the reader as he attempts to understand the text. Ultimately, antagonism against a revelational epistemology unites some strange bed-fellows.

For example, John Webster says,

> Yet at the very same time that the doctrine [of revelation] was eviscerated in this way [i.e., dogmatically minimalistic as a source of knowing Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, and the Trinity], the demands placed upon it increased to a point where they became insupportable. Perhaps the most significant symptom of this is the way in which *Christian theological talk of revelation migrates to the beginning of the dogmatic corpus, and has to take on the job of furnishing the epistemological warrants for Christian claims. . . . it promotes the hypertrophy of revelation by making it responsible for providing the platform on which all subsequent Christian teaching is erected*.[114]

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[113] N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 1 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1992), 59.

[114] John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12; italics mine. Cf. with D. A. Carson and Timothy Keller, who write,

> We also thought it was important to begin our confession with God rather than with Scripture. This is significant. The Enlightenment was overconfident about human rationality. Some strands of it assumed it was possible to build systems of thought on unassailable foundations that could be absolutely certain to unaided human reason. Despite their frequent vilification of the Enlightenment, many conservative evangelicals have nevertheless been shaped by it. *This can be seen in how many evangelical statements of faith start with the Scripture, not with God. They proceed from Scripture to doctrine through rigorous exegesis in order to build (what they consider) an absolutely sure, guaranteed-true-to-Scripture theology*.
>
> The problem is that this is essentially a foundationalist approach to knowledge. It ignores the degree to which our cultural location affects our interpretation of the Bible, and it assumes a very rigid subject-object distinction. It ignores historical theology, philosophy, and cultural reflection. Starting with the Scripture leads readers to the overconfidence that their exegesis of biblical texts has produced a system of perfect doctrinal truth. This can create pride and rigidity because it may not sufficiently acknowledge the fallenness of human reason.
>
> *We believe it is best to start with God, to declare* (with John Calvin, *Institutes* 1.1) *that without knowledge of God we cannot know ourselves, our world, or anything else. If there is no God, we would have no reason to trust our reason*." (D. A. Carson and Timothy Keller, *Gospel-Centered Ministry* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011], 6; italics mine)

Indeed, Calvin recognized that it is impossible to see ourselves rightly without seeing God rightly and *vice versa*. But Carson and Keller appeal to Calvin for a conclusion that contradicts Calvin's own epistemology. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), III.2.ii, III.2.vi, where Calvin stands on the Scripture as the only ground for epistemology: "Faith rests upon knowledge, not upon pious ignorance" and " . . . we hold faith to be a knowledge of God's will toward us, perceived from his Word. But the foundation of this is a preconceived conviction of God's truth. As for its certainty, so long as your mind is at war with itself, the Word will be of doubtful and weak authority, or rather of none. And it is not even

The nature of this objection is strong and potentially devastating. It questions the possibility of the text actually functioning in an authoritative way. David Kelsey articulates a form of this objection by asserting that appealing to Scripture as authority in a vacuum ought to be viewed as nothing more than naked subjectivism. Kelsey believes that Scripture and church are dialectically related concepts.[115] They are also set and subset. For Kelsey, "Scripture as authoritative" is a phrase that is indelibly marked, even defined, by the tradition (church) in which that statement is made. So, distinct traditions use the Scripture differently, which means that his view is slipping away from Protestant *sola scriptura*.[116] For scripture to remain the authority in hermeneutics, it must determine the method of use, not tradition. In spite of his claim that "The essay makes no Christian theological proposals",[117] Kelsey presupposes two significantly theological proposals: (1) human autonomy with regard to how one uses Scripture, and (2) that the Scriptures cannot actually be authoritative, but that every claim to submit to the Scripture as an authority is merely functional.[118] For example, Kelsey says, "The utterance, 'This scripture is authority for this theological proposal' is self-involving in that by it a speaker commits himself to follow this rule when he does theology. Accordingly, such expressions do not ascribe a property to scripture; instead, they locate scripture in a certain way in the context of the activity of doing theology."[119]

In other words, mankind as a religious community actually makes the Scripture functionally authoritative by how they propose to *use the Scripture*. These objectors

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enough to believe that God is trustworthy [see Rom. 3:3], who can neither deceive nor lie [see Titus 1:2], unless you hold to be beyond doubt that whatever proceeds from him is sacred and inviolable truth." Tragically, trust in human reason produces the epistemic futility described in ch. 1.

[115] Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine*, 89–109.

[116] Ibid., 94–95.

[117] Ibid., 9.

[118] Ibid., 106, 145, 147.

[119] Ibid., 109.

would likely say that what has been proposed as a presuppositional hermeneutic is nothing more than this author's tradition and historically-situated use of Scripture. If this were true, such an assertion is not actually an articulation of Scripture, but merely a Protestant tradition imposed upon the Scriptures. In this way, the strength of this objection can be appreciated more appropriately.

What is the proper response from the presuppositional hermeneutic? Could the previous argument be entirely wrong? Could the presuppositions articulated as Scripture be nothing more than this author's subjective sense-data imposed upon the Scripture without divine warrant at all?

The first answer must be an affirmation: "Yes, it is possible but not necessary. We certaintly agree that the the previous articulation is not necessarily true of the Scripture simply because this author said so." Otherwise, for this author to assert that a position is correct upon personal authority is a violation of the presuppositional hermeneutic's original epistemological conviction—that the Scripture alone can function as the sure ground for hermeneutics. Instead of being built on the authority of Scripture, such a hermeneutic would be built on this author's personal interpretive authority.[120]

Here is where the *de facto* nature of the argument is important. Such an accusation is not that an assertion is *false*, but that it cannot be known whether it is true or not. Because this author possesses presuppositions that have been received and/or shaped by his tradition and community, he could never know whether this articulation of hermeneutics was divinely warranted. Every articulation is provisional because of communal presuppositions, according to Kelsey.

This highlights the epistemological nature of the objection. On what basis could these critics prove such an assertion? Kelsey's charge of traditional situatedness

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[120] *Interpretive* authority rests exclusively in Scripture. This does not deny the existence of other authorities than God speaking in the text of Scripture, but it does deny that they hold authority over the meaning of His texts.

cuts both ways. In fact, the burden of proof rests on Kelsey because he is making the claim that one's view of authority and *how* one *uses* Scripture is a subset of the church tradition, atmosphere, and presuppositions that one brings to the Scripture in the first place. For Kelsey to be consistent, all he can say is that *according to his tradition*, the voice of Scripture cannot drown out the human voices in the church. This is something far short of his claim that no theological method can be determined by the Scriptures themselves.[121]

Ironically, if these critics stick to their own ideology in making such an assertion—specifically, that one's assertion about truth cannot possibly be universally known as biblical because he cannot escape his own presuppositions—then they fall prey to their own subjectivity in the very act of making such an assertion. Their accusation cannot really be known to be true, because it is an inviolable mix of tradition and interpretation. All that the critic can really consistently assert is not that an articulation is wrong, but that it does not agree with their own presuppositions, which in turn have been shaped by their tradition and community. In other words, the accusation takes the tone of a childhood playground taunt, "My tradition can beat up your tradition." To say "My tradition is better than your tradition" amounts to nothing more than an assertion of personal superiority. Because this author knows himself and his own tradition, the proper response would be, "You are likely right. I have no desire to defend the superiority of my personal situation over yours." Nevertheless, the postmodern interpreter's tradition is no authority for this author or any other Christian. Indeed, any objection that would

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[121] E.g., Kelsey says, "The expression, 'Scripture is authoritative for theology' has self-involving force. When a theologian says it, he does not so much offer a descriptive claim about a set of texts and one of its peculiar *properties*; rather, he commits himself to a certain kind of activity in the course of which these texts are going to be *used* in certain ways." Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine*, 89. And, earlier he wrote, "Close examination of theologians' actual uses of scripture in the course of doing theology shows that they do not appeal to some objective text-in-itself but rather to a text construed *as* a certain kind of whole having a certain kind of logical force." Ibid., 14. Such statements reject the possibility that theologians can actually use texts the way that Scripture demands—that is, to use Scripture with divine-warrant for using it in the particular way they are using it.

conclusively prove that personal presuppositions have actually been imposed over the top of Scripture must demonstrate such a criticism from the authority of the self-attesting Scriptures themselves. There appear to be two options for the critic: either (1) the critic can level the unproven assertion and then acknowledge that it represents nothing more than a conflict of traditions—the reality of such differences, no sane person would deny, or (2) the critic can prove the assertion by pointing out from the Scripture that the personal presuppositions used in interpretation are not warranted by the Scripture but rather they are unfairly imposed upon the Scriptures from the reader's tradition. It seems that this second option is rarely, if ever, practiced.

Nevertheless, these interpreters regularly appeal to the authorities of Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Gadamer, Rorty, and Ricoeur[122] in order to *prove* that subjectivity has been raised up and illegitimately called "biblical." It should go without saying that any postmodern critique that grounds its argument in philosophy *as opposed to Scripture* cannot possibly critique a biblical articulation in any authoritative way. When a personal articulation demonstrably violates something revealed by God in Scripture *or* when it asserts something that is not demonstrably biblical, then this objection would be confirmed, and the articulation would not actually be biblical. Starting with an empirical or existential ποῦ στῶ leads to radically divergent conclusions than starting with a revelational epistemology. For this objection against the presuppositional hermeneutic to carry more weight than a personal assertion, it must demonstrate where its presuppositions are not the Scripture's presuppositions about language and meaning. Without it, this objection lacks divine warrant.

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[122] E.g., Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation*, 25, 183, 220–21; Smith, *Who's Afraid of Relativism?*; Westphal, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation?*; Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 1–33. Christian scholars who defend the situatedness represented in this objection quickly begin to lose credibility for their claim of doing Christian interpretation without submitting their thinking to the authority of Scripture—unless they degenerate the term to the point that "Christian" can be something besides "biblical." See Luke 6:46; John 17:17.

Finally, even worse than the negative problem, this objection positively presupposes that the Scriptures cannot overcome the personal presuppositions of the interpreter in a successful way. This objection must be demonstrated that Scriptures have no answer to the postmodern conviction about the inevitable and unavoidable subjectivism in interpretation. In fact, quite the opposite is true.

The Scriptures do not presuppose that they are unable to overcome the presuppositions of an interpreter. In fact, Jesus Himself presupposes precisely the opposite. No less than ten times the Scriptures record that Jesus said something equivalent to "Have you not read…?"[123] For Jesus, the reading of Scripture is sufficient for rebuking presuppositions that are opposed to the Scripture's meaning.

For example, in Matthew 19, Jesus responds to the divorce question. The recent divorce of Herod Antipas added potency to the discussion for Jesus' critics.[124] The reader is made immediately aware of the numerous and profoundly strong presuppositions that would be resident within the minds of Jesus' opponents. The Pharisees were testing Jesus, as to whether divorce was right, authorized, permitted, or proper (v. 3).[125] This debate goes back to the interpretive debate over Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which is on the minds of these interrogators (cf. Matt 19:7). The Mishnah (c. AD 200[126]) is the later codification of the oral tradition that would have been discussed in Jesus' day. For instance, in Gittim 9:10, which pertains to divorce, two of the three rabbis quoted lived before Jesus—one died between AD 10-30, and another died when Jesus

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[123] Matt 12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31; Mark 2:25; 12:10, 26; Luke 6:3. Jesus regularly assumed that the text He quoted was sufficient to overcome the errant presuppositions of his opponents. More often than not, he simply cited the OT text without the phrase, "Have you not read . . . " E.g., Matt 22:43-45; Mark 11:17-18.

[124] Alan Hugh M'Neile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1952), 272.

[125] BDAG, 349.

[126] Jacob Neusner, *Questions and Answers: Intellectual Foundations of Judaism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 53ff.

was between 10-13 years old. The third was alive during the Bar Kokhba rebellion (AD 132-135) against Rome and believed Bar Kokhba was the Messiah.[127] Gittim 9:10 reads,

> The House of Shammai say, "A man should divorce his wife only because he has found grounds for it in unchastity, since it is said, Because he has found in her indecency in anything (Dt. 24:1)." And the House of Hillel say, "Even if she spoiled his dish, since it is said, Because he has found in her indecency in anything." R[abbi] Aqiba says, "Even if he found someone else prettier than she, since it is said, And it shall be if she find no favor in his eyes (Dt. 24:1)."[128]

The conservative house of Shammai interprets Deuteronomy 24 significantly different than the more liberal views of Hillel and Aqiba. Shammai and Hillel already enjoyed an established interpretive position when this story took place.[129]

Inarguably, each rabbi has a personal heritage—his parents were either married or not and his childhood would affect his own presuppositions about divorce. Similarly, each rabbi has his own personal experience of marriage and/or singleness. Finally, the nation of Israel traces its identity back to the Torah and the ministry of Moses. There would likely be a cultural esteem for those leaders, whose personal significance would be wrapped up in their prominence, suitability for the role of teacher, and their ability to teach and defend their interpretations on such critical issues or passages. Altogether, any rabbi in this exchange with Christ potentially has three or four strong presuppositions to overcome in order to see Deuteronomy 24 objectively. These presuppositions are firmly "situated" in the rabbinical experience, likely sharing Shammai- or Hillel-type presuppositions about the divorce discussion.

Jesus passes this "test" with a very profound response. His response reveals His interpretive presuppositions. "Jesus answered and said, 'Have you not read that the One Who created from the beginning made them male and female?' And he said, 'For

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[127] https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/rabbi-akiva, accessed October 2, 2018.

[128] Jacob Neusner, trans., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*, Accordance Version 2.2. (Yale University, 1988).

[129] See John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Academic, 1999), 30–31.

this reason, man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will result in one flesh'" (Matt 19:4-5; translation mine). For Jesus, the answer to the "test" lies in the original design, the original purpose intended by God for man as male and female. In response to this objection, Jesus presupposes that the reading of Scripture (specifically, Gen 1:27; 2:24) answers the question sufficiently. What is implied in His response is that if they are stuck at a presuppositional loggerhead about divorce—Shammai's presuppositions vs. Hillel's presuppositions—then they must not have read Genesis (cf. Matt 19:7-8). Jesus assumes that confusion would dissolve if they read Genesis and then Deuteronomy. The reading of Scripture is enough to overcome unbiblical presuppositions—those notions that lack divine-warrant and then hinder the interpreter from seeing what is in the text. Whether those unbiblical presuppositions actually stand or fall when the mind encounters the Scripture involves anthropology and pneumatology.[130] But Jesus presupposes that simply reading the text is sufficient to overturn conflicting presuppositions and to leave the reader culpable for his interpretation. Jesus' presupposition is not prohibited by Gadamer's historically-affected consciousness.

Jesus was a very real man who interpreted the Scripture rightly. He had presuppositions that came from His culture, heritage, and family. Post-enlightenment epistemologists would have to deny that Jesus had a real childhood, or humanity, in order to deny this assertion, without giving up their presupposition that proper interpretation is impossible because of presuppositions. Yet these presuppositions never interfered with His ability to devour and live on the words of God (Matt 4:4). He faithfully heard His Father's words and passed them on successfully to His disciples.[131] In other words, Jesus'

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[130] Only the Spirit can grant faith, but that is far different than granting meaning outside of what is written. See the discussion on 1 Cor 2-3 below.

[131] E.g., John 7:17-18; 14:10; 17:6, 8, 14, 20.

human presuppositions did not prevent Him from precisely articulating His Father's words because His presuppositions were always subject to those words. Jesus never sinned by exalting errant presuppositions over God's word.[132] The presupposition of this objection—that presuppositions always interfere with proper interpretation of the Scripture—is not Jesus' presupposition. Interpreters who call themselves Christian must choose between interpretation worthy of the name "Christian" and this eminently 'situated' post-Enlightenment presupposition.

An interpreter may or may not believe that the simple reading of Scripture has the power that Jesus presupposes that it does. However, no interpreter can claim that presuppositions are unable to be exposed by the Scripture—that one's conclusions are nothing more than one's own sense data or church tradition—*while professing that such a presupposition is biblical*. Jesus' own presupposition is quite opposite of this, as is seen in ten occurrences of "have you not read…?" and examples can be multiplied.[133] Wellum rightly says, "Scripture is able to confirm or correct our views as needed precisely because Scripture itself is not the interpretation of the church but the written word of God himself that interprets his own acts in history and their significance for his church and the world."[134]

Interpretive Diversity is Pervasive

This objection claims that the vastly diverse interpretations of the same passages prove that the Scriptures alone cannot function as the ground of hermeneutics. The notion of Scripture as clear revelation, able to be understood and applied as described in this project is, potentially, incompatible with the pervasive diversity of

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[132] Cf. Heb 4:15 and the example of Saul (1 Sam 13 and 15), above.

[133] E.g., Matt 12:3, 5; 21:16; Mark 12:18-27.

[134] Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate: The Doctrine of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 93.

interpretive conclusions. Christian Smith gives an excellent description of this objection in his aptly subtitled book, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture*:

> I will argue that most biblicist claims are rendered moot by a more fundamental problem (which few biblicists ever acknowledge) that undermines all the supposed achievements of Biblicism: the problem of *pervasive interpretive pluralism*. Even among presumably well-intentioned readers—including many evangelical biblicists—the Bible, after their very best efforts to understand it, says and teaches very different things about most significant topics. My suggestion is that it becomes beside the point to assert a text to be solely authoritative or inerrant, for instance, when, lo and behold, it gives rise to a host of many divergent teachings on important matters.[135]

The negative concern about interpretive differences is also rooted in a positive desire for interpretive consensus. The democratic view of consensus follows the classic articulation of Vincent of Lérins. He said that "what we should hold to is that which has been believed everywhere, always, by everyone."[136]

The phobia against differing interpretation is understandable and it has a noble goal—to demonstrate the clarity of the gospel to the world. Such unity can only come from submission to the text and the sanctification of the church.[137] However, the search for consensus becomes an interpretive idolatry if it prevents the Scripture from distinguishing between faithful and unfaithful interpretations.

Nevertheless, in spite of some of these difficulties within the consensus view, it remains important to appreciate the legitimate threat to the presuppositional hermeneutic as proposed in this project. The accusation could be customized for this project in this way—*How can one propose that such convictions, presupposed by the Scriptures, must be presupposed by interpreters for anyone to communicate or interpret anything, when such an interpretive diversity is so pervasive?* Put in these words, this objection is serious

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[135] Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible*, x–xi.

[136] As quoted by Barth, *Doctrine of the Word*, I.2:550; translation mine [*ut id teneamus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*].

[137] E.g., John 17:6-26; Eph 4:1-16; Phil 3:15-16; 4:2.

indeed. If the presuppositional hermeneutic does not find an answer within the story of the Scriptures, then it has been properly defeated.

Nevertheless, such a critique of the presuppositional hermeneutic (or, to use Christian Smith's term, "Biblicism") is only valid if the Bible anticipates interpretive uniformity. But the Scripture anticipates no such thing.

First, the meaning of Scripture is frequently twisted and perverted.[138] The Scripture presupposes that the author holds *author*ity over the meaning of a text. However, the same evidence serves to demonstrate that the Scriptures have one ready answer for a significant portion of interpretive diversity—unbelief and pride within the visible church.[139]

Secondly, as shown above, the NT is full of pastoral examples and exhortations for church leadership to warn against false teaching, to expose it, refute it, and correct those who have been affected by it.[140] Such texts are incompatible with a Scripture that anticipated interpretive unity.

Third, interpretive diversity exists among genuine believers. Scripture has a ready explanation for this. The Scriptures place great emphasis on the connection between hermeneutical ability and personal sanctification.[141] Holiness and humility engender interpretive ability, whereas carnality and pride hinder interpretive ability. To be

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[138] E.g., Gen 3:1-4; 1 Sam 15:3-26; Jer 8:8-9; 23:36; 2 Pet 3:16.

[139] E.g., 1 Tim 1:3-7, 18-19. 1 Pet 1:8, refers to "Those who are unpersuaded stumble on the word, unto which they were also appointed" (translation mine). The antecedent of the neuter pronoun ὃ is most likely the entire concept of unbelief stumbling on the word, as is typical for the neuter relative pronoun. Cf. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 712–14.

[140] E.g., Acts 13:45 (here, Paul and Barnabas gave such a biblical message, that the only way to contradict it was by way of blasphemy); 20:20, 27-32; Rom 16:17-18; Gal 1:8-9; 5:1-12; Col 2:4, 8-23; 1 Thess 5:21-22; 2 Thess 3:14; 1 Tim 1:3-7, 18-19; 4:6-8, 16; 6:3-6; 2 Tim 1:14; 2:14, 16-19, 23; 3:5, 8-9; 4:3-4; Titus 1:9-14; 3:8-11; 1 Pet 3:15; 2 Pet 3:16-18; Jude 3-4.

[141] Not every difference of interpretation is a moral issue. Especially in light of the greater distance in time and culture between the original writing and the contemporary reader, more room exists for honest mistakes due to limited knowledge.

sure, not every interpretive difference can be blamed on carnality. Godly men often do disagree on the exegetical data that swings the hinge of interpretive conclusions. However, the Scriptures greatest concern for interpretive ability has to do with personal holiness. Just as the false teacher remains in a state of carnality and worldliness (2 Pet 2-3; Jude), Christians can be hermeneutically impaired to varying degrees due to the growth in holiness and diligence in sanctification. Two texts show this explicitly.[142] They will each require some space to examine them sufficiently. Comments will be limited to the explicit or implicit details of the text that prove that hermeneutical ability is connected to sanctification.

1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4. This passage comes in the middle of Paul's discussion about his manner of speaking. Paul writes about his method of proclamation and the nature of his Corinthian audience. This becomes very important for understanding the significance of this passage for hermeneutical ability.

A brief examination of the context of 1 Corinthians 1-4 bears this out. The Corinthians were zealous fans of Greco-Roman rhetoric. Paul sought to explain his method of delivery so that they might understand the difference between the persuasion that comes from rhetorical adaptation and biblical persuasion—the former is achieved by human artifice and the latter rests on divine proof.[143]

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[142] 1 Cor 2:6-3:3 and 2 Tim 2:14-26. Additionally, Heb 5:11-6:2 addresses the issue.

[143] For current discussions that agree with this perspective, see Duane Litfin, *Paul's Theology of Preaching: The Apostle's Challenge to the Art of Persuasion in Ancient Corinth*, rev. and exp. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015); Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002); Lane G. Tipton, "Resurrection, Proof, and Presuppositionalism: Acts 17:30-31," in *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*, eds. K. Scott Oliphint and Lane G. Tipton (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 41–58. For current discussions from the opposing viewpoint, see Michael A. Bullmore, *St. Paul's Theology of Rhetorical Style: An Examination of I Corinthians 2.1-5 in Light of First Century Greco-Roman Rhetorical Culture* (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1994); Stephen M. Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians*, SBL Dissertation Series 134 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992); Os Guiness, *Fool's Talk: Recovering the Art of Christian Persuasion* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2015); Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 73–77.

After explaining that the weakness of God's "foolish" message is actually more powerful than the power of man's "wise" message (1 Cor 1:18-25), Paul explains that the effectiveness of the message depends on God's sovereignty. For Paul, adapting his message to a methodology that attracts the world will only work on the non-elect.[144] By avoiding Greco-Roman rhetoric, Paul prevents the threat of his audience placing their trust in human ability—oratory—and instead, those who follow the gospel will be shown to have placed their trust in God's power (1 Cor 2:4-5).

In 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4, Paul explains a tension in the audience's ability to understand the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor 2:6-16), which forms the basis of his polemic against the Corinthians (1 Cor 3:1-4). Inarguably, Paul is speaking about speaking in this passage. This is explicit in the larger context and in the first two verses of this section: "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature" and "but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery" (1 Cor 2:6-7). This leads to a second question—to whom is Paul speaking? Verse 6 gives a hint with the reference to the "mature." The wisdom that Paul *does* speak (2:6; which is the same thing as the "foolishness" of 1:18-25) is contrasted with the wisdom of the world. Those who revere worldly wisdom are being abolished, or rendered ineffective. Τῶν καταργουμένων ("who are passing away") aptly summarizes the description of 1:21. Paul is not speaking to those who trust in the wisdom of men, but to the mature.

In 1 Corinthians 2:9-10, Paul continues to emphasize the target audience of his proclamation. God is speaking "to us" when He revealed divine truth through the apostles. The "us" are "those who love Him" (v. 9). Additionally, in verse 10 an excellent case can be made to prefer the γάρ variant in light of Paul's tendency to explain his OT citations.[145] Then, the sense would be that the reason the wisdom of God is not

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[144] Cf. 1 Cor 1:18 and 1:26-31.

[145] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 109. Contra

understood by the rulers of this world is "because God revealed it to us . . ." God gives His Spirit that mankind might know the things of God. The rulers of the world, devoid of the Holy Spirit, do not understand the things revealed by God. The mature, the "us," the ones who love Him, have the Spirit of God, and enjoy certainty about the things of God (1 Cor 2:6, 9-10, 12). There is an implicit discussion about revelation behind these verses. The Spirit plays a dual role, both in the giving and receiving of revelation.[146] Nevertheless, Paul is ultimately focused on the Spirit's role of giving understanding to the minds that are exposed to that revelation. That emphasis is sustained throughout the passage.

Verse 13 contains a couple of notable exegetical details. Both deserve to be dealt with here, because they contribute to the discussion of hermeneutical ability. At the outset, it should be pointed out that no matter which interpretive conclusion one comes to on this verse, the reader will not be prohibited from seeing the implications of this passage on sanctification and hermeneutical ability. Nevertheless, the exegetical weight favors the interpretation that personal sanctification affects hermeneutical ability.

First, what is the best translation of συγκρίνοντες ("combining," [NAS] or "interpreting" [ESV]), and second, what is the referent for πνευματικοῖς ("spiritual *words*" [NAS], or spiritual people [per ESV])? Grammatically, both options are feasible for each word. The issue that would most directly affect the meaning of συγκρίνοντες in its context is the presence of two opposites or two parts, which would require the meaning "combine." On the TLG database,[147] many of the patristic uses cite this passage.

Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: American Bible Society, 1994), 481, who prefers δέ due to internal and external criteria.

[146] Richard B. Gaffin, "Epistemological Reflections on 1 Corinthians 2:6-16," in *Revelation and Reason: New Essays in Reformed Apologetics*, eds. K. Scott Oliphint and Lane G. Tipton (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 25.

[147] Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/Iris/demo/tsearch.jsp#s=5, accessed October 4, 2018.

But the uses that did not reference this passage were often more helpful. For example, Origen used this word in a sermon on Jeremiah when he writes, "For we should mix the life of those who have sinned with the life of those who turned and believed."[148] This context, discussing two opposite things, requires the notion of "combine" or "mix." Plato, for instance, often used this word with opposites, in such contexts requiring the translation "combine."[149]

In the LXX, in eight of the nine times is occurs in the canonical books, it means 'interpret.' These passages regularly have a personal noun or pronoun, so that someone is 'interpreting' something for someone else. These contexts do not have two objects to "combine," but only one accusative object along with a personal dative of advantage. Such a case requires the translation "translate" for συγκρίνω. Büchsel agrees, pointing to the influence of the LXX:

> [The last three words of 2:13] develop in some way the thought that Paul proclaims revelations given by the Spirit in words taught by the Spirit. The sense "to unite" (a)…is not very likely, since the word 'unite' is too weak. The sense "to compare" (b)…introduces an alien thought. There is no reference here to comparison of different revelations, or to different revelations at all. Hence it is best to accept the meaning "to interpret," "to expound," "to explain" (d), which is predominant in the LXX: "expounding revelations of the Spirit."[150]

The *crux interpretum* for 1 Corinthians 2:13 and the meaning of συνκρίνω is the referent for πνευματικοῖς. If this adjective modifies an implied λογοῖς from the previous clause, then the resulting "spiritual words" could be translated with either "interpreting spiritual things with spiritual words," or more likely, "combining spiritual things with

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[148] Origen, *In Jeremiam (Homiliae 12-20)*, in *Origenes Werke*, ed. E. Klostermann, vol. 3, (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1901), 18.8.38; translation mine [βίον γὰρ συγκρίνωμεν ἐκείνων τῶν ἡμαρτηκότων τῷ βίῳ τῶν ἐπιστρεψάντων καὶ πιστευσάντων].

[149] E.g., Pl. *Ph.* 71a (he refers to distinguishing and combining opposites such as cooling and heating—διακρίνεσθαι καὶ συγκρίνεσθαι, καὶ ψύχεσθαι καὶ θερμαίνεσθαι); Pl. *Tim.* 67d: "Therefore, on the one hand there are things that are equally indifferent, then on the other are those things we say are evident, such as greater and lesser things, either things that combine, or things that seperate the same vision" (translation mine; τὰ μὲν οὖν ἴσα ἀναίσθητα, ἃ δὴ καὶ διαφανῆ λέγομεν, τὰ δὲ μείζω καὶ ἐλάττω, τὰ μὲν συγκρίνοντα, τὰ δὲ διακρίνοντα αὐτήν); Pl. *Laws* 893e.

[150] Friedrich Büchsel, "Συγκρίνω," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), 3:953–54.

spiritual words." However, if the adjective is substantival and masculine, then the sense would be "spiritual people." In this case, translating συνκρίνω as "interpreting spiritual things for spiritual people" makes better sense. In light of this, the decision about πνευματικοῖς virtually determines the decision about συνκρίνω.[151]

Paul uses πνευματικοῖς 15 times in this letter alone and every masculine occurrence is substantival. The only true attributive uses are neuter.[152] It does not make a difference whether the noun has the article or not, the masculine form is substantival, referring to a person. The articular form is used in 1 Corinthians 2:15 for the spiritual man. In contrast to the Corinthians (3:1), spiritual men are referred to with the anarthrous form. 1 Corinthians 14:37 refers to regarding oneself as a spiritual man. In light of the context of 1 Corinthians 2:15 and 3:1, an excellent case can be made for taking this as "spiritual men."[153]

On behalf of the interpretation "spiritual words," the previous clause does indeed talk about the means of Paul's speech by contrasting, literally, "instructed words of human wisdom" with "instructed [words] of the Spirit." The second use of "words" is implied. Some interpreters take this as a more important contextual feature than the use πνευματικός in 2:15 and 3:1.[154]

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[151] There are, of course, exceptions that cross these interpretive combinations. For example, Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 115, goes with "'explaining' or 'interpreting' . . . the things of Spirit by means of the words taught by the Spirit." As examples of the point being made here, cf. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 114, and Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 264-66. Lenski goes with "combining" and "spiritual things," whereas Thiselton prefers "interpreting" and "to people of the Spirit."

[152] E.g., 1 Cor 10:3-4 (3 times); 15:44-46 (4 times; the last three imply the word σῶμα from the first occurrence).

[153] Contra Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 264–67; with Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 114–15; and Litfin, *Paul's Theology of Preaching*, 240–41. Thiselton gives a compelling case for "spiritual people." Fee gives an excellent defense of "words taught by the Spirit," and Litfin makes a case for it in light of the rhetorical context of the passage at large. Nevertheless, Litfin rightly acknowledges that either way, "form and content [of his preaching] once again converge in Paul's argument, and the difficulty of interpreting the much debated phrase 'combining spiritual with spiritual' (πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες NASB) in 2:13 practically eliminates itself" (240).

[154] E.g., Lenski, *First and Second Corinthians*, 114.

To some degree both interpretations will be able to appreciate the contrast between 2:6-16 and 3:1-4—the fact that this passage explains the impact of sanctification on hermeneutical ability will not be lost entirely. Nevertheless, the interpretation defended here fits the contextual details better and shows how sanctification affects hermeneutical ability. The truths of 2:13a are spoken with words taught to Paul by the Spirit, who is also *interpreting those truths for spiritual people*.

In light of the interpretation above, it makes sense that Paul focuses on the audience's hermeneutical ability with regard to apostolic proclamation in 2:14-16. Such a transition is not abrupt, but rather natural and necessary. The interpreter without the Spirit (this is the sense of ψυχικὸς, cf. Jas 3:15; Jude 19) does not receive or positively welcome the things revealed by the Spirit of God.[155] There are two reasons given: (1) the natural man regards spiritual truths as foolishness—Paul effectively takes the truths of 2:6-13 and shows that these proofs of divine persuasion are the foolish things of God that man in his worldly wisdom will never regard as wisdom (1:18-25; 2:1-5), and (2) the natural man is not able to understand these things. The significance of this verse will be evident in the concluding comments on 3:1-4. Verses 15-16 contrast with verse 14. The interpreter with the Spirit "discerns"[156] all things.[157] Only the spiritual man can discern spiritual truth in divine revelation. He is the only one who can discern the spiritual truth

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[155] For the difference receiving these truths intellectually and welcoming these truths spiritually, see the contrast between the synonyms παραλαβόντες and ἐδέξασθε in 1 Thess 2:13.

[156] Fee writes, "Probably it means something very close to 'discern' in the sense of being able to make appropriate 'judgments' about what God is doing in the world; and the person 'without the Spirit' obviously cannot do that." Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 117. Not only does ἀνακρίνεται represent a play on words with συγκρίνοντες (v. 13), but it also anticipates the accusation against Paul's proclamation by the carnal judgment of merely human orators in 1 Cor 4:3-4.

[157] Gaffin wisely reminds us that "all things" must not be thought of as transcending human limitation so that the spiritual man shares in God's exhaustive self-knowledge.

> At the same time, however, we must not tone down this passage or domesticate Paul's *panta*. His point is hardly that revelation is restricted in its relevance to only a part of life, or, following Kant, concerns only the moral-religious dimension of human experience. . . . Such wisdom, Paul is saying, has a bearing on, in fact is essential for, a true knowledge of everything there is to know about God, ourselves, and the world. (Gaffin, "Epistemological Reflections on 1 Corinthians 2:6-16," 29)

in it. Why, then, would Paul water down the truth or conceal it in a rhetorical package to be compelling, or slightly wiser in the eyes of the world, when the content itself is beyond them? Only the spiritual understand what the Spirit said.

In 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, Paul transitions powerfully from how he speaks, to why he was prevented from speaking what he wanted to say. There is a startling difference between the repetition of λαλοῦμεν (2:6) . . . λαλοῦμεν (2:7) . . . λαλοῦμεν (2:13), to the abrupt οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι. Similarly, the transition also shows up between the audiences. In chapter 2, Paul spoke to the τελείοις (6), τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτον . . . ἡμῖν (9-10), and the πνευματικοῖς (13). But here, he speaks to the Corinthians οὐκ . . . ὑμῖν ὡς πνεθματικοῖς ἀλλ' ὡς σαρκίνοις (1). Fortunately for the Corinthians, Paul does not call them "natural" (2:14), but "carnal" (3:1). They are not devoid of the Spirit, but they are "infants in Christ" (3:1).

Paul explains why he cannot speak to them as spiritual people (cf. 2:13; 3:1) in 3:2. He could not give them the solid food that he had hoped because they were not yet able. Paul simply says "For you were no longer able. But even now you are still not able."[158] The temporal adverb οὔπω with the imperfect tense means that they previously lacked ability. The temporal adverb νῦν with the present tense shows that they currently lack ability. However, the third temporal adverb ἔτι shows that Paul is not hopeless about their future ability. Their inability pertains to digesting the solid food of Paul's proclamation. Current scholarship is quick to point out that the problem is that Paul gave them truth, whether milk or solid food, and they longed for something else.[159] Carson writes, "[H]e feels he cannot address them as people with the Spirit. That is why he has had to rearticulate the elementary gospel to them again in the first two chapters of this

[158] 1 Cor 3:2; translation mine [οὔπω γὰρ ἐδύνασθε. ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἔτι νῦν δύνασθε].

[159] E.g., David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 108–9; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 291–92.

epistle."[160] Carson then describes the responsibility that the Corinthians have for their own spiritual immaturity. Similarly, Chrysostom said, "The Corinthians' inability to receive solid food was not by nature but by choice, so they were without excuse."[161]

Yet, this view seems to fall short of the contrast in verse 2. Paul actual *did* give them milk, and *not* solid food because of their *inability*. When Paul had previously preached to the Corinthians, he gave them the spiritual rations that they needed to survive, but their carnality prevented them from enjoying a full banquet.

This verse connects back to 2:14, where Paul talked about inability of the natural man to know (οὐ δύναται γνῶναι) the things of God. The Corinthians are not natural men. They are in Christ, but they are babes, acting like natural men. As it is, they do have the ability to digest milk, but they lack the ability to digest solid food. This passage should not be used to vindicate different normative categories of Christian, i.e., the mature *versus* the carnal. Nevertheless, Paul shows that carnality hinders one's ability to digest, discern, interpret, and understand the things of the Spirit. It does so by degrees, moving the Christian towards the categorical inability of the unbeliever.

Again, the context of chapters 1-4 is important. If Paul were only critiquing the unethical cultural aspects of rhetoric,[162] then their difficulty with his message could be blamed on Paul's rhetorical (in)ability. In this case, the Corinthians limitation to receive Paul's message would be blamed on Paul's rhetoric. Yet, this passage clearly shows that the problem with their ability (3:2) is their carnality and fleshliness (3:3).

If, as Calvin said, the natural man "with all his acuteness, is as stupid for obtaining of himself a knowledge of the mysteries of God, as an ass is unqualified for

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[160] D. A. Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry: Leadership Lessons from 1 Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 71.

[161] As cited in Gerald Lewis Bray, ed., *1-2 Corinthians*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, NT vol. 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 28.

[162] See Pogoloff, *Logos and Sophia*, 120–21.

understanding musical harmonies",[163] then the Corinthians might be compared to the hearing impaired at that same concert. They may not be like a brute beast before divine revelation, but their hermeneutical ability was seriously impaired.

Richard Gaffin writes, "Coming to light in this passage, then, is the epistemological difference between believers and unbelievers, a difference of the most radical and far-reaching sort, in that it does not go too far to say believers and unbelievers belong to two different worlds; they exist in not only separate but antithetical 'universes of discourse.'"[164] In light of the continuing discussion in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, this comment is correct but the conclusion can be pressed even further. Paul also shows that this epistemological difference is not merely static, but dynamic. In the case of the Corinthians, even though they are "in Christ," they are still infants, even "carnal." Fortunately, they are not lost in epistemological nihilism regarding God's revelation like the natural man of 2:14. Nevertheless, their carnality and pride in the worldly wisdom of human oratory moves them toward the inability of the natural man—to such a degree that their hermeneutical digestive ability can only handle milk, not solid food. For Paul, carnality always impairs hermeneutical ability.

2 Timothy 2:14-26. This is one the most important passages on interpretation in the Bible. This passage is fairly straightforward, and the significance of holiness for hermeneutics is readily apparent. Paul is exhorting Timothy towards diligent faithfulness in handling the word of truth, in verse 15. This diligence is a spare-no-effort type of zeal. Σπούδασον can be translated "be zealous/eager, take pains, make every effort, be conscientious."[165] It can be described as the singular focus of a soldier, seeking to please

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[163] Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 20:82.

[164] Gaffin, "Epistemological Reflections on 1 Corinthians 2:6-16," 23.

[165] BDAG, 939.

the officer who enlisted him; an athlete competing lawfully to win a prize; and a farmer that must work hard first in order to receive the fruit (vv. 3-6).[166]

Paul exhorts Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself tested and approved before God, an unashamed workman" (2:15, translation mine). The final phrase of the verse explains that Timothy can do this "by accurately handling the word of truth" (translation mine). The participle ὀρθοτομοῦντα is described by BDAG:

> [In Prov 3:6; 11:5] it is used w[ith] ὁδούς and plainly means 'cut a path in a straight direction' or 'cut a road across country (that is forested or otherwise difficult to pass through) in a straight direction', so that the traveler may go directly to his destination . . . Then ὀρθοτομεῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας would prob. mean ***guide the word of truth along a straight path*** (like a road that goes straight to its goal), without being turned aside by wordy debates or impious talk 2 Ti 2:15. For such other mngs. as *teach the word aright, expound (it) soundly, shape rightly,* and *preach fearlessly,* s. M[oulton]-M[illigan, *Vocabularly of the Greek Testament*].[167]

Chrysostom's Greek sermon is helpful for understanding this word in this passage. He said,

> *Cutting straight the word of truth*. He says this well, for many attend to the word and are distracted on all sides; the things that adhere to them are many. And he did not say, "Restoring straight," but "Cutting straight;" that is to say, "Cut off the illegitimate things, and be attentive to such things with great violence and sever them. Just as with a leather strap, with the sword of the Spirit cut out of the sermon from all sides what is excessive and belongs elsewhere."[168]

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[166] Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 21:212.

[167] BDAG, 722; bold original. Similarly, LSJ, 1250, "*cut in a straight line*, τὰς ὁδούς LXX *Pr.*3.6: metaph[orically], ὀ. τὸν λόγον *teach* it *aright*, 2 Ep.Ti.2.15." Commentators regularly highlight the proper, right, and precise use or handling of the word of truth in light of this word. See esp., John Kitchen, *The Pastoral Epistles for Pastors* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2009), 366–67; William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2000), 524–25; George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 411–12: "ὀρθοτομέω . . . means literally 'cut straight' or 'cut right.' There is a growing consensus that the stress is on ὀρθο- ('right') and not on τομέω ('cut') on the analogy of the similarly formed word καινοτομέω ('make a new assertion, renew'; see Lock, MM, Dibelius-Conzelmann [examples in n. 5]; H. Köster, *TNDT* VIII, 112)." Additionally, the preponderance of the figurative uses of the adjective and adverb form (ὀρθός and ὀρθῶς; see BDAG, 722; LSJ, 1249: "III. metaph., . . . 2. *right, true, correct* . . . ὀ. λόγῳ *stricktly speaking, in very truth* . . . so in Adv., ὀρθῶς λέγειν") is quite telling. If an interpreter rejected the metaphorical meaning here, then he would be left with a minimal statement that would merely prohibit something reminiscent of Thomas Jefferson's literal cut-and-paste Bible.

[168] John Chrysostom, "Homiliae X in Epistolam secundam ad Timotheum," in *Ιωαννου Του Χρυσοστομου, Τα Ευρισκομενα Παντα*, Patrologiae cursus completus (series Graeca) 62 (Paris: Migne, 1862), 626; translation mine [Ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας. Καλῶς τοῦτο εἶπε· πολλοὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν παρασπῶσι πάντοθεν καὶ παρέλκουσι· πολλὰ ἔχει τὰ ἐπιφυόμενα. Καὶ οὐκ εἶπεν, Ἀπευθύνοντα, ἀλλ', Ὀρθοτομοῦντα· τουτέστι, Τέμνε τὰ νόθα, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα μετὰ πολλῆς τῆς σφοδρότητος ἐφίστασο καὶ ἔκκοπτε· καθάπερ ἐπὶ ἱμάντος τῇ μαχαίρᾳ τοῦ πνεύματος πάντοθεν τὸ περιττὸν καὶ ἀλλότριον τοῦ κηρύγματος

The emphasis here is on trimming out any superfluous addition to the text. Make the word evident, and amputate any distraction from the word of truth.

Thirteen of the nineteen occurrences of ὀρθοτομέω in the TLG database refered to this passage.[169] Seeing this word in other contexts often sheds more lexical light on this word than those contexts that treat the passage directly. For example, Chrysostom says of Psalm 5:8 [Ps 5:9, LXX], "'Straighten my way before you.' That is to say, 'Make it evident, clear, known. Cut it straight for me.' Yet another interpreter said, 'Level your way before me.' That is to say, 'Make it ready, easy to understand.'"[170] This text gives us some rich synonyms for ὀρθοτομέω. Precise interpretation grants the reader access to the meaning that would have been understood by Timothy's audience. Paul's use of this word, in this context, shows that he is eager for Timothy's skill as a craftsman, a laborer in the word of truth, to be precise, accurate, straightforward, and undistracted. Not only is precision with the text presupposed to be a possibility, it is demanded as a necessity.

Nevertheless, the contrast between the unashamed workman, and those who will be ashamed gives an answer to this objection about diversity of interpretation. The judgment will reveal quality of each interpreter's hermeneutic. Paul is eager to equip Timothy with what he must hold to, a hermeneutic that is "tested and approved before God."[171] For Paul, divine approval remains paramount for the interpreter's precision. The means of presenting oneself approved before God is properly handling the word. Without this future approval firmly in mind, the interpreter will lose the focus necessary to refine

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ἔκτεμνε].

[169] http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/Iris/demo/tsearch.jsp#s=19, accessed October 5, 2018.

[170] John Chrysostom, *Expositiones in Psalmos*, Patrologiae cursus completus (series Graeca) 55 (Paris: Migne, 1857), 67; translation mine [Κατεύθυνον ἐνώπιόν σου τὴν ὁδόν μου· τουτέστι, δήλην μοι ποίησον, σαφῆ, γνωρίμην· ὀρθοτόμησον αὐτὴν παρ' ἐμοί. Ἕτερος δὲ ἑρμηνευτὴς εἶπεν· Ὁμάλισον ἔμπροσθέν μου τὴν ὁδόν σου· τουτέστι, ῥᾳδίαν ποίησον, εὔκολον].

[171] In the clause σπούδασον σεαυτὸν δόκιμον παραστῆσαι τῷ θεῷ, the dative should be read with the previous phrase from verse 14—ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ.

and protect his hermeneutical practice. The moment he becomes motivated by impressing or pleasing man, he will be ashamed at his future evaluation.[172]

As Paul warns about hermeneutical threats, Timothy learns why there is a diversity of interpretation among people who handle the word of truth. In 2:14 and 16-19, Paul explains that the toleration of quarrels over the word of truth (2:14), and the engaging worldly and vain talk (2:16) will produce further ungodliness among the church and will suffer harm. This passage comes in a letter with a previous discussion about holding to a pattern of sound words (1:13), and a subsequent discussion about a class of men (2:16-17a) and specific examples of men (2:17b-18) who are hermeneutically rejected. The specific mishandling of the word of truth, in this particular instance pertained to the denial of the future resurrection (2:18). These men are antitypes of the examples of Jannes and Jambres, who also opposed the truth (3:6-9). Regardless of the nuances of the lexemes in 2:14, 16, these terms clearly fit with a mandatory standard of truth that Timothy must maintain in the face of interpretive opposition.

In the face of interpretive diversity, accuracy and precision are of paramount importance. In the context of interpretive precision Paul explains that usefulness to the Master comes from personal sanctification (2 Tim 2:19-26). Paul encourages Timothy, who is notably tempted to timidity (cf. 1:6-7), with regard to interpreting the word of truth. In the face of interpretive diversity, one needs a firm place to stand. Paul finds it in the character of God and His ability to protect His people from false interpretations and false influences. So, in verse 19, Paul alludes to Korah's rebellion. 2 Timothy 2:19a is a virtual quotation of Numbers 16:5 (LXX), save Paul's substitution of κύριος for ὁ θεὸς. 2 Timothy 2:19b is a reference to two passages in the LXX. In Numbers 16:26-27 (LXX),

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[172] Kitchen writes, "The One in whose presence you must solemnly warn others is the One in whose presence you must also stand yourself. The goal is to be able to stand before this Judge 'approved' (δόκιμον). The word means to be found authentic and approved after testing. The false teachers were looking for the approval of the audience (4:3), but Paul focused Timothy upon the pleasure of the audience of One." Kitchen, *Pastoral Epistles for Pastors*, 366.

the command to separate in verse 26 (a synonym of Paul's word) is followed by the same word as Paul, used in the narrative record of what the people actually did with regard to Korah and the rebellious families (v. 27). In Leviticus 24:16 (LXX), the phrase ὀνομάζων δὲ τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου refers to the blasphemer who must be stoned. Paul quotes this phrase without the conjunction to explain whom Timothy must avoid. Within the church, there are those who, like Korah, deny the meaning of the truth. Korah refused to accept what God spoke through Moses, while Hymenaeus and Philetus rejected what God said about the future resurrection. To remain useful to God, especially in the capacity of leading and handling the word, one must separate from influences like these. The danger is that Timothy might tolerate them, or even give warrant to their position by debating them in the church. The only safe response hermeneutically is to avoid, or shun them (2:16).

In 2 Timothy 2:20-26, Paul pictures the church as a large house. The house refers to the visible church, including all who associate with the people of God.[173] This includes those who, like Korah, are within the visible community, but do not remain faithful to the standard of sound words. In the face of such diversity of interpretation, what was the safeguard for Timothy from stepping off of the foundation that the Lord Himself set? In 2:20-26 the issue is holiness of character and personal sanctification. This exhortation holds tremendous significance for hermeneutics. Timothy cannot presume that his interpretation is and always will be accurate. Paul warns that only by separating oneself from impure or unclean vessels can the interpreter remain "sanctified, useful to the Master" (2:21). Personal holiness remains significant for hermeneutics throughout 2:22-26.

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[173] See Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 417; I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 759; Kitchen, *Pastoral Epistles*, 376; Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*.

In the face of hermeneutical diversity, the interpreter must be concerned about conclusions. However, this diversity does not prove that conclusions are always tentative or provisional. Instead, diversity should sober the interpreter up regarding personal sanctification and holiness. For Paul, the greatest threat to hermeneutical uselessness is an impure life that would contaminate one's precision and accuracy with the text.

Conclusion. Every example of interpretive diversity becomes a confirmation of "Biblicism's" consistency. Each instance becomes a false influence that the Scripture warns against, or another instance of disunity that must be reconciled by submission to the truth.[174] Furthermore, the fact that the common origin of the Scripture leads to diverse destinations because of unbiblical epistemologies is no argument against the presuppositional hermeneutic.[175] In chapter 1, the text of Scripture speaks of the moral aspect of epistemology. In the same way the Scriptures speak of the moral aspect of hermeneutics.[176] For those who interpret and teach God's word in the church, the most important qualification is a character that is above reproach (1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6). Similarly, a man who is self-willed is disqualified from teaching the church in this capacity (Titus 1:7), because those motives inevitably dull and eventually ruin the precision necessary to interpret and teach the Bible in the church (1 Tim 1:3-7).

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[174] E.g., Eph 4:1-16; Phil 3:15; 4:2.

[175] E.g., Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 91, writes, "An appeal to the disagreement that exists among dogmaticians—who, though proceeding from the same Scripture as a revelation of God, nevertheless arrive at very different conclusions—cannot justify the subjectivism of consciousness theology."

[176] On the morality of hermeneutics and the role of the Holy Spirit, see Ferguson's discussion on the persuasion of the text of Scripture on the basis of the internal witness of the Spirit; Ferguson, *Some Pastors and Teachers*, 351–52.

Certainty Is Interpretive Pride

To call certainty a vice, and provisional interpretation a virtue is common.[177] In order to better understand this objection, a comment about certainty is necessary. In the context of hermeneutics, the concept of certainty applies to different aspects of interpretation. Two are most critical, and they must be distinguished. First, there is the aspect of certainty about hermeneutics itself—assurance that one has divine warrant for reading the Scripture the way that he is. Second, one can speak of certainty about meaning—conviction about truth.

With regard to the first aspect, a hermeneutic grounded in a man-made epistemology can only claim a degree of probability, and, according to revelational epistemology (ch. 1), lacks divine warrant. In other words, the reader who practices such a hermeneutic has no biblical or truly reasonable grounds for confidence about conclusions. Where conclusions happen to be correct, it is in spite of the hermeneutic and never because of it.

With regard to the second aspect, God commands, requires, and expects His children to know and be certain about the following: the nature of God the Father, the exact truths of Christ's life and ministry, the meaning of spiritual truths, the mind of Christ, God's ability to preserve the faithful and grant understanding, the nature and power of grace to produce godliness, the inseperable connection between regeneration

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[177] E.g., Westphal, *Whose Community?*, 139; Smith, *Who's Afraid of Relativism?*, 29–30, 79–81, 180–82; Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 300; Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1991), 307–8, 314. Contra Herman Bavinck, *The Certainty of Faith* (St. Catharines, ON: Paideia Press, 1980), 38–40. In this section, titled "Certainty in the Reformation," Bavinck documents that the way out of doubt and fear was faith and humility. Bavinck explains that "courage was rooted in humility" not in emotions, experience or reason. The *Heidelberg Catechism* uses "humble but at the same time bold language." Paul would agree, in 2 Tim 1:7, 12. Only by submitting to divine revelation *humbly* can man have conviction and boldness. The "humility" of thinkers affected by postmodern epistemologies is, ironically, so arrogant to stand on something besides divine revelation, and then to boldly declare that the certainty described by God is not possible. If that description of "humility" were correct, then Rom 4:16-22 would call us to "pride."

and good deeds, the testimony of inspired apostles, and assurance regarding the possession of eternal life.[178]

This objection is often articulated as though the very notion of certainty, conviction, and confidence in the meaning of the text is pride and human boasting. Borrowing language from Luther's Heidelberg Disputation of 1518, Carl Raschke says,

> Theologies of glory—whether they be Scholastic, Calvinist, commonsense realist, Hegelian, positivist, foundationalist, or presuppositionalist—all share the common trait of making the claim that a particular reformulation of our understanding of truth and language is sufficient for understanding God. Theologies of glory, on the other hand, given their hubris and sense of self-sufficiency, have a tendency to misname what they name. . . . the Next Reformation will be all about radical humility and the lack of pride not just in our lives, but in our thought.[179]

Raschke then compares Luther favorably with postmodern interpreters, and the Roman Catholic and Pelagians with modern interpreters who attempt to critique Luther's Augustinian tradition on the basis of their own system. Raschke also praises deconstructionism for opening the way for faith. Raschke's picture of faith is a trek into the desert in which

> One cannot be saved by philosophy or even by theology. . . . The undecidability of radical faith for both Derrida and Caputo has nothing to do with some irrational, unphilosophical gesture. Deconstruction assists faith because it is 'a pact with the *tout autre* (wholly other).' God can only be 'known' through faith—through stripped down, bare-bones, noncontentious, unassuming faith.[180]

Ultimately, he says,

> Faith and ontology have nothing common with each other. . . . The philosophical quest for unfailing presuppositions is not Christian; it is *outright paganism*. It is theoretical hearth and home, where the pagan 'household gods' of our epistemological conceits and ethical parochialisms, like the Asheroth in the Judean high places, subtly supplant the living God.[181]

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[178] E.g., Jer 2:19; Luke 1:1-4; 1 Cor 2:13, 16; 2 Tim 1:12; 2:7; 3:14-15; Titus 2:15; 3:8; 2 Pet 1:19; 1 John 5:13.

[179] Raschke, *The Next Reformation*, 110.

[180] Ibid., 112.

[181] Ibid., 113.

Even though most will not draw such stark lines, the unwillingness to mix firm and fixed presuppositions about theology with his postmodern view of faith is refreshingly consistent. Typically, critics of certainty try to mix determinism and indeterminism in their hermeneutical metaphysic. They try to serve two epistemological masters in an attempt to balance dogmatism with nihilism and end up with a moderate middle.

Kevin Vanhoozer serves as a helpful comparison with the presuppositional hermeneutic. He does not believe that certainty is possible, but instead he argues for "'Adequate' Interpretation":

> Is there no alternative between absolute and anarchic interpretation, or between a gnostic appeal to hidden meanings and an agnostic abandonment of the quest for meaning? . . . The net result of the undoing of the epistemology of meaning seems to be that authority is reassigned once more, away from the text and onto the reader.
>
> There is a third possibility, an alternative between absolute and anarchic interpretation. . . . It is a kind of interpretation, neither absolute nor arbitrary, that yields *adequate* knowledge—adequate for the purpose of understanding. . . . We need not choose between a meaning that is wholly determinate and a meaning that is wholly indeterminate. Neither need we choose between a meaning that is fully present and a meaning that is forever deferred. It may well be that the deferral of meaning is not a permanent state, only temporary. One day we may be able to understand as we have been understood.[182]

God loves for man to know Him (Hos 6:6). It would be feasible for Vanhoozer to declare that this is not certain knowledge, but rather, adequate knowledge that Hosea speaks of. Nevertheless, the honest reader of Scripture notices that the knowledge of God is so certain that to know Him enables the Christian to suffer all things for His sake. Conviction is more certain that life itself (cf. Acts 20:24; 2 Tim 1:12). If this is what Vanhoozer means by "adequate," then it raises the question why he would not be comfortable with certainty.

In taking the middle way between determinacy and indeterminacy, Vanhoozer believes that the loss of certainty about meaning may only be temporary. But is he certain that it is only temporary? At least *for now*, he cannot be. The challenge here, for

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[182] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 139.

Vanhoozer, is that he appears to be determinate about not needing to be determinate. Although Vanhoozer hopes his uncertainty may not be as permanent as Derrida's, without an entirely distinct ποῦ στῶ, the symptoms differ only in degrees.

The ultimate consequence of a human ποῦ στῶ in hermeneutics is the inability to know the truth with certainty. Yet, Vanhoozer says that uncertainty is the means of hermeneutical humility:

> The book of Isaiah presents idolatry as a dimension of the sin of pride. To believe in the absoluteness of our interpretations is like worshiping our own creations; it is like thinking one reads with the eyes of God. Derrida's notion of *différance* casts down ideological interpretations that pretend to represent the text without remainder . . . *I wish at this point to commend deconstruction as a standing challenge to interpretive pride*.[183]

In addition to Derrida's deconstructionism, Vanhoozer admits that his epistemological ποῦ στῶ for understanding language is mixed with extra-biblical philosophy.[184] On this basis, Vanhoozer finds a ground for challenging interpretive pride. Vanhoozer believes that certainty is forbidden

> In a fallen world language no longer infallibly does what it was designed for. There is no question of returning to the innocence of Eden. Cartesian certainty, an absolute knowledge grounded in the knowing subject, is neither possible nor Christian. A little lower than the angels, we humans know only in part, through the glass of language, darkly—not because of some defect in language but because of our unseeing eyes and unclean lips. *One should never be too casual, therefore, in claiming understanding. When it comes to interpreting texts, honesty forbids certainty*. Human knowing, of books and of the Book of Nature, is mediate and approximate. Here Christians can agree with chastened postmoderns.[185]

This statement—"honesty forbids certainty"—would seem to forbid the certainty contained in the statement itself.

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[183] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 184; italics original.

[184] He writes, "There are significant philosophical resources available to the theologian who wishes to seek a fuller understanding of language as covenantal medium of interpersonal communication. Here I introduce three of the most important: Searle's speech acts, Ricoeur's hermeneutics, and Habermas's social theory. The burden of this chapter will be to integrate all three into a comprehensive theory of literary meaning as communicative action." Ibid. Starting with a man-made epistemology may not lead to errors 100 percent of the time, the point is that such a fallible foundation for knowledge cannot lead to certainty, but merely probability.

[185] Ibid., 207; italics mine. Notice the reaction to mirror theory in language, interpretive Eden, and Cartesian rationalism. He is quite correct here—rationalism will not produce certainty.

By way of contrast, the Scriptures were given for certain knowledge (e.g., Luke 1:4; 1 Cor 2:13; 2 Cor 2:4). However, they also demand humility (1 Pet 5:6; Jas 4:10). A "humility" that rebels against God's command to know and understand what He has revealed is the opposite of biblical humility. Pride in one's ability is sin; confidence in God's ability to reveal Himself and submission to what He commands is humility.[186]

The divine ποῦ στῶ and the created ποῦ στῶ do not subordinate or mix. They both claim full autonomy and the interpreter cannot serve both as masters. Nevertheless, Vanhoozer is convinced that he can appeal both to divine authority for what he calls conviction, and to the philosophical authority for what he calls humility *and* skepticism:

> Just how confident can we be as interpreters that we have discovered the meaning of the text rather than ourselves and our own projections? The short response is to say both that *our knowledge (Part 2) must be tempered by humility (Part 1), and that our skepticism (Part 1) must be countered by conviction (Part 2)* . . . Can we 'prove' the realist's intuition that we have heard the voice of an other—the voice of the author or, for that matter, the voice of God? No, I am a critical realist, chastened by the conflict of interpretations and by the undoing of interpretive pride and prejudice. Readers with a healthy sense of the limits of interpretation need not fall prey to interpretive idolatry.[187]

With regard to the first aspect of certainty, any hermeneutic that does not stand exclusively on the biblical epistemology fails because it does not share the same presupposition as the Scriptures. The hermeneutics of postmoderns, like Raschke, or chastened postmoderns, like Vanhoozer, are self-refuting because they prohibit certainty, while at the same time upholding certainty about the impossibility of uncertainty.

On the other hand, Scripture does not presuppose that knowledge is provisional or uncertain in the Scripture. The Scriptures do not produce a mixture of conviction and skepticism, doubt and probability. Certainty is modeled, encouraged, expected and

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[186] Cf. Isa 66:1-2; Ezra 10:3-4. Cf. Ps 119:10b, 21.

[187] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 462.

commanded in the Scriptures.[188] A hermeneutic rooted in experience (like Schleiermacher or Kierkegaard) can only produce uncertain conclusions.[189]

When faith rests in infallible, divine evidence, or infallible, divine testimony, the foundation of that faith is infallible and certain.[190] Probability arguments are an insult to the God who revealed Himself clearly.[191] In the same way that presuppositional apologetics argues against the 'probability' of rationalistic arguments for theism, presuppositional hermeneutics argues against the probability of philosophical, traditional, and consensus views of interpretation.

Fruit is the biblical proof of epistemological foundations (cf. Hos 4:6; Mal 2:7-8; Matt 7:15-20, 24-27; 2 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:16). Hermeneutics built on extra-biblical epistemologies have born the fruit of uncertainty—a precise or correct interpretation is impossible.[192] Yet, Scripture commands the man of God to "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately

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[188] E.g., Jer 2:19; Luke 1:1-4; 1 Cor 2:13, 16; 2 Tim 1:12; 2:7; 3:14-15; Titus 2:15; 3:8; 2 Pet 1:19; 1 John 5:13.

[189] See Bavinck, *The Certainty of Faith*, 64–73. By way of contrast, Crump says, "Without uncertainty there is no reason to believe, for then we would know, and there would be no risk in believing. But when an individual risks believing in the face of such uncertainty, faith gives birth to its own personal certitude." David Crump, *Encountering Jesus, Encountering Scripture: Reading the Bible Critically in Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 66–67. He goes on to cite Kierkegaard,

> Faith does not result from straightforward scholarly deliberation, nor does it come directly; on the contrary, in this objectivity one loses that infinite, personal, impassioned interestedness, which is the condition of faith . . . in this certainty that lurks at faith's door and craves for it, [the believer] is rather in such a precarious position that much effort, much fear and trembling will be needed lest he fall into temptation and confuse knowledge with faith. Whereas up to now faith has had a beneficial taskmaster in uncertainty, it would have its worst enemy in this certainty. That is, if passion is taken away, faith no longer exists, and certainty and passion do not hitch up as a team. (Ibid., 67n42, citing Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments I* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992], 29)

Contra Peter, whose faith produced certain knoweldge (John 6:69), or Paul, for whom faith produced conviction and certainty, which in turn became the ground of his willingness to suffer for the gospel (2 Tim 1:12; 2:8-13). Their passion was fueled by certainty, not killed by it.

[190] Owen, "The Reason of Faith," 17–18.

[191] Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1961), 291.

[192] E.g., Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics*, 300; Merold Westphal, "The Philosophical/Theological View," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 79; Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 412.

handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). Ὀρθοτομοῦντα, "accurately handling," could be translated "guide the word of truth along a straight path."[193] Similarly, the elders of the NT church are those who are "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9). These commands require both precise and correct interpretations. To the degree that hermeneutical presuppositions prohibit correct interpretation, to that degree they would be arrogant, according to Psalm 119:21: "You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, who wander from Your commandments." When hermeneutics are grounded in a mixture of Biblical and philosophical epistemologies, it is hard to see how they can avoid the error of prohibiting obedience to Paul's pastoral imperatives.

Finally, with regard to the second category of certainty, confidence about any passage is impossible for those who practice a hermeneutic built on man-made epistemologies. Biblical certainty is impossible because the interpretation rests in the wisdom and understanding of a fallen and foolish man (Prov 3:5-6; Rom 1:18-23; 1 Cor 1:18-23; 2:12-16). However, to the degree that one reads the Bible according to the Bible's own presuppositions, to that degree, he has certainty that his hermeneutic is divinely warranted—the first aspect of certainty. To this degree, he can enjoy the second aspect of certainty. He can be convinced of the meaning of specific passages and truths that God demands for His children to know and to teach with certainty. This does not mean that the presuppositional hermeneutic is a foolproof protection against interpretive mistakes, but the model actually promotes divinely warranted conclusions instead of guaranteeing uncertainty, like the postmodern approach. To the degree that the Bible's hermeneutic is consistenly employed, readers can taste the fruit of certainty.

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[193] BDAG, 722.

Certainty Is Rooted in Modern Rationalism

This objection is quite plausible because rationalism is a faulty foundation after all. This project would actually echo half of this objection; namely, that the certainty of modernism is uncertain indeed. However, it will be shown that this objection fails to appreciate the difference between a certainty proposed on the fallible foundation of a rationalist epistemology, and the certainty demonstrated and commanded upon the foundation of revelational epistemology.

For example, Smith says, "Evangelicalism itself actually bought into foundationalism whole hog—only instead of it founding universal truth on rationalism or empiricism, evangelicalism simply argued that the right foundation for indubitable knowledge is the text of the Bible and the Bible alone."[194] Although the label "foundationalism" may not apply—especially when foundationalism is pragmatically evaluated as truth embraced by a consensus—but the notion that the Scripture can and must function as the ground of knowledge is, in fact, biblical. The major thrust of Smith's critique is a pragmatic argument; namely, pervasive interpretive plurality, or diversity in interpretive conclusions proves that Scripture cannot function as the ground of knowledge.

This argument fails to distinguish certainty of modernism from the certainty of revelation. One is based upon autonomous human rationalism, the other is based on God's ability to communicate clearly to a man created in His image. There is a difference between foundationalism based upon human reason *vs.* divine revelation, between correspondence theory based on human intellect *vs.* God's Word truly correlating with reality. This mistake, which is common among these authors, tends to conflate revelational epistemology based upon taking God at His word with rationalistic epistemology of the modern era. For example, Raschke says,

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[194] Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible*, 150–51.

> [Stan] Wallace, like Groothuis and many contemporary evangelical scholars, tends to confuse a supposedly Christian theory of truth with a narrow philosophical mind-set that is not indigenous, but rather only incidental, to the broader history of Christian reflection down through the ages. Realism and the 'correspondence theory of truth' were the mainstay of Christian orthodoxy only during the Constantinian period of the church and the High Middle Ages (ca. 1175-1375), and they were often used as armaments of the Papacy to suppress dissent, especially among those reformers who might invoke Scripture.[195]

This quote alone does not prove that Raschke is conflating rationalistic certainty with revelational certainty. But he questions not that there is truth and objective reality or error and nontruth, but that anyone can know the difference.[196] In saying this, he questions certainty regardless if that certainty is based on reason or revelation.

Vanhoozer also critiques certainty on the basis of epistemic foundationalism. He protests both propositionalism and interpretive certainty. First, he equates propositionalism with a modernist epistemology:

> There is a long-standing tendency to identify divine revelation with biblical assertions or statements, considered to be the prime instances of truth-bearing language. Doctrines here function 'as informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities.' Like the Jews at Berea, many theologians—typically evangelicals congregating on the conservative end of the spectrum—studiously search the Scriptures to find out what the Bible actually teaches, 'to see whether these things were so' (Acts 17:11).
>
> Hard questions will nevertheless have to be asked of a method that appears to reduce the diverse modes of language in the Bible to the assertive and propositional. . . . biblical propositionalism would seem to presuppose the quintessentially modern form of epistemology, namely, foundationalism.[197]

Ironically, Vanhoozer cannot help but critique an epistemology that the Bereans practiced. God even praised them for this, calling them "more noble-minded" (Acts 17:11). Then, Vanhoozer openly rejects foundationalist epistemology. Undoubtedly, modernist epistemology is based upon the authority of rationalism, and this form of "classical propositionalism" has been helpfully critiqued by Alvin Plantinga.[198] However,

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[195] Raschke, *The Next Reformation*, 18.

[196] Raschke says, "Postmodern people, however, do not deny that there is truth and objective reality. What they question is our ability to distinguish truth from nontruth." Ibid., 17.

[197] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 4–5.

[198] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 82–85, 93-96.

"classical foundationalism" holds that what is self-evident according to reason or sense is properly basic. Platinga's critique is not of a revelational epistemology, but rather of the rationalistic kind found in John Locke. Vanhoozer critiques a *revelational epistemology* by blurring the discussion with what is properly a *rationalist epistemology*:

> The present proposal has its own, properly theological reasons for demurring from classical foundationalism. In particular, canonical-linguistic theology sees two problems with the notion that Scripture is an indubitable foundation. Foundationalism is an epistemology (theory of knowledge) that likens what we know to a pyramid based on a set of indubitable beliefs. According to this theory, beliefs count as genuine knowledge only if they can first establish their epistemological pedigree by showing how they are based on foundational beliefs. The story of modern epistemology is largely the story of the quest for this holy grail, this set of privileged beliefs upon which the house of knowledge could confidently be built. Some theologians treat propositions abstracted from the Bible in a foundationalist manner, as a sure and certain bedrock on which the upper stories of doctrine can be constructed via induction and deduction from their biblical base.[199]

He then gives three critiques of this position, along with its accomplice—the neutrality of reason:

> First, foundationalism privileges a certain type of information—propositional truths abstracted from Scripture—to the detriment of the diverse literary genres in and through which that information is canonically processed. Second, foundationalism privileges a certain type of procedure for generating knowledge that abstracts the *knower* from the process as well. For all intents and purposes, the particulars—the particular kinds of text, the particular locations and identity of the exegete—play no significant role in the getting of knowledge. All that matters are propositions and procedures. Foundationalism thus misses the real drama of knowledge: Will the exegete get—make cognitive contact with—the meaning? Will the exegete *relate* to, and *do*, the truth?[200]

Vanhoozer certainly desires to distinguish a foundationalism of unwarranted propositions which have been "abstracted from Scripture." Nevertheless, to return to the example cited above, in the context of Acts 17:3, "these things" (17:11) certainly refer to propositions such as the necessary fact of the Messiah's suffering, resurrection, and Messiah's necessary identity as Jesus of Nazareth. God praises the Thessalonians for evaluating the apostolic message on the authority of a revelational epistemology, which,

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[199] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 292.

[200] Ibid.

in that circumstance, was limited to the OT. Much more consistent, is the approach to certainty that builds upon a revelational epistemology, which alone can critique the epistemology of rationalism, empiricism, and existentialism. R. Albert Mohler Jr. captures the proper response to this misdiagnosed epistemology:

> The way out of hermeneutical nihilism and metaphysical antirealism is the doctrine of revelation. It is indeed the evangelical, biblical doctrine of revelation that breaks this epistemological impasse and becomes the foundation for a revelatory epistemology. This is not foundationalism in a modernist sense. It is not rationalism. It is the understanding that God has spoken to us in a reasonable way, in language we can understand, and has given us the gift of revelation, which is his willful disclosure of himself, the forfeiture of his personal privacy.[201]

Conclusion

The Scriptures possess several presuppositions about language, meaning and interpretation. These must be shared by any hermeneutic that claims divine authority. In fact, the presuppositional argument finds its strongest argument here. The transcendental argument is found in the fact that all interpreters who disagree with these convictions must actually borrow them irrationally in order to argue with them.

Critics of the presupposition that language can accurately transfer meaning between persons cannot consistently argue with that biblical presupposition by using language. Wittgenstein and his followers should resort to some other medium if they actually want to communicate to others that they are convinced that the biblical view of language is untrue. Conversely, if readers were to interpret them consistently with their own view of "language games," such views can consistently be interpreted to affirm the biblical view after all.

Similarly, authors who oppose authorial intent should never expect to be understood. Conversely, readers of those authors who believe that meaning is determined

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[201] R. Albert Mohler Jr., "When the Bible Speaks, God Speaks: The Classic Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy," in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 31.

by autonomous texts and readers, or a combination of author, reader, and text can *rightly* interpret writings that oppose the presuppositional hermeneutic as *properly* defending the presuppositional hermeneutic. In this way, a hermeneutic built on a human epistemology is seen to be utterly irrational.

Finally, interpreters who oppose the single, literal, grammatical-historical sense of meaning cannot clearly articulate their view without inconsistently borrowing the Scripture's own presuppositions about interpretation. Otherwise, they must acknowledge that, when this author finds a sense in their writing that agrees with the presuppositional hermeneutic, interpretive injustice has not been done. Instead, they must agree that their own principles have been faithfully employed with their own writings.

When it comes to language, meaning and interpretation, mankind is wise to remember Paul's warning—the unfaithful response of man never reflects poorly on God, because, as Paul concludes, "Let God be found true, though every man be found a liar" (Rom 3:3-4). To interpret the divine Scripture with a hermeneutic that is grounded outside of that Scripture is neither safe nor sound, lacking divine warrant for any of its conclusions.

CHAPTER 3

THE HERMENEUTIC EXHIBITED BY SCRIPTURE

Chapter 3 represents a turn in the argument.[1] While chapter 2 examined the hermeneutic *presupposed* by the Scripture, chapter 3 looks at the hermeneutic *exhibited* by the Scripture. Various interpreters may agree with both chapters 1 and 2 that the hermeneutic presupposed by Scripture is the only divinely warranted ground for interpretation because it *alone* stands on a revelational epistemology. Yet interpreters may agree with chapters 1 and 2 and still employ broadly different interpretive convictions. This is often due to a difference of opinion about what the Scripture *exhibits* hermeneutically. In other words, there are some hermeneutical approaches that uphold a grammatical-historical-*plus* approach. These interpreters may not entirely disregard the grammatical-historical sense, but they will argue that what the Scriptures *presuppose* does not actually account for all that the Scriptures *do*.

This chapter documents the evidence that the biblical authors consistently practiced the presuppositional hermeneutic. In other words, the argument of this section is that the hermeneutic *presupposed* by the Scripture is also *exhibited* by the Scriptural writers when they interpret previous Scripture. This chapter concludes that the apostolic interpretation of previous Scripture demonstrates that there is no divine warrant for interpreting Scripture with any other lens that what inspired interpreters *exhibited*.

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[1] Some portions of the research in this chapter were previously submitted in a paper titled "'Have You Not Read?' A Critique of Redemptive-Historical Hermeneutics," for the PhD research seminar "Expository Preaching" (86810), Spring 2017. Some portions of research were previously submitted to George Zemek in a paper titled "A Critique of *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*: An Examination of Hermeneutical Methodology and Proposal for Future Conversation," for the PhD independent study "Critique of Historic and Contemporary Views of NT Uses of the OT" (86977S), Spring 2016.

The Grammatical-Historical Practice of the Apostles

If the biblical presuppositions about interpretation outlined in chapter 2 are indeed biblical, then readers of the Bible should expect that the biblical authors interpret the Scriptures by employing those presuppositions. This is indeed what they do. For example, Johnson writes, "The doctrine of inerrancy does not demand exact, verbatim citation from the Old Testament. It merely requires that the meaning the New Testament author finds in the Old Testament and uses in the New is really in the Old Testament."[2] This discussion often becomes confused with two distinct aspects of later biblical writers and their relationship to prior Scripture. The apostles, for example, are often interpreting previous texts (*interpretation*), and revealing new truth (*inspiration*). These must be distinguished. Where these two functions become confused, a hermeneutic easily emerges that finds meanings in older texts that were not actually there, but were merely revealed later. This argument can be shown in the prophets' interpretation of the Torah.[3]

However, this argument will focus on the apostles' hermeneutic for two reasons: first, the redemptive-historical hermeneutic is possibly the most popular form of theological interpretation that would potentially object to the presuppositional hermeneutic (see appendix 3). This system builds its hermeneutic almost exclusively on NT interpretations of the OT rather than on prophetic interpretations of Torah, due to its claim of being a new Christian hermeneutic. Second, this movement has held a significant impact on preaching. The textual evidence presented here yields greater fruit for the homiletical implications that are discussed in chapter 4.

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[2] S. Lewis Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New: An Argument for Biblical Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1980), 66.

[3] Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2018), 47–120. Several works are helpful in exploring the apostolic use of the OT in a way that is consistent with the Scripture's own presuppositions, e.g., Ibid., 121–98; Iain Provan, *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 107–50; Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985); Kaiser, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 45–89.

The apostles consistently interpret the OT in a way that is consistent with the Scriptures' own presuppositions about language, meaning and hermeneutics. Christ Himself argued for the resurrection on a grammatical basis. The Sadducees denied the resurrection and the immortality of the spirit (Acts 23:8). Jesus proved the resurrection from the Torah, the extent of the canon acknowledged by the Sadducees. In Matthew 22:32, Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6. In order to prove the resurrection from Torah, He points out that God *is* the God of the living, not the dead (cf. Luke 20:38—"for all live to Him"). The basis of this argument lies in the present tense verb, which is implied in the context.[4]

Likewise, Paul makes an argument on the basis of a singular noun as opposed to a plural noun (Gal 3:16), but at the same time recognizes that the OT uses this singular noun in a singular sense (the individual "Seed") as well as a collective sense (the collective "seed") in that those who are identified with the individual Seed are constitutive of the collective seed (Gal 3:29).[5]

Likewise, the massive majority of the quotations from the OT demonstrate that the apostles interpreted the OT in accordance with the original meaning, intended by the human author, accessible to the original audience. The regularity of such practice means that, even from the perspective of critics, only a slim minority of passages can even serve as candidates against the presuppositional hermeneutic. According to some, these passages are purported to prove a hermeneutic that discovers a meaning in the OT that was inaccessible to the original audience.

A recent volume on the NT use of the OT demonstrates the strength of this pattern. Interpreters with various hermeneutical approaches contributed to the

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[4] The LXX rightly translates it with an explicit present tense: Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ θεὸς τοῦ πατρός σου, θεὸς Αβρααμ καὶ θεὸς Ισαακ καὶ θεὸς Ιακωβ (Exod 3:6).

[5] See the discussion of the Seed promise, and the doctrine of the One and the many, below.

Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament.[6] The editors of the *Commentary* wisely avoided canvasing dozens of subjects that pertain to the field of the NT use of the OT (i.e., Jewish exegesis, typology, *testimonia*, traditional links, the extent of Old Testament contexts imported with the citation, etc.). Instead they focused their attention where it would produce the greatest benefit to the interpreter of the Bible—"the places where NT writers actually cite or allude to the OT."[7] Of course, allusions are notoriously hard to define, but the contributors deal with 'probable' allusions and even explicit citations.

In order to minimize subjectivity and disparity between the contributors, the editors encouraged each contributor to consider six questions in their commentary:

1. What is the NT context of the citation or allusion?
2. What is the OT context from which the quotation or allusion is drawn?
3. How is the OT quotation or source handled in the literature of Second Temple Judaism or (more broadly yet) of early Judaism?
4. What textual factors must be borne in mind as one seeks to understand a particular use of the OT?
5. How is the NT using or appealing to the OT? What is the nature of the connection as the NT writer sees it?
6. To what theological use does the NT writer put the OT quotation or allusion?[8]

Additionally, the introduction to the work also gives the reader five points for orienting himself to the commentary:

1. One of the reasons for maintaining flexibility in approach is the astonishing variety of ways in which the various NT authors make reference to the OT.
2. In addition to the obvious ease with which NT which (as we have seen) apply to Jesus a variety of OT texts that refer to YHWH, so also a number of other associations that are initially startling become commonplace with repetition. NT writers happily apply to the church, that is, to the new covenant people of God,

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[6] D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007). E.g., the commentator on Matthew, Craig L. Blomberg, clearly believes that there may be a divine sense of an OT text that is hidden to the human author and audience. Additionally, he does not believe that Matthew practiced a grammatical-historical interpretation of Hosea. Cf. William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert I. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 178–80.

[7] Carson and Beale, *Commentary on NT Use of OT*, xxiii.

[8] Ibid., xxiv–xxv.

many texts that originally referred to the Israelites, the old covenant people of God.

3. One of the distinctive differences one sometimes finds between the way NT writers read the OT and the way that their non-Christian Jewish contemporaries read it is the salvation-historical grid that is often adopted by the former.
4. Here and there within the pages of this commentary one finds brief discussion as to whether a NT writer is drawing out a teaching from the OT—i.e., basing the structure of his thought on the exegesis of the OT text—or appealing to an OT passage to confirm or justify what has in fact been established by the Christian's experience of Christ and his death and resurrection.
5. Contributors have been encouraged to deploy an eclectic grammatical-historical literary method in their attempts to relate the NT's reading of the OT.[9]

In order to evaluate the relative consistency of this volume's hermeneutics with its thesis, table 1 compiles the stats on the methodology of each contributor's comments on the text. This table only accounts for explicit OT citations. Due to the difficult nature of classifying allusions, they are left out altogether. Books of the NT that are missing did not contain any explicit citation from the OT —namely, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-3 John, Jude, and Revelation.[10]

Table 1. Recognized Apostolic Use of the Grammatical-Historical [G-H] Hermeneutic

Author, *Book*	OT Citations (#)	G-H NT Text (#)	NT Percent (%)	G-H OT Text (#)	OT Percent (%)	G-H Apostle (#)	Apostle Percent (%)
Blomberg, *Matthew*	51[11]	48	94	47	92	41	80
Watts, *Mark*	23	23	100	22	96	22	96
Pao and Schnabel, *Luke*	27[12]	25	93	26	96	27	100

[9] Carson and Beale, *Commentary on NT Use of OT*, xxvi–xxviii.

[10] Ibid., 835, 841, 871, 1063, 1069, 1078, 1082–83.

[11] Blomberg, "Matthew," 1, says "Approximately fifty-five references prove close enough in wording for commentators typically to label them 'quotations,' . . . " Nevertheless, he only treats fifty-one of the references as quotations in the body of the commentary. (Except for other works cited, throughout the remainder of this section the works of individual contributors to the *Commentary on NT Use of OT* will appear as last name, title, and page number.)

[12] Pao and Schnabel, "Luke," 251, acknowledge twenty-five citations, but when all the collated quotations are counted, the total comes to twenty-seven.

Table 1—*continued*

Author, *Book*	OT Citations (#)	G-H NT Text (#)	NT Percent (%)	G-H OT Text (#)	OT Percent (%)	G-H Apostle (#)	Apostle Percent (%)
Köstenberger, *John*	14	14	100	14	100	14	100
Marshall, *Acts*	27	23	85	27	100	21	78
Seifrid, *Romans*	54[13]	54	100	54	100	51	94
Ciampa and Rosner, *1 Corinthians*	17	16	94	17	100	15	88
Balla, *2 Corinthians*	12	12	100	12	100	11	92
Silva, *Galatians*	11	11	100	11	100	11	100
Thielman, *Ephesians*	6	6	100	6	100	5	83
Towner, *Pastorals*	3	3	100	3	100	2	67
Guthrie, *Hebrews*	31[14]	31	100	31	100	28	90
Carson, *James*	6	6	100	6	100	6	100
Carson, *1 Peter*	15[15]	15	100	15	100	14	93
Carson, *2 Peter*	1	1	100	1	100	1	100
TOTAL	298	288	97	292	98	269	90

[13] Seifrid says that there are "roughly sixty citations of the Old Testament in Romans." Seifrid, "Romans," 607. However, he only documents fifty-four quotations.

[14] However, Guthrie claims, "I count roughly thirty-seven quotations." Guthrie, "Hebrews," 919. Yet, in the body of his commentary he only refers to "quotations" thirty-two times. Three of those occurrences he acknowledges without any discussion or commentary with which to evaluate his hermeneutics (10:16-17; 11:2, 18; pp. 978f, 985).

[15] Carson writes, "About twenty quotations are sufficiently lengthy and specific that there is little doubt regarding their specific OT provenance." Carson, "1 Peter," 1015. However, he only documents fifteen citations in the body of the commentary.

The column labeled "OT Citations" records the number of Old Testament quotations dealt with in the commentary on that book. The number in this column records the number of instances where the contributor called the reference an explicit citation, as opposed to allusion. In some instances, however, a judgment had to be made on the part of the reviewer. For example, the commentators on Revelation declared that "there are no formal quotations," but two allusions are called "citations" in the body of the work.[16] Nevertheless, for this reason, Revelation is not on the chart. The column "G-H NT Text" and "NT Percent" record the number of instances where the contributor dealt with the NT passage in a typical grammatical-historical fashion (see below) and the percentage of time this occurs. The columns "G-H OT Text" and "OT Percent" record the same information on the Old Testament passage being quoted. Finally, the column labeled "G-H Apostle" refers to the hermeneutics of the NT apostle, or Christ Himself. Sometimes, the quotation of the Old Testament is on the lips of an enemy (i.e., Scribes, Pharisees, or Satan) and these instances were not included as a failure to employ the grammatical-historical method, since their interpretation of Scripture is often rebuked.

This table was tallied according to the following standardized criteria for evaluating the hermeneutical method. After one or two readings, this reviewer made a decision as to whether the text under discussion was handled consistently with the grammatical-historical method. For an interpretation to be considered faithful to the grammatical-historical presuppositions of the Scripture, this writer had to be able to answer "Yes" to four questions: (1) Did the interpretation make sense of the larger context? (2) Did the interpretation make sense of the syntax and grammar of the passage? (3) Would the interpretation be accessible to the original audience (the historical meaning)? And (4) Was there one single meaning employed?

This table demonstrates that, even in the judgment of some interpreters who

[16] Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1082-83, 1090.

believe in *sensus plenior*, and/or that the apostles employed other hermeneutical approaches besides grammatical-historical method, in their own treatment of the data, 269 out of 298 citations take the OT texts according to their grammatical and historical sense (90.3 percent). This means that only 9.7 percent of the occurrences could function plausibly as evidence that the apostles practiced a new Christian hermeneutic which discovered meaning that was not already present in the original passage. The overwhelming evidence points towards a very careful and straightforward examination of the Scripture that reads no new meaning into the passage.

If it were not for space limitations, examining each example to show how strong the evidence really is would be extremely profitable. A few examples from Blomberg's contribution, "Matthew," are helpful because his hermeneutic differs from the presuppositional hermeneutic.[17] First, Matthew 21:5 quotes from two OT texts:

> Behold, the LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth, say to the daughter of Zion, "Lo, your salvation comes; behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him." (Isa 62:11)
>
> Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph,* O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zech 9:9)

Both of these prophecies are identical with Matthew's meaning. Blomberg says, "Here one may speak of direct, literal prophecy and fulfillment."[18] Secondly, Matthew 21:13 quotes Isaiah 56:7: "Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples." Blomberg concludes, "One can readily speak of the fulfillment of direct predictive prophecy here."[19]

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[17] Most notably, with regard to the authority for determining truth claims: presuppositionalism vs. verificationalism. See Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 163–67.

[18] Blomberg, "Matthew," 64.

[19] Ibid., 67.

Similarly, George Guthrie examines how the author of Hebrews interprets and handles Psalm 8. The citation of Psalm 8 is introduced in Hebrews 2:5. Guthrie writes, "Thus, with the quotation from Ps. 8, the author has in mind the submission not only of the world, but also of the world to come, and this is vital to our understanding of how he uses this passage from the OT."[20] In the context, the author of Hebrews is making a negative case that God has not subjected the world to come to the dominion of angels. Then, Guthrie explains the meaning of the passage in the context of Psalm 8:

> It is vital to understand the ideal relationship communicated here, Adamic kingship being squarely in focus. The passage communicates a divine ongoing commission. The OT story in many ways reflects a repeated failure to fulfill that commission by Adam, Noah, Israel, and so forth, and it is interesting that Jewish sources through the ages have seized on this psalm to emphasize the insignificance of people rather than their exalted roles as "kings" over the created order.[21]

Guthrie concludes that the understanding and usage of Psalm 8:5-7 in Hebrews 2:5-8 matches the understanding and usage of those words in the original context of the psalm. He writes,

> In [Heb] 2:5-9 the use of Ps. 8 suggests that the divine commission of Adam as king over God's creation ultimately has been fulfilled in Christ, the eschatological last Adam. Christ, in his solidarity with humanity (2:10-18), had been for a little while lower than the angels but now has been crowned with glory and honor as a result of his suffering.[22]

In keeping with a literal sense of what Psalm 8 anticipates, Guthrie concludes that the crowning has taken place while the putting down of every enemy has not. He rightly recognizes that in Hebrews 2:9, the author acknowledges that the literal sense of Psalm 8 has yet to be realized: "[The author of Hebrews] explains that all things have indeed been placed under the feet of Christ (quoting Ps. 110:1). The reality has been inaugurated, but its consummation will come at a time in the future."[23]

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[20] Guthrie, "Hebrews," 944.

[21] Ibid., 945.

[22] Ibid., 946.

[23] Ibid., 947.

But what about times where the use of the Old Testament does not constitute a direct fulfillment of a predictive prophecy? Matthew 21:9 quotes Psalm 118:25-26. The crowds take up this psalm on their lips and sing it as Jesus enters Jerusalem (who, in the very act is fulfilling Mal 3:1 and Zech 9:9). Blomberg says, "But probably Matthew also understands the acclaim as reinforcing Jesus' own messianic action in riding on the donkey . . . The use of 'Son of David' as part of the crowd's acclamation makes this latter interpretation preferable."[24] Even, here, in an example that is not a direct fulfillment, Matthew's meaning of Psalm 118 is what the Jews have always understood from that portion of the Hallel. The fact that this crowd called for His crucifixion by the end of the week is not an issue of hermeneutics, but unbelief. In other words, even in citations that are not predictive, the sense can be understood as the grammatical-historical sense of the original passage.

Some of those who would likely disagree with the presuppositional hermeneutic have to admit that the overwhelming majority of interpretations of the Old Testament *exhibited* by the apostles demonstrate that their hermeneutic is consistent with the Scripture's presuppositions. The observations made above can be applied to 269 occurrences of NT citations of the Old Testament with complete agreement from the contributors to the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. These authors have eclectic hermeneutics—they likely differ on the degree to which the OT teaches the meaning ascribed to it by the NT or whether the OT contained it in a concealed way, like the apple seed that becomes the tree[25]—and they acknowledge that the practice of grammatical-historical interpretation accounts for over 90 percent of the instances of Old Testament citations. According to these interpreters, some of whom believe that the Spirit might bring new or additional meaning to the Old Testament in the

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[24] Blomberg, "Matthew," 66.

[25] Beale and Carson, "Introduction," xxvii.

NT, must admit that this occurs in the slim minority of less than 1 in 10 occurrences. Nevertheless, is there evidence that the hermeneutic *exhibited* by the Scripture would correct or contrast the one *presupposed* by the Scripture? Do the 9 percent actually demonstrate that the hermeneutic *presupposed* by Scripture is not sufficient to account for the hermeneutic *exhibited* by Scripture?

Exhibition of the Apostolic Hermeneutic

Starting with the observations of the contributors to the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, there are only 9.7 percent of citations that could plausibly evidence a discrepancy between what Scripture presupposes and what it exhibits—and one must not imagine that all the contributors would agree that the presuppositional hermeneutic was patently *biblical*. A hermeneutic that requires something outside the text itself in order to find the meaning of that text must stand on a slim minority of passages where the Bible exhibits a hermeneutic. These instances fall into two basic categories: first, some of these uses of the Old Testament text are not properly interpretations at all, but something else—usually rhetorical—and second, some of the uses are actually evidences of the grammatical-historical sense of the original text.

First, NT authors do not always interpret the texts they are citing. Sometimes they use those texts rhetorically. A familiar example is found in Paul's citation of Psalm 19:4 (Rom 10:18). Here, Paul uses Psalm 19:4 to make a different point than the original verse. But, there is no fulfillment formula (πληρόω) or comparison (ὡς).[26] Paul does not insinuate that this verse means what Paul means in Romans 10. The familiar language is apt to make Paul's point here. Additionally, these two contexts have a reasonable connection. Paul is making the comparison between general revelation and special

[26] Douglas J. Moo and Andrew David Naselli, "The Problem of the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 707.

revelation, which is intrinsic in Psalm 19 (cf. vv. 1-6 and 7-14).[27] Such a citation is no real evidence *for* or *against* an exhibited hermeneutic, because it is not a proper instance of hermeneutics.[28]

Another excellent example of this is Romans 9:25, where Paul quotes Hosea 2:23. However, he introduces the quote with ὡς. Both a literal interpretation of the Hosea passage (God will effectually call Israel even though they are apostate and not-His-people due to their infidelity and idolatry) and a literal interpretation of Romans 9:24 (God will effectively call not only Jews, but also Gentiles, who are not His people) are necessary to understand the comparison Paul is making between God's effectual calling of apostate Israel and godless Gentiles. Paul is not using ὡς for a simple proof of what he is saying. That this is a true comparison is emphasized in Romans 9:27, where Paul uses a disjunctive conjunction, and introduces Isaiah's passage to reiterate God's guarantee to Israel (Ἡσαΐας δὲ κράζει ὑπὲρ τοῦ Ἰσραήλ).

In Galatians 4:21-31, Paul explains that he is speaking allegorically about Genesis. In effect, he is saying something other than what the original text says.[29] Paul undoubtedly has a good reason for allegorizing. Likely, the polemical nature of the letter has something to do with it. Also, the allegory Paul produces from the Genesis account actually matches the grammatical-historical sense of Deuteronomy 27:26; Habakkuk 2:4; Leviticus 18:4-5; Deuteronomy 21:23, and all the passages appealed to in the first half of the letter. Since this allegorizing does not contribute new content to Paul's argument

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[27] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 570–71; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 61–62.

[28] As an illustration, when a child asks a question about how long ago did people not have cell phones or internet, the answer, "Four score and seven years ago . . . " does not appeal to Lincoln at Gettysburg, let alone evoke the meaning of that address. It is familiar language that serves the purpose of explaining that it has been a long time from the perspective of the younger generation.

[29] ἀλληγορούμενα means to "speak allegorically," BDAG, 46; or "*interpret allegorically*," LSJ, 69. The root comes from ἄλλος plus ἀγορεύω, which, at the risk of the etymological fallacy, would have significance along the lines of "to speak something different." BDAG, 46, 47.

against the Judaizers described in Galatians 2:11-14, it would seem that he is taking them on with an allegory possibly like theirs. In other words, the argument would essentially be, "Should you resort to allegory for a contrary position, I can just as easily prove my position from allegory as well." This unique usage should not be appealed to as an example of Paul's hermeneutic for four reasons: (1) the fact that this is the only time Paul does this would seem to indicate that this is not Paul's practice, but likely a response to the polemic situation, (2) Paul never claims that this is an interpretation in the sense that "it is written," or this is a fulfillment, (3) Paul admits that rhetorically, he is creating an allegory, acknowledging that this is not the literal meaning of the Sarah/Hagar narrative, but nevertheless, (4) Paul's allegory actually matches the meaning of the grammatical-historical interpretations of the previous seven citations of the Old Testament.[30] Galatians 4:21-31 should not be used as evidence that Paul believed that allegorical interpretation is the proper way to read the OT. Quite problematic for the allegorical view is the fact that in this one and only instance of such a practice, Paul actually reads the OT, especially Isaiah 54 (Gal 4:27), literally. This reference makes no sense without the literal sense of Isaiah 54—the barrenness of Israel to produce the seed promise—falling precisely between the condition of the future Servant suffering as a burnt offering in order to see His seed corporately after that resurrection (Isa 53:10-12) and the promise to fulfill this promise to *David* (Isa 55:1-3).[31]

Secondly, examples of apostolic interpretation must be examined for their hermeneutical merit. Many texts are miscast as interpretations that differ from the original text, but in reality, the mistake lies in a misunderstanding of the OT meaning, the

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[30] Gal 3:6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16.

[31] See the discussion on Isa 55:3 below; Provan, *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture*, 137–50. Provan demonstrates that what Paul doing is vastly distinct from Heraclitus' embarrassment over the literal sense of Homer *or* Philo's embarrassment over the literal sense of the OT in the philosophical context of Alexandria. Provan shows Paul's ability to make an allegory out of Hagar and Sarah, which actually matches the literal sense of the rest of the OT, like Isa 54 in particular.

NT function, or both. After careful examination, this author has not found any instances that require a hermeneutic beyond that presupposed by Scripture. Every instance in the 9.7 percent of citations purported to find a meaning in the citation beyond the grammatical-historical sense of the citation, either ended up being demonstrably identical to the original meaning in its grammatical-historical context, or else it turned out to *not* be an interpretation, which would be made clear by the apostle in the NT context or by way of the introductory formula.[32] Obviously, the strongest argument for the presuppositional hermeneutic is to demonstrate that the Bible always *exhibits* the interpretation of other texts of Scripture in a way that is consistent with the hermeneutic *presupposed* by the Scripture. Several of the more "difficult" passages for this thesis are dealt with briefly. However, the final two passages, Matthew 2:15 and 1 Corinthians 10:4, are examined at greater length because these have received significant discussion and discussions are sometimes confused.[33]

1 Corinthians 9:9/1 Timothy 5:18 and Deuteronomy 25:4

Deuteronomy 25:4 is cited by Paul twice—in 1 Corinthians 9:9 and 1 Timothy 5:18. In the *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, the respective authors actually disagree on whether Paul interpreted Deuteronomy 25:4 according to the grammatical-historical sense of the Torah. Ciampa and Rosner affirm that Paul did pay attention to the context of Deuteronomy 25:4, when they write, "At first glance, it seems as though the cited text does indeed reflect concern for oxen (rather than for people), but as we noted above, the near literary context does in fact reveal an emphasis on concern

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[32] Cf. E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1981), 22–25. Ellis makes the case that the introductory formulas are more like a stylistic introduction. In his view, the variety of usages with the same introductory formula reflects the apostles' stylistic license. The focus of Ellis' discussion is the role that the human author plays in the writing. He does not mention the significance of conjunctions used with introductory formulas.

[33] Not to mention that these two are referred to most often by the Redemptive-Historical interpreters as a defense of their position. See appendix 3.

for human well-being."[34] However, Towner believes that Paul interpreted this text through the lens of rabbinical exegesis: "But in any case, between the original command set down in Deuteronomy, which presumably was in fact given originally out of concern for the proper care of oxen, and the application of the OT text in 1 Tim 5 and 1 Cor 9, the text had passed through the grid of Jewish exegesis to yield finally the analogy that Paul employs here."[35]

However, there is no need to appeal to Jewish exegesis. Reading the passage in context makes sense of Moses' *written* intention. Deuteronomy 24-25 are loaded with various sundry commands. They all demonstrate love for one's neighbor. For example, laws pertaining to a honeymoon period are explicitly motivated by the happiness of the new bride (Deut 24:5). Requirements for pay schedules refer explicitly to the needs of the employee (Deut 24:14-15). Laws about reaping and harvesting are motivated by the welfare of the alien, the orphan, and the widow, because these three either have no land or man to produce food for themselves (Deut 24:17-22). Criminal penalties are regulated in order to prevent degrading a brother in the eyes of the public (Deut 25:1-3). Even when the law is not explicitly for the welfare of mankind, the implicit reason is obvious. For example, legislation about weights and measures would immediately harm the purchasers (implicit) and such behavior is an abomination to God (explicit; Deut 25:13-16). In light of this context, if Deuteronomy 25:4 was not proverbial for human labor, then it would be completely foreign to the context, let alone the entire Torah. In fact, when Moses gave commands about livestock they pertain either to the protection of personal private property, or the safety of one's neighbor.[36] So, if this verse pertained to literal oxen, it would be the only verse in Torah focused on animal welfare apart from

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[34] Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, "1 Corinthians," 720.

[35] Philip H. Towner, "1-2 Timothy and Titus," 900.

[36] E.g., Exod 21:28-32, 33-34; 22:1.

human welfare. This interpretation would come at the expense of the literal, grammatical-historical context of the proverb—Deuteronomy 24-25 and the proper treatment of people.

Arguably, the Gentile Corinthian church was not as familiar with the Deuteronomy context as Timothy (cf. 2 Tim 3:15). This is consistent with Paul's subsequent commentary to the Corinthians "God is not concerned about oxen, is He?" (1 Cor 9:9). Paul is aware of the context, and in case the Corinthians are not, he makes it clear that this was never the intention of passage. Paul continues to point out that what God is saying is the same thing as what is written (1 Cor 9:10).[37] This explanation makes sense of the large context (Torah) and the narrow context (Deut 24-25, specifically). Even though Towner views 1 Timothy 5:18 as an instance that does not demonstrate a grammatical-historical interpretation, in the end, this citation illustrates that Paul *exhibits* interpretation consistent with what the Scriptures *presuppose*.

Hebrews 10:5-9 and Psalm 40:6-8

Guthrie says that Hebrews 10:5-9 "probably should be seen as a fulfillment of indirect typological prophecy, the experience of David the king being understood as a pointer to the experience of Christ."[38] These words do not necessarily contradict the grammatical-historical sense of Psalm 40, but they do raise the question of whether the meaning was actually intended by the psalmist or only recognizable from the later viewpoint of the NT author. Guthrie seems to affirm the latter when he writes, "Here too we have a typological fulfillment of those things existing as shadow in the old-covenant

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[37] Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, 212–20, develops this well. Contra Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 165–66, who claims that Paul's "underlying hermeneutical assumption of his reading of both texts is articulated in the emphatic *di' hēmas pantōs legei* (he speaks entirely for our sake)." This is why Hays believes that, for Paul, "Even the most mundane apodictic pronouncements in Scripture gain unforeseen spiritual gravity when read with the ruling conviction that Scripture must speak to us and must speak of weighty spiritual matters." In this way, Paul finds a meaning that is "unforeseen."

[38] George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews," 977.

era, Christ filling out completely God's ultimate intention for the role of high priest and also that of sacrifice."[39] For this reason, this instance was cited as not conforming to a grammatical-historical interpretation of Psalm 40 on the part of the author in the chart above.

Similarly, some redemptive-historical interpreters claim that this citation proves that apostles discovered meaning that was not present in the Old Testament text. For example, Keller writes,

> But when we look at Psalm 40, *we see absolutely nothing to indicate that the speaker is Jesus or some messianic figure*. Why would the Hebrew author assume that Psalm 40 was about Jesus? He does so because he knows what Jesus told his disciples in Luke 24, that all the Scripture is really about him. The Bible is in the end a single, great story that comes to a climax in Jesus Christ.[40]

To be sure, there are some complicated textual issues with this passage.[41] But where Keller sees *absolutely nothing*, Psalm 40 actually records that the identity of the speaker is found in the scroll. The scroll in David's context was undoubtedly the royal scroll that contains the Torah. The purpose of this scroll was for the sake of the king's fear of God and his careful obedience to his commands, as recorded in Deuteronomy 17:18-20:

> Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons

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[39] George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews," 978.

[40] Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015), 57-58; italics mine. Contra, Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New*, 53–67.

[41] Regarding the Greek variant in Ps 40:7 [Eng.; 39:7, Greek], LXX has ὠτία, matching the HMT, while Vaticanus and Sinaiticus both have σῶμα; *Codex Vaticanus* (Vatican City: Vatican Library, N.d.), accessed November 15, 2018, https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1209; *Codex Sinaiticus* (British Library; Leipzig University Library; St Catherine's Monastery at Sinai; and the National Library of Russia, N.d.), accessed November 15, 2018, http://www.codexsinaiticus.org/en/. The author of Hebrews clearly used a copy of the Septuagint that matched these uncials. The change is not hermeneutically significant, since the meaning of this individual's readiness to listen to the obligation on his body ends up meaning the same thing as the offering of his body. However, both terms anticipate the future Servant Song of Isa 50:4-6, which may have affected the LXX translators. See Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New*, 60–65, who successfully demonstrates that the interpretive use of "body" does not violate the meaning of the original Hebrew.

may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

The future success of the nation and the king's line are predicated on the king's ability to learn to fear the Lord and observe His words. His obedience to God's will is integral to the welfare of the kingdom.

Inside this scroll, content is written "concerning Me."[42] עָלָי means "with regard to, concerning Me."[43] Of course, the Torah is not properly about David. As demonstrated in chapter 2, the Torah is about a Seed, a ruler from Judah, an Angel of the Lord who blesses those who bless Israel, and curses those who curse Israel, One who would crush the head of Israel's enemies, establish global dominion, restore eternal life to Adam's race, and function in the role of a prophet who would give God's words, like Moses, in human form.[44] Guthrie points out that the Psalm 40:7 reference to Deuteronomy 17 "may simply be alluding to the role of kings as mentioned in the law."[45] Nevertheless, these two realities merge in context of the Davidic covenant. More recently, David was told by the prophet Nathan that this Seed was actually going to be in his own lineage, a future eternal King (2 Sam 7:4-17). This promised Son of David will rule forever (2 Sam 7:13), but the covenant comes with a condition. Notably, in David's day, it was revealed that if David's son were to commit iniquity, he would require divine chastening (2 Sam 7:14).

In order to synthesize all these observations, it is helpful to start with Deuteronomy 17:18-20; 2 Samuel 7:13-14; and Psalm 132:10-12. Together they reveal that the future David will uphold the covenant, unlike the historical David who committed iniquity and required chastening. The eternal rule of the Davidic King is dependent upon this One fearing the Lord, obeying His Word, and saying, in the words of

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[42] Ps 40:7 [Eng]; Ps 40:8 [HMT], translation mine.

[43] See *HALOT*, 2:826; cf. LXX—περὶ ἐμοῦ; VULG—*de me*.

[44] E.g., Gen 3:15; 49:10; Exod 23:20-23; Num 24:8-9, 17-19; Deut 18:15-22.

[45] Guthrie, "Hebrews," 977.

Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your law is within my heart."[46] Additionally, the Seed promise of the Torah has been narrowed from Eve, through the patriarchs, down to David. Therefore, from the vantage point of David writing Psalm 40, the same Seed who will reverse the curse and restore dominion in the sense of Genesis 3:15 and Numbers 24:17-19,[47] is the same who will rule globally and eternally in the sense of 2 Samuel 7:13 and Psalm 2.[48] This future rule can only occur with a full consecration and yielding to the Lord. Of course, those words were spoken by the historical David, but the historical interpretation must recognize the significance of the previous conditions for the royal success (Deut 17:18-20), as well as the forward-looking requirement of the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:13-14), in order to appreciate what the historical David *means* by pointing to the testimony of the Torah concerning "Me." With this interpretation, the prophets agree. They regularly refer to the future Messiah with nothing more than a reference to David or his throne.[49]

Finally, the Seed promise includes the introduction of animosity between Satan and his children (cf. John 8:44; Eph 2:2) and Eve and her children. So, the Seed will restore spiritual life to Adam, which was lost on the very day he sinned.[50] This Seed promise became forever connected with the divine name, Yahweh, in the first historical use of the name. Of course, the first canonical use of the name occurs in Genesis 2:4, by the pen of Moses (see below). But chronologically, the first recorded use of the name

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[46] From the standpoint of the writing of Ps 40, future conditions on the Davidic covenant in Ps 89:3-4, 30-37; Isa 53:10-11 are illustrative but not legitimate for *historical* interpretation of Ps 40; see the discussion below.

[47] Cf. Jer 33:26, where the seed promise is mentioned in connection to Jacob (Num 24:19) and David.

[48] Ps 2 was written by David (Acts 4:25).

[49] E.g., Isa 9:7; Jer 23:5-6; 33:15, 17, 21; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Zech 12:8. The emphasis on righteousness and rule are important. These passages were written after Ps 40 and should not contribute to the historical interpretation, but they do agree with the interpretation here.

[50] Gen 2:17; 3:22—living forever in a state of spiritual death would be worse than his fallen condition. Cf. Lev 18:4-5; Rom 5:12-19; 8:12-13.

comes from the lips of Eve. In Genesis 4:1, after giving birth to Cain, Eve says, "I have gotten a manchild with *the help of* the LORD." The italics, original to the NASB, indicate that this is a translational addition. The construction in play here involves the Hebrew particle אֶת, which can function as a prepositional phrase, or as a direct object marker, in this case requiring "LORD" to function in apposition to "manchild." As one Hebrew grammar says, this particle is often repeated before multiple nouns "when one or more nouns are in explanatory apposition with one another".[51]

For example, Genesis 22:2 is an obvious instance of apposition, because the prepositional use does not make sense: "He said, 'Take now your son [אֶת־בִּנְךָ], your only son [אֶת־יְחִידְךָ], whom you love, Isaac [אֶת־יִצְחָק], and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.'"

However, Genesis 4:1 poses a difficulty that Genesis 22:2 does not—both the prepositional and appositional usage can make sense of the passage in context. Harmon serves as an example of a typical discussion about this construction in this context:

> It is possible that the function of אֵת is to draw attention to the word to which it is attached, rather than to act as a syntactical marker. The presence of -אֵת in Gen 4:1 is a crux. It can be taken as marking the object, so that Eve expresses a confidence that the child she has borne is indeed the Lord, so fulfilling the promise of Gen 3:15. However, most translations and exegetes assume that the word is a preposition connected with the Akk. preposition *itti*, meaning "from." Hence, many Eng. translations accept this derivation and paraphrase "from" to mean "with the help of."[52]

A problem exists with the typical conclusion. The view that Eve is simply referring to God, as though "LORD" is synonymous at this point seems to beg for a historical precedent. If she is claiming that she conceived and bore a man *like* God, or that it happened with God's help, Eve would only be using the name "LORD" as synonymous with God. Yet, the use of this name for God has no recorded antecedent.

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[51] Isaac Nordheimer, *A Critical Grammar of the Hebrew Language* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1841), 2:86.

[52] Allan Harman, "Particles," in *NIDOTTE*, 4:1030.

The previous canonical references to *Yahweh* (e.g., Gen 2:4, 5, 7, etc.) come from the pen of Moses. Genesis 4:1 remains the first use of the name. Without any antecedent, like most Hebrew names, the etymological significance behind the name is very important.

This means that this usage cannot simply fall into a mere synonym with *Elohim*, even though it becomes God's name of self-reference. Instead, this first usage of the word carries the lexical sense of the third person, imperfect form of the Hebrew verb "to be" (היה), which would be translated, "He will be . . . " Or, better, it comes from the Hebrew verb "to become" (הוה), which would be translated, "He will become . . . "[53] Who is she speaking of? Cain. What will he be, or He will be what?

The answer is as easily accessible as it is profound—Eve believes that this is the fulfillment of the promise given to her in Genesis 3:15 about the man who would come from her womb, the Seed. Of course, when it comes to reversing the curse, establishing animosity between the seed of Satan and Eve, Cain clearly shows that he is not the one promised, at the very latest, by the time he kills his brother Abel. More likely, in the eyes of his mother, this awareness came earlier. The text reveals that she is aware he was not the fulfillment in Genesis 4:25. Not surprisingly, after seeing homicide of brothers, and the sickness of the human race (Enosh means 'sick' or 'incurable'[54]), mankind begins calling on the name of the LORD (Gen 4:26). Men recognized that they were distant from God, and the only way for reconciliation, reverse of the curse, and animosity to be established between mankind and the seed of Satan was for the One promised to come. God takes the name *Yahweh* as His own self-identity (e.g., Gen 15:7).

Remarkably, at the burning bush, the Angel of the Lord [מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה] (Exod 3:2) reveals Himself to Moses. Rather than using the third person imperfect form of הוה,

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[53] *HALOT*, 1:241, 243-44; see John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 2:125-28.

[54] *HALOT*, 1:70.

Yahweh, this person speaks of the promise in the first person imperfect form of היה, "I will be Him whom I will be" [אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה], (Exod 3:14). Some commentators have debated the future aspect of the imperfect form here, largely due to the LXX use of the present tense.[55] However, the exact same form, אֶהְיֶה, is used two verses earlier, and virtually every modern translation recognizes the future tense in the phrase "I will be with you . . . " (Exod 3:12).

In Exodus 23:20-23, the Angel of the Lord turns out to be the Divine Person who shares a name with *Elohim* (going all the way back to Exod 20:1). The speech is so identical between the two that if Israel obeys the voice of the Angel of the Lord then they are doing what God Himself says (Exod 23:22).

All of this was revealed long before David wrote Psalm 40. In addition, the hope of eternal life after a physical resurrection was revealed long before David (cf. Job 16:22-17:3, 12-16; 19:25-26). Then, redemption from the grave involves the mediation of the מַלְאָךְ and the restoration of God's righteousness to man (Job 33:23-28), and deliver him from the darkness of spiritual death into the light of spiritual life (Job 33:29-31). So, for the Seed of Eve to accomplish such a ransom, innocent blood had to be shed (cf. Lev 17:11; Ps 49:7-9). The conditions of the Davidic covenant ruled out any Son of David who sinned. The future David had to obey the Torah perfectly in order to fulfill the conditions of the Davidic covenant and to fulfill the Seed promise and ransom man from death.

In light of what was already revealed (Gen-Ruth; the Davidic covenant; Job), it becomes difficult to respect Keller's assessment of the absence of Messianic intent regarding Psalm 40 as written by David. Keller's hermeneutic turns the readers' attention

[55] E.g., John J. Davis, "The Patriarchs' Knowledge of Jehovah: A Critical Monograph on Exodus 6:3," *Grace Journal* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1963): 38–39.

away from the OT so quickly, that interpreters rarely demonstrate an adequate answer for what *is actually revealed in the original passage,* such as Psalm 40, in this case.[56]

Matthew 1:23 and Isaiah 7:14

Matthew describes how an angel revealed to Joseph that Mary would be with child through a miraculous and supernatural conception, resulting in a virgin birth. Matthew declares "Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet" (Matt 1:22). Then, he quotes Isaiah 7:14 in the next verse. The term "fulfillment" rules out any notion that this is anything less than an actual prophecy that has arrived at its completion with this event. Blomberg writes,

> Some conservatives treat this as direct, predictive prophecy. The majority of scholars deny any predictive element (for a representative treatment, see J. D. W. Watts 1985:98-104). Better than both of these approaches, however, is the concept of double fulfillment (for the hermeneutic in general, see Blomberg 2002b; for this specific passage, see Gundry 1994:25). Matthew recognized that Isaiah's son fulfilled the dimension of the prophecy that required a child to be born in the immediate future. But the larger, eschatological context, especially of Isa. 9:1-7, depicted a son, never clearly distinguished from Isaiah's who would be a divine, messianic king. That dimension was fulfilled in Jesus.[57]

Later Blomberg admits that Matthew may not have known Isaiah 7:14 as a prophecy of this kind of reality until after the "coincidence" was too striking to be just that. He writes, "Whether or not Matthew was aware of any previous interpretation of Isa. 7:14 as referring to a sexually chaste woman, the 'coincidence' of Jesus being born of a virgin was too striking not to be divinely intended."[58]

Blomberg is likely right to call the direct, predictive prophecy position a minority. Nevertheless, this view has some very able defenders.[59] These sources

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[56] Subsequent revelation also agrees with this interpretation (e.g., Ps 89:3-4, 30-37; 132:10-12; Isa 50: 4-11; 53:10-12).

[57] Blomberg, "Matthew," 5.

[58] Ibid.

[59] E.g., Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 113–19; David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 68–73; Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 7:244-59; Charles L. Feinberg, "The Virgin Birth in the Old Testament and Isaiah 7:14," *BibSac* 119, no. 475 (July

adequately document that Isaiah 7-8 is a prophecy of the future. In the context, the threat to Ahaz is an anti-Christ, or anti-Seed of David, threat against the King of Judah (cf. Isa 7:1-9, esp. v. 6). So, the prophecy is an encouragement to the faithful remnant in Israel (6:8-13) that this attempt to supplant the Davidic line with Tabeel will not ruin the redemptive promise. In fact, the Davidic line will successfully continue on until one is born of a virgin.[60]

However, there are two different prophecies. The distinction between the two can be seen in several crucial details. By comparing Isaiah 7:14 and 8:3, there are at least three critical differences in these prophecies. First, one child has the name "Immanuel," and the other "Maher-shalal-hash-baz." Second, one is born without natural procreation, and the other is born through natural procreation. Third, the mother of the first is an unknown virgin, and the mother of the second is Isaiah's wife, the prophetess.

Furthermore, there is both a distinct developmental marker in the life of the two boys in each prophecy, and this leaves a time stamp on distinct fulfillments regarding the threat from Aram. For the first child, the developmental marker is the ability to discern right from wrong (Isa 7:16), whereas the second prophecy will occur before the second child has the ability to say "My father," or "My mother" (Isa 8:4). And, the fulfillment of the first prophecy involves "the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken" (Isa 7:16), whereas, in the second prophecy, the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria (Isa 8:4).

Regarding הָעַלְמָה, the definite article appears to indicate a specific person; the LXX matches. Regarding the meaning of this word, other words have been suggested as

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1962): 251–58.

[60] Feinberg, "The Virgin Birth in the Old Testament and Isaiah 7:14," 254–58; Turner, *Matthew*, 69–70.

candidates that would more clearly connote the idea of "virgin," such as *betulah*. C. H. Gordon wrote:

> From Ugarit of around 1400 B.C. comes a text celebrating the marriage of the male and female lunar deities. It is there predicted that the goddess will bear a son. . . . The terminology is remarkably close to that in Isaiah 7:14. However, the Ugaritic statement that the bride will bear a son is fortunately given in parallelistic form; in 77:7 she is called by the exact etymological counterpart of Hebrew *ʿalmah* 'young woman'; in 77:5 she is called by the exact etymological counterpart of Hebrew *betulah* 'virgin.' Therefore, the New Testament rendering of *ʿalmah* as 'virgin' for Isaiah 7:14 rests on the older Jewish interpretation, which in turn is now borne out for *precisely this annunciation formula* by a text that is not only pre-Isaianic but is pre-Mosaic in the form that we now have it on a clay tablet.[61]

Importantly, the Jewish scribes who translated the LXX over two centuries before Christ's birth used ἡ παρθένος here, a word that means "one who has never engaged in sexual intercourse, *virgin, chaste person*."[62]

Significantly, the "sign" (אוֹת) of Isaiah 7:11 is a divine child (7:14). The third time this word is used in the prophecy is on the lips of Yahweh in Isaiah 8:18 (cf. Isa 8:11). The quotations should continue throughout verses 16-18, for three reasons: *first*, the LORD speaks of the LORD in verse 13. So the reference to the LORD in verses 17-18 does not require that the speaker be Isaiah, instead of the LORD. *Second*, it is difficult to imagine Isaiah calling those who are devoted to God's law and testimonies "My disciples," whereas the LORD would rightly call them His disciples. *Third*, the Divine speaker who has referenced another person who is also LORD now claims that His identity with the children the other LORD has given Him are the *sign* (אוֹת) in 8:18. This language far exceeds the identity of Isaiah, as Isaiah 9:1-7 makes explicit. So, the speaker in 8:16-18 is still the LORD. Hebrews 2:13 recognizes that this speaker is the coming Christ. The divine Son of David is both Immanuel (Isa 7:14) and Mighty God (Isa 9:6) who will rule on the throne of David (Isa 9:7). He will vanquish the darkness and bring

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[61] C. H. Gordon, "'Almah in Isaiah 7:14," *Journal of Bible and Religion* 21, no. 2 (April, 1953), 106, as cited by Feinberg, "The Virgin Birth in the Old Testament and Isaiah 7:14," 256.

[62] BDAG, 777.

light to all He rules. His children will be devoted to His Law (cf. Isa 8:16-18, 19-22; 9:1-7).

These points appear to be lost on Blomberg when he writes, "In 8:18 Isaiah describes his two sons, Maher-Shalal-Has-Baz and Shear-Jashub (cf. 7:3), as 'signs and symbols in Israel,' which description ties back in with the sign God promised in 7:11, 14."[63] Misunderstanding the details of OT prophecy make it difficult to recognize that there are two distinct prophecies, and that both are each fulfilled literally. The "sign" was the mark of the fulfillment of the Davidic promise in the future Son of David (from Isaiah's perspective). And, these mistakes lead to a problematic conclusion, as Turner points out, "The multiple-fulfillment view introduces an unwarranted distinction between what the prophet predicted and what God intended to reveal by the text."[64]

On the other hand, the distinct prophecies serve an important purpose. The prophecy of the divine human (Isa 7:10ff.; 8:4-9:7) brings comfort to a nation whose redemptive promise is tied up in the physical safety of the Davidic line. This most important promise is still secure. And, the promise of the human child (Isa 8:1-4) gives Isaiah's contemporary audience a fulfillment that proves the legitimacy of the other prophecy that would not ultimately be fulfilled in his lifetime, in accord with the test of a true prophet (cf. Deut 18:21-22).

Ultimately, if Isaiah 7:14 is not a prophecy about a virgin, then it raises a most difficult question: how can a birth that comes from a young woman through natural conception function as a *sign* of the fulfillment? Such a common event, one that has happened billions of times in the history of mankind, hardly serves as a suitable sign for such a prophecy.

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[63] Blomberg, "Matthew," 4.

[64] Turner, *Matthew*, 71.

Acts 13:34 and Isaiah 55:3

Preaching to the Jews at the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, Paul teaches on the resurrection of the Messiah. After transitioning from the *general* sense of raising up Christ in the line of David, Paul transitions to the *specific* sense of raising up Christ from the dead.[65] The resurrection was clearly taught in the Old Testament. It is often supposed that Acts 13:34 and 35 are linked by the midrashic method of *gezerah shawah* or the connection of *stichwort*, keyword connections.[66] If that were true, this would constitute an example of interpretation that did not exhibit the hermeneutic presupposed by the Scripture, as delineated in chapter 2. Without denying the fact that both this quote, and the one from Psalm 16:10 in the next verse share the same word ὅσιος,[67] it remains to be seen whether both passages affirm the teaching about a resurrection of the Christ, in their own contexts.

Paul quotes from a passage that merges several critical truths from the OT in one context. Before assessing Paul's hermeneutic, it will be important to make observations on the context of Isaiah 55:3. The grammatical-historical sense of Isaiah yields interesting conclusions in three areas that successively build on one another: first,

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[65] The three exegetical proofs of this transition are (1) verse 34 starts with a disjunctive (δέ), (2) the repeated verb ἀνίστημι is now modified by the phrase ἐκ νεκρῶν, and (3) this repetition of the same word in distinct ways is paralleled earlier in the sermon with the word ἐγείρω, which is used of raising up David *generically* (v. 22), and *specifically* of raising Christ from the dead (v. 30).

[66] See G. K Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 43–44. And Barrett says,

> The Greek agrees closely with the Hebrew . . . except that for חסדי it has τὰ ὅσια. This is no doubt related to the fact that the related word חסיד sometimes means ὅσιος, though in Isa. 55.3 חסד must have a different meaning, *faithful love,* or *mercy.* At this point the quotation of Ps. 16.10 in v. 35 must be borne in mind (it was no doubt already in Luke's mind). It supplies an example of the meaning of ὅσιος (the Hebrew root is חסיד), and uses the verb διδόναι. (C. K Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994], 1:647)

From a contrary position, Ellis says,

> Neither do Paul's combinations rest merely on the basis of a 'key-word'. Although a number of Pauline citations appear to be united under a *Stichwort*, the significance is far deeper than a verbal congruence. The recurrence of the *Stichwort* is perhaps a designed mnemonic, but at times it is only a natural coincidence in the subject matter. Certainly it is the sense element that is basic for Paul. The verbal aspect is the nature of effect rather than the underlying cause. (E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* [Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1981], 50)

[67] The HMT uses a cognate—Ps 16:10 has the substantive adjective חָסִיד, and Isa 55:3 has the noun חַסְדֵי.

Isaiah teaches *corporate solidarity*, or "the one and the many;" second, Isaiah 40-55 connects "My Servant" with the Future David; and third, Isaiah 53-55 makes connections that demand a Messianic resurrection.

First, *corporate solidarity* is recognized in the regular connection of the One and the many. This comes from the fact that the Old Testament consistently teaches about the people of God and promises of God in such a way that it identifies promises, expectations and blessings of "the many" (the people of God) with "the One" (the Messiah).[68] The Old Testament uses several terms for both the promised One and the nation as a whole: seed,[69] son and firstborn,[70] holy one/godly one,[71] My Servant.[72] These connections do not abuse *gezerah shawah* without regard for the context, but they depend upon a literal-grammatical interpretation of each context in which they occur. This leads to the second observation about the context that shapes Paul's quote.

Second, Isaiah 40-55 connects "My Servant" with the Future David. The term "My Servant" is critical to understanding this portion of Isaiah's prophecy. "My servant"

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[68] Kaiser, *Uses of the Old Testament*, 29, 52; Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 70, 136. Ellis acknowledges that the Talmud recognizes the distinction between the singular and the plural with the word 'seed' as applied to the Patriarchs. He is correct to admit that this is where Paul agrees with Jewish interpretation, so long as we acknowledge that this is due to a shared grammatical-literal hermeneutic, and not atomistic abuse of phrases or words and imposing meaning that the context did not intend. K. Lake and H. J. Cadbury give us "the most quoted passage" on the rabbinical use the OT in the connection between these two passages due to *hosia*:

> When the Rabbis found a phrase which could not be explained by any ordinary method in its own context they interpreted by 'analogy,' that is, they found the same word in some other place in the light of the intelligible one. Here, *hosia* is unintelligible, therefore the writer takes another passage in which the adjective *hosios* is used substantially, Ps. xvi. 10 . . . and introduces it by *dioti*, to show that this is the justification for his interpretation, and that by perfectly correct Rabbinical reasoning *ta hosia* means the Resurrection. . . . It is very important to notice that the whole argument is based on the LXX and disappears if the speech be not in Greek. (cited by Kaiser, *Uses of the Old Testament*, 36–37)

[69] The One—Gen 3:15; Ps 89:4; the many—Gen 13:15-16; 17:7, 19 (especially in contrast to v. 20); 22:17; Isa 53:10.

[70] The One—Ps 2:7; 89:26-27; 132:11-12 (admittedly plural, but that is due to the conditionality placed upon each king in David's line, ultimately fulfilled in the One); 2 Sam 7:14; the many—Exod 4:22-23; Jer 31:9.

[71] The One—Deut 33:8; Ps 16:10; 89:19-20; the many—Ps 30:4; 31:23.

[72] The One—Isa 42:1; 49:3, 5-7; 50:10; 52:13; Ps 89:3, 20; the many—Isa 41:8-9; 43.8-13; 43:14-44.5; 44.6-8, 21-23.

is used by God for many people in the OT, including Abraham (Gen 26:24), Moses (Num 12:7; 2 Kgs 21:8), Caleb (Num 14:24), David (2 Sam 3:18; 7:5, 8; 1 Kgs 11:13, 32, 34, 36, 38; 14:8; 19:34), Isaiah (Isa 20:3), and the nation Israel (Isa 41:8; 44:21; 45:4).

The Servant in Isaiah 42 is distinct from any references to Israel as a nation. For example, in Isaiah 41:8-16, "My servant" is explicitly national because of the national promise for the nation's military successes, and the plural "men of Israel" in verse 14. In Isaiah 42:18-22, "My servant" is blind and deaf (19), and trapped (22), whereas the "My Servant" of 42:1-9 is called by the Lord to be a light to the nations (6), to open blind eyes and to liberate those who are imprisoned (7). Furthermore, in the macro-context of Isaiah, the Lord has "put My Spirit upon Him," (1). Isaiah has already introduced us to a person who has the personal anointing of God's Spirit in 11:1-10. In verse 2 it says, "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him". This individual is both a shoot who will arise from the stem of Jesse (Isa 11:1), and a root of Jesse (Isa 11:10). This shoot/root combination means that this Person is not only in the Davidic line, but is also a cause or predecessor to it.[73] This terminology is also used of the Messiah—this One is "anointed"—in Isaiah 61:1: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted."

The nature of these connections is important. If an interpreter were to assert that these three prophecies (Isa 11, 42, 61) referred to the same person simply based on the practice of *gezerah shawah*[74] while neglecting the context, such a practice would fall short of the presuppositional hermeneutic. These texts may or may not refer to the same person, but when the repetition of key terms catches the reader's attention, it becomes

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[73] This passage calls to mind Psalm 110:1-3, where David records the words of Yahweh, addressing someone else who is David's Lord, about that second Lord's universal rule on earth. For a discussion on the individual shoot from David in verse one, being the personal banner for the nations in verse 10, see Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 7:186.

[74] The concordance, or repeated reference is to the "Spirit of the Lord [God]," (11:1; 61:1) or "My Spirit," on the lips of Yahweh directly (42:1).

necessary to examine whether the contexts themselves bear out that one text is, in fact, referring to the same reality as another text. The activities of the Servant in Isaiah 42:7 match the function of the Anointed (Messiah) in Isaiah 61:1—"to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners." Isaiah views this Servant (introduced in 42:1) in connection with the Seed/Son of David in 11:1-10. The list of shared functions must include at least the following: justice and righteousness are established in a global scale (Isa 11:3-5; 42:1, 3-4), the word of His mouth judges and destroys His enemies (Isa 11:4; 49:2), captives are liberated and prisoners are set free (Isa 42:7; 61:1), the land is restored (Isa 11:6-8; 49:8), and light—the knowledge of God and His law—is given to the nations.[75]

In Isaiah 49:3, the Lord says to the Servant "You are My Servant, Israel." In the immediate context (49:1-7), this Servant called Israel is raised up "to bring Jacob back" to the Lord (v. 5), and "to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel." This "Servant, Israel" is also "the One abhorred by the nation [Israel]" (v. 7). Clearly, this is an instance where "Servant" refers to the One, and not the many. But there is good reason for the intimate association with the nation by use of the term "Israel." "My Servant" is the promised *One*, not the already existent and distant *many* (49:5), and verse 6 gives a powerful promise of global blessing associated with the future ministry of this Servant. In verse 4, the Servant despaired of all previous efforts to show forth the glory of God. In fact, the nation has failed to be Yahweh's Son and display His nature in accord with sonship.[76] Yet the function of sonship—displaying the character of

[75] Isa 51:4-5 describes "a light of the peoples" as the law going forth from "Me" (the divine Speaker in ch. 51), the establishment of global justice, and the global expectation of His glory in salvation and judgment. This is true of the root of Jesse and the Servant (Isa 11:9; 42:4, 6; 49:6. Cf. 59:21-60:9; 61:8-9).

[76] Peter John Gentry, "Rethinking the 'Sure Mercies of David' in Isaiah 55:3," *WTJ* 69, no. 2 (September 2007): 286–88. To be consistent, hermeneutically, it is important to let the text (God) declare what it (He) means with regard to the idea of 'Son,' as it refers alternately to the One and the many. A son reflects the likeness and image of a father (cf. Gen. 1:26; 5:1-3). The nation is a son (Exod 4:22-23) and fulfills that role by living out the conditions of sonship as delineated in the Torah (Exod 19:4-6). When the nation fully obeys all that God has commanded, she will have successfully glorified God on earth before the nations. Also, the king of this nation is to be a model citizen and keep his own copy of the law so that

the divine Father on earth—remained unfulfilled throughout successive generations of compromising and rebellious sons of both David and the nation.

Third, Isaiah 53-55 demands a resurrection. The descriptions in the "Servant songs" have begun to increase in intensity. In Isaiah 50:4-11, the "Servant" is not used as a term, but the identity of the Speaker is revealed at the end, verses 10-11. The nation is contrasted with the Servant, as there is no man who listens or answers from within the nation (50:2), but the Servant listens like a disciple (v. 4). The men of the nation transgressed (v. 1), but the Servant was not disobedient (v. 5). This section reveals that the Servant has had his ears opened to obey, and to suffer in His body by the instruction of the Lord God. The suffering, though severe, is not fatal.

However, in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 the Servant's suffering intensifies as He endured it on behalf of the sins of others (53:4-6, 10-12). The suffering becomes fatal. The Servant is buried in a grave (v. 9), is crushed as a guilt offering (which the sacrifice, of course, never survives; v. 10), and He pours Himself out unto death (v. 12). Yet verse 10 has a most curious conditional clause: "*If* He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring." The Servant was already declared to be both a root and a shoot of Jesse—the coming David. The promise to the historical David is based upon the unchanging character of God (2 Sam 7:8-16). Yet even the Davidic covenant comes with conditions placed upon the Son who would rule forever.

For instance, 2 Samuel 7:14 describes this descendant as a unique Son to God: "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will

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he can fear God and observe His commands. When this happens, Israel as a nation will continue long in the land of promise (Deut 17:14-20).

Supplementary, but tangential, to this argument is the interesting fact that this Davidic Servant is also divine in Isaiah's prophecy. First, in Isa 50:4-11, this person has been given a tongue and body capable of suffering. But He also equates the voice of His servant with the Lord (10), and personally distributes post-mortem torment. See Isa 51:4-5, where the divine Speaker claims virtually all of the functions and activities listed above for Himself. See Isa 59:21-60:9, where the divine Speaker (59:21) refers to Himself as the One for whom the coastlands will wait expectantly (60:8). See Isa 61:1-9, where the divine Speaker refers to other divine Persons: "the Spirit of the Lord God," and "the Lord" who has anointed the speaker (v. 1), who also refers to Himself as "the Lord" (v. 8).

correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men." As it stands it says nothing more than the fact that every sinful descendant of David will receive the deserved chastisement. However, Psalm 132:10-12 explains that this covenant given to David expects a faithful descendant, and even conditions the covenant upon the faithful Seed or Son of David. So, although the Davidic covenant is secure based upon God's character (2 Sam 7:11b-13, 16; Ps 89:1-4), it comes with a conditional expectation of faithfulness on the part of the king (cf. Ps 89:49-51, which was written in Solomon's generation, anticipating the fulfillment).[77] In other words, God has sworn to bring out the conditions that fulfill the covenant. The "if" of Isaiah 53:10 is a condition placed on the fidelity of the Son of David in His sufferings. The Servant becomes salvation for the nation and light to the Gentiles *on the condition that* He pours Himself out to the point of physical death. But, more specifically, the Servant will see His seed *if He dies*. Clearly, verses 9-12 already hint at a physical resurrection, but one could imagine that Isaiah speaks of seeing this fulfillment from heaven in some sort of spiritual capacity.

Isaiah 54-55 describes what it means for the Servant to see His seed. In chapter 54, Isaiah develops the metaphor of a family. God is the husband, and the nation of Israel is the wife. Unfortunately, children are absent due to the barrenness of the nation. Israel has failed to produce the seed. As of yet, there is no fulfillment of the promised seed. The language is incredibly reminiscent of Abraham, Sarah, and the 'impossible' son of promise in Genesis 17. The link with that story will become stronger in Isaiah 55:3, because of the shared reference to 'the eternal covenant.'[78] For now, the seed is nothing more than a stump, a tenth of the nation (Isa 6:13). But that will change when the seed

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[77] Gentry, "Rethinking the 'sure Mercies of David' in Isaiah 55." This article was extremely insightful up to this point of the discussion. He, however, makes no mention of the condition in Isa 53:10 in the article.

[78] Cf. Isa 55:3 with Gen 17:7, 13, 19. It is interesting that the first reference to the "everlasting covenant" is found in Gen 9:16, referring to the covenant with Noah. Isaiah mentions this very reality in Isa 54:9-10 in order to strengthen this promise that Israel will have sons "more numerous than the married women" (v. 1).

includes foreigners who come to the nation and to the future David in faith (Isa 55:4; 56:3, 6-8).

In Isaiah 55:1-3, God calls for those in want to come to Him and live. People must come with spiritually empty hands, acknowledging their lack of spiritual resources. In chapter 54, there is no resource available to birth children from a barren wife. The lack pertains to man's ability to forsake sinful thoughts, and think God's thoughts (vv. 6-13). This requires the Word of God. He compares His Word to rain from heaven that provides bread. A grammatical interpretation of chapter 55 recognizes the bread (v. 2) as the fruit that comes from the "rain" of God's Word (vv. 10-11). In verse 3, God declares that when the peoples will listen to the Lord, He "will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David." This everlasting covenant includes the Noahic, Abrahamic, and the Davidic treaties (Gen 9:16; 17:7, 13, 19). It includes the functions of the Servant previously discussed, but in this context, it specifically refers to verses 4-5. Although these are perfect tense verbs, they are clearly future events in light of the imperfect in 55:3b. Gentry explains,

> Isa 55:3b is expressed in the future tense. In 55:4, however, although נתתיו is a perfect tense, it refers to the fact that Yahweh has planned a future role for the Davidic King to play. This interpretation fully preserves standard usage for the Hebrew perfect and shows how the future orientation is maintained.[79]

The eternal covenant made in verse 3, is described in verses 4-5. The future David will be a leader and commander for the peoples. The future David will see His seed personally, on earth, with nations seeking Him, as He rules over Israel. As it turns out, Isaiah 55:3 makes explicit what was implicit in 53:10—the future David must die and rise physically in order to fulfill this everlasting covenant. The Seed will see His seed in a physical and literal way when He reigns on earth over the nations, as promised to David.

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[79] Gentry, "Rethinking the 'sure Mercies of David' in Isaiah 55," 292.

In light of the grammatical-historical evidence available to the original audience, Isaiah 55:3 is a promise that the Seed promised to Eve, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, then David, will fulfill the conditions of the Davidic covenant by dying as a sacrifice, rising from the dead, and establishing a corporate seed for Israel on the earth. This is good news for a nation that is barren with regard to both the Davidic Seed and the corporate seed.

Paul proclaimed the resurrection of the Messiah in the synagogue on the basis of the authority of the Scriptures themselves. If Paul had resorted to an interpretation that could not be verified from the Scriptures themselves, the Jews would rightly disregard Paul as a heretic. Instead, the Jews refusal to believe the actual word of God had to be exposed (cf. Acts 13:44-47). This is neither an instance of arbitrary *gezerah shawah*, nor of reading a shadowy promise retrospectively in light of Christ. Instead, Paul interpreted Isaiah 55:3 in contextual fashion, giving the sense of the passage as it was intended and articulated by Isaiah. The Christological meaning was literal and prospective, otherwise Paul could not rightly say that this prophecy pointed to Christ or found its fulfillment in Him (Acts 13:33).

Matthew 2:15 and Hosea 11:1

Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 has likely generated more discussion than any other passage with regard to the precise nature of the NT use of the OT.[80] Diverse

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[80] E.g., Peter Enns, "Fuller Meaning, Single Goal: A Christotelic Approach to the New Testament Use of the Old in Its First-Century Interpretive Environment," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 167–217. Enns believes that the way to understand Matthew rich theological is to acknowledge that Matthew's interpretive principles may not agree with ours. Ibid., 198. He says,

> [Hosea 11:1] is not *predictive* of Christ's (or anyone else's) coming but *retrospective* of Israel's disobedience and God's deliberating over what he is going to do about it. It is my opinion that it obscures matters to argue that Matthew is observant of or somehow bound to the historical context of Hosea's words, namely, that there actually is something predictive or eschatological in Hosea 11. What drives Matthew to handle Hosea's words is, in my view, something other than a commitment to how Hosea's words functioned in their original setting. (Ibid., 199)

For Enns, "what drove Matthew's exegesis was not Hosea's own words taken in isolation, but how those words were understood in light of Christ's coming. To put it more forcefully, it is because Matthew *knew* that Jesus was the Christ—writing as he did after Christ's death and resurrection—that he also knew that all Scripture speaks of him." Ibid., 200. He goes on to say that such a reading is not

proponents of interpretation, from rabbinical to redemptive-historical, have pointed to this citation as proof that Matthew did not practice grammatical-historical interpretation.[81] Scholarly conversation would be greatly improved if the conversation partners were as intimately familiar with Hosea's prophecy as Matthew and his audience were.[82]

The greater portion of this section will focus on the original meaning of Hosea, to which the context of Matthew and his use of Hosea 11:1 can be compared. The issue is whether Matthew builds a case for Christ based on the literal meaning of Hosea's prophecy, or whether his notion of *fulfillment* is beyond the scope of Hosea's intent.[83]

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superficial rummaging of the OT, but nevertheless, the theology can only be seen in retrospect after Pentecost. Ultimately, for Enns, the NT is not additional revelation but a more authoritative revelation than the OT: "Even though both Hosea and Matthew are inspired, Matthew has the final word on how Hosea is to be understood which can only be seen by looking at the grander scope of God's overall redemptive plan." Ibid., 201.

[81] E.g., Beale, after summarizing several approaches, says, "Usually such conclusions are made because Matthew (and other NT writers) is being judged by what is often called a 'grammatical-historical' interpretative method and by a particular understanding of that method." G. K. Beale, "The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: One More Time," *JETS* 55, no. 4 (December 2012): 698. And LaSor says, "The literal meaning of Hosea 11:1, however, does not seem to give us any basis for such a fulfilment. Hosea is clearly talking about the exodus of Israel from Egypt." William Sanford LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*," *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 57.

[82] See C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Fontana Books, 1965). In this work, Dodd takes on the theory of Rendel Harris that there was an a-canonical collection of messianic proof-texts which explains the preponderance of quotations in the NT from the same OT passages (see pp. 23-27). Dodd concludes that the evidence is quite the opposite:

> The composition of 'testimony-books' was the result, not the presupposition, of the work of early Christian biblical scholars. The evidence suggests that at a very early date a certain *method* of biblical study was established and became part of the equipment of Christian evangelists and teachers. . . . The method included, first, the *selection* of certain large sections of the Old Testament scriptures, especially from Isaiah, Jeremiah and certain minor prophets, and from the Psalms. These sections were understood as *wholes*, and particular verses or sentences were quoted from them rather as points to the whole context than as constituting testimonies in and for themselves. At the same time, detached sentences from other parts of the Old Testament could be adduced to illustrate or elucidate the meaning of the main section under consideration. But in the fundamental passages it is the *total context* that is in view, and is the basis of the argument. (Ibid., 126)

Ever since Dodd's work, the discussion about the quotation of an OT passage has been more aware of the original context. Some view this contribution as an excuse for hermeneutical positivists to cite connections in support of one's preconceived conclusions, while ignoring those details that do not. E.g., Steve Moyise, "Intertextuality and Historical Approaches to the Use of Scripture in the New Testament," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 26, no. 2 (2005): 455. This certainly is a danger to aspects of hermeneutics in a NT citation of the OT, in that the reader can impose hermeneutical theory on (1) Hosea's meaning, (2) Matthew's meaning, and/or, if he is guilty of eisegesis in either #1 or #2, (3) Matthew's hermeneutic in reading Hosea.

[83] For a helpful description of the differences among typological interpretations with regard to Matt 2:15, see Myron C. Kauk, "Matthew 2:13-15 and the Intention of the Old Testament Author" (paper presented at the Eastern Regional Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Lynchburg, VA, 2016), 3–4; Tracy L. Howard, "The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15: An Alternative Solution," *BibSac* 143,

A careful reading of Hosea is necessary to examine what Hosea is literally *doing* with the text of 11:1. In light of the evidence of Hosea's prophecy given in its historical context, the phrase in Hosea 11:1 is forward looking in anticipation of a gracious redemption of Israel. Such a promise is shocking and undeserved in light of their spiritual harlotry. The nation whom He already called out of Egypt once still needs redemption, and, most importantly for Matthew's use, this redemption is tied to the planting of the Son of David as King over the nation.

Hosea's context. Hosea writes roughly as an early contemporary of Isaiah. His ministry was long, and his writings can be dated from 753-722 BC. In order to consistently honor the historical sense of meaning that is presupposed by the Scripture, the canon preceding Hosea forms the historical background that informs his audience about God, His promise, and their need for His gracious provision. Without such a background, it is quite easy to imagine that "Out of Egypt I called My son," amounts to nothing more than a historical statement about the exodus account as the redemptive-historical hermeneutic maintains. But the historical background and context of Hosea makes such a view problematic. In order to understand what Hosea *meant*—the meaning accessible to the original audience—several observations are relevant for understanding the truth of this profound prophecy.

First, before Hosea wrote, Israel already had a proper knowledge of what is often called the doctrine of "the One and the many." This phrase refers to the notion that there is a singular and corporate element to much of the redemptive promise given in the OT. What is articulated here must be distinguished from the "pesher" interpretation as practiced in rabbinical hermeneutics. This approach equates the reference of Israel to that of the Messiah.[84] As opposed to the pesher interpretation, a proper understanding of "the

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no. 572 (Oct 1986): 320.

[84] Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids:

One and the many" will never be arbitrarily forced over OT passages, but must be recognized when the specific context highlights such a doctrine. While this doctrine explains the intimate connection between the rise and fulfillment of the One with the spiritual welfare and salvation of the many, it should not be confused with an arbitrary equivocation of the referent "Christ" and "Israel" with regard to the term "son" in Hosea 11:1.[85] Nevertheless, this doctrine observes an intimate connection between the two in the use of some technical terms in the Scripture. Three examples would be the terms "Seed," "Servant," and "Son."

"Seed" is introduced in the *proto-euangelion*. In Genesis 3:15, God tells the serpent that He would *place enmity* between the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. At this point in revelation-history, man and Satan are united in sin and rebellion against God. So, the introduction of animosity between the two requires a transformation and restoration of one back to loyalty and allegiance to God in a state of righteousness. This animosity will be placed between the woman and the serpent, and between their respective seed—"between the children of God (who are united with their Savior, the Messiah; cf. Gal. 3:16, 29) and the children of the devil (cf. John 8:44)."[86] The noun זֶרַע is singular, but as a collective noun, it can be conceptually plural, as it often is in the HMT.[87] Here it is inarguably singular. In the third clause, the Seed of the woman is

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William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 128: "In applying the passage to Jesus, Matthew seems to be thinking along the lines of corporate solidarity and rereading his Old Testament from an eschatologically realized and messianic perspective. . . . he evidences a pesher handling of the passage."

[85] This is perhaps the most confusing aspect of some approaches to the Matthew's use of Hos 11:1. E.g., R. T. France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 126. The textual connection between the welfare of the Seed and the blessing of the corporate seed never abuse any text or context. As will be shown below, equivocating on the referent of "son" as being Israel and the Son of God, the Messiah, is not tenable. Instead, this doctrine is upheld in Hosea by the actual connection between the future redemption of Israel out of the future "Egypt," that is Assyria, by means of planting the Seed (Jezreel) in the form of the future Son of David. This divinely given King contrasts the northern tribes' kings, which are impotent to deliver the nation or fulfill redemptive promises. See below.

[86] Greg L. Bahnsen, "At War with the Word: The Necessity of Biblical Antithesis," *Antithesis* 1, no. 1 (1990): 7.

[87] E.g., Gen 13:16. Occasionally, the same context can even distinguish the singular and plural

predicted to bruise the serpent (יְשׁוּפְךָ). This verb is singular, not plural. Yet, on the other hand, the HMT can switch between a singular and plural pronominal suffix when referring to Israel as a nation. Interestingly, the Jewish scribes who translated the LXX follow suit and acknowledges not only is the Seed singular, but personal, by switching from referring to the neuter σπέρματός with an expected neuter pronoun, to using the masculine singular αὐτός and αὐτοῦ later in the verse.[88] Two to three centuries before Christ was born, they translated Genesis 3:15 by taking the seed as singular, referring to a unique individual coming in the line and lineage of mankind. However, subsequent uses of this technical term alternate between referring to a collective whole and a singular representative.[89]

"Servant" is also used of both the Messiah and the nation by biblical authors prior to and contemporary with Hosea. For example, Isaiah and Ethan refer to the Messiah—the One—with this technical term.[90] On the other hand, Isaiah uses the term for the many, the nation.[91]

"Son" (and the relative technical term, "firstborn") is used of both the Messiah and the nation. As far back as Exodus 4:23, God has called the nation His "son," in the context of the esteemed offspring, the preeminent one, the firstborn. In fact, God compares and contrasts His son, Israel, with Pharaoh's firstborn in this verse. Similarly,

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in the same context, e.g., Gen 22:17a (corporate), 17b-18 (singular—notice the third person, singular masculine pronominal suffix on "enemies" in v. 17b).

[88] Cf. the *constructio ad sensum* in Gen 15:13 (LXX), where τὸ σπέρμα is corporate, and so the following verbs are *plural* (i.e., καὶ δουλώσουσιν αὐτοὺς καὶ κακώσουσιν αὐτοὺς καὶ ταπεινώσουσιν αὐτούς).

[89] E.g., the One—Gen 3:15; 22:17 (even the NASB struggles here, and translates the singular pronominal suffix "the gate of *his* enemies" with the plural "the gate of *their* enemies"; the ESV rightly recognizes the singular use of *zerah* instead of the collective); the many—Gen 13:15-16; 15:5; 17:7-8, 19 (especially in contrast to verse 20); Isa 45:19, 25; 53:10. Paul notices the connection between the singular seed and the collective seed (cf., Gal 3:16 and 29). For another Pauline use of "the One and the many," see Rom 16:20.

[90] Isa 42:1; 49:3, 5-7; 50:10; 52:13; Ps 89:3, 20.

[91] Isa 41:8-9; 43.8-13; 43:14-44.5; 44.6-8, 21-23.

Jeremiah 31:9 calls Ephraim God's "firstborn." On the other hand, both of these terms are used for the Messiah. Examples are too many to list, but among the most familiar example would be 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:7; 89:26-27; 132:11-12 (admittedly plural, but that is due to the conditionality placed upon each king in David's line, ultimately fulfilled in the One).

In light of the doctrine of "the One and the many," we find that the welfare, establishment, and reign/dominion of the One is directly tied to the welfare, security, redemption and salvation of the many. Several passages document both the One and the many in the same place.[92] Even though this doctrine could be *abused*—as though it gives readers the right to flip back and forth between Israel and the Messiah as referents, or to imagine that the referents are indistinguishable—it is important to remember that, even before Hosea's prophecy, the welfare of Israel (the corporate seed) and the Messiah (the Seed) are wed together. The argument below documents that, in Hosea's day, an adulterous nation needs to produce the Seed and they have been unable to do so thus far. God's promise to protect and raise that Seed up is an essential aspect of the nation's redemption and deliverance. This doctrine does not originate with Hosea but he upholds it throughout chapters 4-10. The doctrine of the One and the many does not produce an equivocal reference for the term "My son" in Hosea 11:1, but Hosea's prophecy agrees with the rest of the OT that the future planting of the Seed of David is an essential component of what it means to redeem Israel from its spiritual slavery and idolatry.

Second, Jezreel forms an important role in the prophecy as a whole, and in Matthew's reason for seeing fulfillment in Hosea 11:1. The reason for judgment in

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[92] E.g., Ps 89:3-4, 19-29, 35-36; Isa 29:23; 44:3; 53:10; 54:1-17. Of course, by *reading the NT in light of the OT* passages like Mark 10:45 and Rom 5:15-19 explode with a significance that would be lost by reading OT in light of the NT. Paul recognizes that the promise of the land to the seed (καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου; Gal 3:16) is inclusive of the collective of the corporate seed because the promise made in Genesis is given explicitly to the singular seed, which is Christ (and, unsurprisingly, in 12 of the 13 times this phrase is used in Genesis [LXX] it refers to the land promise). Paul continues to explain that the seed of Abraham are *collectively* or *corporately* those who are of Christ (Gal 3:29).

Hosea's first prophecy is the bloodshed at Jezreel by the hands of Jehu (1:4). The meaning of the word "Jezreel" (יִזְרְעֶאל) is important in this context. Etymology of words ought not to be pressed arbitrarily, but in Hosea's prophecy, the play on the meaning of זרע is explicit. The word means "God sows" or "God plants." Though some take this to mean only scattering,[93] the context of Hosea 1-2 makes it clear that the scattering of the nation will culminate in the planting of the nation.[94] "Jezreel" alludes to the concept of the Seed-promise (זֶרַע, is the cognate of זרע) that started with Eve and was subsequently narrowed to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and finally David.[95] While the name itself recalls this redemptive promise, the explicit judgment involved in the prophecy initially sounds like the seed promise is in jeopardy because of the destruction of the house of Israel due to "the bloodshed of Jezreel" (Hos 1:4).

The history of Jezreel and this initial prophecy regarding Jezreel remain critical for understanding Hosea, and, in turn, Matthew 2:15.[96] The discussion about Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 has ignored Jezreel's importance for what Hosea is doing in his prophecy.[97] Even the commentators on the first two chapters of Hosea often fail to

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[93] Burroughs took this term to mean "scattered by the Lord." He appeals to 1 Kgs 22:17 and the word נְפֹצִים ("scatter") in an attempt to prove this. See Jeremiah Burroughs, *An Exposition of the Prophecy of Hosea* (Beaver Falls, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1865), 10.

[94] George J. Zemek and J. Todd Murray explain,

> The main verb that comes from the root of this personal name has to do with sowing, scattering, dispersing. It most likely depicts a metaphorical scattering (i.e., the dispersion) of God's people among the nations (see Zech 10:9). And yet, God's naming of this child in this context is going to set up an astounding antithetical application with Chapter 2, verses 22-23. Therein the LORD reveals that He will ultimately 'sow' them back into the Promised Land. (George J. Zemek and J. Todd Murray, *Love Beyond Degree: The Astounding Grace of God in the Prophecies of Hosea* [The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2017], 30–31)

And, later they write, "So, amazingly, God, by His unfathomable grace, will re-sow them into His Promised Land after His purging judgments are carried out." (Ibid., 31n13)

[95] Gen 3:15; 12:7; 17:9; 21:12; 24:60; 26:3-4, 24; 28:4, 14; 32:12; 35:12; 2 Sam 7:12; 1 Chr 17:11. Both the corporate seed and singular Seed promise are passed inseparably down the Jewish lineage.

[96] Hos 1:4-5, 11; 2:22.

[97] E.g., S. Vernon McCasland, "Matthew Twists the Scriptures," *JBL* 80, no. 2 (June 1961): 143–148; Kaiser, *Uses of the Old Testament*, 47–53; Howard, "The Use of Hosea 11:1 in Matthew 2:15"; John Sailhamer, "Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15," *WTJ* 63 (2001): 87–96; Dan G. McCartney and Peter Enns, "Matthew and Hosea: A Response to John Sailhammer," *WTJ* 63 (2001): 97–105; Enns, "Fuller Meaning, Single Goal," 198–202; Kauk, "Matthew 2:13-15 and the Intention of the Old Testament Author"; Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 105–10, 134–35.

distinguish between Jehu's bloodshed at Jezreel in obedience to the Lord *versus* Jehu's bloodshed at Jezreel which constituted a direct assault on God's redemptive purpose.[98] This distinction is important for understanding both Hosea's judgment and the nature of this prophecy's fulfillment under Herod.[99]

In 2 Kings 9, Elisha sends a prophet to Jehu in order to anoint Jehu King of Israel according to the word of the LORD (vv. 1-3). God commissioned Jehu to be a means of divine judgment against the house of Ahab by striking down the whole house of Ahab (vv. 7-10). Even though Jezreel is introduced as the setting of the story in 2 Kings 8:29, the story of Elisha, the unnamed prophet, and Jehu's anointing are background to the main story. The story of what happened at Jezreel occurs in 2 Kings 9:14-37. This includes the death of Ahab's son, King Joram (v. 24), and Ahab's wife, Jezebel (v. 33), who was eaten by dogs in accordance with the literal sense of the prophecy against her (cf. 1 Kgs 20:21-24). These actions are the fulfillment of Jehu's God-given commission. As every reader knows, Jehu is not doing this out of humble, God-fearing reverence for doing the will of the Lord.[100] Yet, in spite of the very real guilt of impure heart motives, the judgment of Hosea 1:4 is for the bloodshed explicitly. The slaughter of Joram, Jezebel, and all of Ahab's sons, can hardly be the object of this judgment. In fact, these slaughters were previously commanded by God and subsequently praised by God.[101]

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[98] Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 16; Burroughs, *Hosea*, 10–11; Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 13: 51-52; Leon J. Wood, "Hosea," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, Accordance Version 2.1., vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), para. 40147.

[99] Douglas Stuart, *Hosea - Jonah*, Word Biblical Commentary 31 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 29; Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10: 27-28. Stuart makes a passing comment about both slaughters, but Keil and Delitzsch rightly emphasize the important point—Jehu was was praised in 2 Kgs 10:30 for fulfilling his God-given mission, but he was never exonerated for killing Ahaziah, King of Judah, and for the moral compromises with regard to the sins of Jereboam (see 2 Kgs 10:29, 31).

[100] Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, 13: 51-52; Wood, "Hosea," 40139.

[101] Cf. 2 Kgs 9:7-10 with 10:30, "You have done well in executing what is right in My eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in My heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." This commendation is the exact opposite of the Hos 1:4-5.

The "bloodshed of Jezreel" refers to something else. Shockingly, he also orders his men to shoot Ahaziah, the Davidic king of Judah (2 Kgs 9:27). This was entirely outside of his divinely-mandated mission,[102] and it represents a rebellious act of unbelief in the redemptive promises of God given to David. This act is what would come to the mind of the faithful reader of Hosea's prophecy, but this act itself is only the beginning.

In fact, the story of Jezreel does not end there. 2 Kings 10 records the massacre of Ahab's 70 sons (in accord with Jehu's instruction) and the destruction of Baal worship. In 2 Kings 11:1, when Athaliah saw that her son was dead, she initiates the most anti-Christ act of hostility against God's redemptive purposes. She attempts to destroy the Seed-promise by killing every living "seed" (2 Kgs 11:1) of David. This attempting infanticide against David's line would have made God a liar and prevented God from glorifying Himself through the promised Messiah—not to mention it enabled her to reign as Queen for six years. However, God preserved Joash from infancy until he could reign as king at the age of seven (2 Kgs 11:2-12).[103]

For Hosea's purposes, Jezreel represents another demonstration of the wicked adulterous, idolatrous infidelity of the nation to Him as their Groom. However, the judgment "given" through the names of these children is reversed in Hosea 2:22-23. Zemek and Murray explain,

> The final link in this chain, "and they will respond to Jezreel," brings back the name of Hosea's and Gomer's first child. Among other features, the Hebrew root of that symbolic name for Israel is 'to sow.' In judgment God is going to *sow* [in the sense of to scatter, to disperse] His people into captivities as He would soon do; however, in mercy, He would in the future *sow* [in the sense of sow as to plant] them back into the Promised Land (cf. v. 23a). And that land will be abundantly productive.
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> The rest of verse 23 deliberately brings back into the poetic picture the other two children born to Hosea and to Gomer, the prostitute. God promises in verse 23b,

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[102] Of course, it was not outside of God's sovereignty. Instead, this was also God's judgment on Ahaziah for his godlessness. See 2 Chr 22:7.

[103] Matthew's purpose in documenting the Herodian infanticide in Matt 2 already begins to emerge. For the present purposes, the spiritual harlotry of the nation is the cause of such judgments and anti-Christ assaults on the line from Jewish rulers like Jehu, Athaliah, and ultimately Herod.

> "I will have mercy on No Mercy" (ESV). This is a future reversal of His judgment conveyed by the symbolic name of *Lo-ruhamah* for Israel. Finally at the end of verse 23, the third child enters to complete the picture: "And I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people,' and he shall say, 'You are my God'" (ESV). The severance of relationship conveyed by this name, *Lo-ammi*, will also be reversed, and an intimate relationship will be reestablished in the future.[104]

This reversal of judgment opens hope for the adulterous prostitute of God's people. Just when all hope was lost in Athaliah's day, Joash appeared as a long-shot hope.

Third, Hosea uses this reference to past redemption in such a way that it is a literal promise of future redemption. The more familiar the reader is with Hosea's prophecy, the more obvious this forward-looking anticipation becomes. The forward-pointing effect of Hos 11:1 can be seen in two major ways: (1) *structure*, and (2) *themes*. As far as Hosea's *structure*, the episode of Hosea's marriage to Gomer (chs. 1-3) parallels Yahweh's marriage to Israel (chs. 4-14). In fact, they consist of a structural and conceptual parallel. The observations below highlight the significance of what Hosea is *doing* with the prophecy *introduced* in 11:1.

With regard to prophetic structure, the episode of Hosea's marriage consists of interlocking expressions of judgment and promise. The first three chapters consist largely of judgment, with a few shocking promises of restoration (Hos 1:10-2:1; 2:14-23; 3:5). Similarly, chapters 4-10 consist of judgment with a smattering of promises (Hos 6:11b-7:1a; 10:11-12). However, chapters 11-14 form an inversion of emphasis, consisting largely of promise with a portion of judgment (Hos 11:12-13:3). The picture of Hosea's marriage to Gomer (chs. 1-3) with both its judgment and promise, is matched by the picture of Yahweh's covenant marriage to Israel, consisting of judgment (chs. 4-10) and promise (chs. 11-14).

Just when it seems that Hosea's marriage to Gomer is hopeless, God promises to redeem Israel *again* (Hos 2:14-23). In the Hosea/Gomer episode (chs. 1-3), Hosea actually redeems Gomer in 3:1-3. Even before chapters 4-14, the reader of Hosea learns

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[104] Zemek and Murray, *Love Beyond Degree*, 52–53.

from Hosea 2:14-23 and 3:1-3 that the redemption of Gomer represents the redemption of the nation Israel.

And again, before chapters 4-14, the reader learns that the future redemption of Israel rests in the welfare and protection of the Son/Seed of David. This is implicit in the Jezreel reference, but it is explicit in Hosea as well. Hosea 1:11 says "And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one leader, and they will go up from the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel." This verse promises a national reunion, and national leadership under one leader, and then calls it the day of Jezreel. In spite of the infidelities of the nation and the symptomatic assault on the Davidic line that comes through individuals like Jehu and Athaliah, one leader will rise in connection with a national regathering. The connection between the redemption of the "Son," Israel, and the "Son," the Messiah, is also explicit in 3:5: "Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to the LORD and to His goodness in the last days."[105] After many days without a Messiah (3:4), Israel will be redeemed and the sons (plural) will return to seek the Lord in fear and reverence with Christ reigning as King.

Additionally, several of Hosea's themes demonstrate that the parallelism between the two episodes of the prophecy demand a forward pointing anticipation on the part of God's relationship to Israel. Without a familiarity of both episodes (chs. 1-3 and 4-14), this reality can be missed. In other words, Hosea 11:1, removed from its context, leaves the reader of Matthew 2:15 ignorant of what Matthew sees in Hosea on the merit of the prophecy itself. The first theme has to do with children. In the Hosea/Gomer episode, a parallel exists between the judgment given through the names of Hosea's children (ch. 1) and the promised restoration in the reversal of the names of the children

[105] As mentioned above, the *connection* must not be confused with *identity*. The promised rule of the Son of David can be *distinguished* from the trembling of God's Son, the nation, but it cannot be *separated* from such a reality.

(ch. 2). The three names are Jezreel ("may God make fertile,"[106] or literally, "may God sow"), Lo-ruhamah ("no compassion"), and Lo-ammi ("not My people").[107] The connection of these children with Israel's future can be seen from three lines of evidence: (1) the names of the children, 1:3-9, (2) the restoration of the judgment represented in the names of the children, 2:22-23, and (3) God declares that the marriage of Hosea to Gomer reflects His marriage to Israel in 2:19-23, before Hosea actually redeems Gomer in 3:1-2.

The second theme is that this state of idolatry/adultery is a state of spiritual slavery which has left the nation in need of a post-Exodus redemption. This parallels Gomer's infidelity. The nation's spiritual harlotry is a regular refrain.[108] This harlotry leads to their future slavery, which is the third theme.

Third, a future and imminent Egypt-experience will require spiritual redemption. "Egypt" is more than allusion to the historical reference. Israel has earned a free trip back to Egypt.[109] If Matthew were looking for a backward pointing reference to Egypt, he skipped the obvious examples in the book of Exodus.[110] This can be seen by the references to Egypt and the passages of this prophecy about redemption. In Hosea 7:10-11, Israel is indicted for calling on Egypt and Assyria instead of God. Egypt equals

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[106] *HALOT*, 2:405.

[107] Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 10:27, write, "The prophet is directed by God as to the names to be given to his children, because the children, as the fruit of the marriage, as well as the marriage itself, are instructive signs for the idolatrous Israel of the ten tribes." Similarly, Stuart, *Hosea - Jonah*, 28, observes that these three names of children, in addition to *Not My People* and *No Compassion*, parallels the use of Isaiah's children's names with prophetic messages in Isa 7:3; 8:3-4, and with the Messianic names in 7:14 and 9:6, as well as other named entities like Oholah and Oholibah (Ezek 23).

[108] Hos 4:2, 10, 11, 12 (2x), 13, 14 (2x), 15, 18; 5:3, 4; 7:14; 9:1. Several of these references also include literal harlotry or adultery as an evidence of spiritually playing the harlot. Additionally, spiritual harlotry is described without the terms like "harlot," "harlotry," or "adultery" in Hos 4:17; 7:8-9; 8:8-12; 9:10; 10:2, 5, 13; 12:11; 13:6.

[109] To understand "Egypt" in Hosea, the reader must of course be familiar with the book of Exodus, but see also Hos 2:15; 7:11, 16; 8:13; 9:3, 6; 11:1, 5, 11; 12:1, 9, 13; 13:4.

[110] Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 106–7.

Assyria and trusting in either equals spiritual idolatry. Hosea 7:13c says, "I would redeem them, but they speak lies against Me." They have been redeemed, historically, but without a doubt they need a post-Egyptian redemption from their idolatry. As a result of trusting in Egypt or Assyria and telling lies against God, they will receive derision when they are sent back to "Egypt" (7:16). Hosea 7:16 refers to Israel's punishment in Egypt *in the future*.[111] Hosea 8:13; 9:3, and 6, explain that they will go back to "Egypt." However, Hosea 10:6-7 and 11:5 declare that Israel will not go back to geographical Egypt. Instead, literal Assyria will actually be their "Egypt," because they refused to repent.

This impending judgment leaves post-Exodus Israel in need of divine deliverance. In fact, their future return to Egypt/Assyria is due to spiritual harlotry and thus it requires spiritual redemption. Their sacrifices will not deliver (Hos 8:13); Israel's king cannot deliver (10:3); the nation is bent on turning from God (11:5-7). This bleak picture is answered in a profound declaration of redemption out of such spiritual and national demise (12:9; 13:4). The needed redemption is ransom from the power of death (13:14). But in light of these prophecies, Israel cannot be redeemed while telling lies against God or trusting in foreign nation (cf. 7:13, 16). So, God calls the nation to repent (14:1-3), promising them the healing necessary to recover from such apostasy (14:4). In fact, His anger has been turned away, and He will redeem Israel by producing divine fruit (14:8). But, how will God redeem them? What is this fruit?

The final theme pertains to the need for a future King David. In the Hosea/Gomer episode, David (undoubtedly, the promised seed of the historic David, who died 250 years prior) is promised (Hos 3:5). This fulfillment will be marked by a return to both God and this Messiah. This final theme that makes the future aspect of this prophecy explicit is twofold: (1) Israel's current king is impotent and is connected to national self-

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[111] יִפְּלוּ ("they will fall") is in the imperfect tense. The clause describing this future punishment requires an implied יִהְיֶה (see NAS; ESV; KJV; NIV).

reliance, and (2) Israel's needed King is powerful to fulfill all this prophecy and must be planted/sown by God.

Israel's infidelity has left them with no King. Hosea acknowledges that they have a king, but they obviously lack the King. This accusation builds on the previous episode (1:11; 3:5), and is increasingly explicit in this episode. God rebukes Israel for bearing its own fruit, when He says, "Israel is a luxuriant vine; He produces fruit for himself" (Hos 10:1). This is not a compliment, as the next verse proves—the fruit is faithlessness, guilt, and sacred pillars (10:2). The situation has become so bleak that the only reasonable conclusion would be the acknowledgement that there is no *real* king. Hosea says, "Surely now they will say, 'We have no king, for we do not revere the LORD. As for the king, what can he do for us?'" (10:3).[112] He also says, "Samaria will be cut off *with* her king like a stick on the surface of the water" (10:7). And, finally, he says, "Thus it will be done to you at Bethel because of your great wickedness. At dawn the king of Israel will be completely cut off" (10:15). This last passage compares Bethel's impact on Israel to Shalman's destruction of Beth-arbel, which is a historical reference likely unknown to current scholarship.[113] Nevertheless, this legendary destruction would no doubt have been familiar to Hosea's audience. God has indicted the idolatry of Bethel, and even referenced the city by referring to Beth-aven ("House of Iniquity"), a city east of Bethel, throughout this prophecy (Hos 4:15; 5:8; 10:5).[114] But in the final verse before Hosea 11:1, the connection between the inability and extermination of Israel's man-made king and her idolatry is explicit. Without the King necessary for her deliverance, they are still stuck with the impotent royalty as described in chapter 10.

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[112] Israel has no king, because God has not yet established the Messiah. However, Israel does have a king who will not be able to help at all, as the rest of the verses quoted here demonstrate.

[113] Thomas Edward McComiskey, "Hosea," in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992), 1:181.

[114] Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 30.

In a rare warning from the final prophecy (chs. 11-14), God says,

> *It is* your destruction, O Israel, that *you are* against Me, against your help. Where now is your king that he may save you in all your cities, and your judges of whom you requested, "Give me a king and princes"? I gave you a king in My anger and took him away in My wrath. (13:9-11)

The fruit that Israel has produced for himself is an impotent king who cannot deliver them from God's wrath against their idolatry. "They have set up kings, but not by Me; they have appointed princes, but I did not know *it.* With their silver and gold they have made idols for themselves, that they might be cut off. He has rejected your calf, O Samaria, *saying,* 'My anger burns against them!' How long will they be incapable of innocence?" (Hos 8:4). God does not recognize their kings and they are associated with the idolatry of the nation. National idols will be destroyed, the idolaters will sow (יִזְרָעוּ) the wind and reap the whirlwind (8:6-7; cf. 12:1ff.).

On the other hand, the future provision of David will be accompanied by a trust in God and what He alone can produce. The return from spiritual infidelity will be marked by a return to God and David the King with trembling (Hos 3:5; cf. 1:11). Divine fruit is the difference in the promise of Hosea 14:8. God looks forward to the fruit that comes from Him, "It is I who answer and look after you. I am like a luxuriant cypress; from Me comes your fruit."[115] What fruit do they lack except the Seed of Eve/David, the Son of David as King? In Hosea 13:14 God declares, "I will ransom them from the power of Sheol. I will redeem them from death."[116] The redemption anticipated is from death and hell. This passage connects the theme of the King with the previous theme of slavery and the need for spiritual redemption.

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[115] This language resembles Isa 5 and 54, which compares Israel to a vineyard without grapes and a barren woman, who, like Sarah, had yet to produce the Seed who would dispossess all nations.

[116] Zemek and Murray write, "Although some versions render these lines as questions, that understanding is imposed upon the Hebrew text, which is best rendered, 'I will ransom them from the power of Sheol. I will redeem them from death.'" Zemek and Murray, *Love Beyond Degree*, 212–13. They are quoting the Holman Christian Standard Bible.

Finally, in 11:1, the reader appreciates the forward-looking context as developed in the connections between the parallel episodes of chapters 1-3 and 4-14, as well as the forward-looking themes of the whole prophecy.[117] Judgment and just threats have just been given, yet, remarkably, divorce is not in Israel's future. When God speaks in Hos 11:1, He is introducing the entire section of promised restoration for this marriage (chs. 11-14). 11:1 is, on the one hand, the introduction to the whole promise of those chapters.[118] So, Matthew's reference to Hosea 11:1 not only shows a familiarity with the previous context, but also it focuses on the promise of the subsequent prophecy.

Beyond the future anticipation of 11:1, there remains the question of the referent of the technical term, "My son." This term must not be viewed as an equivocal term that can waffle back and forth between the referents "Israel" and "the Messiah."[119] The context makes it unambiguously clear that the referent is "Israel."[120] For instance, in verse 2, Hosea uses the plural to explain this referent: "The more they called them, the more they went from them; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning incense to idols." Clearly, Christ is *not* the son in Hosea 11:1.

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[117] E.g., Hos 13:4 is another past-tense verse that has future significance: "Yet I *have been* the LORD your God since the land of Egypt; and you were not to know any god except Me, for there is no savior besides Me." This verse also contains a historical glance back to Exodus, and it also carries a future significance for the state of the marriage.

[118] Dodd, *According to the Scriptures*, 126.

[119] E.g., Kaiser says,

> Eventually, 'My Son' was connected with the coming scion of the house of David (2 Sam 7:14), even the One whom the God of heaven would install as His righteous king in Zion as ruler over all the earth and nations (Ps 2:7), the Son of the Holy One whose name is unknown (Prov 30:4). This designation 'My Son' became a technical term and an appellation that could be applied either to the nation as the object of God's love and election or specifically to that final representative person who was to come in Christ. (Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, 49)

In addition, the nation is called "My son" (Exod 4:22). Both "Israel" and the Davidic Messiah can be referred to with this term, but the question is which one is in view here? Kaiser rightly emphasizes the connection between the two referents theologically, but he wrongly blurs the referent so as to make the two indistinguishable.

[120] The LXX translates "My son" in the plural—τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ. Even though this is not the best translation, it reveals that the translators correctly recognized the corporate/plural element of "son" in this context.

Nevertheless, in light of all the observations made above, this reference to Israel is clearly both reminiscent of the historical redemption from Egypt *and* forward-pointing with regard to the future redemption from her idolatry, inability, and spiritual death. At the time the prophecy was given, Hosea was addressing an apostate nation enslaved in spiritual harlotry. The trip to "Egypt"/Assyria had already been determined. They were deeply committed to idolatry, and trusted in the very powers that were to enslave them. They remained impotent against Assyria with kings of their own making. Israel is God's son and this son is lacking the future David on the throne (Hos 3:5; cf. 1:11). The nation has been unfaithful and has earned a trip back to the slave market. Remarkably, Hosea's behavior foreshadowed Yahweh's. The future significance of 11:1 becomes explicit in the future tenses of the subsequent verses. Hosea 11:1-4 describes the tragic state that Israel is *still* in, in spite of being previously redeemed. In verse 8, it becomes clear that God has been provoked by the sheer absurdity of redeeming Israel once, only to leave her in a state of idolatry and Messiah-less hopelessness. His compassion cannot allow Israel to be given up, lost through a divorce that would have seemed reasonable. In spite of Israel's harlotry God is committed to her still. In verses 9-11, the reader is given very encouraging promises. These verses describe God as a roaring lion bringing the nation out of Egypt in the future. This is reminiscent of the prophecy in Numbers 23-24.[121] In Numbers 23:21-24, a king is involved in the deliverance out exile, and the nation is described as a lion rising up. Then, in Numbers 24:5-9, God is crushing the nation's adversaries and He is the lion doing the devouring. God functions in the identical fashion as the Angel of the Lord with regard to Israel's adversaries (cf. Exod 23:20-23 with Num 24:8). Additionally, this passage also connects the deliverance of Jacob "out of Egypt" with the exaltation of a King and His kingdom:

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[121] Sailhamer, "Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15," 94–95; Beale, "The Use of Hosea 11:1," 708.

> How fair are your tents, O Jacob, Your dwellings, O Israel! Like valleys that stretch out, like gardens beside the river, like aloes planted by the LORD, like cedars beside the waters. Water will flow from his buckets, and his seed *will be* by many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted. God brings him out of Egypt, He is for him like the horns of the wild ox. He will devour the nations *who are* his adversaries, and will crush their bones in pieces, and shatter *them* with his arrows. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him? Blessed is everyone who blesses you, and cursed is everyone who curses you. (Num 24:5-9)

Finally, Numbers 24:17-19 connects the seed promise of crushing the head of God's enemies, and thus, of the enemies of His saints, with the restoration of dominion to man—a true link between the seed promise, reversing the curse, and restoring dominion to man:

> I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel, and shall crush through the forehead of Moab, and tear down all the sons of Sheth. Edom shall be a possession, Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession, while Israel performs valiantly. One from Jacob shall have dominion, and will destroy the remnant from the city. (Num 24:17-19)

So, Hosea 11:9-11 is loaded with prophetic, future significance. Yet, even within Hosea, there is another important allusion. Verse 11 reads, "They will come trembling like from Egypt and like doves from the land of Assyria; and I will settle them in their houses, declares the LORD." This recalls the fulfillment of Hosea 3:5, when Israel trembles before God and David her King. God will personally fulfill His redemptive promise regarding the Seed's dominion and rule.[122]

The reader cannot forget the parallel between the two episodes of this prophecy. Israel's brazen harlotry makes Hosea 11-14 more shocking than Hosea's redemption of Gomer off the market after her harlotry (Hos 3:2). Yahweh approaches this adulteress nation while she is in the slave market after all her adulteries. He gets up close and personal. Will He reject her? After chapters 4-10, the attentive reader might easily imagine that He will. Instead of spitting in her face, and mocking her for not looking to Him to provide the King He promised, He soberly says, "I already married you once. I

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[122] Cf., Gen 1:28; 3:17-19; Num 24:17-19; Ps 8; Hos 3:5; 11:10-11.

did not bring you out of Egypt to leave you in Assyria without a Messiah. I am aware that your welfare rests on Me raising up David. The day of Jezreel will come."

According to the literal, grammatical-historical presuppositions of the Scripture, the referent of "My son" in Hosea 11:1 is Israel. In light of the prophecy as whole (both chs. 11-14 and the whole book of Hosea) this future, spiritual redemption of Israel requires God to plant/sow the Seed, a future David, who will redeem the nation from death and slavery. This redemption connects a King of God's own provision with the nation's reliance on God and David. In other words, the fulfillment of Israel's redemption from future Egypt requires the planting of the future David.

The Jewish audience was intimately familiar with the story of Hosea. Former Rabbi Charles Feinberg records that every orthodox Jew recites Hosea 2:19-20 as he places the phylacteries on the middle finger of his left hand.[123] They knew Jezreel, Egypt, Assyria, Admah and Zeboiim.[124] They also knew the nation deserved to be destroyed and judged as a nation, or to see the royal seed exterminated by an Athaliah. And, they also knew that God had promised to prevent such a termination of His promise.

Matthew's context. First, the apologetic context of Matthew is important. Matthew was a Jew, writing to a Jewish audience. Matthew assumes familiarity with Judaism—both its customs and its Scripture. Matthew makes the case that Jesus was the King of Israel. His Jewish audience would have taken the OT literally (as Instone-Brewer demonstrates inductively from Jewish exegesis at the time of Matthew's writing[125]). Moo and Naselli write,

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[123] Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 21. The passage says, "I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know the LORD."

[124] Hos 11:9. These two cities are hinted at in Gen 19:25. In Deut 29:23, they are explicitly linked to Sodom and Gomorrah.

[125] David Instone-Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis Before 70 CE* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (P. Siebeck), 1992), 159.

> For all our legitimate emphasis on Christ as the center and fulfillment of revelation and as the 'hermeneutical key' to the OT, we sacrifice too much by refusing to allow the OT to stand to some extent as an independent witness to the NT. 'All the while that we insist that nothing is exempt from the judgment of Christ—even our faith-understanding of the Old Testament—we must remember that the Old Testament was and, in some sense, is the criterion whereby Christ is Christ.' How can people validate the church's claim that it (not Judaism) is the true 'completion' of the OT if its (not Judaism's) use of the OT cannot demonstrably accord with the OT's meaning?[126]

Second, Matthew uses πληρωθῇ, which rules out the explanation that Matthew is borrowing familiar biblical language to make a different point than the actual text cited.[127] Instead, the fulfillment terminology means "to complete a period of time, *fill (up), complete*."[128] Matthew records that the circumstances of Jesus' preservation from infanticide fill up and bring to completion the expected redemption of the adulterous nation. Herod is another king in the long line of imposters who are nothing more than the fruit of man, rather than the royal fruit produced by God.

When Matthew's adulterous generation (Matt 12:39) showed modest curiosity, and ultimately hostility toward the Seed, the Son, the Servant (see Matt 11-28), he documented that God's betrothed was still as unfaithful as Gomer. The inner hostilities

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[126] Douglas J. Moo and Andrew David Naselli, "The Problem of the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 712–13, quotation from James A. Sanders, "Habakkuk in Qumran, Paul, and the Old Testament," *Journal of Religion* 39 (1959): 235.

[127] Douglas J. Moo, "The Problem of Sensus Plenior," in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, eds. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1986), 187–92.

[128] BDAG, 828; italics original. This context fits the definition, "*make full* or *complete.*" LSJ, 1420. Moo and Naselli say, "The NT authors use ['fulfill' (*plēroō*)] as a general way of describing the relationship of the OT to the NT. It describes how the new, climactic revelation of God in Christ 'fills up,' brings to its intended completion, the OT as a whole (the preparatory, incomplete revelation to and through Israel." Moo and Naselli, "The Problem of the New Testament's Use of the Old Testament," 710. Although this definition of 'fulfill' rightly acknowledges that the word looks towards a completion, it goes too far in applying to the Matt 2:15 context as a bringing of the Exodus motif to a climax in Jesus, God's "greater son." Moo and Naselli are on the right track, but the application settles for a more general sense of fulfillment instead of recognizing how specifically Matthew's context actually does bring the *future anticipation* of Hosea to completion.

Additionally, Chou explains how "fulfill" can properly function even in contexts where there is not such an explicit forward-looking revelation as in Hosea. He writes,

> For example, James 2:23 claims Abraham's that near-sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22:1-19) fulfills 'Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him as righteousness' (see Gen. 15:6). In context, James does not claim Genesis 15:6 was a prophecy. Rather, the fulfillment centers on how Abraham's works exhibited the maturation of his faith (vv. 21-22, not the use of τελειόω). In that case, fulfillment refers to the fruition of certain theological concepts. (Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers*, 132–33)

towards the redemptive promise that are symptomatic of an unbelieving generation showed up *again*. Due to the infidelity of the Jews in Matthew's day, Israel had a king of her own making, not the fruit promised by God. Herod, in Jehu-/Athaliah-fashion, was insecure about remaining the King of Judea. He killed every male under the age of two in Bethlehem. Precisely here, at the deliverance from this blow, Matthew recognizes fulfillment of the prophecy—not when Jesus comes *out of* Egypt, but when He goes *into* Egypt. If the fulfillment was merely some pattern of Jesus following the nations footsteps, or in the departure *out of* Egypt,[129] then Matthew should have referenced Hosea 11:1 after Matthew 2:21.[130] When Matthew says that Jesus, the true Son of David, was divinely preserved from infanticide under the hand of Herod, and safely delivered to Egypt, he did not quote Hosea 11:1 four verses early. Instead, the reference was clear. This was the fulfillment of redeeming Israel out of spiritual slavery requires God to sow the Seed of promise in the face of royal hostilities. The day of Jezreel is coming in due time. Regardless if his message was believed, what Matthew was saying was accessible for those who read Hosea's prophecy according to the grammatical-historical sense.

If Matthew were looking for a verse that documented the historical exodus, where would he find the most obvious example? Of course, Exodus is the obvious choice for both Matthew and his Jewish audience. However, he does not quote Exodus, but Hosea 11:1. Why? The quotation fits in Matthew's gospel because Hosea is doing something different with this statement than Moses was with his historical account of the exodus. Hosea's prophecy is an *actual* prophecy that requires fulfillment. The "son" in

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[129] E.g., Johnson, *The Old Testament in the New*, 55, argues that Matthew is using typology here—the nation's return from Egypt typifies Jesus' return. However, this misses the significance of Hosea's connection between the planting of the future David and the redemption of the nation out of Egypt. If Matthew is recognizing typology, it would be between adversaries against the redemption of the nation, such as Balaam (Num 24:7-9, 17-19), Jehu (2 Kgs 9:27; 10:12-14), and Athaliah (2 Kgs 11), which then typify the antitype of Herod (Matt 2:13-15).

[130] Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New*, 51–52; Beale, "The Use of Hosea 11:1," 705–7.

Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15 is none other than the nation of Israel.[131] Matthew did not misread Hosea's prophecy and interpret "My son" to mean Christ, even though that phrase can refer to the Messiah in other contexts.[132] Instead, Matthew rightly understands that the fulfillment of this anticipation of the redemption of Israel from slavery to spiritual adultery requires the planting of the future David. The nation is in need of redemption because her idolatry has left her with the fruit of humanly produced royalty. Only the planting of the future David in the face of idolatrous hostilities can deliver this nation. The Jewish audience of Hosea and Matthew had access to the anticipation of the Seed promise. They anticipated this event. The faithful knew that the promise would have to rest in the power of God, not the ability of the nation to fulfill the conditions of the Mosaic or Davidic covenant.

Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 leaves no reason to assume that Matthew was doing something different than Hosea. Of course, Hosea did not know about details like Caesar and his census, or the fact that Herod would be ruling when the Seed would be born. Nevertheless, the literal sense of Hosea's prophecy anticipates the establishment of the Davidic King in order to actually deliver Israel from spiritual rebellion. Matthew knew that Jesus' deliverance from Herod's decree was critical for the Seed promise. He was not creative, but only observant to notice the thread of fulfillment between Jehu-Athaliah-Herod, the connection between Gomer's adultery and Israel's idolatry, and the need for a King planted by God. This fulfillment was not an element of inspiration and revelation on the part of Matthew. Rather, the mystery of how Jesus of Nazareth was the King of Israel, and *not embraced by His people* was an element of revelation that

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[131] The ESV, KJV, and NIV, all use "son" in both Hos 11:1 and Matt 2:15. Ironically, NASB uses "son" in Hos 11:1, but "Son" in Matt 2:15.

[132] E.g., Ps 2:7-12; 1 Chr 17:13. See 2 Sam 7:14; Zech 12:10 and Ps 89:27.

required an explanation for those who were familiar with the OT. Instead, the fulfillment element of Hosea's prophecy was an issue of interpretation on the part of Matthew.

For Matthew to practice "Christological" hermeneutics in order to prove to Jews that Jesus is the Messiah would not be compelling at all. If the Jews must believe that Jesus is the Messiah on some other basis than what Hosea intended by what he wrote, then that "some other basis" is more authoritative than God's revelation in Hosea. On that supposition, Matthew would be calling his Jewish audience to identify Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, not as proven by Hosea's prophecy, but on the authority of his Christological hermeneutic.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 and Exodus 17

1 Corinthians 10 is often used as proof that the typological use of the OT is a *hermeneutical* issue.[133] The important question is this: did Paul *interpret* Christ as a fulfillment of the rock because of NT revelation about Christ's provision for His people, or did Paul see Christ's ministry to the Israelites on the basis of a grammatical-historical exegesis of Exodus? A familiarity with both the context of 1 Corinthians 10 and Exodus 17 prove that the latter option is correct—Paul recognized Christ's ministry to the nation on the basis of the exegetical details found within the narrative itself.

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul warns against the danger of downplaying temptation due to presumption about spiritual privilege. Paul reminds the Corinthians about the spiritual privileges that Israel enjoyed: experiencing the deliverance and display of divine power in the form of the cloud, passing through the sea, immersion[134] into Moses'

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[133] Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 202–5. A massive chasm exists between the recognition of types and *typological hermeneutics*. The first is grounded in the text and recognizes biblical types, and the latter searches for typical connections in the text upon which to *interpret* and is controlled by the subjective comfort level of the interpreter regarding the validity of those connections.

[134] Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: American Bible Society, 1994), 493, writes, "It is more probable that copyists replaced the middle ἐβαπτίσαντο (which corresponds to Jewish practice, according to which the convert baptized himself) with the passive (which is the usual expression in the case of Christian baptism, e.g. 1.13, 15; 12.13; etc.), than

ministry by means of the cloud and the Red Sea crossing, and partaking of spiritual food and spiritual drink, which was certainly a spiritual provision. Manna was miraculous and God-given, but it was physical food. Paul is here referring to spiritual privilege and provision.

However, in verse 4b, Paul proves that they were all enjoying spiritual sustenance by grounding the argument in this claim, "*for* they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ." The people all enjoyed spiritual provision of the most profound variety. They were not just partaking in Moses' ministry, but in spiritual provision that came from the second Person of the Trinity. Paul is, in fact, interpreting Exodus according to the Scripture's own presuppositions about hermeneutics. By paying attention to the literal context of Exodus, the reader of 1 Corinthians picks up on the significance that Paul intended for his exhortation.

First, it is clear that there are at least two divine people in the Torah. God speaks in plural form (Gen 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; see ch. 2). Then, in the account of Sodom and Gomorrah, the reader discovers that the person in human form who is talking to Abraham is the LORD Himself (Gen 18:33). In the actual account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, there are two people who are both called LORD, one on earth who is raining fire from the other LORD who is in heaven (Gen 19:24). On Mount Moriah, the Angel of the Lord speaks of God, *and* references the idea that Abraham is not withholding Isaac "from Me," when no one but God Himself told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac (Gen 22:12).

Exodus 23:20-23 is perhaps one of the most important and overlooked Christological passages in all of Scripture. Here, God declares that He is going to send an angel before Israel to guard and guide them (v. 20). In verse 21, God cautions the people to be watchful, attentive, or on guard (הִשָּׁמֶר) in His presence. They must obey His voice

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vice versa."

for the very reason that God's own name is in Him. The Hebrew word for 'name' refers not so much to the epithet or label, but the reputation or character that the epithet represents. The Angel of the Lord shares the same character or name as Yahweh Himself. God even equates the authority and identity of the words that each Person might say: "But if you truly obey his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries" (v. 22).

The implications of this passage on other passages seem endless.[135] However, with a view to understanding the exodus narrative, the reader of the Torah does well to examine Genesis 16:7-11; 21:17 [Angel of God]; 22:11-15; 31:11 [Angel of God]; 48:16; Exodus 3:2 [Angel of God]; 14:19. Especially important is the identity of this Person in the exodus account. Exodus 13:21 says, "The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night." The LORD Himself was in the pillar of cloud/fire in order to guide them, as Exodus 23:20-23 said that He would do. Interestingly, with Pharaoh in pursuit in chapter 14, Israel needs to be guarded from behind. Exodus 14:19 explains, "The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them."[136] The Angel of the Lord, the divine Person distinct from God, who nevertheless shares His name, is *following Israel*. Understandably, Paul said, "they

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[135] Subsequent revelation about the Angel of the Lord demonstrates that witnesses who saw Him were afraid they might die for beholding God (e.g., Judg 6:21-24; 13:1-23). This Angel almost killed Balaam, the adversary of Israel (Num 22:31-33); He killed 185,000 Assyrians in one night (2 Kgs 19:35); He killed 70,000 Israelites in judgment for David's sin (1 Chr 21:14-15—this reference is powerful in light of 2 Chr 3:1, because the Angel of the Lord stops the plague at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, which is the site of the future temple where Christ Himself would come as the substitutionary lamb). Malachi anticipates that the Angel of the covenant (Mal 3:1), this divine Person, will show up personally in the temple. After Isaiah promises comfort at the personal arrival of Yahweh in Jerusalem (Isa 40:3, 9), Mark combines all three passages (mainly Isa 40:3 and Mal 3:1, but the personal pronouns are from Exod 23:20-23) in his prologue (Mark 1:2-3).

[136] Undoubtedly, Paul knew of the identity between the Seed/Son of David, Servant and the Angel of the Lord in passages like Exod 23:20-23; Isa 4:2-5; 11:1ff; 42:1ff; 44:3; 59:21-60:2; 61:1; Zech 3:1-5; 12:8; Mal 3:1.

were drinking from a spiritual rock which *followed* them, and the rock was Christ" (1 Cor 10:4; italics mine).

Second, in the account of Massah and Meribah (Exod 17:1-7), it is clear that Israel needs literal water because they are physically thirsty. Moses strikes a literal rock that miraculously brings forth literal water.[137] However, Paul is not saying that the meaning of Exodus is unclear, a mere shadow of meaning focused by the lens of the NT. Rather, he is making a point based on the literal "human" meaning of the text regarding the divine Person who was ministering to the nation; namely, that Person provided spiritual sustenance that the nation truly needed. Paul calls this Person the "spiritual rock," which was certainly *not* the literal rock that provided literal water. So, the "spiritual rock" provides spiritual water. Paul's point in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 could be paraphrased, "Corinthians, you know that our forefathers in the exodus partook of massive spiritual privilege. It is critical that you do not overestimate the privilege you enjoy in the NT church, as if you are unique because you are benefitting from Christ when they did not. Instead, consider the fact that Christ was *actually* ministering to that generation personally. He was the One who provided their spiritual sustenance. And yet, even with His personal ministry, they fell prey to apostasy by giving into the seemingly 'little' sins like greed (6), idolatry (7), immorality (8), testing God (9), and grumbling (10). If these things happened to them, then what would happen to us if we think we can disregard slight temptations by presuming on Christological privilege?"

Understanding Exodus helps to understand Paul when he says, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man" (v. 13a). This commonly misused phrase is popularly construed to encourage those in temptation that what they are

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[137] Julius Kim, *Preaching the Whole Counsel of God: Design and Deliver Gospel-Centered Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 97, is exemplary of the redemptive-historical handling of this passage when he appeals to other passages—Deut 32:15b, 18; Ps 78:35; 95:1—in order to make the vague assertion that in the Exod 17 context, "the Rock has *connotations* of a Creator, a Savior, a Redeemer."

experiencing is not atypical. Instead, Paul is warning the Christian that the typical, common sins are the more subtle dangers because these will produce apostasy. Sins like grumbling overtook our forefathers and they *also* benefitted from Christ's *personal* ministry. Interestingly, the next clause begins with the disjunctive, if not contrastive, δέ, "…but God is faithful." This only makes a contrast if Paul was putting the reader on edge with sober urgency in 13a. Taking this phrase as an encouragement makes no sense with the contrast. The redemptive-historical interpretation of this passage diminishes the severity of the warning. The wilderness generation and the NT church alike actually shared in the personal ministry of the second person of the Trinity. To the degree that the reader is ignorant of this, the significance and thrust of the warning is muted.

A tight and precise connection *literally* exists between the temptation facing NT Christians and that of the wilderness generation. Paul is saying, "Since no temptation has overtaken you except what is common, be on guard, because even grumbling was sufficient to lead those who tasted of Christ's ministry into apostasy." Paul understands that the wilderness generation had the benefit of Christ's personal ministry, and yet they apostatized due to complaining, grumbling, immorality, etc. When the contemporary reader understands how *literal* Christ's personal ministry was in Exodus, the warning against apostasy becomes even more alarming. NT presumption ("We have Christ, so it will turn out better for us . . . ") has no place in the presence of such a warning.

When a reader fails to understand the personal ministry of the second person of the Trinity to the wilderness generation, he misses the depth and urgency of Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 10:13. Paul is making a connection between the spiritual demise of the Israelites and professing Christians who have all benefitted corporately from Christ's ministry but give in to "common" temptation. The warning is severe. The common-to-man temptations lead to apostasy from Christ's ministry—the same Person who ministered in Exodus 14-17 to the rebellious wilderness generation.

Conclusion

The passages that initially appeared to present the greatest difficulty for the presuppositional hermeneutic turn out to actually demonstrate its consistency. Whenever inspired authors interpret the OT, they consistently implement what the Scriptures presuppose about language, meaning, and interpration. In other words, the hermeneutic *exhibited* by the Scripture, is consistent with what is *presupposed* by Scripture.

According to Jesus Christ, the failure to see Him in the OT comes from a combination of two possible sources: (1) unbelief (cf. John 5:38-40, 46-47), and (2) ignorance of the Scripture's *actual* content (cf. Matt 22:29-32). Unbelief and ignorance are not mutually exclusive (cf. Luke 24:25). Jesus taught that true belief in Him came from interpreting the OT according to the intention of the human author (John 5:46-47), which is *why* He paid such close attention to the literary context, grammar, lexemes, and historical situation of the OT. Even Christ arrived at the divine intention of the text by means of the human intention. Rather than making any particular theology the interpretive lens, He looked to the human intention of each text because this is also the divine meaning. Jesus never bifurcated His Father's intention from the prophet's intention in the writing of Scripture. On the contrary, belief in Christ depends upon believing the human author: "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:46-47).

CHAPTER 4

HERMENEUTICS AND HOMILETICS: THREATS AND BENEFITS TO THE PULPIT

This chapter brings the previous argument to bear on the pulpit. The homiletical implications of hermeneutics are manifold, and the threats fall into two broad categories. These correlate generally with the conversation partners of chapters 2 and 3, respectively. First, when interpretive authority is located outside the Scripture, the pulpit suffers from a lack of certainty and confidence about the divine authority of its message. An exclusively biblical interpretive authority is necessary to fulfill the mandate "Preach these things with all authority" (Titus 2:15). Second, preaching loses the whole counsel of God when theology crosses into the area of interpretive authority. Finally, this chapter concludes with homiletical benefits of the presuppositional hermeneutic.

Hermeneutics and homiletics can be distinguished, but not separated. Greidanus says, "Although this conflict can be called a *homiletical* controversy, it will soon become apparent that *hermeneutics* plays a major role. We do not consider this an illegitimate intrusion on the part of hermeneutics; on the contrary, it demonstrates once again that it is impossible to reduce homiletics to some formal technique concerning the art of communication."[1] And later he says,

> Because homiletics deals with a special kind of communication—communication in the *church*—there is much more to it than a formal description of "how to get the message across." It is equally (if not more) concerned with "how to *get* the message [i.e., material homiletics]." . . . It is by way of "material homiletics" that homiletics is firmly linked with the central concern of biblical hermeneutics.[2]

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[1] Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 4.

[2] Ibid., 5.

For this reason, the substantial discussion about interpretation is warranted because homiletics are inseparably linked with hermeneutics. The emphasis on hermeneutics is not because homiletics are less important, but because they are *so* important. Hermeneutics are to homiletics as the lens is to reading. If a reader with 20/20 vision wears Coke-bottle glasses, accurate reading will be inhibited. Or, to improve the analogy, if a reader suffers from significant vision impairment, cosmetic eyeglasses will not afford him any clarity.

The hermeneutic of the preacher determines the homiletical content in a causal way. The preacher who seeks to obey the command "Preach the Word" (2 Tim 4:2) will only succeed if he interprets God's Word in the way that God requires. In other words, preachers who start with the text of Scripture, and interpret it according to whatever fanciful impulse they want, will not be faithful to obey God's command.

Interpretive Autonomy and The Gagging of God

The first threat to the pulpit comes from the hermeneutic that is not grounded exclusively in a revelational epistemology. The hermeneutics represented in the conversation partners from chapters 1 and 2 stood on any combination of rationalism, empiricism, or existentialism. Peter Leithart purportedly wrote, "If there's a post-Reformation epistemological crisis in the West, we [are] all in it, not just Protestants. None of the strategies for building consensus—neither Protestant nor Catholic—have been successful in uniting the *whole* church."[3] The pulpit displays the hermeneutical ποῦ στῶ; this visible edifice stands or falls depending on the invisible epistemological foundation. Therefore, when Leithart recognizes that our epistemological crisis can be seen in schism, he is pointing to the an important and visible implication of epistemology—consensus may be lost due to epistemological starting points.

[3] As quoted by Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 21. This author had trouble verifying the source because the webpage was no longer valid.

This is certainly a correct observation—different epistemologies will not be universally accepted—but, more importantly for the pulpit, if this concern influences a preacher's epistemology, hermeneutic, or homiletic, then he has compromised or failed as a herald of God's message. Heralds cannot afford to be concerned about human response to a divine message, lest they prostitute their calling; they must be consumed with the notion of pleasing the King whose message they herald.[4]

The fact remains that in every age faithful preaching of God's word, with a hermeneutic built on a revelational epistemology, will never be popular. A revelational epistemology may expose the epistemologies of rationalism and existentialism in slightly

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[4] E.g., Jer 17:15-16; 23:16-40; 2 Cor 4:5; Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:3-6. Friedrich says, "It matters a great deal which authority the herald serves. His status depends on that of the one who commissions him, and on the nature of the commission. κῆρυξ is certainly not just a term of reproach as the previous quotations might suggest. It can also be a title of honour. In the Roman period the herald of the Areopagus is a highly regarded personage." Gerhard Friedrich, "Κῆρυξ (Ἱεροκῆρυξ), Κηρύσσω, Κήρυγμα, Προσκηρύσσω," *TDNT*, 3:686.

On his qualities, Friedrich writes,

> If a herald does not have a powerful voice, he is useless. This condition is related to his task. In Hom. he summons men to the assembly and warriors to battle. In the assembly itself he is responsible for peace and order. In trials he has to pacify the people if they become too excited and if those present try to give vocal support to one side or the other. . . . Among the Lacedaemonians the office was hereditary and passed down from father to son even if the son did not have a good voice. Elsewhere those seeking to be heralds had to submit to a voice examination. . . . The herald had to declare official decrees and announcements. He could do this only if he had the voice. When the herald went through the streets or opened the assembly, he seems sometimes to have used a trumpet to gain a hearing. But a good herald regarded it as a point of honour to manage without an instrument.
>
> Apart from the predominant questions of the voice, certain qualities of character were required. In many cases heralds are very garrulous and inclined to exaggerate. They are thus in danger of giving false news. It is demanded, than, that they deliver their message as it is given to them. The essential point about the report which they give is that it does not originate with them. Behind it stands a higher power. The herald does not express his own views. He is the spokesman for his master. . . . It is unusual for a herald to act on his own initiative and without explicit instructions. In the main the herald simply gives short messages, puts questions, and brings answers. . . . The good herald does not become involved in lengthy negotiations but returns at once when he had delivered his message. In rare cases he may be empowered to decide on his own. But in general he is simply an executive instrument. Being only the mouth of his master, he must not falsify the message entrusted to him by additions of his own. He must deliver it exactly as given to him. (Ibid., 687)

And, on inviolability on diplomatic missions, Friedrich writes,

> When a κῆρυξ goes to a foreign land, he is not only under the protection of the country which he represents should anything befall him. He is also under the special protection of the deity.
>
> Hom[er] calls heralds ἄγγελοι Διός . . . They are holy and inviolable. An offence against them is ἀσέβαια and brings down the wrath of the gods. To them one may not apply the ancient principle: As the message, so the reward. One may be angry at those who send them, but they themselves are not to be punished. They are inviolable because they are under divine protection. Even if their news is unwelcome, they must be hospitably received.
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> . . . Violation of a herald is an offence against the gods . . . This is why the herald can travel unmolested in a foreign country. He can speak openly, having nothing to fear. (Ibid., 688-89)

different ways, but the offense is the same. Such preaching will be as unpopular in the Enlightenment as it is with postmoderns today.

God's say-so is all that matters for the herald. His role requires that he not tamper with the message, flatter the hearer, or concern himself with how many professing Christians refuse to accept a message on the evidence of God's self-testimony. The herald will never be faithful if he desires acceptance with the postmodern. Such a listener refuses to allow God to speak authoritatively—that it, to determine meaning—in His Word by upholding an unbiblical presupposition about the role of the reader on the meaning of a message. When the epistemological crisis is evaluated on the criteria of producing consensus, man remains the authority in the pulpit. Typically, "man" retains authority over the message by means of the audience, as Paul teaches in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (see below). In this way, the preacher becomes an unwitting pawn in the hands of the audience. In this way, a preacher will sell a revelational epistemology and a divinely-authorized hermeneutic to attain consensus. But when the epistemological crisis is evaluated on the criterion letting God's authority speak to His church before He returns, then God speaks with authority in the pulpit as Lord of His church.

Rejection of Divine Authority

By using an interpretive approach that is not given by God, the interpreter effectively gags God by interpreting *what* He said in a *way* He never authorized. To the degree that the reader inserts his own words or hermeneutic into God's Word, to that degree God's message is perverted.[5] The transmission of God's voice will be jammed by every interpreter and preacher who discerns the meaning of His message with the static interference of his own choice.

[5] See Jer 23:36 in the discussion below.

When the reader of God's Word gets to use a lens of his own choosing, the reader's desire has now affected God's meaning without warrant. Chapter 2 contrasted presuppositional hermeneutics and the hermeneutics that do not stand on the ποῦ στῶ of Scripture. For example, reader-response interpretation is condemned as disobedience (1 Sam 15:1-31); subjective presuppositions affect objective meaning and contaminate the message (Jer 23:15-40). Similarly, consensus frequently leads to God's condemnation (e.g., Num 13:1-14:12). Such an approach leans on a democratic majority among sinners about meaning, which is no safeguard for understanding what God said. The authority on all of these approaches may tend towards rationalism, empiricism, or existentialism, but regardless of the form, these hermeneutics do not stand firm on the revelational epistemology. A hermeneutic that God never authorized, leads to interpretive conclusions that God never authorized. In this way, a preacher can quite easily construct a sermon that starts with the divinely-authorized text, but end up with a sermonic content that lacks divine-warrant. The result is a twisting or perverting of God's Word.[6] The sermonic content derived in this way is refuted by God as coming from man, not Himself. God says,

> "The prophet who has a dream may relate *his* dream, but let him who has My word speak My word in truth. What does straw have *in common* with grain?" declares the LORD. "Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock? Therefore behold, I am against the prophets," declares the LORD, "who steal My words from each other. Behold, I am against the prophets," declares the LORD, "who use their tongues and declare, '*The Lord* declares.' Behold, I am against those who have prophesied false dreams," declares the LORD, "and related them and led My people astray by their falsehoods and reckless boasting; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they furnish this people the slightest benefit," declares the LORD. . . . "For you will no longer remember the oracle of the LORD, because every man's own word will become the oracle, and you have perverted the words of the living God, the LORD of hosts, our God." (Jer 23:28-32, 36)

Hermeneutics without divine-warrant threaten to plague an entire generation of preachers. Without an inoculation, the pulpits of this country will continue to hold a copy

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[6] See Jer 8:8-9; 2 Pet 3:16; Jude 4.

of God's Word, but they will lose the voice of God for the voice of the human interpreter. The clear transmission signal from God will be jammed by static interference from man.

Reverence for Human Authority

The second implication is the precise corollary of the first. The rejection of divine authority turns with reverence toward human authority.

The greatest challenge to researching the homiletical implications of such a hermeneutic on preaching is the difficult task of finding examples of sermons derived from a compromised epistemological starting point. For interpreters, literary critics, and students of Christianity who do not submit their hearts to Christ as Lord, such a move is not only expected but consistent with their presuppositions. Stanley Fish is not a professing believer[7]; Molly Worthen, whose fascinating volume on Evangelicalism's internal struggle for interpretive authority between text and reason[8] comes from the perspective of a "secular pragmatist."[9] The way in which Worthen and Fish go about interpretation appears to be consistent with their view of the Scripture.

However, the hermeneutics built upon human epistemologies, as documented in chapter 1, do not lend themselves to faithfulness in the pulpit as demanded by the Scripture. The list of notable contributors to these hermenetuics hardly includes any who are known for their preaching ministry. For example, David Kelsey was a professor of theology at Yale[10]; Christian Smith teaches sociology at Notre Dame[11]; Merold Westphal

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[7] R. Albert Mohler Jr. and Stanley Fish, *Is There a Truth in This Class? A Conversation with Stanley Fish*, 2016, 50:18-60:10, accessed August 23, 2017, http://www.albertmohler.com/2016/03/28/thinking-in-public-stanley-fish/.

[8] Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism*, (Repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[9] Molly Worthen, e-mail message to author, August 19, 2018.

[10] David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), back cover.

[11] Christian Smith, *The Bible Made Impossible: Why Biblicism Is Not a Truly Evangelical Reading of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2011), back inside flyleaf.

taught philosophy for over twenty years at Fordham University[12]; James K. A. Smith teaches philosophy at Calvin College[13]; Stanley Hauerwas is a professor of theological ethics at the Divinity School, Duke University[14]; Stanley J. Grenz was Pioneer McDonald Professor of Theology at Carey Theological College, Vancouver British Columbia, and Professor of Theological Studies at Mars Hill Graduate School, Seattle Washington[15]; Carl Raschke is professor and chair of the department of religious studies at the University of Denver.[16] Perhaps a notable exception to this is the volume of sermons preached by the professor of theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Kevin J. Vanhoozer,[17] whose hermeneutical authority stands on an admixture of epistemologies.[18] While these names may also preach in various degrees, pastors are notably absent from this list. The impetus behind such hermeneutics does not come from the pulpits.

A hermeneutic that prohibits certainty and authority tends to conflict with the mandate given to pastors—"Preach the Word" and "These things speak and exhort and reprove will all authority. Let no one disregard you" (2 Tim 4:2; Titus 2:15). A hermeneutic built on the authority of man leads to a view of interpretation that opposes obedience to such commands. This is the height of arrogance (cf., Ps 119:21), and utterly

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[12] Merold Westphal, *Whose Community? Which Interpretation?: Philosophical Hermeneutics for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), back cover.

[13] James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Relativism?: Community, Contingency, and Creaturehood* (Grand Rapids: Baker Pub. Group, 2014), back cover.

[14] Stanley Hauerwas, *Unleashing the Scripture: Freeing the Bible from Captivity to America* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), back cover.

[15] Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), back cover.

[16] Carl Raschke, *The Next Reformation: Why Evangelicals Must Embrace Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), back cover.

[17] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Pictures at a Theological Exhibition: Scenes of the Church's Worship, Witness and Wisdom* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2016).

[18] See appendix 1.

consistent with the exaltation of human authority. Such a fear of man produces a snare in every area of life (Prov 29:25), let alone the pulpit (Gal 1:10; 1 Thess 2:3-6).

An important parallel exists between the authority of the message and the reception of the message. Throughout the Scripture, God explains that the reception of the message depends upon the heart of the listener, particularly whether that person is seeking God's glory or man's. Divine-glory seekers will embrace the message with divine authority, but human-glory seekers will only embrace a message grounded in human authority.[19] This connects directly to the pulpit and the authority behind the message. In 2 Timothy 4, Paul warns Timothy that the church will increasingly turn toward teachers who tickle ears. In fact, the audience itself "will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires" (4:3). Since the participial phrase κνηθόμενοι τὴν ἀκοὴν is nominative, Paul is clearly saying that the audience is behind the tickling of their own ears. Paul is pointing out that popular preachers are increasingly those who give the people what sounds good and feels good. Increasingly, those in the church will seek their own glory and pleasure rather than God (cf. 2 Tim 3:1-5). These will not tolerate men who preach the Word any more than those who sought glory from men tolerated Jesus' message or the divine authority behind it (John 5:41-44; 7:17-18). Such men "turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Tim 4:4). In this way, man rejects divine authority ("the truth") and exalts human authority ("myths").

The New Homiletic—now quite an outdated title—exemplified by Eugene Lowry and Fred Craddock, illustrates the impact that extra-biblical hermeneutics have on preaching. The New Homiletic sought to appeal to the audience with preaching that made no demands. Rather, it brought the audience through a narrative experience in a way that avoided the sense that there was an authority. The homiletic upholds and operates on the

[19] See John 5:41-44; 7:17-18; 8:43-45; 12:37-50.

conviction that the audience remains autonomous.[20] This is a perfect corollary to 2 Timothy 4:1-5. The preaching of the New Homiletic tells the audience that there is no divine truth here, no universally binding, divine authority to which the listener *must* yield. To be sure a choice *must* be made, but no man has the *right* to say "No" to the claims of Christ. This is to reject the gospel and call God a liar, leaving a soul eternally guilty. The New Homiletic tickles the ear by flattering the listener with the illusion that he has the prerogative to do as he desires with the message.

In a similar way, sermons derived from an extra-biblical hermeneutic actually stand on the authority of man. Those who desire to hear a naturally-pleasing [ear-tickling] message will flock to hear such preaching, because (1) the message originates from man[21], and (2) it matches the desires of the audience.[22] The preacher who seeks human glory finds a ready-made audience who seek human glory. Only those who seek the glory from God will listen to a message from God, interpreted with a hermeneutic from God.

To the degree that the preacher's hermeneutic is not warranted by God, his message is merely human. His sermon will be compromised at the foundational level. God has a strong opinion about messages purported to be a declaration of divine revelation that have been influenced by human interpretation. He prohibits such messages from ever being called divine truth. Instead, they are nothing more than human dreams, a corrupted version of divine truth (Jer 23:28, 36). The pulpit must not only start with God-given content, it must derive its content through a God-given hermeneutic. Otherwise,

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[20] E.g., Fred Craddock, *Overhearing the Gospel: Revised and Expanded Edition*, Revised and Expanded Edition. (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2002), 90, 92, 96–97, 99, 105, 108.

[21] See John 5:43-44: "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the *one and* only God?"
John 7:17-18 "If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or *whether* I speak from Myself. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him."

[22] 2 Tim 4:3 " . . . but according to their own lusts, they will heap up teachers for themselves, by itching their ears" (translation mine).

what would have been a divine message is transformed to something merely human, and the preacher speaks merely on personal authority.

The famous preacher of the fourteenth century, John Wyclif, remains timelessly relevant for preachers. He wrote, "Whereupon, since the Holy Scripture which is perceptible to the sense states such sensible things collectively and they are conformed to the sense of the Lord, it is obvious that a person who understands these things in a perverted way creates for himself a text which is not Holy Scripture."[23]

Theological Interpretation and the Whole Counsel of God

The section examines how preaching loses the whole counsel of God when theology crosses into the area of interpretive authority. As noted in chapter 3, the redemptive-historical hermeneutic influences Reformed pulpits more than any other theological approach. In spite of the diversity within the movement, there are some implications of this approach that flow out of this approach to the varying degrees that the preacher holds to the hermeneutic. In other words, this discussion of pulpit implications in no way insinuates that a proponent of the redemptive-historical hermeneutic can never allow the text to objectively correct his theology, but it does happen, to some degree, in spite of the redemptive-historical model itself.[24]

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[23] John Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, trans. Ian Christopher Levy, The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 121.

[24] The same inconsistency is true of someone who claimed to practice the presuppositional hermeneutic. One can claim that the Scripture should produce a theology from the exegetical basis up, but in spite of such an approach commit the error of reading theological concerns without warrant into a passage of Scripture. The models are not so mechanistic as this. In the same sense that a godly, humble man who practices the redemptive-historical hermeneutic can find clarity in the text that transcends his current theological big-picture, a sinfully fearful, or selfishly ambition application of the presuppositional hermeneutic will inhibit the text, to one degree or another, from "accomplishing its work in those" who hang onto sin (to make a corollary to 1 Thess 2:13).

When Theology Trumps the Text

There is nothing wrong with systematic theology, systematic conclusions, and the function of biblical theology, *per se*. The problem is when theological conclusions become an interpretive *a priori*. When big-picture theology protects the interpretation of individual texts, it becomes increasingly difficult to prevent that theological conclusion from trumping the text. In fact, if theological conclusions are actually functioning as an interpretive *a priori* they actually make it impossible to prevent theology from overtaking the text. This is not so say that theological reading cannot, from time to time, protect the interpreter from theological error. This inevitably happens whenever another infallible text is properly interpreted, and the reader can now know for certain what the current text *does not mean*.[25] Nevertheless, current theological convictions must not predetermine the meaning of individual passages of Scripture. In the analogy of the high-definition picture, pixels—individual texts—become blurred or muted when interpreted from the big-picture perspective—the generic canonical context. A theological conclusion from one passage must not become a hermeneutical *a priori* in another passage. What God says in one passage should not be imposed on another passage. In this way, passages begin to lose their own distinct contribution to the big picture. Instead, each and every utterance from the mouth of God stands on its own authority. When theological conclusions are consistently upheld as a hermeneutical *a priori*, no amount of further study of God's Word could ever improve, sharpen and refine the interpreter's current theology.

Big-picture emphasis has become more and more common in hermeneutics and homiletics. Certain terms reflect the hermeneutical trend to view individual texts in light of the big-picture rather than *vice versa*, such as: *metanarrative*,[26] *big picture* or

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[25] See Matthew W. Waymeyer, "The Analogy of Faith: Exegetical Tool or Post-Exegetical Check?" (paper submitted to Advanced Hermeneutics: NT 851, The Master's Seminary, December 1999), 7.

[26] Glenn Watson, "Big Story Preaching: Nurturing Gospel-Shaped Disciples through Metanarrative Proclamation," (a aper presented at the Evangelical Homiletics Society, Louisville, KY, 2015), 194–205; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 49n48.

grand drama,[27] *canonical context*,[28] and *canonical-linguistic* or *Theo-drama*.[29] Even *Sola Scriptura* can tend to minimize the significance of individual texts by exalting *organic* interpretation over fragmentary, *synthetic* as opposed to atomistic.[30] To be sure, there is a danger of atomizing one particular passage and making it the key for understanding *all* of Scripture. This leads to confused statements, such as whether one should read Romans 4 in light of James 2, or *vice versa*. Both passages must speak with their full force, because to mute either one steals clarity and precision from the understanding of the church. The only accurate way to let God speak before theology becomes an *a priori* is to start with the pixels of each passage, rather than reading either in light of the other.[31]

But nevertheless, the sermon will lose textual precision when the big-picture takes priority over the interpretation each text, rather than allowing those interpretive conclusions to sharpen the resolution of the big-picture. By way of illustration, this paper is being typed on a screen that has 1440 x 900 resolution, totaling just under 1.3 million pixels. In order to illustrate what concerns some big-picture proponents, one must admit that a single pixel abstracted from the big picture is virtually without meaning. Possibly a really keen eye could recognize the color of one pixel—suppose it is green, but the proper

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[27] Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 245.

[28] See Richard S. Briggs, "Christian Theological Interpretation of Scripture Built on the Foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets: The Contribution of R. W. L. Moberly's Prophecy and Discernment," *JTI* 4, no. 2 (2010): 311–12; Robert W. Wall, "Intertextuality, Biblical," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, eds. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 542.

[29] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 16–29, 37–112.

[30] Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura*, 135–37, 146–47, 221–24.

[31] I.e., if Rom 4 is read over the top of Jas 2, the unique contribution that James makes about the nature of saving faith and false profession will be lost. The smug and complacent, intellectually Reformed listener, will miss out on needed conviction—namely, that the profession of faith that lacks effectual fruit is a faith that does not justify, sanctify, or save in any way. However, if Jas 2 is read over the top of Rom 4, the unique contribution that Paul makes about God's justification of ungodly sinners is something that is not based upon works will be removed or obscured in the minds of the church. In this instance, the person who trusts in self, or struggles with trusting in self, will miss the message of imputed righteousness he desperately needs to hear.

significance of that color without the big picture would be meaningless. Theological interpretation wants to protect the significance of that pixel by starting with the observation that the big picture is a football field, and that is what gives significance to the single green pixel. However, what the theological approach fails to recognize is that the big picture is only as high-definition as the number of individual pixels are working properly. For the sake of argument, suppose that the big picture is generally accurate, and the viewer is truly looking at a football field. When the viewer stops to look closely at a minority of pixels that portray the football field, he notices several that are pitch black. By starting with the big picture, the viewer knows that grass is not black, and assumes that these pixels must not be working properly, and decides to interpret them in light of the big picture. By viewing them in accord with the surrounding pixels, it is not so much that he will no longer recognize the football field, but the high-definition portrayal of each and every blade of grass, with powerful contrast between the brilliant green of the grass and the black of each shadow that highlights the contours of each blade will be lost. In this way, bringing the big picture into the equation of what to do with each pixel actually loses contrast and definition. The precision of the big picture depends on letting each pixel contribute its unique exegetical and infallible detail to the entire big picture.

For example, Poythress describes the Trinitarian theology derived from the Scriptures as a whole, as equally the meaning of individual texts specifically. He writes,

> By contrast [with the Enlightenment ideal], within a Trinitarian context, meaning coinheres with import. The sense of a particular text coinheres with the senses of all other biblical texts. The senses of the particulars are never understood apart from the import of the whole plan of God. Hence, differences about the sense of a particular text reside within a larger framework, in which the differences are often more like nuances within a larger whole. In agreement with Augustine, *we regard as secondary the question concerning which truth is taught in a particular text, provided that we acknowledge truth as a whole*.[32]

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[32] Vern S. Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1999), 187; italics mine. Also, see Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 38, 207–11, for an attempt to make Christian theology equally ultimate with hermeneutics. Such a practice is exposed on pp. 344-49, where Vanhoozer claims that he is more interested in exposing alternative control beliefs, rather than *unbelief* (344), and turns around to claim that Christian doctrine both is verified by canon and community (347), and is not verified

The big-picture approach can exalt theology to the point that unity and agreement about theological differences cannot be resolved on the basis of studying the Word of God. When implemented consistently, such a presupposition leads only to strengthening one's preconceived theological notions. Poythress has to admit, "The fact is that Christians disagree with respect to the doctrine of God. As long as such differences exist, we cannot expect to have generically 'Christian' biblical interpretation. Rather, we will have Arminian, Calvinistic, and other kinds of biblical interpretation."[33] This is certainly a problem. However, the intrusion of theology into the interpretive authority actually accentuates this problem, rather than opening a way for the Scriptures to provide the needed unity (cf., Eph 2:20-22; 4:1-16).

The Danger of Seeing an Infallible Text through a Fallible Lens

At some point, the theological lens becomes indistinguishable from the lens of tradition. This point goes back to the objections of chapter 2, and the accusation that this project claims to do something biblical without admitting that it is merely a personal tradition imposed upon the Scriptures themselves. Of course, such a charge could be true, but for it to be made with any *authority*, the charge must demonstrate where an articulation, doctrine, or treatment of the Scriptures actually violates or fails to account for the text itself.

In varying degrees, the theological emphasis of the redemptive-historical interpretation struggles to recognize the fallible nature of theological articulations and systematic expressions of theology, be they ever so articulate and noble. While most, if

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on the basis of a *episteme* or *techne*, citing Kierkegaard (349). It begs the question, How are "Christian" doctrine and text equally ultimate, when it appears that fallible community and/or fallible Kierkegaard trump a textually derived epistemology? It would arrogant to critique such an approach on the basis of a different theology that was equally unfounded on the text of Scripture. Nevertheless, it is necessary to do so if the Scriptures actually yield a different view about the authority of community or Kierkegaard.

[33] Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation*, 215.

not all, of the redemptive-historical interpreters read for this project would acknowledge that theological articulations are fallible, and the Scriptures alone are infallible, there seems to be a tendency to lean on theology to resolve exegetical threats rather than to critique theological articulations on the basis of exegesis.

By way of example, this author has long-admired the writings of Robert Reymond.[34] He has demonstrated that he retains a proper appreciation for history and theological articulations, but will not allow anything to encroach on the exclusive authority of the Scriptures. This approach has not gone without critique. Keith Mathison, for one, has called out Reymond for critiquing the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. Importantly, Mathison is not critiquing Reymond's exegesis, but he complains that Reymond's critique of the creed exemplifies a "naive belief in the ability to escape one's own noetic and spiritual limitations" in the thought of a Reformed theologian.[35] Here is an example of how theological interpretation becomes a priority over ongoing exegetical study. If Mathison were interested in giving a rigorously biblical defense of the creed, then he should simply point out a more faithful handling of the Scripture. But to critique the very attempt to articulate divine truth with greater precision actually *canonizes* all of our current theological flaws and inconsistencies by making them untouchable from the standpoint of the biblical text.

In its more extreme forms, the view that the apostles did not stick to the grammatical-historical, literal sense of the Scripture leads away from, not just the literal sense, but the notion that there actually is a right or wrong conclusion about biblical interpretation to begin with. For example, Enns writes,

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[34] E.g., Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976); Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1998); Reymond, *John Calvin: His Life And Influence* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2008).

[35] Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2001), 241.

> Perhaps we should think of biblical interpretation more as a path to walk than a fortress to be defended. Of course, there are times when defense is necessary, but the church's task of biblical interpretation should not be defined by such. I see regularly the almost unbearable burden we place on our preachers by expecting them, in a week's time, to read a passage, determine its meaning, and then communicate it effectively. The burden of 'getting it right' can sometimes be discouraging and hinder effective ministry. I would rather think of biblical interpretation as a path we walk, a pilgrimage we take, whereby the longer we walk and take in the surrounding scenes, and the more people we stop and converse with along the way, the richer our interpretation will be.[36]

Apparently, Paul was guilty of burdening Timothy (2 Tim 2:15ff) and hindering his effective ministry. But that does raise the question, *Who gets to define faithful preaching, Paul or Peter Enns?*

However, in its more moderate forms, the position stills lacks an answer for how to firmly land on the divine meaning, when this meaning exceeds the human meaning. In other words, if we look to later revelations that were transmitted through a human author, then how is the divine meaning of the latter revelations to be discovered? If divinely intended meaning transcends the human intention, then the only evidences for determining that divinely intended meaning are fallible.[37]

Finally, by way of subjective evidence, this author's ministerial experience indicates that the stronger the bent toward theological interpretation, the more reluctance there is to talk about the exegetical details of the text. This observation in no way presumes upon motive—in fact, this author would presume the absolute sincerity of the most avowed theological interpreters who live pure lives and walk humbly with the Lord

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[36] Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 152.

[37] Of course, at the risk of repetition, the divine vs. human meaning debate often appeals to later divine revelations that give a fuller sense of previous articulations. The question remains *Why should the inspired writings of, say, Paul and John have static or fixed divine meanings when Isaiah and Jeremiah are capable of receiving a fuller sense?* If the NT is capable of a divine meaning in the way the OT is, *On what criteria is the distinction to be discovered?* This leaves the reader interpreting the infallible text with a fallible lens. Some believe that the Spirit will produce meanings in Paul's writings that he did not intend, e.g., Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 186–89. These must posit a view of an infallible interpreter—sort of an individualized spin-off of Aquinas' doctrine of the infallible church (cf. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 188; Susan Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise? The Search for Certainty in the Early Modern Era* [New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012], 181–83.).

in their personal life. However, the observation still deserves mention because a trust in theological conclusions must never trump a trust in the particular texts God has given. When this happens, the interpreter will be tempted to rely less on the text when the exegetical details seem to confront theological systems. If this happens in the pulpit, then the people of God begin to hear more of human theology and less of God's Word. Sermons that interpret God's Word with a presupposed theology can lose the precision contained in God's Word. Individual texts that appear "broken" from the vantage point of theological conclusions actually shock and pierce the heart with divine clarity. The path to more biblical theology in the pulpit starts by giving preeminence to each text God has spoken.

The Scope of Revelation Becomes Constrained by Pet Theologies

When Redemptive-Historical preaching calls for a Christ-centered and cross-centered emphasis, they are demanding something that may not always fit the text *as God wrote it*. In other words, the question becomes *Whose emphasis is the most important, the preacher's or God's?* Did God occasionally forget to make the cross prominent enough that he needs us to emphasize it over the emphasis that He gave in any particular text?

This can easily be seen in Jesus' preaching. All should agree that a preacher cannot *properly* be more Christ-centered than to interpret and preach the text the way that Christ did. Nevertheless, the Sermon on the Mount gives an exposition of the law that fails the standard as articulated by some proponents of the redemptive-historical approach. Jesus never mentions the cross. In fact, when He preaches about righteousness, He speaks of practical righteousness, not primarily of justification.[38] Jesus is content to give a proper explanation of the OT law, what it reveals about God's will for man. The

[38] If Matt 5:6 were speaking of imputed righteousness, then Jesus is pronouncing a blessing on those who are not justified, rather than those who are. Instead, He is describing kingdom citizen as those who long for more practical righteousness (cf. Matt 5:10-12, 16, 20).

Sermon on the Mount rises from the text of God's Word rather than an ulterior requirement that would constrain preaching from being more or less than what the text demands.

Paul also failed to be cross-centered in his second epistle to the Thessalonians. Certainly, he preached the cross and Christ to the church personally (1 Thess 2:2). But Paul is concerned that the scope of revelation be constrained by pet theologies and he sets the record straight by explaining many truths that are not properly Christocentric or cross-centered by way of interpretation *or* content. When this becomes the standard for preaching, the church suffers and becomes malnourished. No one better knows what the church needs to hear, and with what balance it needs to hear it, than does the Lord of the church Himself. Rather than inhibit the spiritual depth and growth of the church by focusing on the preacher's pet theologies, the church should hear theology in biblical balance.

How the Presuppositional Hermeneutic Benefits the Pulpit

If the presuppositional hermeneutic is biblical in its epistemology, presupposition, and practice, then the greatest benefit of such an approach is this—God wants His Word to be read and proclaimed this way. To please Him in our hermeneutic is benefit enough. However, as is always the case, obeying God is always for the good of man (Deut 6:24). Although the benefits are virtually innumerable and could hardly be listed, let alone discussed, a few that hold significance for the pulpit are worthy of mention.

The Scriptures Stand as the Exclusive Interpretive Authority

The nature of Scripture's authority is constantly being questioned, and especially so in the discussion of hermeneutics. This discussion could not be more relevant. While the discussion is always timeless for evangelicals, the 500th anniversary

of Calvin's birth and Luther's 95 Theses (2009 and 2017) may have contributed to bringing *sola scriptura* and interpretive authority to the forefront again. The nature of Scripture's authority has been retrieved in creative ways to include community, tradition, and interpretive plurality as a lesser authority, but nevertheless, *an* authority, in the discussion of interpretive authority. As Bavinck said, "Tradition became a force alongside of, and, not long afterwards, superior to, Holy Scripture. Finally, when tradition even received its own infallible organ in the person of the pope, it also, in fact, took the place of the Word of God, for 'the *auctoritas interpretiva* is invariably the supreme and true authority.'"[39]

The proper response to the postmodern and semi-postmodern must be the fact that Scripture presupposes the accessibility and the responsibility of the reader to take God at His word when He speaks in His Word. When the postmodern complains that *every* articulation of the Scripture is not the Scripture, but merely the tradition and viewpoint of the speaker, this is not an argument grounded in the Scripture. Instead, this conviction is rooted in the post-Enlightenment presupposition that a reader cannot escape his unbiblical presuppositions. Indeed, the Scriptures do explain that biblical texts can and often are twisted and perverted. The accusation that someone *is actually* doing this can only be leveled on the basis of a revelatory epistemology. However, this would require an appeal to the authority for knowing that such a violation occurred. This is only a Christian argument when it being asserted on the basis of Scripture. Without being rooted in the truth, this argument is neither Christian nor consistently possible. It is not Christian because it stands on the authority of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophy. It is not consistently possible, because the person who believes that a reader cannot escape personal presuppositions, can never actually get outside of their own

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[39] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics,* vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 63, quoting Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, 233.

presuppositions and traditions in order to find the clarity to see this violation in others. For such a person, the most that can be said *consistently* is simply that in a disagreement two people have differing presuppositions. No one could legitimately say that any interpretation is more or less biblical than another view, but only that other views represent different traditions imposed upon Scripture than one's own tradition as it is imposed upon Scripture. In this way, the argument ends up being something similar to a playground taunt: "My tradition is better than your tradition." The presuppositionalist can humbly reply, "It likely is. Rather than getting distracted by comparing our backgrounds, let's study and obey the Scriptures because, according to God's own testimony, they presuppose that they contain the clarity and ability to overcome the hostile presuppositions of the reader."

Relativism is unavoidable for such an approach because *every* articulation *about what the Bible means is equally unassailable by any other human being.* This renders the function of elders—to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict (Titus 1:9)—impossible. It prevents the body of Christ from being on guard against self-deception from sin in the lives of others (Heb 3:12-13). In fact, it either precludes the very notion of self-deception or guarantees that it occurs 100 percent of the time. There are only two options for the relativist. Either the Enlightenment presupposition is God's intention for interpretation, or it is not. Either God intends His Word to mean something different to everyone, or He does not. The former option means that *self-deception is impossible* because whatever subjective meaning is ascribed to the text would have been intended by God. But the latter option would mean subjectivity is an unfortunate reality that God does not desire, but nevertheless prevents anyone from achieving the meaning of what He said—therefore *self-deception is unavoidable*.

Whenever the postmodern theologian argues that the Biblicist articulation is not biblical, this should only be compelling when that argument is exposing tradition as violating or going beyond Scripture. The question for the preacher is, *How does the*

thunder of divine authority in the Word drown out the chirping of post-Enlightenment human philosophy? The preacher's hermeneutic must be derived from the Word, and the accusation that this is impossible actually violates the Scripture. Specifically, this opposes the Scripture's presupposition that the reading of Scripture has the power to overcome the personal presuppositions of one's own culture, community and traditions. The significance of this foundation for the pulpit shows itself most tangibly in the conviction, certainty and authority that are necessary for preaching.

Preaching Regains Conviction, Certainty, and Authority

A faithful pulpit possesses conviction, certainty, and authority.[40] John Owen wisely pointed out that only a faith in infallible evidence or testimony produces an infallible faith.[41] He was not referring to a perfect person exercising faith, but rather to a fallible person trusting an infallible testimony. He used the illustration of believing the proposition "The Scriptures cannot err," on the basis of the testimony of the church of Rome. This may be a true statement, but since the church of Rome is not infallible, to believe this statement on the basis of that testimony is a fallible faith as well. However, to believe something on the basis of testimony from the God who cannot lie is to believe something infallibly.

Similarly, to preach with authority, conviction, and certainty, a preacher requires a hermeneutic that does not rest on fallible evidence. Only a divinely-warranted hermeneutic will give the preacher divinely-authorized sermon material. To interpret the Scripture on the basis of the testimony of the church, community, or previous interpreters throughout church history is to interpret with an unwarranted hermeneutic. A sermon

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[40] E.g., Eph 6:18-20; 2 Tim 2:11-14; Titus 2:15.

[41] John Owen, "The Reason of Faith," in *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 4:17–18.

from God's Word, derived by means of a hermeneutic that stands on a fallible testimony will leave the preacher without any grounds for preaching with authority or certainty. The foundation of rationalism, empiricism, consensus, or community will never produce certainty. To claim otherwise requires a doctrine of infallible reason, sense experience, interpretive tradition, or church.[42]

For instance, the presuppositional hermeneutic does not base certainty about the meaning of the text on the ground of experience, even though spiritual experience is necessary for understanding *what* the Spirit wrote in the text. To do so, would be to make the certainty of meaning dependent on the degree of spiritual experience that one enjoys. Bavinck makes this important distinction:

> According to [F. H. R.] Frank neither external proofs nor the authority of Scripture, church, and tradition are able to provide religious certainty, only the experience of rebirth. From the new life in Christ, believers are able to immediately posit the entire content of the truths of the Christian faith. Had he restricted his insight to the epistemological issue—how does a believer arrive at certainty?—no objection would be raised. However, to infer content from experience and epistemology confuses being and knowing, objective truth and subjective certainty. This confusion is typical of modern thought in both its empiricist and idealist form.[43]

The distinction is between the necessity of the Spirit's work in the individual for *subjective clarity* as opposed to *objective clarity*. In other words, the text of the Scripture is clear, regardless if every individual alive were spiritually blind or not. They have objective clarity, in and of themselves, because the Spirit wrote with all clarity. Nevertheless, individuals lack subjective clarity because of spiritual death or spiritual carnality. In this way, the work of the Spirit is to produce regeneration, conviction, sanctification. These are essential components of what the Scripture calls illumination. So, the work of the Spirit is not to clarify what He wrote poorly, but rather, He makes that

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[42] See appendix 2.

[43] Bavinck, *Prolegomena*, 499.

which has perfect clarity to be clear to those who lack ability to see clearly because of sin and death.

The significance for the pulpit is that certainty can only come from what the Spirit has infallibly revealed. The sum of His Word is truth, and it comes with a hermeneutic presupposed and exhibited. Apart from this, how could the preacher ever say with conviction, "This is what the Lord meant by what He said"?

Christ's Voice is Protected from Human Christology

Zeal for Christ's glory is commendable and praiseworthy. The only Christian answer to the question, "Should the pulpit exist for the glory of Christ?" is an unequivocal "Yes!" However, the better and more practical question is, "How does the preacher give Christ the greatest glory?"

Only Christ's voice belongs in the pulpit, and His voice is being interrupted or, in some cases, silenced when unbiblical presuppositions are poured into the hermeneutical foundation. In ecclesiological contexts where experts play fast and loose with interpretive authority, the notion that Christ's voice could be heard objectively in the church sounds impossible, ideal, or a naïve dream to be disparaged with the label "Biblicism." Regardless of the complaints against such a notion, proclaiming *what* Christ meant by what He said remains the call of God on the man of God. In fact, the accusations land squarely on the Lord who commands preachers to follow in the example of Christ (Matt 7:29[44]), because God commands the preacher, "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you" (Titus 2:15).

[44] The personal authority is unique to what Jesus did in this sermon; namely, He contradicted the traditional teaching within Judaism with His own articulation—"But I say to you . . . " Nevertheless, Jesus' teaching was explicitly consistent with what was actually recorded in the OT. This is how and to what degree Jesus' teaching forms an example of Titus 2:15.

However, every preacher must recognize that a zeal for Christ's glory is not compatible with self-reliance in the pursuit of glorifying Christ. True zeal for the glory of Christ will be accompanied by a humble confidence that no one knows how to glorify the Son better than the Father. In fact, the preacher will trust God's ability to glorify His Son by what He said more than he will trust his own ability to make the text Christ-glorifying. The presuppositional hermeneutic, and its revelational epistemology, implicate the human heart at this very point—what does the preacher rely on in order to bring Christ maximum glory, his own reasoning or God's own revealing?

The challenge with the theological approach is that the insertion of Christological concerns into the *interpretation* of any passage actually protects one's current Christology from being corrected, affected, and tweaked by the Scriptures themselves. This effectively canonizes the readers current understanding of Christ and makes the meaning text the by-product of one's theology.

Finally, one can trust the theological conclusions of each and every passage of Scripture. If the goal of interpretation is to understand stand *what* God said by interpreting it *how* God said to interpret, then there is no fear that the interpretive conclusions will be embarrassment to one's theological system. Instead, the interpreter must be comfortable letting biblical tensions stand, and, wherever the Scriptures are silent, leaving gaps in his theological framework. The emphases in Scripture must never be balanced by the fallible theological concerns of the interpreter.

The Church Receives All the Spiritual Benefit God Intends for His People

While the previous benefit involves the prevention of theological errors from creeping into biblical meaning, this benefit pertains to preventing theological emphases from limiting the scope of meaning. For the sake of argument, let us assume that the redemptive-historical interpreter inserts an absolutely biblical, 100-percent-accurate Christology into the interpretive process. Of course, this assumes that one does not need

any molding or refining in their current Christology, but, all the more, that proves the limitation of this approach. With this assumption, however, the problem is not that the interpreter/preacher is canonizing a few unbiblical notions about Christ, but that his goal, his aim, his standard for accurate interpretation becomes something other than simply letting God speak. Suddenly, the interpretive goal and the preaching target become something other than fidelity to God's word, but the standard for faithfulness becomes some awkward combination between fidelity to the text, *plus* a theological concern that was selected by the interpreter rather than by God.

The presuppositional hermeneutic presents an interpretive scheme that is faithful to the Bible through and through. It is not as though claiming to stand on a revelational epistemology guarantees that the interpretation will be free of sabotage by the interpreter, but rather, the benefit is that the model itself does not promote the insertion of theological presupposition into the meaning of individual texts.

The Scriptures boast that the entire scope of revealed truth constitutes a rich spiritual benefit for God's people.[45] For example, Acts 20:20, 27 contain a refrain followed by two synonymous phrases—"I did not shrink from declaring to you *anything that was profitable*" and "I did not shrink from declaring to you *the whole counsel of God*." This requires preachers to be unfettered from shrinking back from declaring the whole counsel of God. Wherever favored theologies become a hermeneutical *a priori*, the sheep lose out on divinely-intended spiritual benefit. Wherever consensus sneaks into interpretive authority, the sheep no longer receive the full benefit of the whole counsel of God, but only the portions that are agreed upon by the majority. In fact, if consensus is defined by Vincent of Lérins—"what we should hold to is that which has been believed

[45] E.g., Jer 23:16, 32.

everywhere, always, by everyone"[46]—then that does not leave much, if anything, that has not been questioned, debated or doubted.

Furthermore the church benefits because the balance of content is governed by God, not the theology of the preacher. In other words, when theological interpretation seeks to protect interpretation by emphasizing some aspect of theology, the danger is always and ever the issue of balance. For example, if the doctrine of justification becomes more than a theological conclusion, but becomes an interpretive *a priori*, the demands, commands, and obligations of Scripture tend to be interpreted as nothing more than a reminder of a failed standard. Suddenly, the top arrow of theological interpretation has encroached on the text as given by God. Human theological "balance" is raised up above divine textual balance.[47] The same can be said for divine sovereignty and human responsibility, the divine nature and the human nature of Christ, divine empowering and human activity, etc.

The Morality of Hermeneutics Reinforces the Character Required for Pastors

Since interpretation is inseparably connected to sanctification (see ch. 2), the character qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 become all the more important for the pulpit. This protects the church from viewing pastors primarily as compelling speakers, but more so as men who must be sanctified, set apart, useful to the Master, heralds of Someone Else's message.

Where the epistemological crisis is seen primarily by the lack of consensus among professing Christians, the church promotes and exalts those who have generated a

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[46] As quoted by Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics*, vol. I.2, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1970), 550; translation mine [*ut id teneamus, quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*].

[47] E.g., in ch. 3, the concern to avoid imperatives was mentioned. This concern may be well-intended, and the love to protect justification by faith alone *should* be encouraged. However, the way to protect justification by faith alone is not to *mute* God's imperatives, but to preach His indicatives and imperatives in the balance given in the Scripture. Only God has perfect balance.

large following by means of their speaking ability. Nevertheless, godly character is requisite for preachers, because without it, hermeneutical ability will be hindered.

Conclusion—The American church pulpit is in desperate need of the presuppositional hermeneutic from the ground up. A divinely-authorized hermeneutic finds it ποῦ στῶ in revelational epistemology; its presuppositions are the Bible's presuppositions about language, meaning, and interpretation; and it follows the pattern exhibited by the apostles when they interpreted the Old Testament. Any other hermeneutic lacks divine warrant, and the sermons derived from the divinely-authorized text without the means of a divinely-authorized hermeneutic lacks divinely-authorized content. This is due to the fact that those texts were handled in a way that God never approved. His Word is truly sufficient because it comes with a hermeneutic hard-wired and built-in.[48]

[48] This phrase came from Abner Chou, personal conversation with the author, April 17, 2018.

APPENDIX 1

INTERPRETIVE AUTHORITY IN KEVIN VANHOOZER'S HERMENEUTICS: A BIBLICAL CRITIQUE OF HIS GROUND FOR INTERPRETATION

Kevin Vanhoozer's hermeneutic differs from the Scriptures in several key areas. This is due to his construction of a hermeneutic on a foundation that is not Scripture alone. In spite of his own claims to the contrary, some of Vanhoozer's hermeneutical presuppositions are not properly biblical presuppositions for interpretation. Because his hermeneutical presuppositions are not biblical, his hermeneutical conclusions are not either. This paper examines Vanhoozer's authoritative starting points, and seeks to show that he fails to build a hermeneutic from the Scripture up. To employ this hermeneutic ultimately prevents obedience to the mandate for the preaching of the Word with all authority.

This paper aims to document the sources and presuppositions of Vanhoozer's hermeneutic. Inevitably, a hermeneutic built on the Scripture will stand up to the test of Scripture. In order to examine and assess those presuppositions, they will be compared to the Scripture themselves. For a hermeneutic to be Biblical, it must emulate the same presuppositions about interpretation that the Scriptures contain. Space will not allow a thorough discussion the Bible's hermeneutic—that which is presupposed and exhibited by the Scripture. Therefore, this paper must settle for a brief conclusion, indicating the problems with Vanhoozer's hermeneutic for preaching, in particular.

Sources and Influences in Vanhoozer's Hermeneutics

Vanhoozer describes his personal influences with these words: "For the sake of this conversation, let's assume that I like C. S. Lewis, and Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin, and Barth, so we'll talk about other people."[1] This initial list is quite eclectic. Since most of these names are relatively insignificant for Vanhoozer's hermeneutics, Luther and Barth are the only names surveyed below. Many secondary works were examined for the contribution they made to understanding Vanhoozer's thought,[2] but the names on this brief list all share the following: Vanhoozer mentions them often in his writings, he mentions them positively (though rarely uncritically), and they all shared some presuppositions and convictions regarding hermeneutical principles.

These influences on Vanhoozer will not be discussed thoroughly. The details mentioned are not an attempt to summarize their thought. Instead, the details included in the summaries below are included with the goal of the paper in mind—the evaluation of Vanhoozer's interpretive authority.

Martin Luther

Although Luther hardly needs an introduction for most readers, nevertheless, his hermeneutic inevitably does. Luther should not be ignorantly slotted into some rabidly allegorical hermeneutic mold. In his excellent discussion of Luther's interpretive authority, Mark Thompson paints a picture that may correct some errant notions about Luther's hermeneutic. Luther seemed to have abandoned the scholastic *Quadriga* by the

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[1] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Who Has Influenced Me?*, 2012, 0:03-0:12, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H1OwvRVxAEE.

[2] David H. Kelsey, *Proving Doctrine: The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977); Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, 4th ed. (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009); Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. Denis Paul (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics*, vol. I.2, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1970); Molly Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

second time he began to lecture on the Psalms, in either September or October 1518.[3] Not only did Luther practice grammatical-historical hermeneutics,[4] but he viewed the literal meaning of the OT as establishing the meaning of the NT.[5]

Sola scriptura has been variously defined. As will be shown in appendix 2, Vanhoozer holds to a *sola scriptura* that merely affirms Scripture as the *primary* or *supreme* authority. Luther held rigidly to such an exclusive view of Scripture as an authority, that "No purely human text could be treated as a necessary supplement to it without raising serious questions about the character of God or His ability to communicate meaningfully and effectively with his people."[6] Luther would have disagreed with Vanhoozer's position.[7]

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[3] Mark D. Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand: The Relation of Authority and Interpretive Method of Luther's Approach to Scripture* (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster, 2005), 185. Although Thompson does acknowledge that Luther used allegory, he also documents Luther's prohibition against allegorical interpretation in his mature years. Thompson, on the same page, quotes from a 1542 lecture on Genesis where Luther said,

> I urge students of theology to shun this kind of interpretation in the Holy Scriptures. For allegory is pernicious when it does not agree with the history, but especially when it takes the place of the history, from which the church is more correctly instructed about the wonderful administration of God in all stations of life, in the management of a household, in the state, and in the church. Inasmuch as such interpreters overlook these things in the histories, they necessarily transform everything into allegories and a different meaning. (Ibid.)

[4] To Erasmus, Luther wrote,

> Let us take the view that neither an inference nor a trope is admissible in any passage of Scripture, unless it is forced on us by the evident nature of the context and the absurdity of the literal sense as conflicting with one or another of the articles of faith. Instead, we must everywhere stick to the simple, pure, and natural sense of the words that accords with the rules of grammar and the normal use of language as God has created it in man. (Ibid., 186)

[5] Thompson articulates and defends this view, translating Luther's relatively early work, *Epistel S. Petri gepredigt und ausgelegt* (1523). He writes,

> Far from the New Testament rendering the Old Testament superfluous, Luther insisted that 'we must derive from it alone the basis of our faith'. The reason for this is the prophetic role of the Old Testament and its relation to Christ: 'For God sent the prophets to the Jews to bear witness to the Christ who was to come. Consequently, the apostles also convicted the Jews everywhere from their own Scriptures and proved that this was the Christ.' Luther encouraged his readers to follow the apostolic example, to 'go back to the Old Testament and learn to prove the New Testament from the Old.' The fulfillment of what was promised does not do away with the promise itself. (Ibid., 179)

[6] Ibid., 252.

[7] Thompson writes, "Luther never felt bound to the [church] Fathers' interpretation of the Scriptures." Ibid., 253–54. And Luther is quoted *as speaking against any interpretive unity as an interpretive authority*:

> But doesn't obscure Scripture require explanation? Set aside the obscure and cling to the clear. Further, who has proved that the fathers are not obscure? Are we once again going to have your 'it seems' and 'they say'? What did the fathers do except seek and present clear and open testimonies of Scripture? Miserable Christians, whose words and faith still depend on the interpretations of men and

George Steiner

George Steiner is a brilliant literary critic. Of special interest for our purposes is the fact that Steiner was raised as a secular Jew, his father teaching him about their Jewish heritage, but not from the standpoint of faith.[8]

Predictably, there is nothing distinctively Christian about Steiner's *Real Presences*. Upon reading it, however, one immediately recognizes terminology and conceptual contributions it makes to Vanhoozer's writing (e.g., the regular appeal to *dramatis personae*, and the Hebrew God's capability for speech-acts[9]). However, beyond the superficial similarities, there are more substantive parallels between the two. First, when it comes to really knowing whether literature has been appreciated and interpreted correctly, Steiner looks to some degree of consensus. For example, could it be that everyone was wrong about a particular text that was neglected and *ought* to have been a classic? What do we do with the man who claims that Mozart is musically incompetent? Steiner answers, "In practice, how do we proceed? By appealing to prevailing opinion, to the cultural, institutional consensus which has developed over time. We count heads and we count years. Across millennia of Western reception, mimesis and thematic variation, across millennia of pedagogy, Homer and Virgil have been found exemplary."[10]

Second, Steiner's wager is that criticism of any kind cannot exist plausibly without the presence of God. "What I affirm is the intuition that where God's presence is no longer a tenable supposition and where His absence is no longer a felt, indeed

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> who expect clarification from them! This is frivolous and ungodly. (Ibid., 199; from *Rationis Latomianae confutatio*, 1521)

[8] Alan MacFarlane, *Full Interview with George Steiner, Part One*, 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bEeAiVnGbM&spfreload=10.

[9] George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 212, 225.

[10] Ibid., 62–3. This notion is quite similar to Vanhoozer's *plural interpretive unity*, and, furthermore, neither Steiner's nor Vanhoozer's conviction about interpretive verifiability requires biblical authority, but merely a secularly supernatural presupposition.

overwhelming weight, certain dimensions of thought and creativity are no longer attainable."[11]

Vanhoozer describes how Steiner set the trajectory for his writing career:

> During my doctoral studies at Cambridge, I heard what I still think of as the finest lecture that I ever heard—it was George Steiner's "Real Presences." And Steiner later turned that into a book, in which he argues that our experience of meaning in music, painting and literature, presupposes the existence of God. Steiner's work encouraged me to think that some day I would have to think about hermeneutics from the theological perspective that was distinctly Christian—unlike Steiner's—which is to say Trinitarian. And, eventually I did that in my book *Is There Meaning in this Text?*[12]

Such a distinctly secular, though brilliant, approach to grounding hermeneutics is tenuous for anyone who would strive to build his interpretive activity upon the authority of Scripture alone.

Vanhoozer's Hermeneutical Presuppositions

The sheer volume of Vanhoozer's work over the last twenty-nine years is astounding. It poses quite a challenge to anyone seeking systematically to identify Vanhoozer's presuppositions for interpreting the Bible. In order to establish that some of Vanhoozer's interpretive presuppositions are not entirely biblical, the presuppositions treated here are those that demonstrate how Vanhoozer's unbiblical presuppositions lead to unbiblical hermeneutical principles.

Vanhoozer affirms that his hermeneutics stand on Scripture. He says, "When it comes to doing theology, God must be our first thought, Scripture our second thought, and hermeneutics our third and last thought. Yet matters are not really so simple, nor so linear."[13] He amends this prioritization by saying,

> Theology, then, is God-centered biblical interpretation. It follows that hermeneutical theology (doing theology by way of biblical interpretation) and theological

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[11] Steiner, *Real Presences*, 229.

[12] Vanhoozer, *Who Has Influenced Me?*, 1:50-2:27.

[13] Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 9.

> hermeneutics (bringing Christian doctrine to bear on the principles and practice of interpretation) are equally ultimate. I therefore propose theological hermeneutics as my candidate for first theology. Note well: I did not say 'hermeneutics' full stop. I am rather advocating a distinctly Christian and theological, which is to say trinitarian, approach to biblical interpretation that begins by recognizing God as a triune communicative agent and Scripture as the written locus of God's communicative action.[14]

Frequently, Vanhoozer's interpretive song carries a presuppositional ring. In one instance, he relies on Plantinga, who "believes that we as Christians have both a right and a responsibility to begin our reflection about God, the world, and ourselves from Christian premises. To this list I now want to add *meaning*."[15] It may seem that by starting Trinitarian, he has successfully rescued interpretation from the secularly theistic version of Steiner. "In this book I have made the further claim that *the best general hermeneutics is a trinitarian hermeneutics*."[16] Although this is true confessionally, it is not so consistently practiced. In fact, as he is prone to admit, his starting point is functionally philosophical and theological:

> Again, I utilize a number of philosophical resources, but, in providing what is finally a sketch of what it is to be an understanding person, I move from philosophy to theology proper. What lies behind one's choice of interpretive principles is ultimately an understanding of oneself and, at least implicitly, an understanding of God. Moreover, the morality of literary knowledge is insufficient apart from the virtues of the interpreter. My thesis is that ethical interpretation is a spiritual exercise and that the spirit of understanding is not a spirit of power, nor of play, but the Holy Spirit. The theological doctrines that contribute to a discussion of the ethics of meaning, then, are pneumatology and sanctification.
>
> 'Is there a meaning in this text?' If I have here marshaled an interdisciplinary coalition, as well as the resources of systematic theology, to answer a simple question, it is because only such a cumulative force can respond effectively to the crisis in the humanities—a crisis that is slowly draining Western culture of its very humanity.[17]

Vanhoozer's foundation is a coalition of philosophy then theology, which yields a syncretistic hermeneutic.

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[14] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 38.

[15] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 199.

[16] Ibid., 456.

[17] Ibid., 29.

It is illegitimate to claim that one's interpretation is correct because it was built on one's theology, which is previously the result of interpretation of the text. Such a statement would whitewash every major form of Christianity as equally biblical—a sentiment with which Vanhoozer agrees.[18] Regardless of legitimacy, this is ironic for Vanhoozer since he warns against losing the distinction between an infallible text and a fallible interpreter.[19] One's systematic is only legitimate to the degree that the hermeneutic is biblically warranted. In this instance, Vanhoozer gets the cart in front of the horse. If hermeneutics were legitimately built upon theology, then regardless of the biblical fidelity of one's theology, his correlating hermeneutic is equally legitimate. This scheme inserts a theological lens over the top of Scripture which guarantees exegetical results consistent with one's theology. A theological interpretation of Scripture is indeed the greatest way to guarantee Ricoeur's fond idea—"the reader 'reads' himself when he reads a book."[20]

In spite of his claims, Vanhoozer's failure to achieve a biblically presupposed hermeneutic is demonstrated in two ways. First, as shown above, he practically builds on philosophy and human ideas. Second, his unbiblical presuppositions lead to unbiblical conclusions about hermeneutics. The next section documents interpretive presuppositions and corollary conclusions.

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[18] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 275–76. The passage is cited at length below; see footnote 29.

[19] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Pictures at a Theological Exhibition: Scenes of the Church's Worship, Witness and Wisdom* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), loc. 1327, Kindle; Vanhoozer, "Augustinian Inerrancy: Literal Meaning, Literal Truth, and Literate Interpretation in the Economy of Biblical Discourse," in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 223.

[20] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 88. Vanhoozer is referring to Ricoeur's frequent citation of Proust's idea.

Philosophical Integration Yields Hermeneutical Syncretism

Vanhoozer integrates philosophy and theology. This integration of various worldviews and belief systems may be compared to the Christian integration movement of faith and psychology. *All truth is God's truth* is often used by Christian thinkers to refer to useful gains in knowledge by unbelievers.[21] Then, psychology raised them to the status of a norm for their science. Regardless of how much science goes into comparing cases of problems such as schizophrenia or autism, anxiety from trauma or irrational fears, the human conclusions about those observations are quite fallible. Mixing secular and Christian thought at the foundational level regularly produce conclusions that violate the Scriptures. For example, "Christian" psychologists often concluded that an individual is not responsible for biblically definable sins such as fear, anxiety, or excusing disobedience to the Lord, on the basis of circumstance, background, personality, etc.[22] This is the inevitable result of mixing faith and unbelief to pour a foundation for epistemology in any discipline, be it psychology or hermeneutics.

Ricoeur's epistemology is firmly grounded in the thought of secular philosophy, and firmly opposed to the authority of Scripture. As Vanhoozer points out, Ricoeur's philosophy is inclusive, embracing the dictum "As far as possible be at peace with all other philosophical positions. . . . Ricoeur mediates thinkers in the history of philosophy. For instance, he reads Kant through Hegel and Hegel through Kant. This 'mutual indwelling' reflects Ricouer's hope that all thinkers are to some extent 'in the truth.'"[23]

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[21] Duane Litfin, *Conceiving the Christian College* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 85–98. Litfin gives ten fundamental ideas about the notion that all truth is God's truth. The problem of this principle, when applied to human discovery of general revelation is that it creates a natural theology. Such a notion has no biblical warrant (see ch. 1, but esp. the discussion on the futility of man-made πού στῶ for epistemology). Additionally, such a notion raises general revelation equal to that of special revelation. While they may be equally clear *objectively*, the Spirit only promises reception and illumination of special revelation (see ch. 2, on 1 Cor 2:6-3:4).

[22] This author could cite several personal examples from interaction with the practitioners in occupational therapy, education, and neuropsychology as applied to autism.

[23] Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in Ricoeur*, 4–5.

Although Vanhoozer discards Ricoeur's notion of the autonomous text, and maintains the role of an author for hermeneutics, he follows Ricoeur in a general way regarding hermeneutics, language, and communication:

> There are significant philosophical resources available to the theologian who wishes to seek a fuller understanding of language as a covenantal medium of interpersonal communication. Here I introduce three of the most important: Searle's speech acts, Ricoeur's hermeneutics, and Habermas's social theory. The burden of this chapter will be to integrate all three into a comprehensive theory of literary meaning as communicative action. Significantly, each of these three philosophers also happens to be a prominent and effective critic of deconstruction.[24]

It would appear that Vanhoozer's unifying principle in his philosophical integration would be the common enemy of deconstruction.

Philosophical integration leads to hermeneutical syncretism. Vanhoozer is comfortable with multiple methods and divergent conclusions. For example, he is even open to considering a qualified allegorical hermeneutic:

> If allegorizing is to have an Evangelical future, it will be important to show that it is neither free-wheeling nor deregulated, but rather ruled by the literal sense and the event of Jesus Christ. . . The way forward is to distinguish between an allegorical hermeneutics in general and what we may term, by way of contrast, a special allegorical—or better, typological—interpretation that I shall in due course rename 'transfigural.'[25]

Later in the same article, Vanhoozer describes the way in which meaning is given to the believer that is *beyond* the verbal sense: "It is also to remember that Scripture not only describes but also plays a part in the triune economy of revelation and redemption: typological interpretation is a matter of verbal sense and Spirited reference, a means by which the Holy Spirit leads readers through earthly shadows to the incarnate heavenly reality of Jesus Christ." He goes on to explain the "Spirited reference" by saying, "This 'Spirited' referent (for this is how we should now think of the spiritual sense) is the 'glory' of the literal sense: the divinely-intended meaning."[26]

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[24] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 207.

[25] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Ascending the Mountain, Singing the Rock : Biblical Interpretation Earthed, Typed, and Transfigured," *Modern Theology* 28, no. 4 (2012): 788.

[26] Ibid., 793, 796.

It is not surprising that Vanhoozer names another scholar who describes Origen's interpretation not as figurative, but figural. This is precisely what medieval scholasticism argued regarding the three- and four-fold sense of Scripture. In Henri de Lubac's classic treatment of the subject, he documents the driving principle for multiple senses of Scripture were the divine unity and the marvelous depths of the Scriptures due to divine authorship, as well as the fact that Scriptures themselves point to a spiritual meaning in passages like Luke 24, 1 Corinthians 10, and 2 Corinthians 3.[27] One scholastic argued, "The Word of God became flesh, fulfilled the Old Testament, unlocked the old Scriptures, and changed them into wine, transferring them to the plane of an allegorical and moral understanding"; and de Lubac said, "[Christian exegesis is an act of faith in the great historical Act that has never had and never will have its equal: for the Incarnation is unique. This exegesis is conscious of its development by virtue of a creative principle, or, to be more precise, a transfiguring principle." He then quotes Rodulfus Ardens, and concludes,

> 'Let ministers of the New Testament read and understand the Sacred Scriptures not according to the meaning that they construe, but according to the meaning by which the Scriptures are construed.' These are profound words, which can possibly be understood in two ways, both equally true. Christian exegesis grows in Jesus Christ, who gives the Scriptures their meaning. It grows in Jesus Christ, who has transformed and renewed everything. In him the ancient texts of Scripture are 'converted.' Like those who are now its ministers, it is 'a new creature' . . . [28]

The similarity between Vanhoozer's qualified allegorical interpretation and scholasticism's four-fold sense is more than shared terms like "change," "unlock," and "transfer." The Christ-event becomes norm for interpretive meaning. However, this poses problems for interpreters. First, no living interpreter of the Scripture was alive for the Christ-event. Second, if one is supposed to read the Scripture through the inspired

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[27] Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture,* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 75–89, 125, 238, 241–42, 251. It is fascinating to note that the divine authorship and unity, as well as the proof-texts, are the same for the scholastic *quadriga* as they are for both Vanhoozer and Redemptive-Historical theologians.

[28] Ibid., 254, 260–61.

account of the Christ-event, then we have a canon-within-a-canon without warrant. It is an arbitrary authority that any human reader would choose one statement in God's Word over and against another portion in God's Word to hold interpretive authority. Instead, the Bible presupposes interpretive authority to rest with God, in speaking what He meant. For example, could the Old Testament saint choose to interpret Jer 2 with a transferred sense through the interpretive authority of the Passover-event? Examples could be multiplied but such a move carries no more textual warrant than any other example that could be given.

Vanhoozer's hermeneutical syncretism can be seen in his embrace of doctrinal incompatible positions as *equally* biblical. He writes,

> . . . the plurality on the level of the canon may call for an equivalent plurality on the level of interpretive traditions. If no single conceptual (read, confessional) system is adequate to the theological plenitude of the canon, then we need a certain amount of polyphony *outside* the canon, too, in order to do it justice. The church would be a poorer place if there were no Mennonite or Lutheran or Greek Orthodox voices in it. The nonreductive evangelical catholic orthodoxy advocated in the present work is itself an attempt to preserve both the diversity and the integrity of a theological dialogue *already canonized in Scripture*.[29]

Here, Vanhoozer is making the case for "Canonical-Linguistic Plurality." He describes polyphonic authorship as the reality that each canonical voice holds a distinctive perspective.[30] By itself, this notion is insignificant. But taken in context, the implications are massive. In a section entitled "Theological Plenitude," Vanhoozer says,

> There are certain advantages in attending to the theological diversity of the biblical texts. Recognizing multiple points of view is an effective antidote to the poison of ideological distortion. Theological systems have too often been used to repress or marginalize one strand of biblical theology in favor of another . . . To the extent that it fosters humility in the biblical interpreter, theological diversity is surely to be welcomed. By contrast, when an emphasis on diversity becomes so radical that one denies the possibility of a biblical view on anything, it can become an excuse for avoiding the concrete claims of a particular text.[31]

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[29] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 275–76.

[30] Ibid., 272.

[31] Ibid., 274.

To be sure, the philosophical integration involved in *Theo-drama* leaves the notion of truth in a constant state of change. "Knowledge in theo-dramatic perspective, because it involves more than information, is never static, never a fixed position."[32] And, " . . . postconservative theology affirms a *plurality of normative points of view in Scripture*, each of which is authoritative because each discloses a particular *aspect* of the truth."[33]

Similarly, another evidence of Vanhoozer's hermeneutical syncretism is shown in his doctrinal inclusion that Roman Catholicism is savingly in the stream of orthodoxy. It would hardly be controversial among Protestants for Vanhoozer to admit that Catholics can and are saved when they read the Scripture and believe the gospel *in spite of what their church officially teaches*. However, he eagerly places Catholics in the *communio sanctorum*[34] and calls co-author Matthew Levering "Saint Matthew . . . in all seriousness, in the Pauline sense of fellow believing Christian, a person set apart through faith in Christ."[35]

Granted, Levering is about as Protestant-friendly of a Catholic as you could find. A Catholic conversant with Luther in the nearest seat would make any flight more enjoyable. Nevertheless, Levering is not a nominal Catholic—blissfully unaware of what the Vatican teaches. On the contrary, he upholds the propitiatory mass—along with both the *typical* Eucharistic interpretation of John 6 and the *atypical* view of eucharist as remembrance (although he places the word in quotes, "Our liturgical 'remembrance') when he says, "the Eucharist saves us from the punishment of death and unites us to him in the new exodus journey to perfect dwelling with God." He questions whether

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[32] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 302.

[33] Ibid., 289.

[34] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 196.

[35] Matthew Levering and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Was the Reformation a Mistake? Why Catholic Doctrine Is Not Unbiblical* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 191.

justification is merely imputation. And, with an appeal to 1 Corinthians 3:13, he upholds purgatory as a suffering "for souls of those who are united to Christ in repentance and love but who are still united imperfectly due to vices, this 'groaning in travail' will include some suffering so that they may 'be glorified with him [Christ].'"[36]

It is hard not to wonder what Vanhoozer would think of John Frith, who was martyred for denying transubstantiation and purgatory on July 4, 1533.[37] Fortunately, or unfortunately, he gives a tacit answer. Vanhoozer openly mourns what happened in the English Reformation as an example of what happens when men lack "honesty, charity, and, most importantly, humility. . . . Five hundred years ago, Protestants and Roman Catholics pronounced mutual anathemas on one another, launched H-bombs (accusations of heresy) at one another and followed up with literal conflagrations (burnings at the stake)."[38] Apparently, in Vanhoozer's view, Frith died as a victim of Catholic arrogance over issues that were arrogantly held on to as primary. If only Frith could have known that "theological diversity was to be welcomed" and that the Catholic voice spoke polyphonically with the Protestant voice, England's ecclesiology would have been better off. This demonstrates the syncretism of Vanhoozer's hermeneutical conclusions. By minimizing the doctrinal difference between Catholic and Protestant, it is hard to know whether Frith was a humble hero or an arrogant failure in Vanhoozer's view. To die for Christ and His truth is glorious; to die for the arrogance of opinion is tragically vainglorious.

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[36] Levering and Vanhoozer, *Was the Reformation a Mistake?*, 87–9, 133, 155.

[37] William Tyndale and John Frith, *The Works of the English Reformers: William Tyndale and John Frith*, ed. Thomas Russell (London: Ebenezer Palmer, 1831), 3:79–80; John Foxe, *The Acts and Monuments of the Church; Containing the History and Sufferings of the Martyrs: Wherein Is Set Forth at Large the Whole Race and Course of the Church, from the Primitive Age to These Later Times, with a Preliminary Dissertation, on the Difference Between the Church of Rome That Now Is, and the Ancient Church of Rome That Then Was*, ed. M. Hobart Seymour, Kessinger Legacy Reprints (London: Scott, Webster, and Geary, 1838), 1:526-28.

[38] Levering and Vanhoozer, *Was the Reformation a Mistake?*, 192.

To summarize Vanhoozer, the different perspectives in the canonical authors is the canonical proof that the theological differences among professing Christians are equally biblical. Putting all three quotations together, the conclusion is unavoidable—the diversity between Mennonite, Lutheran, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic are biblically warranted differences. For Vanhoozer, to argue that one is more biblical than the other is arrogance. Of course, there comes a point beyond those differences where the possibility of being biblical is denied—would that be Mormonism? Islam?—but with regard for a Lutheran to not embrace the mysticism and Greek Archiepiscopate that distinguishes Greek Orthodox as less biblical than themselves is the opposite of humility.

Vanhoozer's presuppositions rule out a hermeneutic that would enable there to be a *more biblical* position among such theological differences. When it comes to a hermeneutic that would prevent this syncretism from preventing the destruction of a biblical view of anything, Vanhoozer does not say what this is, or where it is to be found. Presumably, Vanhoozer's personal preferences would determine this line.

A Compromised Epistemology Redefines "Hubris," "Humility," and "Certainty"

Regarding the practice of epistemology, does Vanhoozer regard Scripture or philosophy as the source of knowledge? That varies from page to page. For "the theologian who wishes to seek a fuller understanding of language," Vanhoozer offered three secular philosophers.[39] Vanhoozer may object to labeling Ricoeur a secular philosopher, but as we saw above, he waffles between calling Ricoeur a theologian of the Word and denying him as a theologian at all. The constant waffling between two positions poses a serious problem for Vanhoozer. Perhaps his greatest ambivalence is epistemology. It appears that Vanhoozer attempts to prohibit the Scripture's right to claim epistemological authority.

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[39] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 207.

Ultimately, Vanhoozer throws out the Scripture as a ground for epistemology, only to take it back up again when postfoundationalism leaves man without a ground for right or wrong. In order to do this, as noted in chapter 2, Vanhoozer conflates modernist rationalism with a revelational epistemology. In his criticism of resting in propositional truth as revealed in Scripture, he critiques a revelational epistemology as though it were grounded on rationalist epistemology, citing "problems with the notion that Scripture is an indubitable foundation."[40]

According to Vanhoozer, foundationalism privileges propositions over other diverse genres of literature. Yet, the Scripture regularly honors *all* genres with legitimate *propositions that came from those genres*.[41] Next, foundationalism "privileges a certain type of procedure for generating knowledge." Apparently, Jesus (again) was a foundationalist. He regularly filled in the gap of ignorance in the minds of his audience and interlocutors by pointing passages of Scripture, and regularly invoking the same method—"Have you not read…?"

Vanhoozer compromises his own intentions when he plans to build a hermeneutic directly upon the Scripture "with norms that we have derived from a reflection on how to read Scripture"[42] but turns right around three years later and denies "the notion that Scripture is an indubitable foundation" for what we know about hermeneutics. If that is not abrupt enough, three pages later, after chopping down the epistemological tree of Scripture, he attempts to prop it up again and walk by as though

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[40] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 292; see pp. 4–5, 292-94. Vanhoozer expresses concern about the dangers of propositions as truths abstracted from Scripture, but then he turns around and suggests that the information that is taken from Scripture is better thought of as a map, "*just these maps*", which begs the questions, "On what foundation do these maps rest, that make them epistemologically superior to propositions?" For an excellent critique of classical propositionalism, as it is based in propositions that are self-evident as determined by reason or the sense, see Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 82–85, 93-97.

[41] Consider Christ, who made theological propositions from Torah (Mark 12:26, 29-31), the Psalms (Mark 12:36), and the prophets (Mark 14:62). Paul followed him in this practice (e.g., Rom 4:3; 3:10-18; 1:17, respectively).

[42] Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 208.

nothing happened. "Knowledge of God begins with truth in what we have been told about God by God, and this means taking the canon as the beginning of theological knowledge, the interpretative framework for understanding God, the world, and ourselves."[43]

Stephen Wellum helps us understand how this notion in Vanhoozer is more postmodern than modern, and how it is more postmodern than biblical, and why modernism is often confused with biblical epistemology:

> In light of the rise of postmodernism, the question *Whose theology is more 'biblical' or more 'true'?* is viewed with disdain and suspicion. Why? For the simple reason that postmodernism, at its heart and for all of its diversity, is a mindset that is tightly linked to a denial that humans can known truth in any objective, universal sense. At this point *post*modernism is often contrasted with modernism, which reflects much of the spirit of the Enlightenment—a spirit, interestingly enough, that borrowed much from Christianity in regard to its commitment to truth, but then sought rationally to ground truth in 'the turn to the human subject.'[44]

Likewise, Gregory Thornbury shares Wellum's concern with regard to Vanhoozer explicitly. He is notably curious about Austin and Searle's speech-act theory with regard to its ". . . religious epistemology. I am particularly curious why theologians such as Vanhoozer and even Erickson believe that speech-act theory is a viable alternative to classic cognitive propositionalist ways of understanding religious authority." The significance of speech-act theory relates to its view of the truthfulness of speech for knowing *anything*. "Stated differently, the truth or falsity of an utterance matters significantly less than the question of whether the utterance 'gets the job done.'"[45] This is significant for where Thornbury goes next. After documenting Vanhoozer's paternal tone

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[43] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 295.

[44] Stephen J. Wellum, "Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recent Proposals for Re-Doing Evangelical Theology: A Critical Analysis," in *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times*, ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 162.

[45] Gregory Alan Thornbury, *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism: Applying the Wisdom and Vision of Carl F. H. Henry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 103.

towards C. F. H. Henry and Charles Hodge at the 2004 ETS plenary session,[46] Thornbury highlights where *post*whateverism will lead the theologian with regard to Scripture:

> Vanhoozer seems disinterested in Henry's fundamental concern in the context of his argument in [*God, Revelation, and Authority*]: if one makes the author's intent supreme, and if one says the author's intention was a genre other than historical and scientific accuracy, we have opened up Pandora's box. Once you make this move, Henry warns, you can take any problematic or disputed text in Scripture as a matter of genre confusion. As we will discuss later in this volume, this is precisely the interpretive move behind crucial abandonments of inerrancy in contemporary evangelicalism. So, for example, if you are uncomfortable saying that Genesis 1 literally reveals the way God created the universe, don't worry. Simply say that the author's purpose was literary, poetic, or allegorical, and your problem is solved. This was Carl Henry's fear, and he was right to be concerned— if not with Vanhoozer, then with others who do not possess the better angels of Kevin's theological nature.[47]

This concern is not unfounded with regard to Vanhoozer. He not only says that the historical nature of the creation account is beyond the scope of Genesis 1-2, he says that the same of Jonah and the whale,[48] and Joshua and Jericho.[49]

This epistemological compromise leaves Vanhoozer with nowhere to turn but to foundationalism in order to assert *some type of knowledge*. Epistemology can be pictured in a polarity of sources, within or without. Either what man knows came from him or from something outside of him. If it was from outside of him, it had to be given to him.[50] If it had to be given to him, then man was in desperate need of that revelation.

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[46] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Lost in Interpretation? Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics," *JETS* 48, no. 1 (2005): 89–114.

[47] Thornbury, *Recovering Classic Evangelicalism*, 107.

[48] Vanhoozer, *Pictures at a Theological Exhibition*, locs. 1418-32, Kindle.

[49] Vanhoozer, "Augustinian Inerrancy," in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, 224–28. Mohler appropriately calls him out for this: "[Vanhoozer] argues that archaeological findings are not sufficient to overcome the truthfulness of Joshua 6 and concludes the the chapter is 'artful narrative testimony to an event that happened in Israel's past' (p. 228). But he does not claim historical accuracy for the passage as a whole." Ibid., 240. Indeed, there is a theological point—ironically, this *must* be a proposition!—but nevertheless, the story as told does claim to tell history as it actually happened. Vanhoozer's presuppositions about epistemology lead to conclusions that differ from the Scriptures. This is a much bigger problem than Vanhoozer's loose definition of inerrancy, which, as Mohler rightly points out, could be embraced by Bultmann. Ibid., 238.

[50] The astute reader may be thinking, "But if I researched something, then I actually discovered something, right?" Sure. But what is important to understand in this discussion is that all human discovery involves autonomous conclusions about the facts. When it comes to biblical epistemology, the facts are not uninterpreted, but they have already been interpreted. Scripture is *revelation*, or *unveiling* of the mind of

Without it, he could not know or have certainty about any purported knowledge. Here is where Vanhoozer's epistemological waffling catches up with him, because he can no longer maintain equilibrium between certainty and relativity. Without biblical foundationalism, man is in the dark.[51]

As a result of compromised epistemology, Vanhoozer ends up redefining biblical terms like "arrogance," "humility," and "certainty." Humility, in Scripture, is the lowliness of man that renders him relatively unaware of himself. When a man is humble, he is like Christ, submissive to the will of the Father (Phil 2:1-11; cf. 1 Pet 5:6). Arrogance, on the other hand, is the exaltation of self, so that the proud man wanders away from obedience and relies on his own understanding and reasoning (Ps 119:21; Prov 3:5-6). The humble have no concern for praise from man, so they are freed up to serve God and understand His revelation (Gal 1:10; John 5:44). They are not concerned any longer with self-will, but prefer to obey God's word, which produces epistemological certainty about the divine source and meaning of the words of Christ (John 7:17-18; 8:31-32; 1 John 2:3). The humble hate and acknowledge their sin, which enables them to see (John 9:40-41). The humble acknowledge their need for God's wisdom and they receive epistemological certainty (Eph 1:18; 3:19; Jas 1:5).

Conversely, the arrogant have no fear of God, and they cannot hate their sin, let alone discover it, and therefore they are prevented from seeing the light of God (Ps 36:1-2, 9). The arrogant seek praise from men, because they think highly of themselves. They prefer to do their own will because they think more highly of their will than God's will for their lives. Therefore, the arrogant do not have certainty about Scripture (John 5:44;

God. It is not the same as going to research the mind of God as seen in the facts of general revelation, the conclusions about which require my infallible reasoning (here is where Vanhoozer's infallible revelation and fallible interpreter is most helpful!). Instead, the readers of Scripture have the mind of Christ contained in this revelation, and the unknowable truth was interpreted for the reader by the human author, as he was born along by the Spirit (2 Pet 1:20-21).

[51] E.g., Ps 36:9; 119:105; Acts 17:27; Rom 3:11; 1 Cor 2:10-13; 2 Pet 1:19.

6:69; 7:17-18; 12:42-43). Scripture promises certainty to those who receive the word implanted with humility.[52]

For Vanhoozer, arrogance goes with confidence and certainty, and humility accompanies being incorrect, or unwillingness to be convinced that one understands the truth rightly.[53] To the extent that it fosters humility in the biblical interpreter, theological diversity is surely to be welcomed.[54] "To forth-tell and forth-show is not to claim absolute certainty for one's beliefs but rather to have the courage of one's convictions, the courage to enter the public square, not as a know-it-all but as a witness. Christians ought to make only those truth claims that they are willing to back with their lives, even in the face of (objective) uncertainty."[55]

Vanhoozer writes, "Honesty forbids certainty." Of course, this comes after the statement that "Cartesian certainty, an absolute knowledge grounded in the knowing subject, is neither possible nor Christian." Ironically, he is quite certain about this statement, but we know that this certainty did not come from repenting of grounding knowledge in the knowing subject, because he would have stood on the epistemological starting point of Scripture, and he would have said the opposite: *Submission to the truth yields knowledge and conviction*. Indeed, the conclusion *honesty forbids certainty* did not come from Scripture. This conclusion is the byproduct of postmodern presuppositions:

> One should never be too casual, therefore, in claiming understanding. When it comes to interpreting texts, honesty forbids certainty. Human knowing, of books and of the Book of Nature, is mediate and approximate. Here Christians can agree with chastened postmoderns.[56]

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[52] Cf. Jas 1:21 with Luke 1:1-4; John 10:4-5; Rom 6:3, 6, 9, 16; 14:14; 1 Cor 1:5; 2:2; 2 Tim 1:12; 1 John 5:13; 2 Pet 1:2.

[53] Levering and Vanhoozer, *Was the Reformation a Mistake?*, 192.

[54] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 274.

[55] Ibid., 358.

[56] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 207.

In a shocking passage, Vanhoozer shows that certain knowledge and humility are in tension, as opposed to the biblical paradigm, where humility is the only means for certain knowledge from the Word. Discussing the 'morality of literary knowledge,' he writes, "Just how confident can we be as interpreters that we have discovered the meaning of the text rather than ourselves and our own projections? The short response is to say both that *our knowledge (Part 2) must be tempered by humility (Part 1), and that our skepticism (Part 1) must be countered by conviction (Part 2).*"[57] Part 1 consists of the undoing of the author, the text, and the reader by postmodernity in the forms of deconstructionism, poststructuralism, reader-response theory, and community readings. In his perspective, unbelieving and skeptical philosophies are the means of humility. It is telling that opposite of the interpretive spectrum from interpretive skepticism is not *biblical certainty*, but "interpretive idolatry."[58] What the Bible calls certainty by means of humility, Vanhoozer calls idolatry by means of pride. For Vanhoozer, "humility" is a willingness to give up certainty. As defined by Scripture, this is arrogance and suppression of the truth.

Doubting Scripture's Sufficiency Yields
A Pursuit of Imaginative Creativity

In 2005 Vanhoozer was able to say, "I have come to rethink the matter of Scripture's sufficiency."[59] It would appear that Scripture's insufficiency is its need to give fluid and customized guidelines to the players in the drama. Enter doctrine (stage left). For Vanhoozer, doctrine is not static or propositional. Doctrine should be thought of as guidelines for the actors who are performing the play. They certainly have a script, but doctrine helps the improvisation for the performance in front of a specific audience. The

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[57] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 462; italics original.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, xiii.

combination of the Spirit and Word are important for understanding what Vanhoozer believes about doctrine. Both are sovereign over the drama, in such a way that not only is the script from God, but so is the performance. In other words, the Spirit guides both script [Scripture] and performance [doctrine for improvisation] in such a way that to listen to the Spirit properly means listening to Word and the performance of the church.[60]

When the Drama contains lines by Him and our improvisation, we have the combination of infallible script, and fallible performance. The sovereignty of the Spirit over the drama has the net effect of making human creativity and improvisation *equal* in authority for the believer with the Scripture itself. Vanhoozer views the drama a partially divine, partially human improvisation. He wants to say that the Spirit is sovereign over the Scripture in the same way as Tradition, established by the church's previous improvisations and performances. "I consider not only traditions but Tradition, together with the argument that the latter is as divinely superintended by the Spirit as the Bible itself."[61] Again, he says, "Surely the life of the church acquires a certain authority if that life is itself a performance of the Spirit."[62] But only γραφή, not ἔργα or πρᾶγμα, are called divinely inspired, useful for spiritual work, or promised divine illumination in interpretation.

Five pages later, he writes, "To suggest that the way the church receives the word determines what God is saying and doing in the Bible is to wreak havoc with the economy of divine discourse."[63] For the church's performance to be equally inspired with the script, and yet for that performance to *not exist as the interpretive authority of the*

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[60] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 12n38, 17, 159, 160, 165, 189. See Vanhoozer, "May We Go Beyond What Is Written After All? The Pattern of Theological Authority and the Problem of Doctrinal Development," in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 780–84.

[61] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 22n70.

[62] Ibid., 188.

[63] Ibid., 193.

script, one must imagine that there is no ability for the church to know what the script means until after it looks back on its own performance from the previous season of theatre. Doctrine must be unknowable in such a perspective.

Indeed, the nature of doctrine must fit with the drama, which is ongoing.[64] The nature of doctrine thus becomes ultimately unknowable until the play (Act V) is finished. Doctrine, in Vanhoozer's scheme, is not static. When doctrine consists of answers from the text, rather than guidelines for playing a part and proclaiming a script, the performers become "unremarkable, ordinary players" and the performance is predictable. It will not impress the world as an audience. Vanhoozer boldly declares that the conventional Christian wisdom "Play by the rules" leads to "the temptation to betray our Lord by staging dull, socially conventional scenes."[65]

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Vanhoozer views the improvisation of human actors as better for the play than following the precise truth of the Word. Faithful and humble Christians throughout the history of the church have believed that merely following the script would underwhelm the world but overwhelm the elect. The creativity of man is not to be compared to creativity of God. Although the world in its creativity failed to appreciate the creativity of God, God was pleased, through His predictable "uncreativity" and His unremarkable cast (in the eyes of the Academy), to impress those who believe.

A Low View of Revelation Yields
A Scripture in Need of Tradition

Over the past decade, Vanhoozer has evolved in his view of interpretive authority and the importance of tradition. He wrote, "This rethinking also led me to

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[64] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 110–11.

[65] Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 191–92.

assign a more positive role to the notions of 'tradition' and 'improvising' than I had first anticipated."[66]

Vanhoozer redefines *sola scriptura* from the Reformation principle that Scripture is the only authority, to something different: "Even many Protestant theologians now urge its abandonment on the grounds that, in insisting on Scripture *alone*, it overlooks or even excludes the importance of tradition, the necessity of hermeneutics, and the relationship between word and Spirit."[67] He maintains that "it is not that Scripture is alone in the sense that it is the sole source of theology; rather, Scripture 'alone' is the *primary* or *supreme* authority in theology."[68] Ironically, he mocks the view that Scripture is not merely the primary authority, but the only authority with the pejorative—but grammatically impossible—*solo scriptura*.[69]

Just like the role of Tradition for the previous performances of Theo-drama by the church, previous readings of Scripture take on an authoritative role. He writes, "Naïve Biblicism errs in short-circuiting the economy of testimony—that is, the pattern of theological authority by which the Spirit leads the church into the full measure of Scripture's meaning by utilizing previous readings."[70]

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[66] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, xiii.

[67] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 109–10.

[68] Ibid., 111; See Levering and Vanhoozer, *Was the Reformation a Mistake?*, 202.

[69] The adjective *solo* is masculine and could not even modify the feminine *scriptura*. Perhaps that is part of a double-entendre (i.e., "Your position is as impossible as this construction!"). Either way, Vanhoozer's position ought to be called *suprema scriptura* or *prima scriptura*. For a better reading of Luther's *sola scriptura,* and documentation that Luther *did not appeal to the Fathers as an authority for determining his theology*, see appendix 2.

[70] Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel*, 145. On the previous page, Vanhoozer explains the relationship between multiple norms: "[God] thus authorized tradition, and Scripture when it saw it said, 'This at last is norm of my norm and light of my light; she shall be called postapostolic testimony, because she was taken out of apostolic testimony.' This is essentially Anthony Lane's 'ancillary view,' or what I prefer to call 'weak' Tradition I." Ibid., 144. This is certainly Vanhoozer's view, seeing that it comes in a section where he is explaining his view regarding "the appointed role of church tradition in the economy of testimony." Ibid., 143.

In summary, Vanhoozer's view of *sola scriptura* revolves around three principles. First, consensus dogma, or *plural interpretive unity*, is the safeguard that meaning can be known by the church. This is virtually a democratic Protestant magisterium, complete with theological justification for its authority. Second, epistemic consciousness leads all interpreters to admit that other Spirit-guided believers are seeking to be faithful just like themselves. Each interpreter suspects himself for falsehood because he has no more intrinsic epistemic authority than any other interpreter. Third, Word and Spirit combine in an authoritative—though less authoritative than Scripture—role for interpretation as Spirit guides the church into the meaning of the Scripture throughout history, leaving us an interpretive tradition.[71]

Scriptural meaning does not need a human authoritative say-so, because Scripture itself is God's say-so. Should every man multiply interpretations a thousand times over, let God be found true though every man be found a liar. Vanhoozer's fear about Christian Smith's accusation against "Biblicism"—*pervasive interpretive plurality*—is only a legitimate threat against "Biblicism" *if that Bible taught that it would not and could not be misunderstood or perverted from its original meaning*. Such a fear ought to have been pushed to the curb at the first glance of passages where the meaning of God's word was questioned, contradicted, lied against, perverted, and its doctrines neglected by theologians who teach from ignorance or else defended by a mere appeal to its reading.[72] In fact, the Scriptures themselves expect that their own meaning will be under such an assault. *Pervasive interpretive plurality* is to be expected throughout the church age.[73]

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[71] Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel*, 17n70, 140–41, 144–45.

[72] Gen 3:1, 3; Jer 8:8-9; Matt 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:21; Mark 12:10, 26; Luke 6:3; Acts 17:11; 1 Thess 5:21-22 (this passage is often misunderstood, but the context is revelation, see 5:20); 1 Tim 1:3-7; 4:1-2; 2 Tim 4:3-4; Titus 1:10-14; 2 Pet 3:16; Jude 4.

[73] 1 Tim 6:20-21; 2 Tim 2:14-19.

In the final analysis, Vanhoozer's interpretive authority is suspect. His consistent waffling and *via media* between poles where the Scriptures give no leeway casts a cloud over the value of Vanhoozer's works as a whole. If his goal is to perform the creative improvisation he calls for, then these works are a success. If his goal is to demonstrate consistency, obedience and biblical epistemology, these works lack all three. It deserves mention that when a theologian articulates his theology, the conclusions ought to reflect agreement with the Scripture and match the Scripture in coherence and correspondence to reality as interpreted by Scripture.

However, in the case of Vanhoozer, the constant qualifications, waffling and tendency to adopt the *via media* on many discussions, leaves his readers with only a few potential conclusions. *One*, Vanhoozer is poor communicator, and regularly over 27 years of writing and speaking, he lacks the ability to actually say what he means; or, *two*, he does not understand his system very well, and the waffling reflects his own personal confusion; or, *three*, he has a malicious agenda and his waffling is deliberate, for some unknown reason. The first option is not plausible, and neither of the others are good options. But in any case, the merit of these volumes is suspect.

Vanhoozer's Interpretive Conclusions And the Task of Preaching

Fortunately, Vanhoozer can hardly practice what he preaches,[74] because no *preacher* ever could. Vanhoozer's hermeneutical conclusions—prohibition of certainty,

[74] Vanhoozer's treatment of three case passages in "Augustinian Inerrancy" raises the question whether Vanhoozer is embarrassed by the classic doctrine of inerrancy or not. See R. Albert Mohler Jr., "Response to Kevin J. Vanhoozer," in *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, ed. J. Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett, Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 236–41. The five sermons in *Pictures at a Theological Exhibit* reveal more about the mind of Vanhoozer than the mind of God. One example modeled an extreme abuse of redemptive-historical hermeneutics ("The Man with X-Rho Eyes" on 2 Kings 6:14-23; locs. 4918-5125, Kindle). Another sermon applied the text to his Drama of Doctrine model, but it required Eugene Peterson's *Message* translation to do so (loc. 1615, Kindle). While interpreting "living water" in John's gospel, Vanhoozer said, "The symbolism of the Fourth Gospel often achieves well-like depths. I see no reason why Jesus could not have intended 'living water' to refer to both truth and the Spirit—the same two conditions he later invokes as necessary for right worship" (locs. 1743-45, Kindle). But this is merely an assertion over the top of John's and Jesus' metaphors. There is no textual justification for claiming that living water is truth in the use of it in John 7:37-39. John tells us it is the Holy Spirit in verse 39: "But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given,*

balance of interpretive skepticism with interpretive idolatry, biblically defensible theological differences, and interpretive consensus—combine into a cocktail that would make any biblical preacher too drunk to ever obey the command to preach with authority.

Only an epistemology that views the truths of Scripture to be indubitable can establish criteria for confidence in handling the Word of God. What would this look like? Returning to the initial epistemological question now carries a fresh sense of implications for the preacher. *How does one know that his interpretation is correct?* Inevitably, this question is larger than a critique of Vanhoozer can tackle, but nevertheless, the way forward now lies open. Starting points are of ultimate importance. His conclusions are not the product of biblical presuppositions or epistemology. Vanhoozer's denial of certainty prevents him from ever being able to obey commands like "Preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction," or "These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you." When a preacher presupposes that one's own philosophy or theology is an acceptable interpretive authority, he has rejected revelation as the source of his hermeneutic and arrogantly looked within.

Starting with self may be as circular as starting with Scripture when it comes to hermeneutics, but there is a difference. One makes self the starting point *without justification*; the other makes the Scripture the starting point on the basis of its self-attesting nature and the demonstration of the resurrection of Christ. Vanhoozer, a true Barthian, wants to make the Christ-event the ultimate authority for employing typology/allegory or 'transfigural' hermeneutics. "On what authority? Says who?" Answer: Says Vanhoozer. He arbitrarily decided that when God speaks about the

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because Jesus was not yet glorified." When Vanhoozer adds "truth" to John's interpretation, the implication of truth coming from within me intrinsically is the unwarranted conclusion. The notion that the Holy Spirit reveals truth internally to every Christian who is imagining and improvising based upon the written revelation, fits with Vanhoozer's notion of the authority of Tradition, based on the sovereignty of the Spirit over the text and the history of the church (Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 22n70). Nevertheless, the test of his view is not merely internal coherence, but textual correspondence.

crucifixion He is clearer than when He speaks about ecclesiology or anthropology. Human judgments about philosophy or a canon-within-a-canon are equally flawed starting points. This means that Vanhoozer is now the authority. Yet Vanhoozer has neither resurrection life in himself nor self-attesting evidence. The Scripture alone does.

On the other hand, if one starts with the Scripture, every text is revelation, and every text contains intrinsic interpretive authority, not some other text chosen by the interpreter, nor previous applications and interpretations by professing Christians. Vanhoozer (hopefully) would ask, "On what authority? Says who?" Answer: Says God. That is the very conclusion that starting with scripture yields. The text of Scripture is God's say-so. When man encounters communication, the natural presupposition is *communication intends to reveal, not conceal.* When this communication is examined, it demonstrates self-attesting authority, complete with the successful prediction of the future, resurrection of the Messiah. In it God speaks. Whatever God says contains interpretive authority. Upon the authority and epistemology of the Scripture, the preacher can say "Thus says the Lord . . ." Without this starting point, the preacher falls subject to homiletical nihilism. Every sermon would begin with, "Thus says me . . . "

Vanhoozer's hermeneutical conclusions preclude the task of preaching for several reasons. Each reason parallels each of Vanhoozer's hermeneutical conclusions. First, preaching has no objective norm when hermeneutical syncretism is legitimized. When variously divergent theological conclusions are *canonized*, how will a preacher ever say anything that contradicts any recognized position, doctrinal conclusion or aberrant perspective that has ever been articulated to any significant degree in the church? The Presbyterian can no longer preach against congregational rule and the Baptist can no longer preach against paedo-baptism.

Second, preaching with authority is impossible when certainty is interpretive idolatry. The arrogance of this conclusion (Ps 119:21) wanders away from the command of Titus 2:15.

Third, preaching can only be suggestive when doctrine is fluid and adaptable to the pragmatic needs of performing in front of the world. Paul's command to Timothy regarding sound doctrine (1 Tim 4:6; 6:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1) is rendered impossible, while Vanhoozer's scheme of doctrine is itself condemned in Paul's warning—"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires" (2 Tim 4:3).

Fourth, preaching Scripture with Tradition—the Spirit is provident over text and church—precludes certainty on any doctrine where there is significant disagreement among professing Christians. What doctrine enjoys consensus? If it does not have to be a complete consensus, who determines when the majority is right and when the majority is wrong? Could the original recepients have interpreted Paul's letters *before there were any other interpreters to even establish a consensus*? Did the second generation Christians offer provisional votes about interpretations in hopes that the third generation could tally them?

Vanhoozer builds upon two foundations at once—text and Tradition, theology and philosophy. The result is a middle road that tries to avoid the cliffs of hermeneutical nihilism on one side, and the shoals of certainty on the other. His emphasis on fallible Tradition and imagination and improvisation of theatrical performance leave the controls of the text in the hands of man. These authorities are not recognized by the Word of God and they affect the hermeneutic at the foundational level. Ultimately, sermon content crafted by reading the Word with unwarranted lenses leads to a sermon that lacks divine warrant as well.

APPENDIX 2

MARTIN LUTHER'S INTERPRETIVE AUTHORITY: *SOLA SCRIPTURA* OR TRADITION?

During Martin Luther's famous exile at the Wartburg Castle (1521-22), his literary output was astounding. In one of the lesser-known works that he wrote during his stay, *The Misuse of the Mass*, Luther described the terror within his heart after his stand at the Diet of Worms, reflecting on the issue of interpretive authority. He wrote,

> I myself experience daily how extremely difficult it is to lay aside a conscience of long standing, one that has been fenced in by man-made ordinances. O with how much greater effort and labor, even on the basis of the Holy Scriptures, have I been barely able to justify my own conscience; so that I, one man alone, have dared to come forward against the pope, brand him as the Antichrist, the bishops as his apostles, and the universities as his brothels! *How often did my heart quail, punish me, and reproach me with its single strongest argument: Are you the only wise man?* Can it be that all the others are in error and have erred for so long a time? What if you are mistaken and lead so many people into error who might all be eternally damned? Finally, Christ with his clear, unmistakable Word strengthened and confirmed me, so that my heart no longer quails, but resists the arguments of the papists, as a stony shore resists the waves, and laughs at their threats and storms![1]

How did Luther have the audacity to say that the Roman Catholic leaders had misunderstood the nature of church, the gospel of justification, and truth itself?[2] Whose "say-so" should be louder than anyone else's "say-so" when it comes to the interpretation of the Bible? Luther's battle with Rome over these doctrines is properly traced to the debate over interpretive authority. At the fundamental level, differences in interpretive authority reflect a battle over epistemological starting points. The Reformation itself

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[1] *LW* 36:134; italics mine.

[2] Luther had been raising these issues during the previous four years. See Martin Luther, "Disputation against Scholastic Theology," in *Career of the Reformer I*, *Luther's Works*, vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 3–16; Luther, "Two Kinds of Righteousness," in *Career of the Reformer I*, *Luther's Works*, vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 293–306; Martin Luther, "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate," in *The Christian in Society I*, *Luther's Works*, vol. 34 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 115–217.

shows the importance of the epistemological discussion. Luther knew the implications for holding something other than the Scripture as an authority for how one knows that he understands the meaning of the Scripture.

Contemporary Conversation about Luther and Interpretive Authority

The conversation about interpretive authority is still intense. But now, within Protestantism, opposing sides appeal to Luther. The issue is not whether the magisterium living in Rome holds any interpretive authority in hermeneutics, but rather, what about the Church Fathers? Is there an interpretive tradition, a historical theology, that should shape and govern the proper reading of the Scripture? In light of this debate, it is necessary to understand the nature of the current conversation *about* Luther, even before we examine what we are looking for *in* Luther (the second section).

This section examines a few significant contributors to the discussion of Luther's view of hermeneutics. Many voices have contributed to this conversation. While all the interpreters surveyed here acknowledge that, for Luther, the Scripture is the *supreme* authority, not all agree on whether the Scripture is the *only* authority. Perhaps no one has been as influential in the discussion as Heiko Oberman.

Heiko A. Oberman

As a biographer of Luther, Oberman enjoys a rich familiarity with the Reformer's life.[3] Regarding interpretive authority, Oberman's volumes on the Reformation have given Protestant scholarship its language of Tradition I and Tradition II.

First, Oberman reiterates how this tension between Scripture and tradition is typically articulated: "Traditionally this is described as the clash of the *sola scriptura*-

[3] Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New York: Image Books, 1992).

principle with the Scripture *and* tradition-principle. Ironically enough both groups, the Reformers and those who would soon come to be known as Roman Catholics, accused each other of undermining the purity and authority of the Word of God."[4]

Then, Oberman qualifies the tension, saying,

> It is our contention that this confusing clamour of rival claims can only be unraveled if we abandon the time-honoured assumption that the issue before us is that of 'Scripture *or* tradition'. What we are confronted with is rather the clash between two concepts of tradition. To discover the precise content and connotations of these two concepts, we shall have to start our investigation in the early Church at the time of gradual reception of the canon.[5]

Oberman means by this that the tradition of *sola scriptura* is a tradition that "implies for the Fathers *the explicit denial of extra-scriptural tradition*."[6] But Oberman can say of the third century, "With Tertullian and Cyprian we find a marked insistence on the decisive difference between the tradition of God, preserved in the canon and the traditions of man (*consuetudines*)."[7] And then of the fourth and fifth centuries, he says, "The curialistic extremists under the canon lawyers mark, according to [Father George] Tavard, a departure 'from medieval classicism. Living authority replaces both Scripture and its traditional interpretation.'"[8] Elsewhere, he also says, "For the canon lawyer, then, the two-sources theory has been established: canon law stands on the two pillars of Scripture and Tradition."[9]

These descriptions of the transition from Tradition I to Tradition II highlight the difficulty Oberman has in front of him. After explaining that there is a tradition that is

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[4] Heiko A. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 270.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 271; italics mine.

[7] Ibid., 274.

[8] Ibid., 276.

[9] Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000), 369.

inseparable from the Scriptures themselves, Oberman selects a few fathers who apparently believe that the tradition of God is preserved in the canon and the traditions of men. Finally, he asserts that canon law usurps both the Scripture and its traditional interpretation. This leaves little room, if any, to distinguish between the body of literature produced by the church about the Scripture and the Scripture themselves. Is it impossible to distinguish the text of the Scripture from the historical interpretations of those Scriptures? If not, how are the canon lawyers any different than those who also have a traditional interpretation?

Oberman describes Tradition I in such a way that there is no tradition outside of Scripture, but by the fourth and fifth centuries Tradition I includes both Scripture and its traditional interpretation. Without explaining how this "traditional interpretation" must be included with the Scriptures themselves, it is difficult to know how to distinguish the traditional interpretation in Tradition I with the living authority of Tradition II. The only apparent difference in Oberman's wording is that with Tradition I, the authorities of traditional interpretation are dead, whereas in Tradition II they are still living and interpreting. Even with this reading of Oberman, both authorities are fallible.

This reading seems to be confirmed when Oberman explains the two categories of Tradition. He writes,

> If for clarity's sake we call the single exegetical tradition of interpreted scripture 'Tradition I' and the two-source theory which allows for an extra-biblical oral tradition 'Tradition II', we may say that both Tradition I and Tradition II find their medieval partisans. It is hard to say whether the conscious elaboration of Tradition II is to be understood as a reaction against the further development of Tradition I, in the sense in which the decisions of the Council of Trent are often claimed to be a mere reaction to the writings of the Reformers. One can make a good claim that the reaction worked rather the other way around.[10]

In a comparable discussion, Oberman takes the same sentence and develops it. He is quoted here at length:

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[10] Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 280–81.

If for clarity's sake we call the single-source or exegetical tradition of Scripture held together with its interpretation 'Tradition I' and the two-sources theory which allows for an extra-biblical oral tradition 'Tradition II,' we may say that both Tradition I and Tradition II had their medieval partisans.

Tradition I in the later middle ages should be seen as a protest against the growing acceptance of the Basilean two-sources theory. In the fourteenth century, at the time of the Western Schism and the final phase of the struggle between Pope and Emperor, the canon lawyer was in high demand. To judge from the many bitter comments by doctors of theology, he not only equaled but surpassed the theologian in status, both at the papal *curia* and at the royal courts. Albeit with varying degrees of eagerness, both curialists and conciliarists drew extensively on the *Dectretum* and the decretals. Under the circumstances, therefore, it is not surprising that the canon-law tradition started to feed into the major theological stream in such a way that the Basilean passage became a genuinely theological argument, and the foundation of the position which we have called Tradition II.

Tradition I, then, represents the sufficiency of Holy Scripture as understood by the Fathers and doctors of the Church. In the case of disagreement between these interpreters, Holy Scripture has the final authority. The horizontal concept of Tradition is by no means denied here, but rather understood as the mode of reception of the *fides* or *veritas* contained in Holy Scripture. Since the appeal to extrascriptural tradition is rejected, the validity of ecclesiastical traditions and *consuetudines* is not regarded as 'self-supporting' but depends on its relation to the faith handed down by God in Holy Scripture.

Thomas Bradwardine can be pointed out as one of the first outspoken representatives of Tradition I at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Though his references to the problem of Scripture and Tradition are relatively few and scattered, his emphasis on the exclusive and final authority of Holy Scripture is quite explicit. His position on this issue may well underlie his willingness to attack Occamistic Pelagianism despite his feeling that he stood alone over against almost the whole Church, even the *curia*.[11]

John Wyclif was undoubtedly deeply indebted to Bradwardine on this issue. It was Tradition I that provided him with the tools he used to evaluate medieval doctrine critically. As we shall see, Huss and Wessel Gansfort must also be regarded as exponents of Tradition I.[12]

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[11] At this point, Oberman includes some important passages from Bradwardine in a footnote:

For indeed, almost the whole world has gone after Pelagius in error. . . . For what Christian disregards the universal doctrine of Christ so that every contrary doctrine will be preferred? And who is unaware, that if Doctors should disagree to a great extent, the original is preferred in such a matter? And who, in that matter, after the authors of Holy Scripture, is more original than Augustine . . . Therefore, it is agreed that the Holy Scripture, which the Father has sanctified and sent into the world by reason of His own inerrant original with strength and certitude, is incomparably preferred to all others. (Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 372n35; translation mine [Totus etenim paene mundus post Pelagium abiit in errorem.' (London, 1618), Praefatio 2; 'Simon, dormis . . . ?', *De causa Dei*, III. 53. 872 E; 'Quis enim Christianus ignorant doctrinam Christi Catholicam omni doctrinae contrariae praeferendam? Et quis nesciat, si Doctores dissentiant magis authenticum in tali materia praeferendum? Et quis in ista materia post Autores sacrae Scipturae authenticior Augustino . . . Quare constat sacram scripturam quam pater santificavit et misit in mundum, ratione sui autories inerrabilis in firmitate et certitudine authenticis omnibus aliis incomparabiliter praeferendam.' *De causa Dei*, II. 31.606 C/D; 602 E])

[12] Ibid., 371–73; except for Latin words, italics mine.

Oberman continues to view the dividing line between Tradition I and Tradition II as a written tradition that includes patristic interpretation and living tradition that relies on oral, extrascriptural tradition.[13] He also recognizes that the discussion of extrascriptural tradition in the Tradition II model leads men like Wyclif and Huss, as well as Occam, d'Ailly, and Gerson to attempt to synthesize Scripture and tradition, with the former two representing Tradition I and the latter three representing Tradition II.[14]

Oberman further explains what he means by "tradition" in the Tradition I model, in a comment on Gabriel Biel: "In this context Biel can speak in terms characteristic of Tradition I: the truth contained in the Gospel has to be understood according to the interpretations of the Fathers."[15] Again, he writes,

> On the one hand, Biel can say, as we saw before, that all the truths necessary for salvation are in some way contained in the Bible. On this ground Biel can assert that papal decrees regarding faith or morals are not binding if contrary to Holy Scripture. In this context he can speak in terms of Tradition I; saving truth is contained in Holy Scripture but has to be interpreted in the light of Tradition, which is understood as the history of biblical exposition. These and similar statements explain why one is often inclined to speak of Biel's "biblicism."
>
> But notwithstanding this clear confession of the sufficiency of Holy Scripture, Biel posits repeatedly an extrascriptural Tradition. Thus when he discusses the sacrament of baptism, he comes to the conclusion that as regards the time and place of its institution, Holy Scripture is silent. It is not this statement itself but the explanation he offers that is most interesting for our purposes: "many other things have most certainly to be believed and done are not mentioned in the Bible." Indeed Biel further offers an alternative explanation, which he owes to Duns Scotus, but the principle of extrascriptural Tradition nevertheless has been clearly enunciated.[16]

Ultimately, Oberman places Biel firmly in Tradition II, citing this passage from Biel himself: "After all many things not written in Holy Scripture have been handed down to the Church by the apostles and have reached us through episcopal succession."[17] So, in

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[13] Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 375–78.

[14] Ibid., 391–92.

[15] Ibid., 394.

[16] Ibid., 398–99.

[17] Ibid., 399; citing Biel, *Sententiarum*, 1501.

Biel's own view of interpretive authority, the difference between Tradition I and Tradition II is personified. The Tradition I reading of Scripture requires the light of patristic interpretation and exposition, whereas Tradition II requires things passed down outside of Bible interpretation itself. The effect of this view, at least in the example of Biel, is that "In a number of places, Biel declares theological debates redundant in view of the fact that the Church has already taken a particular decision."[18] In spite of the occasional statement about Tradition I denying extrascriptural tradition, it becomes clear that Oberman consistently requires the traditional interpretation and exposition of the patristics to function as the light that is necessary to see the Scripture. Oberman even cites Bullinger's *Second Helvetic Confession* ("'praedicatio verbi dei est verbum dei': The preaching of the word of God is *the* word of God.") as evidence that the interpretation of the Scripture is not outside of Scritpure, extrascriptural, but is merely the *living voice of the gospel* ("*viva vox evangelii*").[19]

Finally, regarding Luther himself, Oberman believes that the Reformer was aware of the threat of individualism, and held a high regard for traditional interpretation. Oberman writes,

> In 1528 in a treatise on rebaptism, Luther makes very clear that his interpretation of the *sola-scriptura* principle does *not exclude, but includes* a high regard for Tradition I: 'We do not act fanatically as the sectarian spirits. We do not reject everything that is under the dominion of the Pope. For in that event we should also reject the Christian Church. . . . Much Christian good, nay, all Christian good, is to be found in the papacy and from there it descended to us.'[20]

To use this citation for the argument being made reflects poorly on Oberman, because it misses the thrust of the passage as a whole. In context, Luther wrote,[21]

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[18] Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 401.

[19] Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 286.

[20] Ibid., 285; italics original.

[21] The quotation above does not match this quotation exactly, because Oberman was translating from vol. 26 of the Weimar edition, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, 146f. The following is from the English edition. The critical issue is the context.

> I am not sure as to the ground and reason of their faith, since you do not tell me, and yet ask advice as to what to do in such cases. My answer cannot be very definite. In a sense you are yourselves Anabaptists. For many among you rebaptize in Latin when someone has been baptized in German, though your pope neither does nor teaches thus. For we know well enough that the pope recognizes it as a baptism when midwives administer emergency baptism, even though it be in German. Still you rebaptize persons whom we have baptized in German, as if our German baptism by pastors were not as valid as German baptism by midwives. So the bonehead of Leipzig recently did at Mühlhausen. But the pope has never commanded that baptism should be only in Latin and not in another language. So you have your reward. You favor rebaptism, so you get plenty of Anabaptists, though you will not tolerate them, and yet you want to be rebaptizers in opposition to your own teacher and master, the pope.
>
> But I pass by now what wrong your people do in their rebaptizing. Your shame is the greater since by your rebaptizing you at the same time contradict your idol, the pope. Teacher and pupil do not agree with each other. I will not speak further of this, but rather help you by appearing to be a papist again and flattering the pope. For my dear enthusiasts will put no other interpretation on it (as they already have done) than that I hereby flatter the pope and seek his favor. Who does not follow their folly must bear the name of a new papist.
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> In the first place I hear and see that such rebaptism is undertaken by some in order to spite the pope and to be free of any taint of the Antichrist. In the same way the foes of the sacrament want to believe only in bread and wine, in opposition to the pope, thinking thereby really to overthrow the papacy. It is indeed a shaky foundation on which they can build nothing good. On that basis we would have to disown the whole of Scripture and the office of the ministry, which of course we have received from the papacy. We would also have to make a new Bible. Then, also, we would have to disavow the Old Testament, so that we would be under no obligation to the unbelieving Jews. And why the daily use of gold and goods which have been used by bad people, papists, Turks, and heretics? This, too, should be surrendered, if they are not to have anything good from evil persons.
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> The whole thing is nonsense. Christ himself came upon the errors of scribes and Pharisees among the Jewish people, but he did not on that account reject everything they had and thought (Matt. 23[:3]). We on our part confess that there is much that is Christian and good under the papacy; indeed everything that is Christian and good is to be found there and has come to us from this source. For instance we confess that in the papal church there are the true holy Scriptures, true baptism, the true sacrament of the altar, the true keys to the forgiveness of sins, the true office of the ministry, the true catechism in the form of the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the articles of the creed. Similarly, the pope admits that we too, though condemned by him as heretics, and likewise all heretics, have the holy Scriptures, baptism, the keys, the catechism, etc.[22]

Luther could not be farther from espousing a high view of traditional interpretation. He is simply exposing the fact that spite for the Pope does not lead to biblical balance. Such a reaction would not be driven by what the Scriptures *actually* teach, as much as it is driven by reaction against the Pope—an operating principle that Luther calls "nonsense." Yet,

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[22] *LW*, 40:230-32.

Luther still believes the Pope is the Antichrist. In fact, in the paragraph after this quotation, Luther asserts, "If now the pope is (and I cannot believe otherwise) the veritable Antichrist, he will not sit or reign in the devil's stall, but in the temple of God."[23] Nevertheless, Luther could just have easily said that to spite the devil, Christians ought not quote the Scriptures, because the devil himself did so.

In its context, this passage is not articulating a high view of tradition, but an adherence to the Scriptures, even when submission to the Scripture may externally appear similar to submission to the Pope. Far from asserting a high view of tradition, Luther is pointing out spite towards the pope cannot rightly discern what is true from what is antichrist, since the antichrist claims to uphold the Scriptures. This may be sound and balanced biblical advice, but in no way does it prove that Luther agreed with Oberman's description of Tradition I—that Scripture "has to be interpreted in the light of Tradition, which is understood as the history of biblical exposition."[24]

Gregg R. Allison

Allison believes that, for the Reformers, *Sola Scriptura* did not reflect a tradition that relied on a tradition of interpretation throughout the church. Instead, according to Allison, they critiqued the patristics with Scripture, and the Scriptures enjoyed greater clarity than the patristics' comments on the Scriptures. For example, Allison documents Luther's rejection of patristic interpretive authority in Luther's interaction with Emser and with Latomus.[25]

At the risk of departing too far from Luther, Allison is nevertheless very helpful when he demonstrates a consistency among several reformers in this view of

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[23] *LW*, 40:232.

[24] Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 398.

[25] Gregg R. Allison, "The Protestant Doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture: A Reformulation on the Basis of Biblical Teaching" (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1995), 5–9, 13–16. See the next section.

interpretive authority. He quotes Zwingli, "It is when God gives a man certainty that he is nourished and refreshed and will never hunger or thirst again. But if he has already been nourished by God, why tell him to turn away from this bread to the Fathers?"[26] Later, Allison says,

> Zwingli abhors this deference to the Fathers, exposing it as nothing more than an appeal to majority opinion. But that this consensus is no assurance of a correct interpretation is brought out by Zwingli by examples from both Scripture and church history. Thus again, his thrust in all of this echoes his main theme: "Ultimately only God himself can teach us the truth with such certainty that all doubts are removed." Even when there is a conflict of interpretations, an appeal to human arbiters is futile, for it does not give certainty.[27]

Finally, Allison believes that Calvin would also disregard Patristic commentary as an interpretive authority: "Yet, from the *Institutes* to the *Commentaries* to his *Sermons*, the clarity of the Word of God is repeatedly affirmed, alluded to and presupposed."[28] Allison argues that Calvin believed in perspicuity on the basis of Scripture's self-attestion of its own clarity.[29] Allison's work demonstrates the similarity between the major reformers on the perspicuity of the Scripture.

Keith A. Mathison

Mathison uses Oberman's Tradition I and Tradition II categories. In addition, he also accepts "Tradition 0" as introduced by Alister McGrath. According to McGrath, "'Tradition 0' placed the private judgment of the individual above the corporate judgment of the Christian church concerning the interpretation of Scripture. It was a recipe for anarchy—and, as the history of the radical Reformation sadly demonstrates, that anarchy was not slow to develop."[30] According to Mathison, the radical reformers viewed history

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[26] Allison, "The Protestant Doctrine of the Perspicuity of Scripture," 55 (quoting Zwingli, *Clarity and Certainty*, 81).

[27] Ibid., 57 (quoting Zwingli, *Clarity and Certainty*, 87).

[28] Ibid., 87.

[29] Ibid., 95–96.

[30] As cited by Keith A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press,

and tradition with "utter contempt . . . but . . . Luther rejected both the autonomy and the radical individualism that instilled in those men the idea that each individual is his own final authority in doctrinal matters."[31]

Mathison articulates a view of interpretive authority that depends upon the church, as distinct from the text of Scriptures. He mentions Augustine's much-discussed and even more-misunderstood comment, "For my part, I should not believe the gospel except as moved by the authority of the Catholic Church." Then, Mathison cites the comments of Georges Florovsky, an Orthodox Ukrainian priest:

> In this situation it was proper for a simple believer to appeal to the authority of the Church, from which, and in which, he had received the Gospel itself: *ipsi Evangelio catholicis praedicantibus credidi*. [I believed the Gospel itself, being instructed by catholic preachers]. The Gospel and the preaching of the *Catholica* belong together. St. Augustine had no intention "to subordinate" the Gospel to the Church. He only wanted to emphasize that "Gospel" is actually received always in the context of Church's [*sic*] catholic preaching and simply cannot be separated from the Church. . . . Actually, the sentence could be converted: one should not believe the Church, unless one was moved by the Gospel. The relationship is strictly reciprocal.[32]

This describes a reciprocal authority between the church and Scripture. Although Augustine highly esteemed the current episcopate of his day,[33] he was not making a reciprocal relationship between the church and the Scripture. In context, this quote does not exalt the Church over Scripture. Instead, Augustine argues that since the Manicheans claim to be concerned about the truth only, and they assert that Mani's Epistle is truth along with the gospel, then their personal authority is dead-set against the authorities of the universal church which assert that Mani is a heretic. So, how will

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2001), 127.

[31] Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*, 101.

[32] As cited by Mathison, ibid., 42.

[33] St. Augustine, "Against the Epistle of Manichaeus, Called Fundamental," ed. Phillip Schaff, trans. Richard Stothert, vol. 4, Nicene and Post-Nicece Fathers: First Series (Albany, OR: AGES Software, 1997), §4.5.

Augustine decide between the authority of the Church and the "authority" of Mani? Augustine points to the "incontroverible testimony to the apostleship" in the gospel itself:

> To convince me, then, you must put aside the gospel. If you keep to the gospel, I will keep to those who commanded me to believe the gospel; and, in obedience to them, I will not believe you at all. But if haply you should succeed in finding in the gospel an incontrovertible testimony to the apostleship of Manichaeus, you will weaken my regard for the authority of the Catholics who bid me not to believe you; and the effect of that will be, that I shall no longer be able to believe the gospel either, for it was through the Catholics that I got my faith in it; and so, whatever you bring from the gospel will no longer have any weight with me.[34]

In other words, the very passage used to defend a reciprocal authority in Augustine, actually proves that Augustine would disregard the church authorities to believe the gospel, if that gospel bore incontrovertible testimony to the apostleship of Mani. Yet obviously, Augustine is convinced of the apostleship of Peter and Paul on the basis of the testimony of the Scriptures.

Mathison seeks to uphold *Sola Scriptura,* while at the same time to maintain an interpretive authority that is outside of Scripture. This knife's edge is difficult to stand on without being cut deeply. For example, in his survey of patristic writers, Mathison notices that for Athanasius, "the error of the heretics . . . is not in their appeal to Scripture but in their appeal to Scripture taken out of the context of the apostolic faith, that which Irenaeus referred to as the *regula fidei*. . . . According to Athanasius, Holy Scripture *is* the apostolic *paradosis* or 'tradition.'"[35] Although it may seem like Mathison would agree that all interpretive authority is contained in the text of Scripture alone, this is not where he ends up. Later, he writes,

> It is important to realize that there were two very different versions of the *sola scriptura* principle which were advanced during the sixteenth-century Reformation. The first concept, advocated by magisterial Reformers such as Luther and Calvin, insisted that Scripture was the sole source of revelation, the sole infallible authority, but that it was to be interpreted in and by the communion of saints according to the *regula fidei*. Tradition in the sense of the traditional interpretation of Scripture was

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[34] Augustine, "Against the Epistle of Manichaeus," 5.6.

[35] Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*, 30.

> not discarded. This is the view for which we are using the term 'Tradition I.' The second concept, advocated by many of the radical Reformers, insisted that Scripture was the sole authority altogether. Not only were medieval 'traditions' disregarded, but tradition in the sense of the *regula fidei*, the testimony of the fathers, the traditional interpretation of Scripture, and the corporate judgment of the Church were discarded as well.[36]

According to Mathison, Luther would uphold the exclusivity and sufficiency of Scripture for revelation, but not interpretation. As this quotation indicates, Mathison believes that there is an interpretive authority in the interpretive tradition of the Church Fathers. This leads to some important tensions for Mathison's view of interpretive authority. For instance, he asks,

> Does any of the 'God-breathed' oral revelation communicated by the Apostles to the Church survive today outside Scripture? Those who advocate Tradition 0 say no, but this is difficult for them to conclusively prove using nothing more than the New Testament. Those who advocate Tradition I say "yes" in the specific sense that the apostolic rule of faith remains the hermeneutical context of Scripture, but "no" in the sense that this rule of faith is not a second source of revelation "outside" or "apart from" Scripture.[37]

He seems hesitant to follow his position to its logical end, but he has to ultimately admit that there is an interpretive authority in the Fathers that is a non-textual, but nevertheless a vestigial piece of apostolic tradition.

For Mathison, this move is necessary in order to avoid the hopelessness of subjectivism. He writes,

> Rather than placing the final authority in Scripture as it intends to do, this concept [that *sola scriptura* means to individually evaluate all doctrines according to the only authority, the Scripture] places the final authority in the reason and judgment of each individual believer. The result is the relativism, subjectivism, and theological chaos that we see in modern Evangelicalism today. . . . no one is infallible in his interpretation of Scripture.[38]

Not only is this last line true, it applies equally to Mathison's view of interpretive tradition as demonstrated in the fallible Fathers. This is where Mathison's view diverges from Luther's.

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[36] Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*, 128.

[37] Ibid., 166.

[38] Ibid., 240.

Mark D. Thompson

Thompson may have written the definitive work on Luther's hermeneutic in general, but more specifically, Luther's biblical ground for interpretive authority.[39] This volume is loaded with the rare insights only enjoyed by those who have devoured all of Luther's pertinent writing on interpretive authority. For example, Thompson amply documents Luther's view of the languages for interpretation and preaching: "Luther spoke of the biblical languages as the instruments of the Holy Spirit."[40]

According to Thompson, Luther refused to interpret the Bible with the supplemental authority of science or philosophy. For example, to scholars who struggled to believe that God created the world in six literal days, Luther said, "Do the Holy Spirit the honour of admitting that he is more learned than you. You ought to treat what has been written as if God himself said it."[41]

Thompson builds a case for Luther's practice, and transition from medieval *quadriga* to a straightforward and singular grammatical-historical approach that recognized Christ in the OT on the merits of the OT itself:

> By the time he began to lecture on the Psalms for a second time, in September or October 1518, Luther had not only abandoned the *Quadriga*, he had also given up the traditional expository framework of *glossae* and *scholia*. In stark contrast to the

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[39] Mark D. Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand: The Relation of Authority and Interpretive Method of Luther's Approach to Scripture* (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster, 2005).

[40] Ibid., 114. Thompson documents several other passages from Luther demonstrate this, e.g., "In proportion then as we love the gospel, let us hold firmly to the languages. For it was not without purpose that God caused his Scriptures to be set down in these two languages alone—the Old Testament in Hebrew, the New in Greek." Ibid., from *An die Rathherren aller Städte deutsches Lands*, 1524 [*To the Councilmen of All German Cities*]. And, "Let us be sure of this: we will not long preserve the gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which this sword of the Spirit is contained." Ibid., 114-15, citing Luther, *An die Rathherren aller Städte deutsches Lands*, 1524. And, Luther also wrote:

> I know for a fact that one who has to preach and expound the Scriptures and has no help from the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages, but must do it entirely on the basis of his mother tongue, will make many a pretty mistake. For it has been my experience that the languages are extraordinarily helpful for a clear understanding of the divine Scriptures. This also was the feeling and opinion of St. Augustine; he held that there should be some people in the church who could use Greek and Hebrew before they deal with the Word, because it was in these two languages that the Holy Spirit wrote the Old and New Testaments. (Ibid., 236, citing Luther, *Von Anbeten des Sakraments des heiligen Leichnams Christi*, 1523 [*About the Worship of the Sacrament of the Holy Corpse of Christ*])

[41] Ibid., 120, from *Ein Sermon und Eingang in das erste Buch Mosi*, 1523 [*A Sermon and Introduction to the First Book of Moses*].

> *Dictata* of 1513 to 1515, he provide a continuous commentary on the text of the Psalms which sought to do justice to both their literal meaning in the context of the Hebrew Old Testament and the focus on Christ which he remained convinced was the intention of the Holy Spirit.[42]

Finally, Thompson concludes that Luther was rejecting patristic interpretation not as though necessarily wrong, but only as an interpretive norm:

> He was not, of course, suggesting that the patristic legacy was irrelevant in the task of biblical interpretation. Such a task was not undertaken in a vacuum and Luther himself continued to make extensive use of the patristic commentaries. However, he was insisting that the biblical material stands over and above the statements of the Fathers *as the self-interpreting norm for Christian faith and practice*.[43]

In Thompson's view, this is connected to Luther's conviction about the perspicuity of Scripture: "Luther's conviction that the teaching of Scripture is both accessible and intelligible provides perhaps the most critical link in the conceptual bridge between his appeal to the authority of Scripture and his interpretive practice."[44] Thompson believes that Luther does not leave room for tradition in the sphere of interpretive authority, even at the supplemental level:

> In the Dictata [Luther] explained that 'the Church does not, like the heretics who teach their own doctrine, have independent breasts with which she feeds milk to the weak, but she is captive to the authority of Scripture and does not teach anything but the Word of God'. Later events would, of course, have an impact on the way in which he expressed this principle. His preparation and conduct of the debate with Eck at Leipzig in 1519, for example, certainly made it necessary for him to unfold its implications. However, right from the start of his career at Wittenberg *Luther stressed the unique authority of Scripture which neither requires nor tolerates any supplementation*.[45]

And, Thompson recognizes that, for Luther, only *Sola Scriptura* grounds interpretive authority so that a Christian can rightly judge another Christian articulation as consistent with Scripture or not:

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[42] Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand*, 185.

[43] Ibid., 196.

[44] Ibid., 247.

[45] Ibid., 276; italics mine. The quotation comes from Luther's *Dictata super Psalterium* (1513-1515).

> Luther's call to test the statements of the Fathers, and anything else which presented itself as Christian truth, left open the possibility that these things might be approved as consistent with the teaching of Scripture. His own use of extra-biblical material in his theological work makes clear that he viewed this as more than simply a possibility. The Fathers were not always wrong, and the principles of logic were not faulty in and of themselves. When they accorded with the teaching of Scripture it was perfectly appropriate to use them *as corroborative or illustrative material*. Nevertheless, it is also clear that only Scripture itself operated as an authority for him in the strict sense of the term, *for it was only Scripture which he felt constrained to believe without reservation and without reference to some external validating principle*.[46]

Thompson connects Luther's view of the sufficiency and authority of Scripture with his practice of interpretive authority: "The sufficiency of Scripture would mean little if the biblical text could not be interpreted, or if it could only be interpreted with reference to extra-biblical material."[47]

Finally, Thompson concludes, "His approach to Scripture ought not therefore to be caricatured as an obscurantist refusal to listen to those who were engaged in the interpretive task before him or beside him. Yet we cannot avoid the conclusion that Luther meant much more by the sufficiency of Scripture than some would have him mean."[48]

Kevin J. Vanhoozer

Even though Vanhoozer's view of interpretive authority was examined in appendix 1, how his view on Luther and tradition impacts hermeneutics merits an additional comment. He writes from a position of retrieving Luther's reformation conviction, including *sola Scriptura*. Vanhoozer has published several volumes on hermeneutics and interpretive authority.[49] Vanhoozer defines interpretive authority "as the right to authorize what should be said and done on the basis of Scripture. The question

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[46] Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand*, 278 italics mine.

[47] Ibid., 279–80.

[48] Ibid., 281.

[49] See appendix 1.

before us concerns the locus of interpretive authority. Does Scripture conduct its own symphony, or does *sola scriptura* allow for a certain human conductivity as well?"[50] For Vanhoozer, Scripture *and* Tradition constitute interpretive authority together. Two books in particular develop his view.

In *The Drama of Doctrine*, Vanhoozer weds the tradition of church and the Scriptures themselves and their union begets interpretive authority. Tradition became more prominent as he began to rethink his view of the sufficiency of Scripture. He wrote,

> I began the book fairly convinced that the sufficiency of Scripture meant that the real issue in whether Christians are biblical or not concerns obedience: Will we obey what we hear? While I continue to think that one's spirituality has a decisive bearing on one's theology, I have come to rethink the matter of Scripture's sufficiency. . . . This rethinking also led me to assign a more positive role to the notions of 'tradition' and 'improvising' than I had first anticipated.[51]

This led him to articulate a view of interpretation that is more dynamic, than perhaps he articulated in previous volumes.[52] For Vanhoozer, the canon is "performed" by the church throughout her history. In this view of "drama," God is the director, the Scripture is the script, and the church are the actors.[53] So, the drama of doctrine can be watched afresh as each new generation requires a new "improvisation."[54] Often, the audience even participates in the performance, and regardless, it always affects the performance. This contextualization requires fresh improvisations and these represent doctrinal development

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[50] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel: Retrieving the Solas in the Spirit of Mere Protestant Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 123.

[51] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), xii–xiii.

[52] E.g., Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998); Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002).

[53] Though he uses the metaphor of "script," he is also fond of "maps" (Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, xiii, 81, 128, 335–44, 353.

[54] Ibid., xiii, 81, 128, 335–44. Vanhoozer says, "*doctrines help us to improvise judgments about what new things to say and to do that are nevertheless consistent with our canonical script*" (335, italics original). At the end of the section titled "Faithful Improvisation," he writes, "Thanks to the notion of faithful improvisation, we can affirm both that Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow and that God may do new things with the canonical script." Ibid., 344.

in the church: "The development of doctrine is thus a matter of *improvising with a canonical script*."[55]

It is important to recognize that Vanhoozer believes that the church's performance is inseparable from the Scripture. It is not that the tradition of the church becomes another authority, nor that church performance is without error like the text—this would simply equate the church with the Spirit's work in an unwarranted way, according to Vanhoozer.[56] But, the performance of the church is included in the sphere of interpretive authority. This requires Vanhoozer to prefer the phrase "supreme authority" and "supreme norm" with regard to the Scripture.[57] They are not exclusive because they share authority with tradition—the *Drama* of doctrine as the church improvises for each successive generation. For Vanhoozer, "Tradition" with a capital "T" shares authority with the Scripture because both are equally the work of the Spirit: "In part 2, I consider not only traditions but Tradition, together with the argument that the latter is as divinely superintended by the Spirit as the Bible itself."[58] As a result, he titles a sub-section, "Theo-drama Becomes Scripture: The Nature of the Canon."[59] Eventually, Vanhoozer says, "Surely the life of the church acquires a certain authority if that life is itself a performance of the Spirit. . . . Aquinas goes even further: 'The universal Church cannot err, since it is governed by the Holy Spirit, who is the spirit of truth.'"[60]

Vanhoozer's view of Tradition leads to theological diversity, and he views this as a benefit because it fosters humility in interpretation.[61] This is a humility that should

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[55] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 353.

[56] Ibid., 188.

[57] E.g., Vanhoozer writes, "The canon is the supreme norm and measure of dramatic consistency as we seek to assess the fidelity of our performance to the gospel." Ibid., 146.

[58] Ibid., 22n70. Cf. 159, 160, 165, 188-89.

[59] Ibid., 146–47.

[60] Ibid., 188.

[61] Ibid., 274.

acknowledge "equivalent plurality on the level of interpretative traditions."[62] Without Scripture as the *only* authority, the supreme authority of Scripture is coupled with the authority of Tradition, that, according to Vanhoozer, is equally a product of the Spirit. While the Spirit is undoubtedly sovereign, He never claims inerrancy for the Church's performance, which Vanhoozer recognizes.[63] Nevertheless, there is a sense where, for Vanhoozer, "the canon remains open in the sense that it invites the church's ongoing understanding and participation."[64] As a result, interpretive authority consists of both Scripture and Tradition.

In his more recent book, *Biblical Authority After Babel*, Vanhoozer uses this view of Tradition to attempt a retrieval of the five *solas* of the Reformation. The concern, of course, is whether Protestantism creates little popes. Whereas Christian Smith charged "Biblicism" with "pervasive interpretive diversity," Vanhoozer answers with a more consensus approach—*plural interpretive unity*. He takes the previously discussed terms—Traditions 0, I, and II—and he explains that "Tradition 0" is the view that Scripture requires no interpretive tradition.[65] He calls this *"solo" scriptura*, and its relative *nuda scriptura*, "which refers to Scripture stripped of its ecclesial context . . . "[66]

Importantly, Vanhoozer seeks to retrieve the *solas* of the Reformation, rather than repent of the Reformation. What Vanhoozer regularly retrieves by way of *sola*

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[62] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 275–76.

[63] Vanhoozer writes, "[N]o one version of Christianity—no one contextualization, that is—is equal to the original; rather, we come more fully to appreciate the meaning and significance of the original as we seek to translate it into the vernacular and contextualize it into the prose of everyday life." Ibid., 322. And, he later says, "We owe to twentieth-century hermeneutics the insight that human understanding is always historical. While God's truth is eternal, our theologies inevitably show the signs of the times in which they were conceived." Ibid., 345.

[64] Ibid., 237.

[65] He also suggests "Tradition III" as a label for the postmodern advocates of communal interpretation. See Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel*, 121–22.

[66] Ibid., 120n41.

scriptura is something else than what the Reformers meant[67]—perhaps a *suprema scriptura*. Vanhoozer points out that Scripture, like music, is "not entirely self-interpreting."[68] Vanhoozer's Tradition is an interpretive tradition within the church, quite similar to Oberman. He regularly points to interpretive authority outside the Scripture[69] and inside the church,[70] and claims the Reformers held the same view.[71] In his conclusion, Vanhoozer writes, "*Sola scritpura*: evangelicalism is 'biblicist,' but as we learned from the Reformers, this does not mean that the Bible is the sole source of theology; rather, the Bible is evangelicalism's supreme authority."[72]

Conclusion

The current conversation about Luther's view of interpretive authority still uses the categories introduced by Oberman. Tradition 0, I, II, and III have come to represent a spectrum of views with regard to interpretive authority. On the "0" side of the spectrum, there is the conviction that Scripture holds exclusive authority and it is neither benefitted by nor tolerant of a supplemental authority of traditional commentary. On the

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[67] I am not alone in this concern. E.g., Mohler said,

> That, in a Protestant sense, is what Vanhoozer has done in his attempt to try and retrieve the *solas*. I have one concern about that, and that concern comes down to this: as brilliant as Vanhoozer's presentation of his points and concerns are in this book, the *solas* articulated here are not the same as the *solas* which became the central formula of the Reformation. Now, that's an interesting point in terms of this retrieval. Retrieval is Vanhoozer's effort to try and take those *solas* both backward and forward. I think he's actually quite successful in this effort to go back to central themes and concepts and affirmations of the Reformers, and then to bring that into a faithful evangelicalism, a faithful 'mere Protestant Christianity' he calls it, looking to the future. I think there is loss on the one hand, however, by failing to lay out what the Reformers and their heirs meant by these *solas.* Because as we are looking at the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, it seems to me that is the first and most primary task. (R. Albert Mohler Jr., *Retrieving The Reformation After Babel: A Conversation with Professor Kevin J. Vanhoozer*, 2016, secs. 47:45-48:42, http://www.albertmohler.com/2016/12/12/biblical-authority-babel-kevin-vanhoozer/:)

[68] Vanhoozer, *Biblical Authority After Babel*, 123.

[69] He critiques naïve biblicists for thinking that exegesis is a scientific procedure that lets the text speak. Ibid., 64, 124.

[70] Ibid., 105, 120ff., 129, 144, 212, 223, 233.

[71] Ibid., 116.

[72] Ibid., 233.

"III" side of the spectrum there is a trifecta of authority: Scripture, history and the interpreter's community.

Oberman bears some responsibility for the variance of interpretation in that he does not recognize a Tradition 0, and his comparison between Tradition I and II seems to preclude the possibility that a Christian could ever hold the view that the Scriptures are sufficient for hermeneutics in such a way that this sufficiency is *exclusive* of human writings about the Scripture. For example, he makes some categorical conclusions about some famous pre-Reformers. Bradwardine and Wyclif are his examples of Tradition I interpreters.[73] However, having already explained that Tradition I *includes patristic interpretation* with the so-called sufficiency of Scripture, one is left wondering how to make sense of Wyclif's own articulation of interpretive authority in, for example, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*.[74] Wyclif recognizes that when man interprets the truth in the way that God desires, what he says is true, but even then, his authority is only derived from the exclusive interpretive authority of God's Word.[75] Anticipating today's verbiage about interpretive authority being the loudest *say-so*, Wyclif gives God all the *say-so*: "Yet this is not so because any Christian says this, but instead because God says this."[76]

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[73] Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*, 371–73.

[74] John Wyclif, *On the Truth of Holy Scripture*, trans. Ian Christopher Levy, The Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 197–214.

[75] See Ibid., 162.

[76] Wyclif writes:

> But if [the Vicars of Peter] collected one meaning of Scripture which had previously been hidden, which would be equal authority with Holy Scripture with respect to God, according to the first and second conclusion, it is still impossible for it to attain an equal authority with respect to its proximate creator. For if this person or that Vicar of Peter asserts something, thereby making it true, that would mean he would undoubtedly be Christ himself. But to the extent that any secondary author of Holy Scripture is so moved by God to promulgate something in such a way it is supremely authentic with respect to God. Through that distinction one can demolish those laws which seem to imply that all the decretal letters are of equal authority with the gospel. This would be true if they explicated Holy Scripture. *Yet this is not so because any Christian says this, but instead because God says this*. In fact, the statements of the authors of Holy Scripture are not authentic because they spoke them, but only insofar as God instructed them to speak in this way. This is what the Apostle says in Gal. 1:8. (Ibid., 209–10; italics mine)

Similarly, in a recent study on the Lollard movement, Ghosh writes,

> *Sapientia*, as I pointed out above, aligns itself with authority and tradition. In this scheme of things, relevant textual meaning is the product of much more than the text. The exegete must take into account what Heiko Oberman calls Tradition I: Tradition as the history of scriptural interpretation. A

The contemporary conversation about Luther's view of *sola scriptura* and interpretive authority is burdened by a fair share of inaccurate perspectives about Luther. What makes the conversation so challenging is not so much Luther's complexity. As noted above, Luther's hermeneutic changed drastically—most notably between his first and second set of lectures on the Psalms (between 1513-1515 and 1518) when he dropped the medieval *quadriga* entirely.[77] Development in Luther as an interpreter of Scripture should not confuse this conversation. On the contrary, the greater threat to this conversation is ignorance of what Luther actually said in his own words. Now we turn to this task.

Interpretive Authority in Luther's Own Words

The following selections from Luther's writings present a clear and consistent picture. Luther drew the circle of interpretive authority tightly around the Scriptures alone. This does not mean that Luther rejected the notion that other authorities existed in different spheres, because he acknowledged secular, ecclesiastical and parental authority in the domain allotted to the administration of each. However, this section demonstrates that the Luther upheld *Sola Scriptura* in the discussion of hermeneutical epistemology. That is to say, in the discussion of authority over the interpretation of the text, Luther did not believe that the Scripture was the *supreme* authority, but the *only* authority.

Luther believed that the context of the Scriptures themselves were clear and sufficient to serve as their own protection against proof-texting, or proving what the text does not actually teach. When this happens, the blame lies solely on the interpreter who did not pay attention to the context. On June 26, 1520, Luther published the following against an Augustinian friar in nearby Leipzig:

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crux of Lollard polemic therefore consists in the determination of the extent to which 'Tradition' is acceptable as a valid means of determining biblical meaning. (Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 8)

[77] Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand*, 185.

> I therefore advise this Romanist to go to school for one more year to learn what Christendom and head of Christendom really mean, before he drives the poor heretics away with such high, deep, wide, and long writings. It hurts my heart to have to permit such mad saints so arrogantly, so freely, and so unashamedly to tear up and slander Holy Scripture and to dare to deal with Scripture at all when they are not even fit to tend pigs. Until now I was of the opinion that whenever something is to be proven by Scripture, Scripture itself should serve the point in question. But now I learn that it suffices to throw many passages together helterskelter whether they fit or not. If this is the way to do it, I certainly shall prove, with Scripture, that Rastrum beer is better than Malmsey wine.[78]

On December 1, of the same year, Luther published *Assertio Omnium Articulorum M. Lutheri per Bullam Leonis X. novissimam damnatorum.*[79] It was one of four works that Luther wrote in response to Leo's papal bull[80] at the instigation of Prince Frederick who wanted Luther's response in Latin and in German.[81] It is published in volume 7 of the Weimar Edition of *D. Martin Luthers Werke—Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. It is absent from both of the American editions, the German and the English.[82] It is referenced occasionally in the literature because of its importance for his view on interpretive authority.[83]

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[78] *LW* 39:75–76.

[79] Martin Luther, *Assertio Omnium Articulorum M. Lutheri per Bullam Leonis X. novissimam damnatorum*, band 7, D. Martin Luthers Werke—Kritische Gesamtausgabe (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1897), 91–151.

[80] *LW* 32:5.

[81] Taras Khomych, "Luther's *Assertio*: A Preliminary Assessment of the Reformer's Relationship to Patristics," *Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2011): 357.

[82] "An Index to the Works of Martin Luther," http://www.steveborn.org/LuthersWorks/, accessed December 22, 2018.

[83] E.g., Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand*, 145, 188, 195, 196, 197, 199, 220–21, 229, 256, 276, 280; Iain Provan, *The Reformation and the Right Reading of Scripture* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 283n1; Robert Kolb, *Martin Luther and the Enduring Word of God: The Wittenberg School and Its Scritpure-Centered Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 75-97. Although the name of Kolb's chapter, "Nowhere More Present Than in Scripture: Luther's Perception of What the Bible Is," comes from a line in *Assertio Omnium Articulorum*, his interaction with the work is limited to a mention of that very line on p. 78.

Taras Khomych highlights how important this work is for understanding Luther's view of hermeneutics, claiming that the *Assertio* "marked a shift in his attitude towards the writings of the Church Fathers." Khomych, "Luther's *Assertio*," 351. He writes,

> To confirm his argumentation, he refers to the practice of the Fathers, who themselves interpreted the Scriptures *suo spiritu*. Subsequently, he indicates that the prohibition implies moving away from the text of the Scripture and depending upon the interpretation of other human beings. Luther does not even hesitate to insinuate that as a matter of fact this prohibition is to be attributed to Satan's inspiration as an attempt to move people away from the contact with the Bible. In contrast, the *Doctor in Biblia* urges to approach the very text of the Scripture. . . .
>
> In this vein Luther substantiates his claim that the Scripture should be interpreted without the

The *Assertio's* introduction remains one of the most critical passages Luther wrote on the role of the Church Fathers and interpretive tradition with regard to interpretive authority. It warrants a careful reading. The following translation contains all but six paragraphs of the introduction. Luther wrote:

> First, I want them to know and witness how it absolutely does not please me at all to wish to be constrained by the authority of the Holy Father, except only so far as he has been proven by the verdict of divine Scripture. This I know they will only consider with exceeding reluctance. For they will suppose that this method itself merely begins with the Holy Scripture, only to be eroded by human authorities. And they will say this, that the common function of everyone's mouth or pen is nevertheless understood by a few. On account of which, it is taught in pontifical canons, "No Holy Scripture is from private interpretation." With such a proverb, they advance in the most perverse understanding, so that they do not interpret the Scriptures except from private interpretation itself contrary to Scripture's own actual meaning.[84] For this reason, having put aside the sacred writings, they are immersed in human commentaries alone, not searching what is from Scripture, but what they suppose to be in the Scriptures, as long as it is in one man, the Roman Pontiff (but only if surrounded by the most unlearned Sophists) in order that they alone may give the rule for interpreting the Holy Scripture. Yet regarding the one who presumes concerning the only power and height of majesty, on this side of all understanding and learning, they tell a fable that the Church (that is, the Pope) is not able to err in faith. So, in addition to this, it will be helpful to discuss a few things.
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> First, if no one is allowed to interpret the Holy Scriptures according to private interpretation, then why don't they recognize, that neither Augustine nor any other father was allowed either? Both he who understands the Holy Scriptures by following Augustine and he who does not better understand Augustine by following the Holy Scriptures, without a doubt he understands by following man and private

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help of any intermediaries, and opposes the accusations that this could lead to a misunderstanding of the Bible. Hence, he argues that the diligent and persistent study of the Scripture will fill one with its [Scripture's] spirit to such an extent that one's own spirit will not create an obstacle for the correct understanding of the Bible, as it will perfectly conform to the spirit of Holy Writ itself. (Ibid., 359)

Khomych believes that Luther's view of patristic authority is not an interpretive authority, as though patristic conclusions inform the meaning the of the Scriptures, but rather an interpretive model, because they demonstrate that the interpreter must weary himself with the Scripture alone in order to understand all other human writings. He concludes,

> In contrast to the bull, which stresses the authority of the Church Tradition, he focuses on the Bible in his *Assertio*. The text shows Luther's evaluation of the patristic writings to be closely connected with his biblical hermeneutics. He considers the Scripture as a transparent and self-interpreting source. On the other hand, he notes that commentaries of the Fathers are more obscure and often contradict each other. He also emphasises that the Divine authority should be attributed to the Scripture as the word of God, whereas the works of the Fathers are simply human writings and, consequently, their authority must be subjected to and confirmed by the authority of the Scripture. (Ibid., 362)

[84] These two lines are developed in the subsequent paragraphs. They highlight the contrast that Luther makes between private interpretation that is patently required of every Christian—to understand the Scripture on its own terms—and the private interpretation that represents a hermeneutical abuse—to impose personal meaning upon the Scripture. Luther's point is that although Rome condemned the former, they practiced the latter.

interpretation. For if one is not permitted to understand Scripture privately, much less is Augustine permitted to understand privately: for who will make us certain, whether you understand Augustine correctly? Therefore another interpreter will have to be granted to Augustine also, lest he should deceive us in his own books. Because, if it must be this way, a fourth interpreter must be given to a third, and a fifth to a fourth, and on and on to infinity. And our private interpretation will not bring any trouble to learn or read what was certainly completed at that time. Throughout the beginning, by neglect of the Holy Scriptures, one labored in Augustine alone, and after this, by means of this misunderstanding and neglect, Thomas Aquinas has reigned. And other interpreters have followed this without end.

Therefore, error is manifest by this phrase 'to understand Scripture privately is not allowed,' being demanded of us, so that we may hold the sacred writings at a distance and we might believe the commentaries of men. Without a doubt, I say, Satan himself introduced this understanding so that he might divert us from the Scriptures as long as possible and make us abandon the knowledge of the Scripture. Since it may be better understood in this way, Scripture must be not be understood apart from His own Spirit who wrote them. In this way, the Spirit can be found nowhere more present and lively than in His own holy letters that He writes. Therefore, these works should be allowed, not so that, by setting aside the Holy Scripture, we should only strain at what is produced in human writings. But, on the contrary, first, by setting aside the writings of all men, to an even greater degree he ought to weary himself persistently with the Holy writings alone. Here is the current problem—that no one should understand them by private interpretation. This would result in the habit of diligent study, with which any problem is finally overcome, which for sure would produce in us the Spirit of the Scripture, who is not found anywhere except in the Scripture. For here is His hiding place, and His dwelling place is in the heavens. And Ps 1, the blessed man is praised in this way, in that day and night he meditates not in other books, but in the law of the Lord. From this passage, for the one who drinks by the Spirit he will form his own judgment not only above all the peoples but also above all the writings of the holy fathers. For it is written that Moses' face was glorified because of experience with the words of the Lord, by no means because of experience with the words of men, even those who until that time were the most holy.

In addition, although we should believe the Holy Catholic church to have the same spirit of faith that it once accepted at its own beginning, why is the study of Holy Scripture not permitted today, either exclusively or primarily, as it was in the early church? For they had read neither Augustine or Thomas. Or tell me, if you can, with which judge the investigation will be concluded if patristic expressions have disputed with one another. For Scripture ought to produce judgment here with regard to meaning. This is impossible unless we grant the chief place to the Scripture over all things. These were acknowledged by the fathers, that is, that the Scriptures in and of themselves may be most certain, accessible, and clear, that it may be its own interpreter, testing, judging, and illuminating all things for everyone, just as it is written in Ps 118 [so, VULG and LXX; HMT and Eng., Ps 119]. Or a clarification, the Hebrew properly has, "An opened door for Your words illuminates and gives understanding to the young."[85] Here, the Spirit clearly bestows illumination and teaches that understanding is given through the words of God alone, as through an opened door or foundational principle (so they say). From this, one should begin to step towards light and understanding. Again, "The beginning or

[85] Luther follows the VULG and LXX with the chronological sense of the term. However, for פֶּתִי as "inexperienced, easily seduced . . . naive person." See *HALOT*, 3:989.

sum of Your words is truth." You see, here truth is not granted except in the sum of God's words. That is, if you should learn the words of God in the first place, then with them, just as with a foundational principle, you would be skilled in judgment about all expressions. And how does that entire eight-verse stanza work to call us back from the perversity of our condemned studies to the fount and might teach us that we must study God's words first and only, moreover, that His spirit must come and drive out our spirit so we may theologize without danger? This is indeed true, that with arrogant and wicked men the Holy Scripture is always an occasion for great blindness. But are not the writings of men likewise an occasion of great darkness for the arrogant? Or aren't these writings, no matter how much they excel, a coworker in evil with the arrogant and the impure? These become heretics in the Scriptures, this is nothing surprising; truly they likewise become more than beasts in human writings, this is nothing new.

Therefore, there are no foundational principles for Christians except the divine words. But the words of all men are conclusions drawn from here, and must be brought back and approved by them. Those primary things ought to be whatever is most familiar, but not to be questioned and learned through men, but men ought to be judged by them. But if it is not this way, why do Augustine and the holy fathers so often either dispute or teach according to the Holy Scriptures as if the foundational principles run back to the truth and their own uncertainties and weaknesses are illuminated and strengthened by the light and strength of those Scriptures? For example, they certainly teach that divine words are more manifest and certain than all the writings of men, even in their own words. So God's words should not be informed, tested, clarified, and strengthened by the words of men, but the words of men by God's own words. For unless they should lead to what is more clear and certain, they would ridiculously presume to approve their own uncertainties with the greater uncertainties of God. When even Aristotle and all of nature perceived these things, they should point out that the unknown ought to be shown by the known, and the obscure by the clear.

Therefore, what is so impious as our perversity, that we would not desire to learn the Holy Scriptures on their own terms and by their own Spirit, but by means of human meanings, with the example of opposition on all sides? And with these, should we boast in perversity as if it were a most religious piety? However, if we prefer this, we will concede that the Holy Scriptures are more obscure and unknowable than the patristic writings. But with this admission, we will further grant the sacred fathers in their own commentaries to have constructed nothing other than this—that until they prove their own writings by the Scriptures, they will have proved what is more known by what is less known. Thus, to such an extent in their own writings, they will have marvelously and utterly mocked us and they will have labored in vain. As a result, we must believe in interpretations more than in the utterances of Scripture. Who would be so insane?

Now, how many errors have been invented in the writings of all the fathers! How often do they fight between themselves! How often they disagree with each other! Who is he who will have never twisted the Scriptures? How often they argue with Augustine alone—it determines nothing! Jerome hardly ever asserts anything in his commentaries. But in what way are we able to safely rely on anyone, with whom it may be certain that he often errs, disputes with himself and others, creates violence with his writings, and helps with nothing, unless by the authority of Scripture we may read all of those writings with judgment? No one has achieved equality with Scripture, nor should they, even though those who are older may properly agree because they were more diligent with the Scriptures. Therefore no one should oppose me with the authority of the Pope and whatever saint you please, unless fortified with the Scriptures. Nor should he shout his rank, wishing to appear to everyone as more learned than me, and wishing to understand the Scriptures by

his own spirit. But these are not the shouts of searching for God's truth but for one's own vanity; or else he should bring out that authority with whom it may be certain that he never errs, twists the Scriptures, fights with other or himself, or wavers. I refuse to boast that I am more learned than all, but that Scripture alone should reign. Nor do I want to interpret it by my spirit or the spirit of any other men, but I want to understand it on its own terms and by its own Spirit.

On this issue, it would not seem proper to shout. I have the clearest example in Augustine, whom I often bring up, and, because they often pass over him with a deaf ear, one ought to drive this home often. He says in the Epistle to Jerome [Augustine, *Letters*, 82.1.3], "I have learned to grant this honor to these books alone, which are called canonical, so that I may firmly believe that none of these writers err. However, with regard to the others, to whatever degree they may excel in holiness and learning, so I say that not for this reason I should believe they are true—because of their own perception—but they could persuade me only by canonical Scriptures or by reason plausible to me." For this reason the arrogant don't argue with Augustine who is utterly prepared to despise all who discuss the Scripture as one, so far as he does not persuade by Scriptures or reason. He teaches us that this must be done in Book III, *On the Trinity*, saying, "Refuse to be devoted to my writings as if they were canonical," etc. And Hilary even says amongst the foremost fathers, in his *On the Trinity*, Book I, "The best interpreter is this—the one who should bring back the sense out of Scripture is better than he who should bring it to the Scripture. Nor should he urge this in order to appear satisfied with his own writings, in which case he will have presumed to teach before understanding." Behold, this notable author desires to report out of the Scriptures, not to bring understanding into the Scriptures. Therefore, the wisdom about which they boast is not enlightened in this way—to amass the many sayings of the fathers and to presume an understanding of the Scripture from them, but rather by the understanding brought out of the Scripture and by means of this collection alone to judge the protocol for clarifying the fathers. In the same way, the blessed virgin gathered all these words in her heart.

But if—so that we may be emboldened and obligated by this—Augustine and Hilary and the others had not taught this, don't we still have what Paul said to the Thessalonians, "Test everything; hold fast to what is good," and Gal 1, "If anyone should proclaim anything except what you received, may he be accursed" and, 1 John 4, "Test the spirits whether they are from God"? It is certainly necessary to condemn all of these apostolic admonitions, if it is also necessary to accept any sayings of the fathers without judgment. I speak with regard to the Spirit's judgment that He wants to be included and contained in nothing but the Holy Scriptures.

Because they may be surprised, and that I may speak more extensively, we also read in Acts 17:11, "They heard the word of Paul with all zeal, daily searching the Scriptures whether these things were so." But, therefore, if even Paul's gospel must be tested by former Scripture whether it was so (who nevertheless had authority given to him by God as an apostle), so that he might be trusted with his message, then what should we do with the sayings of the fathers, from whom a new authority must not be pointed out, but yet the things received by the apostles must me preserved? Should we refuse to summon the judgment of Scripture? Finally, Paul himself tests all his writing by the Old Testament, so that we see this abundantly in his epistles, to such an extent that in the introduction to Romans he bears witness for his preaching of the gospel in the Holy Scriptures by means of the prophets. And not only Paul, but also Peter and all the apostles, likewise at the council assembled in Acts 15, demonstrate through their own writings, that even Christ himself, Lord of all, wanted to be proven by John's testimony and confirmed by the His Father's voice from heaven. Yet nevertheless, He most frequently persuades His own by

means of the evidences of Scripture, telling the Jews that they must search the Scriptures, which would give testimony concerning Him.

Therefore, our perversity is extraordinary, that we should prefer to test what is from Scripture by means of other testimonies, when Christ and all His apostles prefer to testify by the Scriptures. On the contrary, therefore, the insanity may be more unbearable, from the testimony they had to make before us, that we prefer to test and uphold the Scriptures by the testimonies of men. This nothing other than the desire to shape and clarify divine things with human things, isn't it? Isn't this the sword of the Spirit, which is necessary for our defenses, to guard us against the accusations in the strength of our flesh? But by these accusations, with regard to the holy fathers I do not want authority removed and ingratitude returned for their pious deeds, but the freedom of the Spirit and majesty of God's words placed preeminently in front of the former. The church fathers are also holy men, but men unequal with the Apostles and prophets. And their authority is not preferred, nor equaled, but subjected, since they themselves did not teach or enlighten them, but they were taught and enlightened by them. They are such an example for us, that to the extent that they have labored in the Word of God for their own time. In the same way, we must labor in it for our own age.[86]

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[86] Luther, "Assertio Omnium Articulorum," 96.4-100.19; translation mine: Primum scire contestatosque esse eos volo, me prorsus nullius quantumlibet sancti patris autoritate cogi velle, nisi quatenus iudicio divinae scripturae fuerit probatus, id quod scio illos vehementer aegre laturos. Sentient enim, hac ratione sese ad primum sacris literis solum in autoribus humanis esse detrital, Dicentque illud omnium ore et calamo usitatum, a paucis tamen intellectum, quod in Canonibus pontificum docetur, Non esse scripturas sanctas proprio spiritu interpretandas. Cuius verbi perversissima intelligentia eo processerunt, ut scripturas non nisi proprio spiritu interpretarentur ipsi contra suam ipsorummet sententiam. Nam hinc, sepositis sacris literis, solis commentariis hominum immerse sunt, non quid sacrae literae, sed quid illi in sacris literis sentirent, quaerentes, donec uni homini, Romano pontifici, non nisi indoctissimis Sophistis circumvallato, soli tribuerent ius interpretandae scripturae sanctae, etiam de sola potestatis et sublimitatis maiestate, citra omnen intelligentiam et eruditionem, presumenti, fabulantes, Ecclesiam (id est Papam) non posse errare in fide. Quare super hac re utile fuerit pauca conferre.

Primum, si nulli licet sacras literas suo spiritu interpretari, Cur ergo non observant, nec Augustino nec ulli alii patrum idem licuisse? et qui scripturas sanctas secundum Augustinum et non Augustinum potius secundum scripturas sanctas intelligit, sine dubio secundum hominem et spiritum proprium intelligit. Si autem scripturas non licebit secundum proprium spiritum intelligere, multo minus licebit Augustinum secundum proprium spiritum intelligere: quis enim nos certos faciet, an recte Augustinum intelligas? Dandus ergo erit alius interpres Augustino quoque, ne proprius spiritus nos fallat in illius libris. Quod si ita fieri oportet, dandus est et tertio quartus interpres, et quarto quintus usque in infinitum, et coget nos proprii spiritus periculum nihil unquam discere aut legere, id quod certe impletum est, dum primo neglectis sacris literis soli Augustino insudatum est, post et hoc non intellecto et neglecto Thomas Aquinas regnavit, Et hunc alii sine fine interpretes secuti sunt.

Error itaque manifestus est, hoc verbo 'non licet scripturas proprio spiritu intelligere' nobis mandari, ut sepositis sacris literis intendamus et credamus hominum commentariis. Hanc, inquam, intelligentiam absque dubio Satanas ipse invexit, quo nos a nostris, literis longissime avocaret et desperatam scientiam scripturae nobis faceret, cum sic potius sit intelligendum, scripturas non nisi eo spiritu intelligendas esse, quo scriptae sunt, qui spiritus nusquam praesentius et vivacius quam in ipsis sacris suis, quas scripsit, literis inveniri potest. Danda ergo fuit opera, non ut, sepositis sacris literis, solum humanis partum scriptis intenderemus, immo contra, Primum, sepositis omnium hominum scriptis, tanto magis et pertinacius insudandum erat solis sacris, quo praesentius periculum est, ne quis proprio spiritu eas intelligat, ut usus assidui studii victo periculo eiusmodi tandem certum nobis faceret spiritum scripturae, qui nisi in scriptura prorsus non invenitur. Hic enim posuit latibulum suum, et in coelis (id est Apostolis) tabernaculum suum. Et psal. i. Vir beatus in hoc laudatur, quo die ac nocte non in aliis libris, sed in lege domini meditatur. Hinc enim hausto spiritu iuditium suum quisque formabit non modo super omnia gentium sed et sanctorum patrum scripta. Scriptum est enim, quod Mosi facies glorificata fuit e consortio sermonis domini, non utique e consortio sermonis hominum, etiam sanctissimorum, qui tum erant.

Praeterea cum credamus Ecclesiam sanctam catholicam habere eundem spiritum fidei, quem in sui principio semel accepit, cur non liceat hodie aut solum aut primum sacris literis studere, sicut licuit primitivae Ecclesiae? Neque enim illi Augustinum aut Thomam legerunt. Aut dic, si potes, quo iudice finietur quaestio, si patrum dicta sibi pugnaverint. Oportet enim scriptura iudice hic sententiam ferre, quod

fieri non potest, nisi scripturae dederimus principem locum in omnibus quae tribuuntur patribus, hoc est, ut sit ipsa per sese certissima, facillima, apertissima, sui ipsius interpres, omnium omnia probans, iudicans et illuminans, sicut scriptum est psal. c.xviii. 'Declaratio seu, ut hebraeus proprie habet, Apertum seu ostium verborum tuorum illuminat et intellectum dat parvulis'. Hic clare spiritus tribuit illuminationem et intellectum dari docet per sola verba dei, tanquam per ostium et apertum seu principium (quod dicunt) primum, a quo incipi oporteat, ingressurum ad lucem et intellectum. Iterum, Principium seu caput verborum tuorum veritas. Vides, et hic veritatem tribui non nisi capiti verborum dei, hoc est, si verba dei primo loco didiceris et eis velut principio primo usus fueris pro omnium verborum iuditio. Et quid facit octonarius ille totus quam ut perversitate nostri studii damnata nos revocet ad fontem et doceat primum et solum verbis dei studendum esse, spiritum autem sua sponte venturum et nostrum spiritum expulsurum, ut sine periculo theologissemus? Hoc sane verum est, superbis et impiis scritpuram sanctam semper esse maioris caecitatis occasionem, sed quae hominum scripta superbis etiam non sunt occasio maiorum tenebrarum? aut quae res quamlibet optima superbis et immundis non cooperator in malum? Hos fieri in scripturis haereticos, nihil mirum, verum eosdem in humanis scriptis plus etiam quam bestias fieri, nihil novum.

Sint ergo Christianorum prima principia non nisi verba divina, omnium autem hominum verba conclusiones hinc eductae et rursus illuc reducendae et probandae: illa primo omnium debent esse notissima cuilibet, non autem per homines quaeri et disci, sed homines per ipsa iudicari. Quod si non ita est, cur Augustinus et sancti patres, quoties vel pugnant vel docent, ad sacras literas ceu prima principia veritatis recurrunt et sua vel obscura vel infirma illarum luce et firmitate illustrant et confirmant? quo exemplo utique docent, verba divina esse apertiora et certiora omnium hominum, etiam suis propriis verbis, ut quae non per hominum verba, sed hominum verba per ipsa doceantur, probentur, aperiantur et firmentur. Nisi enim ea apertiora et certiora ducerent, ridicule sua obscura per obscuriora dei probare praesumerent, cum et Aristoteles istorum universusque naturae sensus id monstrent, quod ignota per notiora et obscura per manifesta demonstrari oporteat.

Quae ergo est nostra tam irreligiosa perversitas, ut sacras literas non per seipsas et illarum proprium spiritum, sed per hominum glossas velimus discere, diverso omnium partum exemplo, et in hac perversitate gloriemur ceu religiosissima pietate? Si enim hoc volumus, Concedemus, scripturas sanctas esse obscuriores et ignotiores quam patrum scripturas: hoc autem admisso, ulterius dabimus, S. patres suis commentariis nihil aliud fecisse quam ut, dum sua probant per scripturas, notiora probarint per ignotiora, et sic tam seipsos quam nos mire illuserint prorsusque in vanum laboraverint, et erit, ut plus credamus interpretantibus quam loquenti scripturae. Quis ita insaniat?

Iam quanti errores in omnium patrum scriptis inventi sunt! Quoties sibi ipsis pugnant! Quoties invicem disentiunt! Quis est, qui non saepius scripturas torserit? Quoties Augustinus solum disputant, nihil diffinit! Hieronymus in commentariis fere nihil asserit. Qua autem securitate possumus alicui niti, quem constiterit saepius errasse, sibi et aliis pugnasse, scripturis vim fecisse, nihil asseruisse, nisi autoritate scripturae nos omnia eorum cum iudicio legerimus? Nullus attigit scripturae aequalitatem, sicut nec debuit, quanquam vetusti illi propius accesserint, quod in scripturis diligentiores fuerunt. Nemo ergo mihi opponat Papae aut sancti cuiusvis autoritatem, nisi scripturis munitam, Nec statim vociferetur, me unum velle omnibus doctiorem videri et scripturas proprio spiritu intelligere. Haec enim non sunt vociferationes quaerentium dei veritatem sed suam vanitatem, aut eum afferat autorem, quem constet nunquam erase, scripturas torsisse, aliis et sibi pugnasse, dubitasse. Nolo omnium doctior iactari, sed solam scripturam regnare, nec eam meo spiritu aut ullorum hominum interpretari, sed per seipsam et suo spiritu intelligi volo.

In qua re ne iuste videantur vociferari, praeclarissimum exemplum habeo Augustini, quem saepius adduxi, et quia surda eum aure transeunt, saepius inculcare oportet, ubi dicit in Epistola ad D. Hieronymum: Ego solis eis libris, qui canonici dicuntur, eum deferre honorem didici, ut nullum eorum scriptorem errasse firmiter credam, caeteros vero, quantalibet sanctitate doctrinaque praepolleant, ita lego, ut non ideo verum credam, quia ipsi sic senserunt, sed si per Canonicas scripturas aut ratione probabili mihi persuadere potuerunt. Cur non et hunc Augustinum arrogantiae arguunt, qui prorsus omnes ad unum tractatores scripturae contemnere audet, quatenus scripturis et rationibus non persuadent, et nobis idem faciendum docet lib. iii. de trinitate, dicens: Noli meis literis velut canonicis inservire &c. Et Hilarius vel inter primos patrum in suo de trinitate libro primo dicit: Optimus interpres hic est, qui sensum e scriptura potius retulerit quam attulerit, nec cogat hoc in dictis contentum videri, quo ante intelligentiam docere praesumpserit. Ecce hic insignis autor vult e scripturis referri, non afferri in scripturas intelligentiam. Non ergo hoc est elucidare sapientiam, de quo gloriantur, multa patrum dicta congerere et ex iis scripturam intellectam praesumere, sed e scriptura intelligentia relata et per sui solius collationem elucidata illorum dieta iudicare. Sic et beata virgo conferebat verba omnia in corde suo.

Quod si, ut hoc auderemus et deberemus, Augustine et Hilarius aliique non docuissent nonne Paulum habemus ad Thessalonicenses dicentem 'Omnia probate, quod bonum est tenete', Et Gal. i. 'Siquis aliud euangelisaverit praeter id quod accepistis, anathema sit'? Et i. Iohan. iiii. 'Probate spiritus, utrum ex deo sint'? has certe Apostolicas monitiones necesse est omnes contemnere, si quaelibet patrum dicta oportet absque iuditio admittere, iuditio inquam spiritus, quod nullis nisi sacris literis voluit includi et

This introduction testifies to Luther's affirmation of *sola scriptura* throughout, explicitly and implicitly. For example, "understanding is given *through God's Words alone*," (97.27, *per sola verba dei*). Ps 119 teaches us "that we must study *God's words first and only*" (97.34, *primum et solum verbis dei*). And, Luther says, "I refuse to boast that I am more learned than all, but *Scripture alone* should reign" (98.40, *solam scripturam*). More important than these explicit examples, this text explains the substance of *sola scriptura* in its descriptions about the exclusive role that Scriptures play in interpretive authority. For example, when Luther says, "Nor do I want to interpret it by my spirit or the spirit of any other men, but I want to understand it on its own terms and by its own Spirit" (99.1-2), and "I speak with regard to the Spirit's judgment that He wants to be included and contained in nothing but the Holy Scriptures" (99.40), he explains that *sola scriptura*—without using the term—is his interpretive authority apart from any tradition of interpretation.

In March of the following year, 1521, Luther answered Leo's bull again, this time in German. He wrote,

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contineri.

Atque ut latius, quod mirentur, dicam legimus in actis Apostolorum c. xvii. quod ii, qui cum omni aviditate verbum Pauli audierant, quotidie scrutabantur scripturas, si haec ita haberent. Si ergo Pauli Euangelium seu novum testamentum oportuit probari per veterem scripturam, an ita haberet, qui tamen autoritatem habuit a deo sibi datam, sicut Apostolus, ut eius verbo crederetur, quid nos facimus, qui patrum dicta, quorum nulli fuit autoritas nova docendi, sed tantum accepta per Apostolos conservandi, nolimus ad scripturae iudicium vocari? Denique, non solum ipse Paulus sua omnia per vetus testamentum probat, ut in Epistolis eius abunde videmus, adeo ut in Proemio Epistolae ad Romanos testetur Euangelium suum praedictum in scripturis sanctis per prophetas, Sed et Petrus et omnes Apostoli, etiam Concilio congregati Act. xv., per scripturas sua demonstrant, quin et ipse Christus, omnium dominus, voluit per Iohannis testimonium comprobari et voce patris de coelo confirmari, adhuc tamen frequentissime sua persuadet testimoniis scripturae, Iubens etiam Iudaeis, ut scrutentur scripturas, quae testimonium perhibeant de eo.

Mira ergo nostra perversitas, ut aliis testimoniis quam scripturae nostra velimus probare, quando Christus et Apostoli omnes sua volunt in scripturis testificari, imo, quo sit insania intolerabilior, Scripturas, unde testimonia pro nobis petenda sunt, volumus testimoniis hominum probare et tueri. Nonne hos est aliud nihil quam velle humanis divina formare et elucidare? Nonne hoc est gladium spiritus, quo nos defensos oportuit, obiecta carne brachii nostri tueri? Non tamen per haec sanctis patribus volo detractam auctoritatem et ingratitudinem pro sanctis eorum laboribus repensam, sed libertatem spiritus et maiestatem verbi dei illis praepositam. Sint sancti viri et Ecclesiarum patres, sed homines et Apostolis atque prophetis impares, et horum autoritati non praelati nec aequati sed subiecti, ut quos non ipsi erudierunt aut illustraverunt, sed a quibus ipsi eruditi et illustrati sunt: tantum nobis exemplo sint, ut quemadmodum ipsi in verbo dei pro suo tempore laboraverunt, ita et nos pro nostro saeculo in eodem laboremus.

> Holy Scripture must necessarily be clearer, simpler, and more reliable than any other writings. Especially since all teachers verify their own statements through the Scriptures as clearer and more reliable writings, and desire their own writings to be confirmed and explained by them. But nobody can ever substantiate an obscure saying by one that is more obscure; therefore, necessity forces us to run to the Bible with the writings of all teachers, and to obtain there a verdict and judgment upon them. Scripture alone is the true lord and master of all writings and doctrine on earth. If that is not granted, what is Scripture good for? The more we reject it, the more we become satisfied with men's books and human teachers.
>
> That many of the bigwigs hate and persecute me for this reason does not frighten me at all. It rather comforts and strengthens me since it is clearly revealed in the Scriptures that the persecutors and haters have usually been wrong and the persecuted have usually been right. The lie has always had the greater following, the truth the smaller. Indeed, I know if only a few insignificant men were attacking me, then what I have taught and written were not yet from God. St. Paul caused a great uproar with his teaching, as we read in Acts [17:5, 18; 18:12; 19:23–41], but that did not prove his teaching false. Truth has always caused disturbance and false teachers have always said, "Peace, peace!" as Isaiah [Ezekiel] and Jeremiah tell us [Ezek. 13:10, 16; Jer. 6:14; 8:11].[87]

Before the end of the month (March 29, 1521) and three weeks before the Diet of Worms, Luther published his *Answer to Emser*. The editors write,

> Although Luther clearly exhibits his contempt for Emser in the treatise, he also deals with the fundamental issues raised in the controversy: the primacy of the pope, the priestly estate, and the relationship between Scripture and tradition. With theological sagacity Luther gets to the heart of the fundamental difference between his definition of authority and that of Emser, who represents the traditional view. While Emser subjects the word of God to ecclesiastical authority, Luther regards the word of God as the judge of ecclesiastical tradition—a principle he elaborates in the section entitled "Concerning the Letter and the Spirit."[88]

To Emser's accusation that he is guilty of interpretive arrogance, Luther responds,

> Again, where I have taught Christian freedom and advised how to be courageous, he interprets it to mean that I have taught haughtiness and pride. He manifests his skill by showing that Holy Scripture teaches only humility so that, if Emser had not appeared, no one would have known that Scripture teaches humility. Thus, according to the hyperchristian and hyperspiritual interpretation of goat Emser, Luther teaches sheer unchastity, haughtiness, disobedience, and similar vices.[89]

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[87] *LW* 32:11-12.

[88] *LW* 39:140.

[89] *LW* 39:148.

This timeless accusation finds a parallel today. To stand on God's ability to communicate, because of His own infallible self-testimony, appears arrogant both to sixteenth century Romanists and twenty-first century postmoderns.

Luther moves on to address the nature of the patristic writings in contrast with the Scriptures themselves, highlighting the issues of perspicuity, authority, illumination and the Spirit. With regard to interpretive authority, Luther will not tolerate fallible evidence. Four passages must suffice. First, he writes,

> But you know very well that when you drag in by the hair some passages of the fathers to apply to your dreams, it does not move me at all. Even if they agreed with you, it is not enough. I want to have Holy Scripture because I fight against you with Scripture. Moreover, the fathers do not count with me at all unless you have first proven that they have never erred. That you will do when the ass gets horns and the goat turns into a sheep! And when you have done that, I shall still say that no holy father has the power to command and to make an article of faith or a sacrament that Scripture did not command or make. I shall disregard your long straw spear of usage and your short wax dagger. Christ did not say, "I am Emser's long spear and short dagger." Nor did he say, "I am usage and custom," nor "I am Ambrose, Aristotle, this or that teacher." Instead, he said, "I am the truth" [John 14:6]. Since Emser dares to wage the whole quarrel with three main items, spear, dagger, and sword, I shall attend to these three, and first of all to the spear.[90]

Second, he says,

> So that such deceptive chatter may be recognized, I ask them again: *Who told them that the fathers are clearer than Scripture and not more obscure? How would it be if I were to say that they understand the fathers as little as I understand Scripture? I could stuff my ears against the sayings of the fathers as well as they can against Scripture. But this is not how we shall reach the truth.* If the Spirit spoke in the fathers, he spoke even more in his own Scripture. And whoever does not understand the Spirit in his own Scripture—who will believe that he understands him in the writings of someone else? This means precisely to use the sword in its sheath. If one does not grasp it as it is by itself, but rather through human words and glosses, it will soon be blunt and more obscure than before. Yet Emser insists on calling this striking with the blade. The naked sword gives him the shivers. But there is no help for it, he has to like it.
>
> Therefore, one must know that Scripture without any glosses is the sun and the whole light from which all teachers receive their light, and not vice versa. This can be seen from the following: when the fathers teach something, they do not trust their own teaching. They are afraid it is too obscure and too uncertain; they run to Scripture and take a clear passage from it to illumine their own point, just as one puts a light into a lantern, as Psalm 18[:28] says, "Lord, you light my lantern." In the same way, when they interpret a passage in Scripture they do not do so with their

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[90] *LW* 39:156.

> own sense or words (for whenever they do that, as often happens, they generally err). Instead, they add another passage which is clearer and thus illumine and interpret Scripture with Scripture, as my goats would certainly discover if they would read the fathers correctly. But since they run around everywhere and look at neither Scripture nor the fathers correctly, it is no wonder that they do not know what Scripture or the fathers teach.[91]

And, he writes,

> St. Paul says, in II Corinthians 4 [3:6], "The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." My Emser uses and interprets this to mean that Scripture has a twofold meaning, an external one and a hidden one, and he calls these two meanings "literal" and "spiritual." The literal meaning is supposed to kill, the spiritual one is supposed to give life. He builds here upon Origen, Dionysius, and a few others who taught the same thing. He thinks he has hit the mark and need not look at clear Scripture because he has human teaching. He would also like me to follow him, to let Scripture go and take up human teaching. This I refuse to do, even though I too have made the same error. I intend, in precisely this example, to give reasons and to show clearly that Origen, Jerome, Dionysius, and some others have erred and failed in this matter, that Emser builds upon sand, and that it is necessary to compare the fathers' books with Scripture and to judge them according to its light.[92]

And, finally, Luther says,

> What good does it do you, then, Murner[93] and all you papists, to cite many fathers in connection with this passage? They have erred as men. But you want to regard error as foundation and truth. To me the principal saying of Christ is worth more than all the teachers and fathers, no matter how holy and learned they may be. Christ's words are clear enough and do not need any glosses.[94]

Undoubtedly, before Luther stood at Worms, he had already published his rejection of the Patristics as an interpretive authority for the Scriptures.

In 1522, Luther gave an answer to Henry's *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* of the previous year. He wrote,

> For this work and word is from God, and not from us. Here I stand; here I sit; here I remain; here I boast; here I triumph; here I mock Papists, Thomists, followers of Henry, Sophists and all the gates of hell, to say nothing of the sayings of men, however holy they may be, or of deceptive traditions. The word of God is above all.

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[91] *LW* 39:164.

[92] *LW* 39:175.

[93] I.e., Thomas Murner, a Franciscan friar from Strassbourg, whom Luther addressed in the appendix of this work. The editor wrote, "Murner had written three treatises against Luther during November and December, 1520: the first attacked Luther's *Treatise on the New Testament, That Is, the Holy Mass*; the second defended Alveld against Luther's *On the Papacy in Rome;* the third joined Emser's attack on Luther's address *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*" (*LW* 39:140).

[94] *LW* 39:222.

> The divine majesty makes me to care not at all if a thousand Augustines, a thousand Cyprians, a thousand of Henry's churches should stand against me. God is not able to err or deceive. Augustine and Cyprian, though both were elect, were able to err and did err.[95]

Luther believed that the biblical languages gave him the clarity, certainty and conviction necessary to articulate the Scripture in an edifying way. In 1524, he wrote,

> We should not be led astray because some boast of the Spirit and consider Scripture of little worth, and others, such as the Waldensian Brethren, think the languages are unnecessary. Dear friend, say what you will about the Spirit, I too have been in the Spirit and have seen the Spirit, perhaps even more of it (if it comes to boasting of one's own flesh) than those fellows with all their boasting will see in a year. Moreover, my spirit has given some account of itself, while theirs sits quietly in its corner and does little more than brag about itself. I know full well that while it is the Spirit alone who accomplishes everything, I would surely have never flushed a covey if the languages had not helped me and given me a sure and certain knowledge of Scripture. I too could have lived uprightly and preached the truth in seclusion; but then I should have left undisturbed the pope, the sophists, and the whole anti-Christian regime. The devil does not respect my spirit as highly as he does my speech and pen when they deal with Scripture. For my spirit takes from him nothing but myself alone; but Holy Scripture and the languages leave him little room on earth, and wreak havoc in his kingdom.
>
> So I can by no means commend the Waldensian Brethren for their neglect of the languages. For even though they may teach the truth, they inevitably often miss the true meaning of the text, and thus are neither equipped nor fit for defending the faith against error. Moreover, their teaching is so obscure and couched in such peculiar terms, differing from the language of Scripture, that I fear it is not or will not remain pure. For there is great danger in speaking of things of God in a different manner and in different terms than God himself employs. In short, they may lead saintly lives and teach sacred things among themselves, but so long as they remain without the languages they cannot but lack what all the rest lack, namely, the ability to treat Scripture with certainty and thoroughness and to be useful to other nations. Because they could do this, but will not, they have to figure out for themselves how they will answer for it to God.[96]

In 1525, Luther blushed about writing something that he considered to be so obvious. Nevertheless, what he said may sound punchy to postmodern interpreters embarrassed by "propositionalism":

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[95] Martin Luther, "Contra Henricum Regem Angliae. 1522," vol. 10.2, *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1907), 215.1–8; translation mine: Hoc enim opus et verbum dei non nostrum est. Hic sto, hic sedeo, hic maneo, hic glorior, hic triumpho, hic insulto Papistis, Thomistis, Henricitis, Sophistis et omnibus portis inferi, nedum dictis hominum quantumlibet sanctorum aut consuetudini fallaci. Dei verbum est super omnia, Divina maiestas mecum facit, ut nihil curem, si mille Augustini, mille Cypriani, milli Ecclesiae Hinricianae contra me starent. Deus errare et fallere non potest, Augustinus et Cyprianus, sicut omnes electi, errare potuerunt et erraverunt.

[96] *LW* 45:365–66.

> Nothing is better known or more common among Christians than assertion. Take away assertions and you take away Christianity. Why, the Holy Spirit is given them from heaven, that he may glorify Christ [in them] and confess him even unto death—unless it is not asserting when one dies for one's confession and assertion. Moreover, the Spirit goes to such lengths in asserting, that he takes the initiative and accuses the world of sin [John 16:8], as if he would provoke a fight; and Paul commands Timothy to "exhort" and "be urgent out of season" [II Tim. 4:2]. But what a droll exhorter he would be, who himself neither firmly believed nor consistently asserted the thing he was exhorting about! Why, I would send him to Anticyra!
>
> But it is I who am the biggest fool, for wasting words and time on something that is clearer than daylight. What Christian would agree that assertions are to be despised? That would be nothing but a denial of all religion and piety, or an assertion that neither religion, nor piety, nor any dogma is of the slightest importance. Why, then, do you too assert, "I take no delight in assertions," and that you prefer this frame of mind to its opposite?[97]

In 1538, Luther wrote:

> For even if they are equally holy, you must not for that reason say that they are not able to err or fail, and that we must discuss, trust, and depend on all the Fathers, or take and believe all they have taught as right. Rather, take the touchstone or testing-stone, namely the Divine Word, and test, assess, and judge accordingly all that the Fathers have written, preached and said, as well as the rules and human ordinance made by others. For where one does not do this, he will be easily misled and deceived.[98]

The same misreading of Luther is happening with regard to the role of tradition or Patristics as *interpretive authority*. Importantly, these passages focus on the interpretive tradition of the Church Fathers, as opposed to what the Pope or magisterium are currently saying. Commonly, Oberman's categories are used, rightly or wrongly—his wording and usage of Tradition I and II seems to waffle a bit—to uphold the notion of history as a lesser-authority for Luther. To be clear, the discussion about interpretive authority looks into who or what has the right/authority to *determine meaning and validate or invalidate the right-ness of the interpretation*.

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[97] Martin Luther, "The Bondage of the Will," in *Career of the Reformer III*, trans. Philip S. Watson, vol. 33, *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 21.

[98] As cited by Thompson, *A Sure Ground on Which to Stand*, 278, from Luther, *Auslegung des ersten un zweiten Kaptiels des Johannesevangeliums*, 1538 [*Interpretation of the First and Second Chapters of John's Gospel*].

Conclusion

Luther repeatedly denied that there was some interpretive tradition that held any legitimate interpretive authority over hermeneutics. In fact, the introduction to the *Assertio Omnium Articulorum* records, when Luther does talk about the "authority" of the Church Fathers, he not only subjects that to the Scriptures, but that authority is constituted by their example of studying the Bible *diligently*. His view of human authority is never allowed to encroach on the exclusive interpretive authority of the Scripture alone.

This does raise a question, about Luther's fondness for previous interpreters. Why does Luther appeal to Augustine and Hilary,[99] or, John Huss, as he (in)famously did at Leipzig?[100] He does not appeal to them as an authority. In fact, in the *Assertio* he turns around and extols the exclusive authority of Scriptures with a rhetorical question. Regardless of the Fathers, in order that Christians may be emboldened and obligated, "Don't we still have what Paul said . . . ?"[101] Luther quotes the Fathers to undermine the so-called "novelty" of his position, *and never because he upheld Patristic interpretation as an authority.* For Luther, the Scriptures prove the patristic interpretation, never *vice versa*. Luther denied that this could hold any interpretive authority for the same reason as Calvin—because the Fathers are not superior to the Scriptures in clarity, and they often disagree and contradict each other.[102] Indeed, what they were doing in these quotes was

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[99] Luther, "Assertio Omnium Articulorum," 99.10–23.

[100] *LW* 31:xvi–xviii, 314–15.

[101] Luther, "Assertio Omnium Articulorum," 99.24.

[102] In §§3-4 of his "Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France," Calvin wrote,

> They do not cease to assail our doctrine and to reproach and defame it with names that render it hated or suspect. They call it 'new' and 'of recent birth.' They reproach it as 'doubtful and uncertain.' . . . First, by calling it 'new' they do great wrong to God, whose Sacred Word does not deserve to be accused of novelty. . . . That it has lain long unknown and buried is the fault of man's impiety. Now when it is restored to us by God's goodness, its claim to antiquity ought to be admitted at least by right of recovery. . . .
>
> Moreover, they unjustly set the ancient fathers against us (I mean the ancient writers of a better age of the church) as if in them they had supporters of their own impiety. If the contest were to be determined by patristic authority, the tide of victory—to put is very modestly—would turn to our side. Now, these fathers have written many wise and excellent things. Still, what commonly happens to men has befallen them too, in some instances. For these so-called pious children of theirs, with all

not appealing to an authority, but undermining the accusation of novelty. In this way, Luther can be seen to reject any so-called "traditional interpretation" as an interpretive authority, but at the same time, to uphold and appreciate the edifying and faithful insights of ancient and recent writers, from Church Fathers to John Huss.

As can be seen from Luther's own words, he rejected the notion that *Sola Scriptura* means that authority was *suprema scriptura*.[103] Perhaps the term "supreme" authority would be applauded by Luther with regard to church decisions and secular living, because of the role of human authority in the position of church leaders and governing officials. But in the discussion of interpretive authority, Luther clearly articulated *sola scriptura*. He falls in line with what is disparagingly called *solo scriptura*. Instead, of coining grammatical solecisms like *solo Scriptura*,[104] Luther would likely have been more precise, grammatically and theologically. Today, just as he did in his own day, he would mock the notion that fallible individuals need to rely on fallible

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> their sharpness of wit and judgment and spirit, worship only the faults and errors of the fathers. The good things that these fathers have written they either do not notice, or misrepresent or pervert. You might say that their only care is to gather dung amid gold. Then, with a frightful to-do, they overwhelm us as despisers and adversaries of the fathers! But we do not despise them; in fact, if it were to our present purpose, I could with no trouble at all prove that the great part of what we are saying today meets their approval. Yet we are so versed in their writings to remember always that all things are ours [I Cor. 3:21-22], to serve us, not to lord it over us [Luke 22:24-25], and that we all belong to the one Christ [I Cor. 3:23], whom we must obey in all things without exception [see Col. 3:20]. *He who does not observe this distinction will have nothing certain in religion, inasmuch as these holy men were ignorant of many things, often disagreed among themselves, and sometimes even contradicted themselves*. (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960], 14–19; italics mine)

The remainder of §4 cites multiple examples of Church Fathers who denied the Word, or contradicted the traditions of the church, or subjugated the authority of the Scripture under the judgment of the church. Then, in response to the accusation of Roman theologians, Calvin concludes, "But my discourse would overflow its proper limit if I chose to review how wantonly they reject the yoke of the fathers, whose obedient children they wish to seem. Indeed, months and even years would not suffice me! Nevertheless they are of such craven and depraved impudence as to dare reproach us for not hesitating to pass beyond the ancient boundaries." Ibid., 22-23. Clearly, Calvin was exposed the inconsistently of the Roman claim to its traditional theology. He did not "prove" the Scripture with Patristics, but he documented that the gospel being preached in the Reformation was not novel. Thanks to Phil Johnson for this reference.

[103] As articulated by Vanhoozer and Mathison, and in agreement with Ghosh's interpretation of Tradition I, above.

[104] Should we suppose that the phrase is supposed to mean that the feminine Scriptures are modified by a substatival masculine adjective, like "Scripture, by/with/in a singular man"? Whatever was intended, the phrase *nuda scriptura* makes more sense, and the complaint is that the Scriptures come with an interpretive tradition that is not properly contained in the text of Scripture itself.

Church Fathers in order to safely interpret an infallible and divine Word. What Luther called *sola scriptura* with regard to interpretive authority, has been relabeled *solo scriptura* today. What is called *sola scriptura* today, Luther may have disparaged as *suprema scriptura*, if he were in a gracious mood. But, more likely, words from his *Assertio* might have come to mind, such as *ridicula praesumerent*.[105]

Ironically, while this appendix *does not* prove the presuppositional hermeneutic, it does *undermine* any position that upholds tradition as a lesser authority *and* appeals to Luther. Luther himself would not agree with what they are doing with historical articulations and authority. Luther's position on interpretive authority, ironically, does not add any authority to the presuppositional hermeneutic. In fact, the truly presuppositional hermeneutic would stand against a thousand Luthers should the Scriptures disagree with him.

The current conversation about tradition and interpretive authority seems to lack both definitiveness and nuance. Lack of definitiveness may come from a reluctance to admit that interpretive authority—the authority to determine meaning—cannot be found outside of God's special revelation without denying or compromising the revelational epistemology taught in the Scriptures themselves. If this were the case, it is important to remember that no one or no thing except God speaking in His Word has the right to say, "This means what I say it means because I said so." God does not have the loudest *say-so* in interpretive authority; He has the only *say-so*.[106]

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[105] Luther, "Assertio Omnium Articulorum," 98.14–15.

[106] The Scriptures *do* recognize other authorities in *other* domains, but none of them hold interpretive authority. While parents, elders, and government officials, all share responsibility for distinct groups of people in distinct domains of authority, nevertheless none of those authorities have interpretive authority. This author happens to be a husband, father and an elder in a local church. Yet, none of these roles, or responsibility for authority, gives this author the right to say, "This text means what I say it means and the authority that I said so." The only divinely-warranted authority over interpretation is the Scripture. For anyone to rightly handle the Word, he must cut it straight on its own merit, and demonstrate that the Scriptures themselves leave the reader with such an interpretation.

Second, the conversation frequently lacks nuance, because too often a false spectrum is imported into this discussion. Namely, the spectrum seems to range from the position that the church holds interpretive authority, on the one side, to the view that "Biblicists" refuse to read history and actually read their Bibles *against* the Scripture, on the other side. If this were the spectrum, the balance *appears* to be in the middle, where interpretive history holds a lesser authority than Roman Catholicism, but more than a naïve Biblicism. For example, Barth writes,

> Will those who will have the Bible alone as their master, as though Church history began again with them, really refrain from mastering the Bible? In the vacuum of their own seeking which this involves, will they perhaps hear Scripture better than in the sphere of the Church? In actual fact, there has never been a Biblicist who for all his grandiloquent appeal *directly to Scripture against the fathers* and tradition has proved himself so independent of the spirit and philosophy of his age and especially of his favourite religious ideas that in his teaching he has really allowed the Bible and the Bible alone to speak reliably by means or in spite of his *anti-traditionalism*.[107]

Whereas this anti-traditionalism smacks of arrogance in the face of previous godly, devout, and brilliant students of the Scripture, the answer to such a problem is not tradition, but humility. Instead of reacting to those who have no place for benefitting from and sparring with a rich legacy of biblical interpretation, the better response is to continue benefitting from this legacy without bringing this tradition into the domain of interpretive authority. There is no text whose meaning is determined by anyone or anything outside of God's own *say-so*. He must retain exclusive rights to the authority over interpretation. As G. C. Berkouwer wrote, "We could be lazy and fall back on tradition as though it had authority in itself. Had the Reformers done this, there would not have been a Reformation."[108]

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[107] Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God: Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics*, vol. I.2, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1970), 609; italics mine.

[108] G. C. Berkouwer, "The Authority of Scripture (A Responsible Confession)," in *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til*, ed. E. R. Geehan (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 1980), 202.

At the same time, the church benefits by those who humbly benefit from the conversations still taking place with the writings of dead exegetes. This benefit could be compared to an edifying conversation with a fellow student of the Word. A reader of Scripture who *cannot* be sharpened by another student's exegetical acumen and insights is arrogant indeed—regardless of whether that insight was shared at a coffee shop with a living student of God's Word or through a centuries-old book. Yet, the fact that a conversation is beneficial does not make any conversation partner an interpretive authority, whether they are dead or alive. Otherwise, interpretive tradition becomes an interpretive authority at the expense of divine authority. The only way to avoid the most undesirable outcome—that an infallible, divine authority becomes subjected to and safeguarded by a fallible, human authority—is to adopt Aquinas' doctrine of the sinless church without error.[109]

According to Martin Luther, the notion of an extra-biblical interpretive authority lacks biblical warrant. If individuals have no right to private interpretation, then Augustine did not either. The necessity of reading through the lens of Augustine requires a third, fourth, fifth, and an infinite number of previous interpreters.[110] Eventually, the reader is left with second generation of the church—the first post-apostolic generation—who has no written interpretive tradition with which to even start a tradition. If private interpretation was unwarranted in the eyes of the traditionalists, then every subsequent generation of traditioned-interpretation has been corrupt from the start, because the foundational tradition was a private interpretation.

One way around this obvious dilemma is the appeal to oral tradition. For example, two prominent forms of religion that are founded on the text of Scripture, yet find its meaning in the definitions supplied by its religious leaders are Rabbinical

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[109] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 188; Schreiner, *Are You Alone Wise?*, 181–83.

[110] Luther, "Assertio Omnium Articulorum," 96.

Judaism and Roman Catholicism. Their parallel appeal to oral tradition as an interpretive authority is no coincidence. Both appeal to oral tradition that dates back to special, yet unwritten, revelation directly from God. For the rabbinical system, this oral tradition dates back to Moses and the unwritten revelation given to those who were with him on Sinai, and for Catholicism, this dates back to the verbal revelation of Christ to the apostles.[111]

In conclusion, Luther's own testimony stands as a major hurdle for any traditionalists who seek to sequester him into their own corner. The entirety of interpretive authority does not rest in the hands of man, but in the public and accessible, fixed and certain, yet present and living text of the Word of God. The Bible cannot escape captivity to fallible human authority if a legacy of faithful biblical interpretation is transferred into the domain of interpretive authority. This, Martin Luther refused to do, and his articulation of interpretive authority parallels the conclusions of the presuppositional hermeneutic.

[111] John Owen, *An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews,* in *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2010), 17:125–41; Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, 373.

APPENDIX 3

AN EVALUATION OF AND RESPONSE TO THE REDEMPTIVE-HISTORICAL HERMENEUTIC

Appendix 2 examined Martin Luther and the contemporary views about Luther's interpretive authority with regard to the historical side of theological interpretation. This appendix evaluates the Redemptive-Historical hermeneutic as an example of theological interpretation.

The redemptive-historical hermeneutic has its origins in the biblical theology of Geerhardus Vos. It has the noble goal of glorifying Christ and opposing the dangers of atomistic, moralistic and biographical preaching that tend to promote man to look to man rather than to the gospel of God's grace.[1] The unity of God's decree means that preaching the Scripture rightly means to take each passage in the context of the whole canon.[2] The redemptive-historical hermeneutic is not a monolithic position, but rather a spectrum of interpretation that bears some similar convictions. The following survey of the redemptive-historical hermeneutic attempts to highlight both the minority of differences and the general agreement within the school in a way that is fair to each author.[3]

The reader should not suppose that the lack of discussion about areas of agreement with the redemptive-historical interpreters means that this author disagrees

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[1] Sidney Greidanus, *Sola Scriptura: Problems and Principles in Preaching Historical Texts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001), 62–70.

[2] Ibid., 131, 146–47.

[3] It may be helpful to picture a spectrum of interpreters from those who heavily emphasize the original human intention on the right side, to those who heavily emphasize the fact that the meaning of OT texts have changed radically when the new Christian hermeneutic applied to them on the left side. With such a spectrum, writers like Greidanus would be on the right; Johnson and Goldsworthy would be on the left. Poythress, Chapell, and the rest, would be somewhere in the middle.

with everything commonly promoted by this school. Due to space, this thesis must settle for something less than a full evaluation, and the argument is best served by critiquing three common convictions of this hermeneutic.

A Radically-New Christian Hermeneutic

A tension shows up among redemptive-historical interpreters regarding whether or not Christ is clearly in the Old Testament. Greidanus illustrates the tension well. Exactly where Greidanus stands on the meaning of the Old Testament *itself* is tricky to diagnose. There is a Rubicon to be crossed in this discussion, and he seems to stand firmly in the middle of that river. The issue can be formed into a simple question—Do the Old Testament Scriptures testify clearly of Christ on their own, or *must* they be re-read through the lens of the NT? This Rubicon gets dammed up with waffling terminology and floods the discussion with confusion.

Greidanus writes, "At the same time, it should be evident that we must not read the incarnate Christ back into the Old Testament text, which would be eisegesis, but that we should look for legitimate ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament in the context of the New."[4] Greidanus occasionally warns about the danger of reading Christ back into the OT.[5] Allegory unfairly finds Christ where He is not, and such a method can as easily find Him in the OT as in *People* magazine.[6] If Greidanus were simply saying that we should avoid eisegesis, and make sure that we are faithful to see Christ in the OT *as He is* without contradicting what is revealed in the NT, then the tension goes away. However, that does not appear to be his meaning.

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[4] Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 228.

[5] Ibid., 54, 228.

[6] Ibid., 82.

Many references indicate that Greidanus believes that the OT cannot be understood to refer to Christ until they are read through the lens of the NT. He says, "Another contribution of Vischer is his insistence that the Old Testament cannot be understood in isolation but must be understood in the context of the New Testament," and "Christian preachers cannot preach an Old Testament text in isolation, but must always understand the text in the contexts of the whole Bible and redemptive history."[7] It is not clear whether Christ can be understood from the OT before the revelation of the NT or not. The quotations from the prior paragraph seem to indicate a positive answer, while these latter quotations seems to propose a negative response.

Conflicts in his position can be seen in several contradictions. 'Pairing' OT texts with NT texts "is not a good option" but, in order to preach Christ from the OT, the better option is to start one's sermon in the OT and "then move to the NT to preach Jesus Christ."[8] It becomes difficult to tell the difference between the use of longitudinal themes, which Greidanus promotes,[9] and the medieval tropological and anagogical uses of Scripture, which Greidanus rejects.[10] Perhaps more conflicting is the way he reads Calvin's interpretation of Isaiah 7. He documents that Calvin believes the Jews are hard pressed to ignore the prediction of the Messiah in Isaiah 7. Calvin believes the Jews are forced "to twist the Prophet's meaning to another sense." To this, Greidanus adds, "Obviously, there is more to Calvin's interpretation than merely historical interpretation."[11] However, since Calvin is arguing from Isaiah 7 that the Jews "pervert" the passage, the proper observation would be *exactly* the opposite about Calvin's

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[7] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 173, 230.

[8] Ibid., 43, 54.

[9] Ibid., 222–24, 342.

[10] Ibid., 107–9.

[11] Ibid., 139–40.

hermeneutical presuppositions—namely, that, for Calvin, the *merely historic interpretation* proves and establishes the Messianic prediction.[12]

Again, Greidanus quotes Bright favorably, who says, "Is not the true author of Scripture the Holy Spirit? The plain sense of a text, then, includes the sense intended by the Holy Spirit, the prophetic sense (*sensus literalis propheticus*), its sense in the light of Scripture as a whole (i.e., Scripture is its own interpreter)."[13] So, the true sense of an OT text cannot be known until it is interpreted by later revelation. Does Greidanus mean to imply that, unfortunately for the original audience, the meaning of revelation is not revealed but rather concealed?

By quoting James Dunn, Greidanus seems to indicate that true interpretation of the OT is impossible without rereading that text from the standpoint of a post-Pentecost circumstance: "Interpretation was achieved again and again by reading the Old Testament passage or incident quoted *in the light of the event of Christ*, by viewing it form the standpoint of the new situation brought about by Jesus and of the redemption effected by Jesus."[14] Apparently, faithful interpretation is no longer taking God at His word as He wrote it, but a "reinterpreting"[15] in light of the situation brought about after the resurrection and Pentecost.

In spite of this tension in Greidanus' writing, it is much more typical for the redemptive-historical proponents to be unambiguous on this issue. Others affirm that

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[12] John Calvin wrote,

> This passage is obscure; but the blame lies partly on the Jews, who, by much cavilling, have labored, as far as lay in their power, to pervert the true exposition. They are hard pressed by this passage; for it contains an illustrious prediction concerning the Messiah, who is here called *Immanuel*; and therefore they have labored, by all possible means, to torture the Prophet's meaning to another sense. Some allege that the person here mentioned is Hezekiah; and others, that it is the son of Isaiah. (John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999], 7:244)

[13] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 116n21.

[14] Ibid., 200. The quotation is from James D. G. Dunn, "The Use of the Old Testament," in *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 94.

[15] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 223.

there is two-fold sense of meaning (see Dual Authorship below), but that the fuller, divine sense will never be seen in the OT without this new hermeneutic. Goldsworthy says,

> Our concern is not how the Jewish contemporaries, the Pharisees and the Sadducees and others, regarded Jesus and his disciples, but how the Bible portrays both the continuity and the radical newness of the Christian hermeneutic. The Emmaus two are representative of a general inability to deal with the suffering Messiah as the bringer of the kingdom. Luke shows plainly that the encounter with the risen Christ makes the difference.[16]

Again, he writes,

> Dispensationalism, along with some other forms of premillennialism, is a system of biblical theology that is flawed because it does not draw its interpretive presuppositions from the Bible. For example, it stresses that all prophecy is fulfilled in a literal sense. This is not according to the evidence of the New Testament, which interprets prophecy in the light of Christ.[17]

And, elsewhere he says,

> The disciples of Jesus also needed a lesson in the application of the Old Testament to Christ (Luke 24:25-27, 44-45; Acts 1:6-8). When the message got through under the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostolic preachers never varied from the new conviction that the hermeneutical principle was the gospel, not literalism. This mean that the terminology of the Old Testament could only be understood Christologically.[18]

According to Johnson, the apostolic hermeneutic differs from how the saints of Israel would have read the OT because "the arrival and achievement of Christ have transformed the way in which the new covenant people of God understand and implement the message of the old covenant shadows and Scriptures."[19] Johnson goes on to call his hermeneutic a "radical reinterpretation" and explains, "What John needed to learn, as did Jesus' disciples at a later point (Acts 1:6-8), was that *God reserves the right to fulfill his promises in his own way, even if his ways should contradict our natural,*

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[16] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture: The Application of Biblical Theology to Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 54.

[17] Ibid., 75-6. For other descriptions of a radically new hermeneutic, see 63, 78, 84–85, 97, 111.

[18] Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 170.

[19] Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 81.

normal, ordinary, literal reading of those promises."[20] In fact, Johnson believes that a grammatical-historical approach to the OT contradicts a *literal* interpretation of the NT:

> To look at this question another way, the issue is whether we seek interpretive accountability in a general grammatical-historical approach that in recent centuries has seemed intuitively cogent and appropriately self-critical or in an approach that (as well as attending to original linguistic, literary, and historical contexts) also takes the New Testament *literally* when the latter affirms that an Old Testament pattern is 'fulfilled' in the redemptive work of Christ. I am arguing that if the New Testament itself affirms a symbolic-typological interpretation of an Old Testament feature (for example, that the multiethnic church 'is' the Israel with whom God makes his new covenant), we are on safer ground to follow the New Testament's lead rather than clinging to a different, 'literal' reading that might seem, in the abstract, to be more objectively verifiable.[21]

There are many tragic implications of this argument, which are mentioned in the final theological section below. However, the argument itself—the redemptive-historical hermeneutic was taught and practiced by Christ and His apostles—is the strongest and most authoritative argument offered, because it appeals directly to the Scripture.

Theological Presuppositions and Hermeneutical Practice

This discussion deserves an initial section, a virtual hermeneutical *prolegomena*. The notion that the interpreter *should not* bring theological conclusions to the hermeneutical task is ideal, but it may sound idealistic. The issue boils down to which voice drowns out the other—the text or the reader's current theology.

This project has promoted the presuppositional argument for a defense of hermeneutics. One challenge of using such a label is that the same Reformed school of thought that has most admirably applied presuppositionalism to apologetics (or canonicity[22]), has also been the loudest proponent of redemptive-historical hermeneutics.

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[20] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 142, 143; italics mine.

[21] Ibid., 139–40.

[22] Michael J. Kruger, *Canon Revisited: Establishing the Origins and Authority of the New Testament Books* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012).

In other words, the presuppositional hermeneutic represents what might be viewed as a revolt within Reformed Christianity. However, this revolt needs to happen if Reformed thinking is to remain fully consistent to its foundational principles with regard to hermeneutics. While the epistemology and apologetics of thinkers like Van Til, Frame, Bahnsen and Reymond are consistent with what the Scriptures teach about human depravity, divine sovereignty, and the self-attesting Scriptures, the redemptive-historical hermeneutic represents an inconsistency with those doctrines because it legitimizes the insertion of theological conclusions in an *a priori* fashion to the hermeneutical process. To be sure, balanced redemptive-historical proponents will argue that theology cannot do damage to the text (as documented in the next section), but the interpretive process must be a reciprocal relationship between text and theology, where the influence is mutually reciprocal.

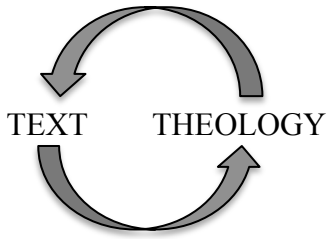

Figure A1. The redemptive-historical hermeneutic[23]

[23] I owe this visual to a private conversation with Michael Dixon during the seminar "Advanced Hermeneutics," who helped me to understand the problem that the presuppositional hermeneutic was producing in the minds of redemptive-historical interpreters. This diagram seems very suitable for the position of Poythress, who writes,

> Within a Trinitarian context, meaning coinheres with import. The sense of a particular text coinheres with the senses of all other biblical texts. The senses of the particulars are never understood apart from the import of the whole plan of God. Hence, differences about the sense of a particular text reside within a larger framework, in which the differences are often more like nuances within a larger whole. In agreement with Augustine, we regard as secondary the question concerning which truth is taught in a particular text, provided that we acknowledge truth as a whole. (Vern S. Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1999], 187)

If there is any correction needed, this figure may be too balanced for Poythress' view. The top arrow should be twice the size of the bottom arrow, to demonstrate that, for Poythress, theology has a greater impact on the text than the text on theology. This author's suspicion that systematic theology drives interpretation of specific texts, and not *vice versa*, seems to be confirmed when he writes, "The fact is that Christians disagree with respect to the doctrine of God. As long as such differences exist, we cannot expect to have generically 'Christian' biblical interpretation. Rather, we will have Arminian, Calvinistic, and other kinds of biblical interpretation." Ibid., 215.

In this approach, the *text* yields theology, but *theology* also influences the reading of the text. This means that the system itself does not just acknowledge that such a reality happens, or is necessary, or is unavoidable, but also that it is desirable. This poses many challenges that require defense—one of the foremost must be, "Why should an interpreter's fallible theology be upheld as a safeguard for understanding of the infallible Word?"

On the other hand, the presuppositional hermeneutic could be pictured as an exegetically-derived theology.

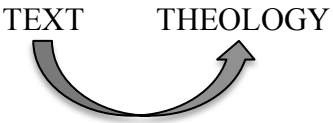

Figure A2. The presuppositional hermeneutic

The danger is that exegetical discussions for the redemptive-historical school could become more about the theological forest and less about the exegetical trees.[24] M. Hopson Boutot warns,

> Nevertheless, despite its benefits, an imbalanced application of RHP [Redemptive-Historical Preaching] may result in an equally dangerous error.

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[24] This is based on five semesters of discussion about this methodology with students and professors both within and outside of the redemptive-historical school in PhD research seminars, mostly involving preaching, hermeneutics, and exegesis, the debates with classmates about the role of theology in hermeneutics has been enlightening, sharpening, and edifying. The discussion with Southern Baptists and Presbyterians alike illustrated the power that theology holds over interpretation. To the degree that the interpreter allows (let alone mandates) that theology play an *a priori* role in the interpretive process, to that degree the interpreter prevents the details of the text from constructing and correcting his theology.

To redemptive-historical interpreters such a model may appear idealistic and impossible. One redemptive-historical proponent said that such a position ought to be called "presupposition-less hermeneutics." Their concern is reasonable—namely, this author is denying that he brings theology into the interpretive process, all the while he actually is doing what the redemptive-historical hermeneutic practices. The purported difference is that at least the redemptive-historical hermeneutic admits what it is doing. However, the label "presupposition-less hermeneutics" indicates that from the perspective of some redemptive-historical interpreters, presuppositions are either unwanted but obligatory, or else they are needed and desirable. But this begs the question whether the Scripture's themselves *presuppose* that one's theology ought to function as an interpretive *a priori*.

> Christians immersed in the riches of Scripture's meta-narrative are able to expound the redemptive storyline from virtually any text, but may lack a deep and abiding understanding of its individual parts. The unintended result is a micro-biblical illiteracy that loses the trees for the forest.[25]

Systematic conclusions from other passages should not color the meaning of individual texts. Of course, what God said elsewhere can prevent the reader from concluding something contradictory to other passages, but the big-picture approach cannot tell the reader what color the individual pixel really is. Scripture does not presuppose that the big-picture can be read into each and every text. As noted in chapter 2, Jesus appealed to the simple reading of Scripture on the assumption that the text itself had the power and clarity to overcome theological presuppositions that hindered interpretation. The notion that an interpreter cannot help but read theology into the text is itself an unbiblical presupposition.[26]

The only interpretive presuppositions that God authorizes are those shared by the Scripture. Redemptive-historical interpreters agree, arguing that the practice of reading the OT *Christologically* is actually practiced by the apostles (and, they would say the same thing about dual-intentionality of the text of Scripture). However, theological presuppositions must not be an *a priori* of the interpretive process, because theology must be held at bay until the exegetical details yield whatever theological conclusions He revealed.

The forest of theology, whether Christology or the gospel, does not produce a sharper big-picture when it is used as the lens for viewing the details. For the sharpest, most high-definition big picture, every single individual pixel of the canon must maintain its individual precision and color that God gave it. Ironically, when the big-picture

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[25] M. Hopson Boutot, "Losing the Trees for the Forest: Redemptive-Historical Preaching and the Loss of Micro-Biblical Literacy" (a paper presented at the Evangelical Homiletics Society, Louisville, KY, 2015), 27.

[26] This does not mean that the presuppositional hermeneutic is a foolproof protection against reading theology into a passage without warrant, but only to show that the model actually fights against such a practice. See the objection "Presuppositions Always Interfere with Proper Interpretation of the Scripture" in ch. 2 of this project.

becomes the interpretive safeguard, individual pixels which cannot be properly distinguished at a distance become categorized, incorrectly at times, by the majority of surrounding pixels. In this way, high-definition becomes standard-definition, and then color becomes black-and-white. There is an ever-present danger that the big-picture of theology become a caricature of what God actually revealed with detail and precision. The exaggeration is due to human theology rather than divine revelation.

Finally, Reformed thinkers can easily confuse the practice of presupposing theology with regard to apologetics on one hand, and hermeneutics on the other. For example, Van Til consistently maintained that theological presuppositions must be maintained throughout the evangelistic endeavor, or else the believer has ceased to worship Jesus Christ with his mind.[27]

However, Van Til clearly viewed theology as an apologetical *a priori,* though not a hermeneutical *a priori*.[28] Exegetical foundations come *before* apologetic presuppositions.[29] Since his day, presuppositionalists have sought to fill in the philosophical presuppositionalism with a more rigorous and exegetical presuppositionalism.[30] In spite of Van Til's self-acknowledged lack of exegesis,[31] his

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[27] The remainder of this section builds on the discussion about presuppositions in epistemology, apologetics, and hermeneutics (ch. 1).

[28] Van Til was opposed to theological presuppositions interfering with exegesis, claiming that exegesis must always be inductive and never deductive. Cornelius Van Til, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology: Prolegomena and the Doctrines of Revelation, Scripture, and God*, ed. William Edgar, 2nd ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2007), 17, 19, 43–53. Too often, presuppositionalism has been appealed to for an abuse of theological presupposition before the act of exegesis which is unwarranted by Van Til's writings, and, more importantly, the Scriptures themselves.

[29] Ibid., 17–19, 28–29, 43; Cornelius Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge* (Nutley NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1961), 38.

[30] E.g., George J. Zemek, "Exegetical and Theological Bases for a Consistently Presuppositional Approach to Apologetics" (ThD diss., Grace Theological Seminary, 1982).

[31] As was noted in ch. 1, Berkouwer critiqued Van Til because exegesis failed to play a decisive role in his book *Sovereignty of Grace*, to which Van Til humbly agreed that the critique was valid. See E. R. Geehan, ed., *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussions on the Philosophy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Til* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing Company, 1980), 200, 203.

views on the decisive role that exegesis plays *before* the application of systematic theology is clear. He said,

> In the Westminster Confession of Faith the statement is made that that is true which by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture. *This statement should not be used as a justification for deductive exegesis*. One must not start with the idea of the sovereign control of God over all things and deduce from it the idea that there is no human responsibility. Nor must one begin with the doctrine of human responsibility and deduce from it the idea that there is no absolute control by God over the wills of men. *But to say that one must not engage in this sort of deduction is not to say that the Bible can teach that which is contradictory.*[32]

For Van Til, exegesis ought to ground all theological practice, whether systematic or apologetic. Again, he said,

> Exegesis takes the Scriptures and analyzes each part of it in detail. Biblical theology takes the fruits of exegesis and organizes them into various units and traces the revelation of God in Scripture in its historical development. It brings out the theology of each part of God's Word as it has been brought to us at different stages, by means of various authors. Systematic theology then uses the fruits of the labors of exegetical and biblical theology and brings them together into a concatenated system. Apologetics seeks to defend this system of biblical truth against false philosophy and false science.[33]

For Van Til, presuppositionalism is the recognition that any predication cannot rationally occur without presupposing the triune God. So far, this is an epistemological *a priori*, which is also necessary in any theological application, whether apologetics or hermeneutics. He writes,

> This distinction between the method of apologetics and the method of other disciplines we believe to be mistaken. *All the disciplines must presuppose God, but, at the same time, presupposition is the best proof*. Apologetics takes particular pains to show that such is the case. This is its chief task. But in so doing, it is no more neutral in its method than are the other disciplines. One of its main purposes is to show that neutrality is impossible and that no one, as a matter of fact, is neutral. We conclude then that apologetics stands at the outer edge of the circle of systematic truth given us by systematics in order to defend it.[34]

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[32] Van Til, *Christian Theory of Knowledge*, 38.

[33] Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 17. William Edgar explains that all three applications of systematic theology stand on exegetical and biblical-theological grounds: "This succinct presentation of the encyclopedia of the disciplines represents a framework for organizing knowledge, and the seminary curriculum. Particularly important is the three-part relationship between exegetical, biblical-theological, and systematic considerations. Note also the three carriers of systematics: apologetics, practical theology, and church history." Ibid., 17n6.

[34] Ibid., 19.

So, the "neutrality" he complains about ought not be viewed as a defense of theological *a priori* in the hermeneutical endeavor. In other words, the necessity of presupposing God in order to predicate anything about something is not the same as a necessity to presuppose theological conclusions before exegesis:

> When we speak of the theological method, we refer to all the theological disciplines and not to systematic theology only. Then too, when we take systematic theology as a whole and divide it into its loci of theology proper, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, and eschatology, we cannot say that only in theology proper do we employ the theological method.[35]

This use of "all theological disciplines" obviously refers to the distinct subjects of systematic theology. Even though all thought and every act of exegesis must presuppose God, Van Til denied that theology must be presupposed before exegesis. When one aspect of revelation becomes the interpretive lens for other texts, the reader loses. The glory of God revealed in Scripture begins to lose its precision, its brilliance, its contrast, and its comprehensiveness.

Perspicuity and the OT

The redemptive-historical hermeneutic, intentionally or not, raises a question about the perspicuity of the OT. This interpretation requires a *sensus plenior* (see below) to bridge the perceived gap between what the OT apparently *meant* and what it *said*. As Johnson says, "What John needed to learn, as did Jesus' disciples at a later point (Acts 1:6-8), was that God reserves the right to fulfill his promises in his own way, even if his ways should contradict our natural, normal, ordinary, literal reading of those promises."[36]

This statement comes dangerously close to—if not already guilty of—impugning God's integrity. If God does not fulfill the promises He gave, in the sense in which He led the original audience to interpret before the resurrection experience, how

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[35] Van Til, *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, 43.

[36] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 143.

did He not lie?[37] How is this faithful, when every fulfilled prophecy was accomplished precisely in accord with the grammatical-historical sense, and God's promise to fulfill the rest of them in the same way is more sure than the order of sunrise, sundown, and the orbit of the moon (Jer 31:35-37; 33:20)?

According to Johnson, the apostolic hermeneutic differs from how the forefathers would have read the OT because "the arrival and achievement of Christ have transformed the way in which the new covenant people of God understand and implement the message of the old covenant shadows and Scriptures."[38] So, Christian hermeneutics have been "transformed" from something inferior previously. Johnson explains that a critical component of improvement in preaching Christ is preaching *grace*. He says, "Just as preaching Christ necessarily entails preaching grace, so also there is no faithful preaching of saving grace that is not a preaching of Christ, in whom and through whom alone God's reconciling favor and re-creative power flow to human beings."[39] This burden drives his esteem and appreciation for this "transformed" hermeneutic.

Johnson is convinced that the true and full meaning of the OT cannot be unlocked without this "transformed" hermeneutic. He seems to indicate that there is a tension between the meaning of each individual text and the revelation of Christ Himself when he says, "We want to preach Christ, but we also want to preach each biblical text with integrity."[40] In Johnson's scheme, a preacher who simply took the text of the OT

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[37] As discussed in the section on the literal, grammatical-historical sense (ch. 2), God alone determines the definition for what He extols and condemns, such as speaking truth and lying. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). His Word cannot be affirming, denying, or waffling all at once (2 Cor 1:17-20), because Paul's inability to do this compares with God's faithfulness (v. 18). He cannot insinuate a promise to someone, and reserve the right to change the meaning of that promise and/or give that promise to someone else without impugning His righteousness.

[38] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 81.

[39] Ibid., 82.

[40] Ibid., 128.

Scriptures literally could ostensibly be preaching a graceless, legalistic or moralistic message.[41]

Potential Objection No. 1: The Grammatical-Historical Sense of the NT Requires a *Sensus Plenior* in the OT

The presuppositional hermeneutic recognizes that Scripture interprets Scripture according to the grammatical-historical sense, so as to determine what the original audience would have understood by the grammar of the text. By way of contrast, redemptive-historical interpreters begin with a grammatical-historical sense, but it is not enough. In their view, a Christian (Christocentric) hermeneutic is required to make sense of several instances where the apostles find meaning in the OT.[42] Supposedly, this cannot be discovered in the grammatical, historical sense of the original text. These interpreters claim that theological conclusions must also be exegetical presuppositions. According to this view, the climax of theology is the person and work of Christ, and He must be recognized as the hermeneutical key to unlock meaning not found in previous revelation through any other means.

Sensus plenior ("a fuller sense") became the common way for Roman Catholic scholars in the twentieth century to speak of the meaning beyond the literal sense, so that "The *sensus plenior* of Scripture could account for the Christian interpretation of prophetic or theological ideas in a text even though these ideas might not have been historically in the mind of its human author."[43] The notion is common among Protestants

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[41] This has *huge* implications on one's view of God's character. That means that for 1,400 years, God gave Israel a hopeless, moralistic or legalistic message without any post-resurrection experiential hermeneutic. Those souls were accountable for that revelation, and judged because of it. If the meaning of grace through Christ could not be seen without such a hermeneutic, they are worse-off than the unreached. This would leave the Jews with greater accountability because of revelation, but without any hope of understanding that revelation. In such a scheme, the Jews problem was not sin and unbelief, but they lacked the hermeneutical code that would be revealed centuries later. Worse, God actually chastised and scattered the nation for violating a revelation that it could not fully understand before AD 33.

[42] Several of the passages discussed in ch. 3 are commonly used to make this argument.

[43] Donald K. McKim, ed., *Dictionary of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 77.

and Catholics alike, and it remains a common tenet of redemptive-historical hermeneutics.[44]

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[44] Among some very strong parallels between the redemptive-historical hermeneutics and medieval scholasticism, the greatest may be the sharing of the spiritual Christological sense. The motive and priorities that drive both the redemptive-historical hermeneutic and medieval scholasticism are surprisingly parallel, with the notable exception of the analogical and tropological sense being unique to Scholasticism's fourfold sense of Scripture. This is not to insinuate that redemptive-historical interpreters would not critique the fourfold sense of Scripture (to the contrary, see the interaction with Greidanus above), but to point out that the *sensus plenior* of redemptive-historical interpretation and the spiritual sense of medieval scholasticism both flow out of the literal sense, and appeal the centrality of the crucifixion for interpreting Scripture. Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture,* vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998).

Even today, the medieval practice of allegorical meaning is making a comeback so long as the literal sense is composed of the spiritual sense as an extension of the literal sense. For one proponent of medieval hermeneutics, the allegorical sense is the Christological sense so far as the Christological sense is somehow connected to the literal sense as revealed in the entire canon, regardless if the sense can be discovered in the OT passage itself; see Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 161–70. Carter writes,

> But if the Christological sense is not the literal sense, how is that other sense (whatever we call it) connected to the literal sense? How could it be that something other than free-floating subjectivism? (I did not want to preach my own feelings about the text; I wanted to preach the Word of God.) This is a perennial question in the history of Great Tradition hermeneutics. What this chapter seeks to show is that the spiritual sense is not in contradiction to, nor does it float free from, the literal sense. This will be done by showing that the Great Tradition, at its best, moved gradually in the direction of, the literal sense. Instead, it is what Calvin, who brings the Great Tradition of Christian exegesis to its peak, call 'the plain sense of the text.' I contend that this plain sense of the text is what scientific exegesis needs to engage. (Ibid., 165)

That Carter claims Calvin as a pinnacle example of scholastic hermeneutics is remarkable indeed. Carter is a stark contrast with David Puckett, who summarizes Calvin's view of the divine and human intention this way: "It is apparent that Calvin is unwilling to divorce the intention of the human writer from the meaning of the Holy Spirit. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that for him, the intention, thoughts, and words of the prophet and of the Holy Spirit in the production of scripture are so closely related there is no practical way to distinguish them." David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 36–37.

Carter, however, discourages the interpreter from focusing on the human authorial intention alone. For him, interpretation must focus on the divinely intended meaning, which is necessarily, then, distinct from the human intent. Carter writes, "Interpretation of Scripture cannot proceed with a focus on the human authors and their intentions alone; it must pay attention to what the divine author is saying through the human authors as well, which necessarily involves the interpreter in a mystery, because no human interpreter can grasp all that God is or all the knowledge that God has of himself." Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, 25.

Carter, presumably, could mean nothing more than the fact that no human has a precisely identical knowledge of anything equal to God. However, it seems that he is not speaking just of an analogical human knowledge, but of the hidden intention of God in the text as understood according to the grammatical-historical intention of the human author. But later he says,

> Augustine, in his comments on Psalm 73, explains that the unity of Scripture means that Christ really is present in the Old Testament and not just in the New. When Hans Boersma speaks of 'Scripture as real presence,' he means that Christ is present in the Old Testament ontologically and not just read into the Old Testament text by overzealous Christian interpreters. In a sermon delivered in 411, Augustine explains how Christ can be simultaneously present and hidden in the Psalms: 'At that time the New Testament was hidden within the Old, as fruit is in the root. If you look for fruit in a root you will not find it; yet you will not find any fruit on the branches either, unless it has sprung from the root.' (Ibid., 158–59)

Accordingly, Christ is the fruit that will not be seen by looking at the root *by itself*. This is precisely the problem with Carter's position. He assures the reader that he wants to protect the Old Testament from being read into the text by overzealous Christian interpreters where He does not exist ontologically, but then he embraces a view that demonstrates that Christ cannot be seen in the Old Testament without the fruit of the New Testament. Christ is simultaneously hidden (as far as the original

The term *sensus plenior* may be used by interpreters with vastly distinct elements in their respective hermeneutic. But for the vast majority of uses, this term means that the fuller sense is: (1) the divine meaning, (2) not intended by the original human author, (3), unknown to the original audience, and (4) only known through the revelation of the NT author. Several observations about *sensus plenior* will help to clarify the implications of this view on the presuppositional hermeneutic.

First, the accusation that *sensus plenior* is required by the grammatical-historical hermeneutic has been long-standing, and would undoubtedly be leveled against the presuppositional hermeneutic. For example, LaSor said,

> There are guidelines to be observed in our quest for the *sensus plenior*. First of all, it must always begin with the literal meaning of the text. *Sensus plenior* is not a substitute for grammatico-historical exegesis, but a development from such exegesis. It is not a reading into the text of theological doctrines and dogmas; rather it is a reading out of the text the fullness of meaning required by God's complete revelation.[45]

Second, it is important to define the meaning of "meaning" in the concept of dual intentionality. If meaning refers to everything in an author's mind, then obviously, there is an infinite difference between the human author's "meaning" and the divine author's "meaning."[46] However, such a view seems to contribute nothing to the

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OT text is concerned) and present (as far as what can be seen once one has looked at the fruit). This begs at least a couple of questions, "How was Jesus actually a fulfillment of the OT Scriptures? Why did Jewish apologists like Matthew say that Jesus fulfilled the OT to his audience unless the evidence of the OT spoke for itself?"

Occasionally, redemptive-historical proponents of *sensus plenior* acknowledge the similarity between their view and that of Roman Catholics. E.g., Vern S. Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 108n25, acknowledges his similarity to Raymond Brown, with the caveat that Brown is leaving meaning open to church tradition, which Poythress hopes to avoid.

It is necessary to respond to these hermeneutical approaches with a presuppositional and biblical response to the tenets that are common to medieval exegesis and redemptive-historical hermeneutics; namely, the distinct meanings derived from recognizing human intention and divine intention with regard to Scripture, and that the historical sense (plain to the original audience) leads to the spiritual sense, which is revealed in the NT. The presuppositional hermeneutic argues that there is only one sense, the grammatical, historical sense, and that sense of the OT is Messianic, as written by the human authors (see John 5:46-47 for Jesus' view of the Messianic meaning of the Torah according to Moses' intention).

[45] William Sanford LaSor, "Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*," *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 (1978): 59.

[46] Henri A. G. Blocher, "God and the Scripture Writers: The Question of Double Authorship,"

conversation. The implications of such a view shows the futility of defining meaning this way. If we adopted such a meaning of "meaning," then to argue with a distinction between divine "meaning" and human "meaning" would require a denial of God's omniscience, or an affirmation of the human author's omniscience. Such a notion hardly warrants interaction. The meaning described in chapter 2 will continue to be used in this discussion—namely, authors possess the authority to determine meaning. What they intended by the grammar they used in the context in which it was said was the accessible meaning to the original historical audience. This is the "narrow concept of meaning" that equates the meaning of the human words with the divine words, because in the case of divine inspiration they are one-and-the-same.[47]

Third, redemptive-historical practioners often promote historical-grammatical exegesis in order to discern the intention of the human author, while practicing Christocentric hermeneutics in order to understand the divine author.[48] This requires reading the Bible from left to right to arrive at the human meaning, and reading right to left in order to arrive at the divine meaning which transcends the human author's understanding or scope. Vern Poythress has articulated this position for over twenty years[49] and he serves as a suitable conversation partner among various options.[50]

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in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 506–7.

[47] Blocher, "God and the Scripture Writers," 508–17.

[48] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 49; Julius Kim, *Preaching the Whole Counsel of God: Design and Deliver Gospel-Centered Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 48.

[49] Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture"; Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation*; Poythress, "Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning: Gains and Losses from Focusing on the Human Author, Illustrated by Zephaniah 1:2-3," *JETS* 57, no. 3 (2014): 481–99.

[50] E.g., N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1992), 50–64; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture & Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 27.

Vern Poythress

Poythress has written on this issue for over thirty-two years.[51] Since then, he wrote a volume and another article on the issue of *sensus plenior*, or divine meaning.[52] Poythress embraces the term *sensus plenior*, but he prefers the distinction between divine meaning and human meaning. His view "shows affinities" with Raymond Brown's definition of *sensus plenior*. He says, "The *sensus plenior* is that additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation."[53]

For Poythress, *sensus plenior* distinguishes between the human author's intended meaning and the divine author's intended meaning. The emphasis on divine meaning as opposed to a merely human meaning is the most important contribution to the redemptive-historical hermeneutic's view of *sensus plenior*.

Outlining Poythress' position is difficult because he regularly mediates between opposite ends of the same spectrum.[54] In his own words, Poythress presents a

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[51] Vern Sheridan Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," *Westminster Theological Journal* 48, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 241–79. This was republished as ch. 5 in Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, 82–113. The page numbers in this section refer to the Beale volume.

[52] Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation*; Poythress, "Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning."

[53] As cited in Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 110. Of course, he distinguishes his view from the Roman Catholic notion:

> My views have certain affinities with the idea of *sensus plenior*. See Raymond E. Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior *of Sacred Scripture* (Baltimore, Md.: St. Mary's University, 1955). But Roman Catholic discussions of *sensus plenior* sometimes appear to be interested in including church tradition, not simply the biblical canon in their reckoning. For instance, Brown mentions that *sensus plenior* may be needed to account for the dogmas of the immaculate conception and the assumption of Mary . . . And his full definition of *sensus plenior* seems to leave an opening for the entrance of later church tradition. (Ibid., 108n25)

[54] E.g., Blocher concurs,

> Walter C. Kaiser has been strenuously fighting for the oneness of textual meaning, identifying God's meaning with the prophet's. Alvin Plantinga, on the other hand, denies that 'what the Lord intends to teach us is identical with what the human author had in mind; the latter may not so much as have thought of what is in fact the teaching of the passage in question.' Vern S. Poythress blazes a middle trail, attempting to persuade 'one meaning' champions to accept flexibility and some plurality—he refrains from a straightforward advocacy of several *meanings*: 'However, for most purposes I myself would prefer to avoid calling these three results three 'meanings.' (Blocher, "God and the Scripture

view of divine meaning and human meaning that is very complex: "a complex situation", "the matter is complex", "The complexities that we meet here are only a shadow of the greatest complexity of all," "complexity arises," the complex relations," "complex process of communication," "special complexity," "a complex interplay", "an extremely complex and rich process", and finally, Poythress' view is "complex enough" to embrace both the concerns of those who deny *sensus plenior* and those who teach it.[55] It is hard to imagine that anyone would argue with Poythress about the complexity of his position. Some of that complexity comes from the attempt to balance tensions on both sides. However, some repeated themes help with defining his position. Poythress believes:

(1) the human meaning (grammatical-historical meaning) does not equal the divine meaning;[56]

(2) human meaning intends the divine meaning;[57]

(3) focus on the human meaning has tragic implications for interpretation;[58]

Writers," 506)

[55] Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 93, 97, 99, 101, 101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 110.

[56] E.g., Poythress writes, "Hence it would seem to be the case that we have two separate interpretations of any particular biblical text. The first interpretation sees the words entirely in the light of the human author, his characteristics, his knowledge, his social status. The second sees the same words entirely in the light of the divine author, his characteristics, his knowledge, his status. In general, the results of these two interpretations will differ." Ibid., 93. Later he also says, "But there may still be a way to save this 'single interpretation' approach. Namely, we can claim that God in his freedom decided to 'limit' what he said to the human side. Namely, God decided to say simply what we arrive at through the interpretation of biblical passages when treated as though simply human. This is a valiant effort. It is close to the truth. But, myself, I think that it will not work." Ibid., 94. And, again, he writes, "My distinction between the intention of the human author and the divine intention . . . shows affinities with this definition." Ibid., 110.

Elsewhere, Poythress writes,

> One must compare later Scripture to earlier Scripture to understand everything. Such comparison, though it should not undermine or contradict grammatical-historical interpretation, goes beyond its bounds. It takes account of information *not* available in the original historical and cultural context. Hence grammatical-historical interpretation is not enough. It is not all there is to interpretation. True, grammatical-historical interpretation exercises a vital role in bringing controls and refinements to our understanding of particular texts. But we must also undertake to relate those texts forward to further revelation that they anticipate and prepare for. (Vern S. Poythress, *Understanding Dispensationalists*, 2nd ed. [Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1993], 116)

[57] Poythress believes that "The human author intends the divine intention." Poythress, "Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning," 486. It escapes this author how this statement is compatible with the first point. If the human author intends the divine intention, then how can a proper discovery of the human intention lead one astray from the divine intention? Furthermore, how can there be a difference between the divine intention and the human intention when the human author intends the divine intention?

[58] Ibid., 482–96. The typical strengths highlighted by interpreters who focus on human

(4) divine meaning is the *sensus plenior* of the human meaning and it is *distinct* from the human intention.[59]

In spite of the difficulty, tension, and complexity in Poythress' view, some questions help to bring out the significance of his position. *First*, it is unclear how this divine meaning is to be ascertained. The difficulty here is exacerbated by the contradiction between ##1 and 2 above. However, reading Poythress begs the question, "Is there a safe way to discover the divine intention outside of the human intention?" Poythress admits that the search for divine intention has excused some irresponsible interpretation. He says,

> Let us acknowledge one main concern: over the centuries, the history of interpretation has been littered with examples of people appealing to divine intention in order to do strange and peculiar things with the text of Scripture. But all these examples are actually fighting against the very character of God and the wisdom of his communication. Contrary to naïve impressions, focus on the divine author does not *in itself cause* irresponsible interpretation. Rather, the real cause lies in repeated misconstruals of who God is and how he works.[60]

Again, this begs the question, "Is there a way to discover the divine intention outside of the human intention?"

The answer according to #2 seems to be "No," but the preponderance of quotations in #1 seem to give more credence to a positive answer to this question.

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intention include: the benefit that comes from focusing on social and historical circumstances, the stability of meaning that comes from human intention, the focus on the human author, the increased focus on the human language, focus on the previous canon at the time of the human author's writing, and the unity of the human author's literature. One by one, Poythress explains why these are not, in fact, benefits to interpretation.

Additionally, Poythress explains that a focus on the human meaning leads to the idolatry of rules in hermeneutics (Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation*, 133). It promotes an unwarranted objectivism. "We have arrived, then, at a partial answer to Oliver Objectivist. Objectivist located meaning exclusively with the human author, and insisted on the precise stability of one meaning." Ibid., 80.

He also upholds the notion that there is a fixed meaning in the text, when he says, "Scholarship tends to treat human meaning as if it were 'there' as a fixed, limited object. Scholars ignore the fact that the human author intends the fullness of divine meaning." Poythress, "Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning," 487. This quote represents another instance where his strong commitment to the difference between the human intention and the divine seems to be in question.

[59] Poythress admits, "My distinction between the intention of the human author and the divine intention . . . shows affinities with [Brown's] definition [of *sensus plenior*]." Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 110.

[60] Poythress, "Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning," 485.

Furthermore, at one point, when Poythress gives a potential endorsement of the equating of divine and human meaning, he ultimately rejects the idea.[61]

So, assuming a positive response to this question, there are two possible ways to proceed. The first way to discover divine intention outside of the human intention could appeal to subsequent, divine revelation. The interpreter finds more divine meaning in latter revelation that informs or exceeds the merely human meaning of the prior revelation. In this way, Poythress would be saying that the divine meaning is found in all that God said later, including the NT. It would be difficult for such a view to avoid the conclusion that ongoing revelation from God is better revelation, rather than more revelation—quality, not just quantity. Then God would be improving in His ability to communicate through human authors. If this were the case, then Poythress' position will be answered in a treatment of the supposed *sensus plenior* passages of the redemptive-historical hermeneutic.

However, there is reason to question if this is what Poythress means, because this would *still* be limiting the divine meaning to the human meaning, but simply a later human meaning. Otherwise, the alternative to written revelation would be preposterous. It would be unreasonable to picture Poythress arguing for future divine speech, unmediated by human speech, that told the reader that God's written word had a meaning that transcended what the human author intended. This would constitute a rampant form of mysticism which Poythress would undoubtedly reject.

So, the most likely answer to this problem is that Poythress is talking about psychologizing God's mind, and keeping His intellect, ability, and character in view during interpretation. Statements like this can be found throughout his writings. For

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[61] Poythress, "Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning," 87: "To be sure, the idea of simply equating divine and human meaning in the Bible is a useful one. It directs us away from the arbitrariness of an allegorical system. But when we use this idea in order simply to stick to human meaning, arbitrariness can still exist in the area of the application."

example, rather than speaking about God's *intended meaning in the text,* Poythress explains that the phrase divine intention has to do with God's omniscience, ability and knowledge.[62] This becomes a significant weakness of his view—the way that authorial intent is equated with the psychologizing view of discovering what is in an author's mind even beyond what is in the text.[63]

As noted above, Poythress affirms that the equating of human intentionality with divine is helpful because it protects the Scripture from allegorical abuse. Yet, he claims that arbitrariness still plagues the application of that single intention for the contemporary reader.[64] He argues for a distinction between the human author's knowledge of all application and God's knowledge of our situation. This would appear to be inarguable—indeed, to argue against that would seem to require a denial of God's omniscience or an assertion of the human author's omniscience.

But Poythress emphasizes the distinction between God's ability and the human author's ability to understand a text. He says, "Moreover, there is an undeniable difference between God's understanding of the text and Malachi's, since God is conscious of those aspects of Malachi's intention which are unconscious to Malachi himself."[65] It is unclear how Malachi could have unconsciously intended meaning if "intention" has anything to do with its typical definition of purpose, aim, or plan. Nevertheless, this distinction between what God or Malachi understood introduces a foreign element to the discussion about authorial intent. The discussion at hand is *applying* a text in a contemporary circumstance and Poythress' comment is properly

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[62] E.g., Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation*, 78; Poythress, "Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning," 485, 490, 493.

[63] See the section "Friedrich Schleiermacher," in ch. 1. Psychological interpretation represents the "art" side of Schleiermacher's interpretation as opposed to the "science" side of grammatical interpretation.

[64] Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture", 87.

[65] Ibid.

about God's ability to understand a text. If Poythress were simply observing that God is aware of future applications (e.g., a church member giving by means of a check or debit card), then there would be no problem. However, as a statement about the intended meaning of an author, this does not follow. The fact that God knew about Visa and digital transactions, but Malachi did not, means nothing about the intended meaning of the text. God also knows every bank overdraft, as opposed to Malachi's ignorance, but it is not clear how that affects the intended meaning either. Such things are not properly knowledge of the text, but omniscience about reality. It appears that Poythress is creating this notion of unintentional intention, or "unconscious" intention, in order to keep up the connection that the divine meaning is contained in the human meaning, though unconsciously.

For Poythress, there is a difference between interpreting human discourse and divine speech. He says, "Here lies the decisive difference, of course. The people are listening to *God*. Using the 'same' interpretative process that we use with human speech is precisely what causes us to acknowledge the profound difference and uniqueness of divine speech—for God is unique."[66] Here, Poythress makes an unwarranted leap from the difference between reverence due God's authority and man's authority—which is a most important issue, to be sure—to a difference in how the reader interprets God versus Malachi. For Poythress, dual authorship means dual, even "separate interpretations":

> If the same words happen to be said by two authors, there are two separate interpretations. . . . Hence it would seem to be the case that we have two separate interpretations of any particular biblical text. The first interpretation sees the words entirely in the light of the human author, his characteristics, his knowledge, his social status. The second sees the same words entirely in the light of the divine author, his characteristics, his knowledge, his status. In general, the results of these two interpretations will differ.[67]

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[66] Poythress, "Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning," 89.

[67] Ibid., 93.

Similarly, when Poythress disparages the focus on the human author, he points out that we often know little about the human author.[68]

Finally, in answer to this question, Poythress says, "My concluding advice with respect to the focus on an isolated human author is that we give it up. Period. There is no gain to it, and much loss. We who are scholars work on the intentions of human authors as if this focus will give us answers. But we are living an illusion. Instead, let us seek God."[69] Yet in saying this, Poythress has merely affirmed that the divine meaning is better, and he has yet to demonstrate where this divine meaning is to be found outside of the merely human intention.

Second, how does Poythress' focus on the divine author's intention *improve* interpretation? Poythress' first answer is that divine intention is beneficial because God is omniscient, "superior in his knowledge and skill."[70] While this is true, it is unclear what this means with regard to dual authorship. As 2 Peter 1:20-21 teaches (see below), there is an identity between the interpretation of an event or revelation and an inspired prophet's writing of that revelation, because that prophet is *borne along by the Spirit and speaks from God.* So, when it comes to the actual intentionality of the authors, the prophetic intention is active in the act of speaking, *and* it is identical with the divine intention. The prophet intends no more and no less than God intended for Him to intend. In the text of Scripture, there is no difference with regard to divine or human intention. If prophecy were a merely human function, then there would be an infinite difference between the prophet and God with regard to skill. But the question is not whether God was a better author than an independent human or not. The question is not whether Zephaniah or Paul have a greater knowledge or skill than God, but whether God's ability

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[68] Poythress, "Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning," 481.

[69] Ibid., 499.

[70] Ibid., 485.

to communicate was hindered by speaking through man. Did He *intend* the text to say more than could be known by the original audience through the human language He used?

The second answer is that infinite meaning pertains to divine meaning, while finite meaning pertains to human meaning.[71] This includes the omniscient knowledge of all the ways that a text may apply in various circumstances.[72] This dichotomy is rooted in the omniscience of the divine author as opposed to the lack of those attributes in the human author. In other words, merely human meaning cannot account for all that God knew about the future application of that text.

The third way that the divine meaning is supposed to *improve* interpretation, lies in the sovereignty of the divine author. Sovereignty becomes a critical element for Poythress as he develops his psychologized emphasis on the divine author. As was mentioned earlier, if infinite meaning is connected to divine intention by virtue of omniscience, how does the divine meaning not fall into a self-refuting contradiction, since God knows every misinterpretation of His Word? Similarly, if God's sovereignty is partly responsible for the *improvement* of the divine meaning over the human meaning, then how does that divine meaning separate God's sovereignty over legitimate conclusions from the text and illegitimate conclusions from the text?

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[71] Poythress explains,

> As divine utterance, verses like [John] 17:5 have infinite meaning as we have seen. As human utterance, they express finite knowledge on the part of the speaker. As God, the Son knows all things (Matt. 11:27); as man, his knowledge is limited (Luke 2:52). How can we possible comprehend this mystery? We cannot. It is the mystery of the Incarnation. . . . To put it another way, the finite meanings of Christ's human nature point to, and are in union with, the infinite meanings of his divine nature. Each is a perspective on the other" (Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation*, 77-78; cf. 22, 44)

Of course, this degenerates into a distinction in amount of knowledge contained in the divine brain as opposed to a human brain, as Poythress acknowledges. This is totally different than the discussion about the intended meaning in God's brain and John's brain when the gospel of John was written. If the divine meaning of John has to do with everything in God's brain, then there is no limit to what God knows about that text, even, ironically, omniscient knowledge about all the incorrect meanings imposed on the gospel of John. How would divine meaning not contradict itself it is identified with divine omniscience? Otherwise, Poythress would have to deny that God knew future, false interpretations of His Scripture. See the final question below.

[72] Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 99.

In a fascinating discussion about misinterpretation and sovereignty, Poythress uses the example of a widow.[73] She reads Isaiah 54:4-5 and comes to the conclusion that God has promised to be her husband. While this text does not teach this, 2 Corinthians 1 teaches that God promises to comfort His people in various circumstances which would include widowhood. Poythress concludes,

> The woman was not wrong in her conclusion. . . .
>
> Was the Holy Spirit involved in what happened to the woman? She learned a biblical truth, even though the truth does not attach primarily to the sense of Isaiah 54:4-5. How do we describe the situation? Is it the work of God? Did the Holy Spirit use the loose association to bring home to the woman the biblical truth that God would comfort her in her widowhood?
>
> I say yes. But how do we know? *We know because God is sovereign over the operations of the human mind, including this widow's mind*. And from 2 Corinthians 1 we know that the final effect is biblical. Her conclusion does not contradict the teaching of Scripture as a whole, but rather conforms to it.[74]

For Poythress, the reason why this is the work of God is because it is the divine meaning, sovereignly given to this widow. Poythress recognizes that this meaning is beyond the sense of Isaiah 54:4-5, but this meaning was given by God because He is sovereign over the human mind. Poythress certainly rejects the notion that divine sovereignty means some violent or sensual thought becomes part of the divine meaning. This is not because of sovereignty, but because a sinful application violates other revelation. As Poythress explains, "Thus, it is not true that anything goes. We do not just accept anything, in the way that Amy Affirmationist is tempted to do. But we can acknowledge that the Holy Spirit sometimes teaches people in mysterious ways, through associations as well as through self-conscious logic."[75]

In this story, the widow misses the sense of Isaiah 54:4-5 and stumbles upon a conclusion unconsciously that agrees with another text. This is the divine meaning because God is sovereign over the operations of the mind *and* because it accords with

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[73] Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation*, 84–86.

[74] Ibid., 85; italics mine.

[75] Ibid., 86.

another passage. Now, this widow was not applying 2 Corinthians 1. In fact, Poythress explains,

> People without professional training are often unable to fill in all of these steps. The widow may not have been able to cite Galatians 4:27 and Ephesians 5:22-33 and set forth a theology of New Testament fulfillment in order to defend her interpretation. But the Holy Spirit knows all these connections and all the possible supporting arguments. Most important, he knows what he is doing with the woman.[76]

The question is not whether the Holy Spirit knows the truth, the question is whether the widow does. Her conclusion happens to agree with other Scripture. However, in this story, the meaning was not given to her by God through the Word, but by God through misinterpretation of the text. Granted, Poythress defends that God will not give meaning that contradicts His Word, but in this story, He gave meaning to this widow outside of her knowledge of the Word. From the widow's standpoint, how is she to distinguish between subjective thoughts that come to mind when she is reading the text from those that are given by the Lord? The answer lies in the true knowledge of His Word. But in this story, the answer comes outside of a true knowledge of His Word. For the widow, her subjective impulses which are against the so-called divine meaning are indistinguishable from the divine impulses which are in line with the so-called divine meaning. From Poythress' perspective the scholar can come to the rescue and affirm her conclusion or deny it, but she cannot know on her own. This is the result of turning away from the divine intention *of the text* to the psychologized focus of the divine mind *behind the text*.

Third, Poythress' view begs the question, "How does this view not disparage the written text with the plain, merely-human meaning?" If the divine author is omniscient, sovereign, and more skilled, while the merely human author is neither omniscient nor sovereign, and has limited skill, why would the reader even bother with focus on the merely human meaning? Poythress admits as much:

My concluding advice with respect to the focus on an isolated human author is that

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[76] Poythress, *God-Centered Biblical Interpretation*, 86.

> we give it up. Period. There is no gain to it, and much loss. We who are scholars work on the intentions of human authors as if this focus will give us answers. But we are living an illusion. Instead, let us seek God. If we do so, we will get more spiritual health, because we are encountering God seriously. We will get more accuracy, because can settle many interpretive questions concerning authorial intention.[77]

In fact, when it comes to benefits like the unity of a human author, Poythress is quick to point out that both the human and divine author produced unity: "It is indeed profitable to consider the Book of Zephaniah as a literary unity. But the unity exists just as much when we approach the book from the standpoint of the divine author. Both divine author and human author produced the unity. So the appreciation of unity does not really depend on an *exclusive* focus on the human author."[78] So, both the human and divine authors produce unity. But the difference is that the human meaning is finite whereas the divine meaning is infinite; the human meaning comes with limited skill and knowledge whereas the divine meaning is omniscience and omnipotent.

Poythress cannot help but disparage the human meaning. He writes, "When we focus on the purposes of God the divine author, we have the advantage of being able to grow in knowledge of him, rather than remaining at the level of ignorance that we have with respect to Zephaniah or a disciple who compiled his work."[79] With such a view, it would be irreverent to focus on the unity and significance of Zephaniah in his own context, because such a pursuit would be to get to know the psychologized mind of Zephaniah *behind the text*, as opposed to the mind of God *behind the text*. It would be infinitely more desirable to skip the mind of Zephaniah and go to the mind of God, to quickly move to the broad, big-picture themes of divine judgment and salvation in Christ from wickedness. Poythress does this more than once.[80] This notion plausibly contributes

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[77] Poythress, "Dispensing with Merely Human Meaning," 499.

[78] Ibid., 494.

[79] Ibid., 490.

[80] Ibid., 490, 491.

to the neglect of the original meaning and exegetical detail within the redemptive-historical hermeneutic in the passages examined below. Perhaps, this approach to the *sensus plenior* is responsible for what appears to be unfamiliarity with the merely human meaning, especially in the OT.

In conclusion of this section, three important passages reveal that the Bible does not support a *sensus plenior* view of itself: 1 Peter 1:10-12; John 11:52; and 2 Peter 1:19-21.

1 Peter 1:10-12

This text has become the go-to passage for asserting that the OT possesses a *sensus plenior*, or that those authors wrote better than they knew. For example, after quoting 1 Peter 1:10-12, Johnson writes,

> For this very reason—because they realized that even the prophets themselves could not, in their own time and place, plumb the depth of the promises that the Spirit spoke through them—the apostles refused to leave their listeners and readers in the condition of Israel in the time of Moses, David, or Isaiah. Nor can preachers leave their hearers (nor biblical scholars their readers) in the place that sleuths might find themselves at the end of chapter 2 or chapter 3. Precisely because we are aware that the Old Testament text, 'standing on its own,' leaves so many crucial questions unanswered and 'loose ends untied,' we must follow the apostles' example, within the methodological boundaries established by the apostolic canon, to show our hearers the One who is the End (*telos*) of the Story, and the Solution to all the riddles.[81]

For Johnson, the OT is a loose end to be tied. He does not mean that the forward-looking prophecy was a loose end simply waiting to tied off with recognizable fulfillment. According to Johnson, the OT is a riddle to be solved. The meaning that the original audience understood, leaves the Christian reader in a condition that ought to be avoided. This view is based on 1 Peter 1:10-12.

However, this passage does not lend itself to such a conclusion. Instead, upon reading the text, two things are immediately evident: (1) the prophets were very aware of

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[81] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 160.

several things that were clearly revealed, and (2) they longed to know who the specific person was who fulfill this role, and what sort of times would be required for such a promised-fulfillment.

First, the apostles *did know* several things from their prophecy. The Spirit of Christ within the prophets clearly predicted both the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow (v. 11). These details are *not* under investigation by the prophets who wrote the OT. They know that the Messiah will suffer and will receive glory. Additionally, implicit in verse 11 is the realization that the Spirit of Christ was within them giving the prophecy. The function of the Spirit in the giving of prophecies was well-established and explicit in OT revelation.[82] From the OT vantage point, the prophets knew that the Lord's Spirit would be active in both the divine Messiah's future earthly ministry, as well as their prophecy.[83]

Second, the apostles *did not know* two things: the specific identity of the Messiah, the Christ, the Seed, the Son of David, etc., and also the seasons surrounding such a fulfillment. Verse 12 expresses this with two pronouns: ἐραυνῶντες εἰς *τίνα ἢ ποῖον* καιρὸν**.** Some commentators interpret these two pronouns as redundant, each one modifying the noun καιρὸν**.** For example, Kaiser takes the two pronouns as an emphatic tautology.[84] He cites Robertson favorably, although Robertson mentions this as a possibility.[85] Blass, Debrunner, and Funk write, "Τίς and ποῖος: τίς is used substantivally for the most part; ποῖος, too, is used adjectivally with little distinction (as already in

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[82] E.g., the nation had been given instruction and prophecy by the Spirit (Neh 9:20, 30), prophets recognized that it was the Spirit of the Lord who was prophecying through them (2Chron 20:14; Ezek 11:5; 37:1).

[83] Isa 2:11, 17; 6:1; 52:13. Also, see Isa 11:1-10; 42:1; 44:3; 48:16; 59:21; 61:1.

[84] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 57.

[85] Robertson said, "But tautology seems plain in the last example [Acts 7:49], and may be true of 1 Pet. 1:11, but not certainly so." A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), 735–36.

classical; MGr ποῖος 'who?'), but never in questions about persons. With adjectives it is always τί: τί ἀγαθόν; τι κατόν; τί περισσόν; Both may be combined (tautology for emphasis?): εἰς τίνα ἢ ποῖον καιρόν 1 P 1:11."[86] To translate these pronouns as tautology would leave the interpreter with something like, "searching into which [time] or what sort of season . . ." The only question these authors would have been asking would have been about the timing. Grammatically, of course, this is possible, since καιρὸν is masculine. But so is the personal use of τίνα, which would be translated, "searching into what person [who] or what sort of season . . ." On this interpretation, the question about the actual individual who would fulfill the role is an alternative question to the kind of season or time involved.[87]

Additionally, the presence of the alternative conjunction ἢ gives greater weight to the interpretation to the second view, "what person *or* what sort of season." The tautology is less likely with an alternative or disjunctive particle like ἢ.[88] Taking τίνα as a personal interrogative pronoun, Peter is explaining that the prophets were looking into the precise identity of the Christ would suffer and be glorified in the future, or alternatively, what sort of epoch would this which would see the fulfillment. This does not mean that the sense of either "Christ" or "His sufferings" were unclear. Like Simeon, Anna, and all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:25, 28), the prophets longed to know the referent. The question "Who is this Christ who will suffer such great agony for the salvation of the people?" is a much different question than "What does this prophecy mean?" The OT prophets knew and anticipated a suffering Christ, but they

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[86] Friedrich Blass and Albert Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk, rev. ed. (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1961), §298(2).

[87] W. Edward Glenny, "The Divine Meaning of Scripture: Explanations and Limitations," *JETS* 38, no. 4 (December 1995): 486.

[88] E.g., this would be somewhat akin to describing America's political leader as "the president *or* the commander in chief." Various connective words such as "and," "also," possibly "even," work better in this context.

longed to see Jesus of Nazareth.

Additionally, verse 12 proves that the authors knew their prophecy was future. They did not take it to be future because it was unclear—on that supposition they could not know whether it was future or present. Instead, the details in verse 11 were so clear that they knew it was still future.

With a *sensus plenior* view, the fulfillment could not be known until the NT revelation gave a fuller sense of the text because, without that clarity, it could not be verified as fulfilled or not. Accordingly, those prophets could not have known for certain whether it was contemporary or future, because it would not have been clear. Instead, the clarity of the prophecy "*revealed* to them" that fulfillment was still future.

In light of all that *was* clear in verse 11, and what was revealed in verse 12, a picture emerges that is different than that asserted from the redemptive-historical school. The prophets did not see their writings as a dark riddle awaiting solution (referring to meaning), but a clear prophecy awaiting fulfillment (referring to referent).

The *sensus plenior* model contradicts the very nature of prophecy. According to the prophet Isaiah, prophecy is the foretelling of the future before it happens so that Israel and the nations might know that the God of Scripture is the one and only true God.[89] According to the *sensus plenior* model, prophecy needs more revelation for the divine meaning to be understood, but self-evident prophecy needs nothing beyond itself to understand the meaning. Only in this way can a reader recognize the referent when it comes. The very proof of God's deity is based on what He alone can do—foretell the future so clearly that it is unmistakable when it is fulfilled.[90] If prophecy was a riddle to

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[89] E.g., Isa 41:1-9, 21-29; 42:8-9; 44:24-45:7.

[90] E.g., see the "Cyrus" prophecies in 44:28-45:1. Similarly, the prophecies of Dan 11:1-35 predict the future history of the world from Cyrus to Antiochus Epiphanes. Archer's commentary is helpful:

> Both liberal and conservative scholars agree that all of chapter 11 up to this point contains strikingly accurate predictions of the whole sweep of events from the reign of Cyrus (during which Daniel brought his career to a close) to the unsuccessful effort of Antiochus Epiphanes to stamp out the Jewish faith. But the two schools of thought radically differ in the explanation for this phenomenon.

be solved only by the fulfillment, in such a way that the lack of clarity experienced by the audience of that prophecy left them without a solution to the riddle, then the *sensus plenior* position leaves God with an embarrassing proof of deity. When the fulfillment is required to give a clear picture of what was prophesied, then every vague prediction of the future could equally-well be confirmed as fulfilled.

As it turns out, the redemptive-hermeneutic's use of *sensus plenior* threatens the very divine nature of prophecy because it plays with its precision, which, in turn, affects its verifiability. 1 Peter 1:10-12 affirms the specificity and content of the prophecy to such a degree that the original audience knew that such things did not happen in their lifetime, because they were looking for them to occur *as predicted*.[91]

Regardless of one's decision about τίνα, the meaning of the words in the prophet's mind understood the prophecy, but was seeking to know the precise season and/or precise identification of who the Messiah would be. Even though he takes the tautology view of the pronouns in verse 11, Blocher shows how his interpretation agrees

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> Evangelicals find this pattern of prediction and fulfillment compelling evidence of the divine inspiration and authority of the Hebrew Scriptures, since only God could possibly foreknow the future and see to it that his announced plan would be precisely fulfilled. To the rationalists, however, who begin with the premise that there is no personal God and that whatever superior force may govern the affairs of men leaves the human race quite free to manage its own affairs without any supernatural interference, there is no possibility of a genuine fulfillment of prophecy. Therefore all biblical instances of fulfilled prophecy must be accounted for as pious fraud in which only after the event takes place has the fiction recording its prediction been devised. Since no man can truly foreknow the future, or even be sure of what will happen to him the next day—to say nothing of events to happen several centuries later—it follows that any and every record of a fulfilled prophecy is spurious—a vaticinium ex eventu. This is what rationalists have to say about all predictive portions anywhere in the Bible. For them there can be no such thing as divine revelation of events to come. Otherwise they must surrender their basic position and acknowledge the possibility of the supernatural, as demonstrated by detailed fulfillment of events foretold, as here in Daniel, by a prophet of God more than 360 years in advance. (Gleason L. Archer Jr., "Daniel," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein, Accordance version 2.1 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], para. 39942)

[91] Luke 2:34-35 agrees with this. Simeon, to be sure, received revelation that he would see the Christ before he died—in other words, Peter's question about the sort of season in which this would be fulfilled was answered by way of revelation. However, Simeon also tells Mary that this Child will be a division among the people, and the opposition against Him will bring her much grief. Simeon is aware of Christ's future sufferings. One could argue from silence that this information was revealed to him directly, but the text is explicit. He was already anticipating the One to fulfill the Seed/Son of David/Servant promise in Luke 2:32, as described in Isa 9:2; 42:6; 49:6, 9; 51:4; 60:1-3. He was not in the dark about the meaning, only the precise timing (until the prophecy mentioned in Luke 2:26), and the precise identity of the Christ. Once he sees Him, he is able to say all that was known from the OT about this person.

with what was concluded above:

> "The conviction expressed in 1 Peter 1:10-12," Goldingay writes, "that the prophets did not know what they were talking about" parallels the Qumran belief that "God's mysteries' or 'secrets' were revealed to the prophets, but their meaning was hidden from them.' One needs only to reread 1 Peter 1 to realize that the text does *not* say that the prophets were ignorant of the *meaning* of the words they uttered: rather the opposite! What they were searching for was the *time*—and what kind of time (*eis tina ē poion kairon*)—of fulfillment, and God granted them a partial answer: it would not be their own time (v. 12). The prophets were not aware of many divine intentions (how, when, etc.) *concerning* the things they announced, but it does not follow that the meaning of the words in their minds differed from God's.[92]

John 11:49-52

Aquinas concluded from this passage, "Therefore everyone who prophecies does not know the things which he prophecies."[93] Nevertheless, this passage does not form a compelling model of dual intentionality. First, the meaning that John highlights here is only prophetic in an ironic way, because the words can be taken in a way that Caiaphas did not intend. In fact, John himself records that Caiaphas' statement was not a prediction, let alone a prophecy, but rather advice. Kaiser explains,

> But Caiaphas illustrates another process: one where he says in his own cool, calculated way what was politically savvy for his day, but also one in which his words were turned against him by the Holy Spirit to announce exactly what he and most of his nation had sorely misunderstood and denounced. Jesus indeed was that sacrificial Lamb of God whose blood had to be shed for the sins of the Jewish nation and for the sins of the world (John 3:16; 1 Tim 4:10). This view accorded with what John later explained: 'Caiaphas was the one who had *advised* [not 'predicted' or 'prophesied'] the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people (John 18:14, emphasis mine).[94]

If the redemptive-historical hermeneutic were to appeal to God's sovereignty,[95] on such a basis one could also construct a view of dual authorship based on Balaam's donkey. God

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[92] Blocher, "God and the Scripture Writers," 509.

[93] As cited by Blocher, "God and the Scripture Writers," 509n63; translation mine [Ergo omnis qui prophetat non cognoscit ea quae prophetat].

[94] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Single Meaning, Unified Referents: Accurate and Authoritative Citations of the Old Testament by the New Testament," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Counterpoints Series (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 59.

[95] See Poythress' view of divine meaning and irresponsible interpretations due to divine sovereignty. See above.

was sovereign of this instance, and the donkey did not intend the same thing as the divine author because the donkey was intending *nothing*. Instead, as Kaiser points out, this situation consists of an intentional statement motivated by hostility to God's redemptive purpose. It contrasts sharply with the significance that John found in such an utterance.

Second, this passage would demand the notion of inspiration, which is absent from the context. Far from being inspired, Caiaphas is expressing a carnal desire that is motivated by political expediency (cf., John 11:51). Caiaphas is not speaking from God conscientiously, but rather speaking *against* God. Instead of being borne along by the Spirit of God to give an infallible interpretation of the event (2 Pet 1:19-21), Caiaphas is giving his carnal interpretation of the event. As John makes explicit, the significance ascribed to this expression is *not* from Caiaphas himself,[96] but rather, this is a meaning that is exclusively from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit turns his wickedly motivated words into a significance that is ironically true. As Peter makes clear (below), the speaking of a prophet is neither at the expense of his own speaking or God's speaking, but since the prophet is borne along by the Holy Spirit, what is *from the prophet* is equally *from God*. Caiaphas differs greatly from the self-acknowledged and sober iterations of prophets who claimed, "Thus says the Lord," or apostles who said, "he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you" (1 Thess 4:8). Blocher gives an apt summary of the challenge for using this passage to prove *sensus plenior*:

> Caiaphas is called neither a prophet (he was not called to that office) nor inspired, so in his case, we should not even talk of 'double authorship.' Instead, there are two different authors accidentally joined or superposed, two separate speech-acts. God, in judgment, mockingly plays on the words Caiaphas utters; God uses the sounds of Caiaphas's lips and a merely formal similarity of structure, but he does not speak through the *man*. It would be unwise to make his case the model for biblical prophecy.[97]

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[96] "τοῦτο δὲ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ οὐκ εἶπεν".

[97] Blocher, "God and the Scripture Writers," 510. See Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel

2 Peter 1:19-21

The apostle Peter gives us a perspective that challenges, if not completely contradicts, the redemptive-historical view of *sensus plenior*, or distinct intentions between the human and divine authors of Scripture. There are two interpretive issues that need to be settled, which, in turn, clarify the nature of the human author's interpretation of an event or truth, as opposed to that of God's interpretation of the truth given in the Scripture.

First, verse 19 makes a comparison between the certainty of revelation given in Scripture as opposed to the human experience and interpretation of the same event described in Scripture—"And more sure is the prophetic word we have" (v. 19a, translation mine). This important issue has been fiercely debated. Some commentators would translate this verse, "And we have a sure/certain prophetic word." There are several reasons given for taking this verse in a non-comparative sense. One reason is that view appears to pit the transfiguration against the Scriptures. For example, Schreiner writes,

> Some suggest that the written prophecies of the Old Testament are more certain than an event like the transfiguration because the transfiguration was subjectively experienced. It is difficult to believe that Peter would say this. *According to this interpretation, Peter would be pitting the transfiguration against the Scriptures, arguing that the latter are more certain than the former.* But this would subvert the argument in vv. 16-18, for Peter then would be suggesting that his appeal to the transfiguration is not quite convincing, so he needed something better, namely, the Old Testament Scriptures. But vv. 16-18 demonstrate that Peter believed that the transfiguration was decisive proof for his view, not questionable in the least. He was not suggesting its deficiency in contrast to the Old Testament Scriptures but was simply giving another argument for the validity of his view.[98]

Schreiner aptly points out that the fact of the transfiguration is not being diminished by Peter. This observation is helpful for understanding this passage, regardless of the decision about the comparative adjective. Nevertheless, Schreiner's reason for rejecting

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Academic, 2018), 133–34; Kaiser, "Single Meaning, Unified Referents," 58–60.

[98] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary 37 (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2003), 320; italics mine.

the comparative sense of βεβαιότερον is a distraction from what Peter would actually be comparing in the context. The contrast is not between the certainty of the event of the transfiguration, which is uncertain, and the prophecy of the OT, but the contrast is between Peter's merely human interpretation of the transfiguration and the divinely-inspired interpretation of that event in the Scripture themselves. By keeping this in mind, the reader is protected from disparaging the power of the transfiguration event or the power of an eyewitness account as Schreiner and verses 16-18 demonstrate.

This argument fails to recognize that the contrast is between Peter's interpretation of the transfiguration and the NT account of the event. That Peter was an eyewitness is not unimportant. But, if the adjective has a comparative force, Peter would not be comparing the transfiguration to the Scripture, but the certainty of eyewitness interpretation of the transfiguration with the divine interpretation of the transfiguration in prophetic writings (see vv. 20-21, below).

Of course, this potential response raises another issue regarding the identity of the prophecy. In the context of 2 Peter, the prophetic function is not limited to OT prophets, but it obviously includes them. In 2 Peter 2:1, Peter compares false prophets in Israel with false teachers in the church. Also, Peter views his own writing in a prophetic capacity. He explains that his own eyewitness account will not serve the church after his death. God has revealed this to him in prophetic fashion (1:14). Peter wrote this letter so that the church will be able to recall apostolic truth to mind after his death (1:15). Additionally, Peter calls Paul's writings "Scripture" in 3:15-16. So, for Peter, the apostolic writings are prophetic, and they will be mocked and maligned the way the OT prophesies were discounted by false prophets (2:1-3:9). The comparison is not between the event of the transfiguration and the event of prophecy, but between the interpretation of the transfiguration event by an eyewitness and God's interpretation of any truth revealed in prophecy (in either Testament).

The second reason for rejecting the comparative function of βεβαιότερον is the

flexible nature of comparative and superlative adjectives in first century Hellenistic Greek. Without a doubt, the superlative adjective is quite flexible.[99] However, Wallace explains, "The comparative adjective normally makes a comparison (as its name suggests)" but "The elative sense [in this case, 'very sure'] in classical Greek was normally reserved for the superlative form, but in Koine the comparative has encroached on the superlative's domain."[100] What is telling for Wallace's examples is that in every case of the elative use, the contexts lacks two entities to compare. Robertson rightly acknowledges that the elative use of the comparative can occur without an object of comparison.[101] This does not apply to 2 Peter 1:19, in which the typical comparative force makes perfect sense.

The adjective is also in a predicate position, rather than an attributive position.[102] A suitable translation must account for both the comparative force and predicate position, such as "And more sure is the prophetic word we have, to which you do well to pay attention . . ." This is important because Peter actually writes *nothing* about what the event of verses 16-18 does to the word or "makes" the word, as is italicized by the NASB or supplied by the NIV. Instead, this is a passage about what the prophetic word *is*, in comparison to a trustworthy, yet uninspired, eyewitness account. Peter can talk about the transfiguration as an eyewitness, but this is less sure than the inspired letter that he is writing for the reason he states in verses 20-21.[103]

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[99] Daniel B Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 296–305; Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 662–69.

[100] Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 299, 300.

[101] Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, 664–65.

[102] In a parallel example, the predicate function of βέβαιος is used with the verb ἔχω by fifth century Greek author, Johannes Stobaeus, who writes, "Must you have this friend [to be] more steadfast than [your] parents?" Cited by Heinrich Schlier, "Βέβαιος, Βεβαιόω, Βεβαίωσις," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 600; translation mine: "Stobaeus Ecl., IV, 625, 2: βεβαιοτέρον ἔχε τὴν φιλίαν πρὸς τοὺς γονεῖς;"

[103] Two additional observations makes sense of the larger context. First, this view accounts for the switch from apostolic "we" in vv. 16-18, to the Christian "we/us" in vv. 19-21. Apostolic eyewitnesses

Second, the phrase "one's own interpretation" can be taken as the interpretation of the reader,[104] or alternatively, as the writer of Scripture.[105] However, the context is already about the speaker/writer.[106] Peter gives three reasons for taking the interpretation as an issue of the writer, not the reader. First, ἐπιλύσεως is a genitive of source, referring to the origin of the prophecy, not a dative of means, describing the means of understanding what was already written. Second, γίνεται is indicative. If Peter were warning about the potential misinterpretation of the reader, the subjunctive mood, or the use of δεῖ makes much more sense. Third, verse 21 proves that the focus is the origin/author, not the receptor/reader. The γάρ shows that Peter is giving the reason for his statement in verse 20, and that reason has to do with the divine origin of the writing. The human author is writing, but his own personal will is not the ultimate source of the message. Rather, being borne along—an importance repetition of φέρω—by the Holy Spirit, men spoke from God.

As 2 Peter 1:20-21 teaches (see below), there is an identity between the interpretation of an event or revelation and an inspired prophets writing of that revelation, because that prophet is *borne along by the Spirit and speaks from God.* If the prophet merely *spoke from God*, one could plausibly say that the prophet was unintentional in his writing; perhaps he "came to his senses" after the inspiration event was over. But, the interpretation was not "brought about" by the prophet, but the prophet himself was

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alone can testify to what they have seen and heard, but apostles and non-apostles alike possess the more-sure word. Second, the comparative force of the adjective makes better sense of how this paragraph explains ("γάρ," v. 16) the previous paragraph (vv. 12-15). Since Peter is giving the believers access to apostolic truth after his death, it makes sense that he write a letter. The Spirit has revealed that he is about to die, and bears him along to write this letter, which is actually more sure than his own personal interpretation of what he witnessed. His personal testimony is sure, but Matt 17; Mark 9; Luke 9 are *more sure*. In the same way, 2 Pet is more sure than Peter's merely human interpretation of what he witnesses because of the reason explained in 1:20-21.

[104] E.g., Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 322–23.

[105] E.g., R. C. H Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* ([Peabody, MA?]: Hendrickson Publishers, 1966), 297–98.

[106] See 1:12-15, 16-18; 2:1ff.

"brought along" in his communication. His intention was exactly what God intended, or else the truth of verse 20 is compromised.

John 5:46-47 and 8:56

Peter learned his view of dual authorship and singular intentionality from Jesus. In John 5:46-47, Jesus points a hostile Jewish crowd (cf., 5:18-19) toward the meaning of Moses' writings ("his [Moses'] writings," v. 47). However, Jesus does not simply say that the writings bear testimony to Himself, as though Moses may not have intended to testify of Christ. Instead, Jesus is pointing the Jews toward Moses' intention. He is the person the Jews do not believe (46a), the author who actively wrote (46b)—"For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me" (v. 46). In the protasis of this second-class condition, Jesus is presupposing that the Jews do not actually believe Moses personally.[107] If Jesus was *only* questioning whether they believed the *writings* (v. 47), there could be some room for a distinction between human meaning and divine meaning *in those writings*. But Jesus is talking about believing Moses, period. That refers to taking Moses at his words. Similarly, in the final clause of verse 46, Jesus focuses on Moses' active writing. The divine meaning view would require something like "for his writings are about Me." In this way, Jesus would have allowed for a distinction between the content about which Moses was actively writing *versus* the divine meaning contained in what Moses was writing but did not understand.

Similarly, in John 8:56, Jesus taught that Abraham was not in the dark about the so-called *sensus plenior* meaning that pertains to Christ. There can be no argument that Jesus believed that Abraham saw the referent of Christ in the revelation of the promised Seed and the Abrahamic covenant. This is not a *sensus plenior* this meaning

[107] See Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 695. This represents an argument contrary-to-fact, or better, a condition for the sake of argument, regardless if the speaker believes it is true or not. Both occur in the Greek New Testament.

was clearly seen. The very fabric of *sensus plenior* cannot account for Abraham seeing Christ's fulfillment in the past tense because it requires a meaning that is inaccessible to the original author and audience: "The *sensus plenior* is that additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation."[108] In Jesus' view, Abraham saw the significance of Christ's coming in his own life, well before the NT, let alone the completion of the Torah, the writings and the prophets. He had nothing more than the promises and commands given to him.

Conclusion

Sensus plenior, as defined by Poythress, and practiced in the redemptive-historical hermeneutic, does not fit the evidence of the Scripture. The Scripture teaches that the human intention *is* the divine intention, so that the meaning intended by Moses (or perceived by Abraham) stands as rebuke to the reader's unbelief. The Scripture reveals that there is an *identity* between the human and divine intention in prophetic writing. The lack of *identity* between the mind of God and the mind of man is a psychologized distraction from the issue of hermeneutics. The question is not "What does this author *know*?" but "What does this author *mean* by these words?" Ultimately, the *sensus plenior* view runs into problems regarding the actual *fuller sense* of a written text. On this issue, Walter Kaiser writes,

> In a brilliant analysis Bruce Vawter sees this theory as misusing the old scholastic analogy of instrumental causality: " . . . if this fuller or deeper meaning was reserved by God to Himself and did not enter into the writer's purview at all, do we not postulate a Biblical word effected outside the control of the human author's will and judgment . . . and therefore not produced through a truly *human* instrumentality? If, as in the scholastic definitions, Scripture is the *conscriptio* of God and man, does not the acceptance of a *sensus plenior* deprive this alleged

[108] Raymond Brown, *The* Sensus Plenior *of Sacred Scripture*, 92, as cited by Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 110.

> scriptural sense of one of its essential elements, to the extent that logically it cannot be called scriptural at all?"
>
> Vawter has slammed the door on *sensus plenior* as a *Scriptural* meaning. Whatever else may be said for this deeper meaning, *it is not a Biblical sense*.[109]

According to 2 Peter 1:20-21, dual authorship does not affect meaning. In fact, there are practical and helpful hermeneutical implications that come from dual authorship. First, since God is the author, the revelation is to be trusted, obeyed, believed, and it cannot lie or contradict itself. Second, because man is the author, one must read the passage in light of the semantics and syntax of the human language in which it was written.

Authorial intent of an individual passage cannot lead to dual intentions based on dual authors because there is only one text. What are the exclusively divine elements of Genesis and what are elements are exclusively Mosaic? The question itself is unbiblical, because the single text is both written by man and breathed out by God. Each passage of Scripture is indistinguishably divine and human. For example, the interpreter could ask, "Which part of Isaiah 7-9 reflects God's mind and which reflects God's mind and which part reflects Isaiah's mind?" The biblical answer that does not compromise the biblically defined notion of inerrancy must be, "Every jot and tittle records the mind and intention of both." There is no way to arrive at two intentions from the same text, which leads to the issue of further revelation.

This view of dual intentionality points to later articulations by the divine author.[110] This requires a scheme where God actually says something later that changes

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[109] Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 110. Of course, redemptive-historical writers may complain that their *sensus plenior* comes from later Scripture, but that begs the question. They are highlighting a meaning of a text that was hidden from the writer, and if that meaning could only be known from another [NT] text, then should we not properly say that this is the meaning of another [NT] text?

[110] E.g., Philip Barton Payne says, "It should be remembered, though, that God can reveal more through the words of a writer of Scripture than he fully understood. An exegete can know that God has done this only when further revelation shows that he did." Philip Barton Payne, "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author's Intention," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New*, ed. G. K. Beale (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 17.

(adds meaning to) what He said previously. If the redemptive-historical hermeneutic were merely saying that God revealed *more* in the NT, they would be correct. But the notion that the NT gives the Christian a hermeneutic which allows for a new meaning of what was previously spoken requires a revision in meaning.

Only a robust doctrine of the inseparable nature of divine and human revelation will leave the interpreter reverently attentive to the actual details of the human grammar and syntax. Herder said, "The Bible must be read in a human manner, for it is a book written by men for men. The best reading of this divine book is human. The more humanly we read the Word of God, the nearer we come to the design of its Author, who created man in His image, and acts humanly in all the deeds and mercies, wherein He manifests Himself as our God."[111] God knows full well how to communicate through human language. Reverence to what He said does not look for some divine meaning beyond the human, but rather its pays greater attention and submission to what God said through human language. The pursuit of *sensus plenior* can too easily lead the interpreter to miss the infinite depth and richness of what God said through men, in order to achieve some supposedly greater divine sense. When this happens, the *sensus plenior* becomes the *sensus potior*—the *better* or *more important sense*. Regardless of its lack of biblical merit, it leads logically to the radically new, or distinctly post-resurrection, Christian hermeneutic articulated by the most consistent proponents of the redemptive-historical method.

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[111] Frederic W. Farrar, *History of Interpretation: Bampton Lectures 1885* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961), 406, quoting Herder's letters on the study of theology. No proper citation is given.

Potential Objection No. 2: The Presuppositional Hermeneutic Cannot Explain the Apostolic Hermeneutic

The strength of this objection comes from the argument that the NT apostles discovered new meaning in the OT text. These texts were examined in chapter 3. In a few critical passages that do not involve an explicit interpretation of an OT text, apostles purportedly teach that certain theological emphases (typically, Christological) are necessary for proper interpretation. This poses a potential defeater argument to presuppositional hermeneutics. If true, this objection—that the redemptive-historical hermeneutic was taught and practiced by Christ and His apostles—would authoritatively overturn the argument for the presuppositional hermeneutic because it appeals to the text of Scripture and the practice of the apostles.

This section examines the texts used to support the redemptive-historical hermeneutic. In light of the fact that the redemptive-historical resources examined merely cite the references in an off-hand way, an evaluation of how they arrived at their conclusions exegetically remains impossible.[112] Because the redemptive-historical hermeneutic claims that the apostles did not always interpret the OT literally, the burden of proof would seem to rest on redemptive-historical interpreters. Ideally, they would demonstrate that apostolic interpretations differ from the original, literal meaning of the OT texts that they were interpreting. Without such a defense, the only way forward is to examine those passages on their own merit. Just as chapter 3 examined the passages that

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[112] This author emailed Dr. Thomas Schreiner on March 23, 2017:

> I'm currently in a PhD seminar on preaching, and I'm planning on critiquing the redemptive historical hermeneutic as articulated by Sidney Greidanus, Graeme Goldsworthy, Dennis Johnson, and Brian Chapell. However, these articulations are usually focusing on the preaching application of the methodology. I am looking for some help at the foundational-exegetical level. Could you point me to the work(s) that have demonstrated the best defense for the Christocentric hermeneutic from a NT perspective? In other words, our reading in the preaching volumes rarely gets past the simple assertion that passages like 1 Cor. 2:2; 10:1-4; 2 Cor. 3:6 and Luke 24 demand that we read the OT through the Christ-reality, but they rarely, if ever demonstrate exegetically that these passages require something more than a grammatical-historical hermeneutic in order to be faithful to the OT, although they all assert that this is the case. Any help you can give me would be much appreciated.

To this, Dr. Schreiner replied, "Hi Jonathan, Unfortunately I don't know the best answer to this question. Sorry about that! Tom." This does not mean that there is no such work out there, but his response concurs with my failure to find such a work.

supposedly model an apostolic interpretation of the OT, this appendix examines the texts that supposedly teach us to use a theological hermeneutic. If these passages do not teach such a hermeneutic, then the strongest redemptive-historical argument fails.

The following passages are those cited most often by the redemptive-historical interpreters: first, Luke 24, and second (at least when the redemptive-historical hermeneutic is applied to preaching), 1 Corinthians 2:2. Passages treated in chapter 3, such as Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 (Matt 2:15) and Paul's use of Exodus in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4, are also frequently appealed to as a justification for the theological interpretation of the OT.[113] In response to the redemptive-historical hermeneutic, this appendix concludes (1) that the apostles taught the presuppositional hermeneutic, and (2) that the redemptive-historical school is left with two undesirable options—either it has actually misunderstood the OT in its original context, or it lacks warrant for claiming that the apostles use a redemptive-historical or Christocentric hermeneutic.

Luke 24

The final chapter of Luke's gospel is critical for the redemptive-historical hermeneutic. References to this passage within the redemptive-historical literature may observe nothing more than the fact that Jesus showed the Emmaus disciples that He was revealed in the Scripture. Those observations require no examination, but only full-hearted approval. The question comes whether this passage teaches a radically new Christian hermeneutic for interpreting the OT. In Johnson's view, this passage does not teach the presence of Christ in the OT, as much as it is the crash course in hermeneutics. "The New Testament abounds with examples of the redemptive-historical, Christ-

[113] However, the exegesis in ch. 3 is sufficient to demonstrate why the redemptive-historical interpretation of these passages is not adequate for explaining how the NT interpretation differs from the meaning accessible to the original audience of the OT passage being quoted.

centered *hermeneutic* that the apostles had learned from their risen Lord (Luke 24:27-28, 44-49; Acts 1:3-8)."[114]

Similarly, Graeme Goldsworthy alludes to Luke 24 when he declares that directly applying the OT to Christians produces distortion in our understanding of the text:

> While the temptation in preaching will be strong to proceed directly from, say, the godly Israelite to the contemporary believer, this method will inevitably produce distortions in the way we understand the text. There is no direct application apart from the mediation of Christ. That is the theological principle that I have wanted to emphasize in this study. While, no doubt, the direct approach will produce nice thoughts and, to a limited extent, even edifying ones, we simply cannot afford to ignore the words of Jesus that the Scriptures testify to him.[115]

Goldsworthy believes that Jesus teaches a radically new hermeneutic in Luke 24:

> Our concern is not how the Jewish contemporaries, the Pharisees and the Sadducees and others, regarded Jesus and his disciples, but *how the Bible portrays both the continuity and the radical newness of the Christian hermeneutic*. The Emmaus two are representative of a general inability to deal with the suffering Messiah as the bringer of the kingdom. Luke plainly shows that the encounter with the risen Christ makes the difference. Whatever transpired in the hermeneutical lecture that Jesus gave when he 'interpreted to them the things about himself in the Scriptures' (Luke 24:27), it must have formed the basis for the later apostolic ministry. As Jesus speaks to the larger group of disciples and opens their minds to understand the Scriptures, it would appear that Luke intends us to understand the centrality of his suffering and resurrection for hermeneutics (Luke 24:45-47). This point cannot be emphasized enough for it signifies that the meaning of all the Scriptures is unlocked by the death and resurrection of Jesus.[116]

And more recently, he has said,

> The resurrection is the ultimate demonstration of Christology and of God's hermeneutical reference point. Thus the resurrection of Christ confronted his disciples with a radical change of perspective and challenge to their hermeneutics. Although this new perspective had already been foreshadowed in the prophets and declared by Jesus, the disciples proved to be rather impervious to the truths involved. Partly this was due to their inability to grasp that the Messiah should suffer before entering his glory (Matt. 16:21-23; Luke 24:26). They needed instruction in how the Old Testament is about the Christ (Luke 24:27, 44-45).[117]

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[114] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 167; see pp. 12, 14, 49, 127, 177, 218, 333.

[115] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 116.

[116] Ibid., 54.

[117] Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 64.

G. K. Beale believes that in Luke 24 Jesus taught the apostles "that Christ as the centre of history is the *key to interpreting the earlier portions of the Old Testament and its promises.*"[118] Examples seem to abound *ad nauseam*.[119] In spite of the volume of supporters, several stubborn facts from this passage require answers before this interpretation can account for the text.

The hermeneutical argument is an argument from silence. There is nothing in the text that actually demonstrates, let alone implies, that Jesus is giving the disciples a radically new hermeneutic. Jesus' explicit statements go against such a notion. Yet Greidanus says,

> The concept of 'promise' turns out to be much broader, however, than the predictions in a few messianic prophecies. In his last 'sermon' in Luke (24:44-49), Jesus says, ' . . . everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Notice that Jesus refers to the three main sections of the Old Testament; not just a few prophecies but the whole Old Testament speaks of Jesus Christ.[120]

At best, Greidanus can surmise that this new hermeneutic was applied to at least a passage in each of the three major sections of the Scriptures. Jesus did not teach that every passage was about Him, but He taught the things that pertained to Him in/among

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[118] G. K. Beale, "Positive Answer to the Question Did Jesus and His Followers Preach the Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?: Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 392; italics original. Beale cites Luke 24 in his own footnote on this quotation.

[119] E.g., Poythress writes,

> If we neglect approach (c) [Canonological interpretation: 'any passage is to be read in the context of the entire Bible'], we miss the advantage of having the rest of the Bible to control the inferences that we may draw in the direction of applications. Perhaps we may refuse to apply the text at all, saying to ourselves, 'It was just written for those people back there.' Or we may apply it woodenly, not reckoning with the way in which it is qualified by the larger purposes of God. We miss the Christocentric character of the Bible, proclaimed in Luke 24:45-48. We refuse to see the particulars in the light of the whole, and so we may repeat an error of the Pharisees, who meticulously attended to detail, but neglected 'justice and the love of God' (Luke 11:42). (Poythress, "Divine Meaning of Scripture," 107. The bracketed quotation is from p. 103)

Similarly, Greidanus, after quoting Luke 24, writes, "Jesus' disciples finally fathomed the incredible truth that the crucified Jesus was God's promised Messiah and the living Lord. From that faith perspective the disciples looked back at the Old Testament and saw numerous references to the Jesus they knew. In other words, they now read the Old Testament in the light of their knowledge of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord." Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 184.

[120] Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament*, 56.

all the Scriptures. This is the straightforward, literal reading of Luke 24:27. Even the redemptive-historical scholars acknowledge that they base their Christocentric, spiritual hermeneutic on the literal reading of the NT.[121]

In Luke 24:27, Jesus "interpreted [διερμήνευσεν] for them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (my translation). Jesus does not say that everything written in the OT pertains to Him. But He does teach that things are written about Him in all three portions of the OT. Both of those options are semantically possible,[122] but the conclusion must be determined by the context. In verse 27, Luke mentions Moses and all the prophets, and in verse 44, Jesus mentions the three sections of Jewish Scriptures: the law, the prophets, and the Psalms (sometimes, writings). Each portion of the Scripture teaches things concerning Jesus. The ESV gives an excellent rendering of verse 44: "that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." The word "everything" does not modify "in the Law, the Prophets, and Psalms," but rather, "everything" modifies "written about Me," which in turn can be found in all three portions of the Jewish Scripture. For the redemptive-historical reading to make sense, Luke 24:44 would have to read a predicate use of the prepositional phrase περὶ ἐμοῦ.[123] Or, to make this even more explicit, Luke could have said, ὅτι δεῖ πληρωθῆναι ὅτι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα . . . ἐξηγοῦται με—literally, "that it is necessary to

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[121] Johnson writes,

> To look at this question another way, the issue is whether we seek interpretive accountability in a general grammatical–historical approach that in recent centuries has seemed intuitively cogent and appropriately self–critical or in an approach that (as well as attending to original linguistic, literary, and historical contexts) also takes the New Testament *literally* when the latter affirms that an Old Testament pattern is 'fulfilled' in the redemptive work of Christ. I am arguing that if the New Testament itself affirms a symbolic–typological interpretation of an Old Testament feature (for example, that the multiethnic church 'is' the Israel with whom God makes his new covenant), we are on safer ground to follow the New Testament's lead rather than clinging to a different, 'literal' reading that might seem, in the abstract, to be more objectively verifiable. (Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 139–40; italics original)

[122] BDAG, 782-83.

[123] E.g., πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ νόμῳ Μωϋσέως καὶ τοῖς προφήταις καὶ ψαλμοῖς ἐστιν τὰ περὶ ἐμοῦ, would make this point precisely.

believe that all things written in the Law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms explain Me."

In Luke 24:25, this would be clear if ὅτι πᾶντα ἅ ἐλάλησαν οἱ προφῆται ἐστιν τὰ περὶ ἐμοῦ was the content clause of τοῦ πιστεύειν. The sense would be " . . . slow to believe *that everything written [in the Old Testament] is that which concerns Me.*" Then, the reader would know that these two references are one and the same. In 24:44, the accusative πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα is the object of what is fulfilled, and this composite whole is modified by the prepositional phrase, leaving you with "everything written concerning Me." This is significantly different than the use of the verb, such as "everything written concerns/explains Me."

The disciples are not rebuked for inadequate hermeneutics, but for unbelief. Verse 25 challenges the redemptive-historical interpretation. First, if the disciples misunderstand the Scripture because the necessary hermeneutic is radically new, then they should not be rebuked but instructed. Instead, Jesus says, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" Second, in the redemptive-historical view, the OT must be interpreted afresh *in light of Christ's resurrection*.[124] Yet, remarkably, these disciples were not even exposed to the resurrection reality yet. God supernaturally prevented their recognition of Christ (v. 16). So, they could not possibly have had access to this hermeneutic. According to the redemptive-historical view, the disciples' problem was ignorance. According to Jesus' perspective, it was a failure to believe all the prophets had said. Indeed, they believed the prophecies about the redemption of the nation politically (v. 21), but they struggled to believe the passages about suffering, resurrection, and a redeemed seed free from all spiritual and physical enemies.

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[124] Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 285.

Ironically, according to Goldsworthy's hermeneutic, the disciples are rebuked for what they could not have known (i.e., in Luke 24:25 they are supposedly learning a radically new hermeneutic), but they are patiently instructed where they should have been rebuked (Acts 1):

> Acts 1 indicates that Jesus' discourse in Luke 24 is only partly understood by the disciples. Gloom turns to joy as they now grasp that the death of Jesus was indeed part of God's plan. But their view of history still needs some work to bring it into line with God's view. They ask, 'Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' (Acts 1:6). It appears that they expect the resurrection to be the signal for the full glory of the eschatological kingdom to be revealed. . . . Instead of the expected glorious reign of the Christ in a renewed Jerusalem, we learn that the scepter of the risen Christ is the preached word that will be the focus of the worldwide missionary endeavor of the church.[125]

Yet, Jesus taught the disciples about the kingdom for 40 days (Acts 1:3). It was a 40-day post-resurrection seminar. If ever there was a time to teach a new hermeneutic, this was it. Nevertheless, when they ask Him about restoring the kingdom to Israel, which he just taught them about for 40 days, he does not rebuke them like he did in Luke 24. Again, the rebuke in Luke 24 was for not believing the things that were revealed in the OT.

But in Acts 1, the disciples are asking about the fulfillment of prophecy; namely, they want to know when the kingdom will be reestablished for Israel. Instead of this as a violation of some radically new hermeneutic, Jesus actually affirms that their question is an understandable question by explaining that they do not need to know the timing of this. "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority." This is not speaking of the coming church age, because He says in verse 8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." They know when this will occur because He just told them in verse 5, "for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." The timing of the establishment of the kingdom to Israel is outside the realm of what they are

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[125] Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics*, 224.

to know, but the timing of the initiation of the church is not many days from now. Greidanus' reading of Acts 1 makes as little sense as does his reading of Luke 24. Why would Jesus rebuke His disciples for failing to read the Scripture with a hermeneutic that He had not yet given them (Luke 24), and simply instruct them when they violate the hermeneutic He supposedly gave them (Acts 1)?

The disciples' hearts were burning before they recognized that this was the resurrected Christ. Luke 24 is not teaching a new hermeneutic based on experiencing the risen Christ.[126] In fact, the meaning, knowing the resurrection power and authority of the OT caused their hearts to burn *even before they knew experientially about the resurrection.* What caused their hearts to burn was the actual meaning of the OT based on a pre-resurrection understanding of those passages, as verses 16 and 31-32 prove. Luke 24 proves that the OT speaks of Christ, but it does not teach that it takes a new hermeneutic to find Him there.

1 Corinthians 2:2

Second only to Luke 24, 1 Corinthians 2:2 is an important text for redemptive-historical preachers. Paul says, "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." This verse is sometimes used as evidence for the notion that the content of proclamation was the gospel of Christ and, at other times, as a hermeneutical safeguard for homiletics. Goldsworthy says,

> It is clear from the New Testament that the primary means by which the church grew was through the preaching of the gospel. The apostle Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians that he was determined to know nothing among them but Christ and him crucified, expressed it simply: 'we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles' (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2). The act of proclaiming, or preaching, was not the giving of opinions or of reinterpreting old religious traditions in new and creative ways. It was proclaiming the word of God. Whatever the form of the proclamation, the content was the gospel of Jesus, and it was by this means alone that people were added to the church.[127]

[126] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 54.

[127] Ibid., 32–33.

Again, he writes,

> Perhaps one of the most contentious aspects of the central thesis of this book is the assertion that the application of the meaning of any text must proceed theologically via the application it has to Christ. This is a principle that stands firmly on the fact that the whole of Scripture testifies to Christ. It seeks to take Paul seriously in his intention 'to know nothing among you but Christ and him crucified.'[128]

Johnson also writes, "The apostolic resolve makes perfect sense: 'I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified' (1 Cor. 2:2). Whatever our biblical text and theme, if we want to impart God's life-giving wisdom in its exposition, we can do nothing other than proclaim Christ."[129] Later, he says, "Paul summed up the content of his preaching by naming a person, Christ . . . Christ is the one in whom *all* the treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge are hidden (Col. 2:3). Paul had told the Corinthians that he had resolved in coming to them to preach nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:2)."[130]

Likewise, Chapell writes,

> Christ-centered preaching (whether it is referred to as preaching the cross, the message of grace, the gospel, God's redemption, or a host of similar terms) reflects Paul's intention to preach nothing 'except Jesus Christ and him crucified.' Just as Paul's preaching involved more than the message of the incarnation and atonement—and yet kept all subjects in proper relation to God's redemption through Christ—so also *Christ-centered preaching rightly understood does not seek to discover where Christ is mentioned in every text but to disclose where every text stands in relation to Christ*.[131]

Sidney Greidanus writes,

> What does Paul mean when he writes, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2)? Does he mean that he spoke about nothing else but Jesus' crucifixion? . . .
>
> The meaning of "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" is elucidated by Col 1, where, as we saw, Paul proclaims that kingdom history is centered in the cross of Christ. "Jesus Christ and him crucified"

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[128] Goldsworthy, *Preaching the Whole Bible as Christian Scripture*, 113.

[129] Johnson, *Him We Proclaim*, 2.

[130] Ibid., 75; italics original.

[131] Bryan Chapell, *Christ-Centered Preaching: Redeeming the Expository Sermon* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 279.

> refers literally to the crux, the heart and center of the kingdom history which encompasses all things. Whatever point Paul raises, therefore, or whatever advice he gives, is related to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Paul sees it, everything in the world has to do with Jesus Christ—especially everything in the church, for the church is the body of Christ through which his life continues on earth.
>
> All of Paul's statements, therefore, must be interpreted in the light of his Christocentric viewpoint.[132]

Before examining Paul's meaning in context, a distinction ought to be acknowledged here. For Goldsworthy and Johnson, this passage functions as a hermeneutical check. Greidanus and Chapell, however, are more restrained. For them, this passage is more of a homiletical check.

In the context of 1 Corinthians 1:10-2:5, Paul is not making a statement about hermeneutics or the content of his homiletic. Instead, as alluded to in chapter 2, Paul is making a remark about his persuasive mechanism. The basis of persuasion was the folly of a crucified Messiah, not wise and persuasive words of wisdom. In order to appreciate the largely ignored grounds of argument in 1 Corinthians 2:2, it will be important to briefly highlight classical rhetorical and its terms here.

The recipients of Paul's letters were undoubtedly familiar with rhetoric. When Paul uses phrases like "not in the wisdom of speech," "not with superiority of speech or of wisdom," "not in persuasive words of wisdom," and "not in words taught by human wisdom" (1 Cor 1:17; 2:1, 4, 13), he is issuing a strong polemic against the mixing the method of secular rhetoric with the content of Christ crucified.

For the Greek orators, persuasion is a result of ability (δύναμις) and wisdom (σοφία) with speech (λόγος). These terms, and many referenced below are critical for understanding 1 Corinthians 2:2. Paul rejects these terms as the grounds of persuasion in preaching. Persuasion requires artistic proofs (think Aristotle's *logos, ethos,* and *pathos*).

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[132] Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 331–32.

In a defense of his oratorical school, Isocrates describes the good and mature orator as one who is

> abler and wiser in speech [σοφωτέρους ἐν τοῖς λόγοις] than those who have the advantage over them both in years and in experience. . . . the same arguments which we use in persuading [πείθομεν] others when speaking in public, we employ also when we deliberate in our own thoughts; and, while we call eloquent those who are able [δυναμένους] to speak before a crowd, we regard as sage those who most skillfully debate their problems in their own minds.[133]

Aristotle said,

> Now since it is clear that the means provided by the art is concerned with the proofs [πίστεις]; the proof [πίστις] is a sort of demonstration [ἀπόδειξίς] (because we especially believe whenever we take something to be proven by argument [ἀποδεδεῖχθαι]), and the rhetorical demonstration [ἀπόδειξις] is an enthymeme . . . To persuade [τὸ πεῖσαι] is not the work [of rhetoric], but to see the persuasive things [τὰ ὑπάρχοντα πιθανὰ] that are at one's disposal concerning every subject… Now, rhetoric must be the power to perceive the possible persuasion [τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν] concerning every subject…[134]

Roman orators appeal to the same grounds of persuasion. Longinus[135] agrees that persuasion is important, and he asserts that it comes from eloquence: "The choice of the right word and the fine word has a marvelously moving and seductive effect upon an audience and how all orators and prose writers make this their supreme object."[136] Ultimately, he disparages reasonable persuasion as the goal of rhetoric, and exalts the power to amaze the audience:

> For the effect of genius is not to persuade [πείθω] the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves. Invariably what inspires wonder, with its power of amazing us, always prevails over what is merely convincing [πιθανοῦ] and pleasing. For our persuasions [πιθανὸν] are usually under our own control, but these things exercise and irresistible power [δυναστείαν] and mastery, and get the better of every listener.[137]

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[133] Isocrates, *Antidosis* 199–200, 256–57.

[134] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I.i.11, I.i.14, I.ii.1; translation mine.

[135] Longinus is typically given credit for *On the Sublime*, though the introduction in Loeb Classical Library volume makes a case for first century AD date. Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. W. H. Fyfe, Loeb Classical Library 199 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 146–47. It could well be contemporary with, or shortly after, Paul.

[136] Longinus, *On the Sublime* 30.

[137] Ibid., 4.

Cicero also affirmed the persuasive power of eloquence when he wrote, "As reason is the glory of man, so the lamp of reason is eloquence, for preeminence in which the men of that time did well to call such a man the flower of the people, the marrow of Persuasion."[138] And again,

> The man of eloquence whom we seek . . . will be one who is able to speak in court or in deliberative bodies so as to prove, to please and to sway or persuade. To prove is the first necessity, to please is to charm, to sway is victory; for it is the one thing of all that avails most in winning verdicts. For these three functions of the orator there are three styles, the plain style for proof, the middle style for pleasure, the vigorous style for persuasion; and in this last is summed up the entire virtue of the orator. Now the man who controls and combines these three varied styles needs rare judgement and great endowment; for he will decide what is needed at any point, and will be able to speak in any way which the case requires. For after all the foundation of eloquence, as of everything else, is wisdom.[139]

In contrast to such orators, Paul rejected Aristotle's πιθανός argument in Colossians 2:4. He declared that he needed no secular rhetoric when it came to λόγος and γνῶσις, because he was made wealthy in these respects in Christ (1 Cor 1:5; cf. Col 2:3). He rejected Isocrates' wisdom of speech in 1 Corinthians 1:17. He rejected Aristotle's proofs (both πίστις and ἀπόδειξις) in Acts 17:31—the resurrection is his 'proof'—and 1 Corinthians 2:4, respectively.

In 1 Corinthians 2:2, both the rhetorical context of first-century Corinth, and the nature of the argument Paul was making impact the hermeneutical discussion.[140] Verse 2 starts with a "for," because it grounds the argument of verse 1. It gives the reason for why Paul refuses to "come with superiority of speech or of wisdom" in his preaching ministry. This does not mean that Paul refused to persuade, but only that he refused to use classical tools. He refused the tools that unbelievers would be compelled by. He has

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[138] Cicero, *Brutus* 59.

[139] Cicero, *Orator* 69–70.

[140] Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul among the Sophists: Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002); Duane Litfin, *Paul's Theology of Preaching: The Apostle's Challenge to the Art of Persuasion in Ancient Corinth*, rev. and exp. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015); Greg Heisler, *Spirit-Led Preaching: The Holy Spirit's Role in Sermon Preparation and Delivery* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 29–34.

already discussed this in 1:18-24. Even though they are looking for a powerful speech that tugs at the heart strings while throwing a piece of humbling pie in the face of another orator, Paul will not give it to them. He simply relies on what would never compel someone who is perishing, but will always work on those who are being saved by God (1:18)—the folly of the cross. This is a Jewish stumbling block and Greek foolishness (1:23). So, Paul makes the point again, but this time he explains more about the reason why his preaching was not attended with exalted speech or wisdom—*because* I determined to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified.

Paul refused to persuade with the tools and proofs of classical rhetoric. Instead, Paul relied entirely on the ἀποδείξις of "Christ crucified," so that the faith of men did not rest in Paul's oratory, but Christ's power and wisdom. For persuasion, Paul puts all of his eggs into one basket—the sufficiency of a worldly-foolish message. It never works on the perishing, but only those who are being saved. The theological assertion of the redemptive-historical hermeneutic misses the context of this passage. Their argument is not Paul's argument here. His statement is about the means of persuasion and the object of faith (cf. 2:4-5), rather than a limitation on content or a hermeneutical principle for recognizing the meaning of Scripture. If this were a hermeneutical check, then Paul violated this principle when he interprets Isaiah 10:22 (Rom 9:27). If a homiletical check, then Paul violated this conviction by writing epistles like 2 Thessalonians.

Conclusion

The strongest argument of the Redemptive-Historical hermeneutic is the claim that the apostles interpreted the OT through a Christocentric interpretive lens. This appendix deals with passages that the proponents of this position use to promote their position. The examination of these passages leaves this author unconvinced that the apostles were a theological *a priori* in order to interpret the OT. Along with the conclusions of chapter 3 regarding what the NT *exhibits* in its own interpretation of the

OT, this author does not find any compelling argument left for the Redemptive-Historical hermeneutic to claim a divine warrant for their version of theological interpretation.

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ABSTRACT

THE PRESUPPOSITIONAL HERMENEUTIC:
AN ARGUMENT FOR INTERPRETING AND PREACHING
THE BIBLE WITH AUTHORITY

Jonathan Daniel Anderson, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019
Chair: Dr. Robert A. Vogel

How can the Scriptures stand as the exclusive authority for arriving at a God-given hermeneutic? The Scriptures themselves possess an exclusive hermeneutic that is the only hermeneutic authorized by God for interpreting and preaching the Scriptures themselves—'the presuppositional hermeneutic.'

Chapter 1 demonstrates the necessity of a revelatory epistemology for certain knowledge. In light of the rise of epistemology in hermeneutics, the discussion about interpretive authority was changed by the Enlightenment. Interpretive authority is more critical than ever, and only a hermeneutic that is built exclusively on a revelational epistemology can claim divine-warrant for correct interpretation.

Chapter 2 develops the first of two arguments for the presuppositional hermeneutic—the first is implicit, the second is explicit. For an interpretation to claim divine-warrant, the hermeneutic must share the same presuppositions as the Scriptures regarding language, meaning, and interpretation. The objections against this argument come largely from those who stand on philosophical presuppositions in addition to the Scriptures. Objections are answered from the Scriptures as interpreted by the Scripture's own presuppositions about interpretation.

The Scriptures are hard-wired with a hermeneutic that is demonstrated in its inspired interpretation of other passages. The presuppositional hermeneutic is exhibited

by the Scripture (ch. 3) as the inspired interpretations of other Scriptures identify meaning with the sense accessible to the original audience (historical) according to the syntax within its literary context (grammatical).

Chapter 4 explains how hermeneutics impact the pulpit. When a hermeneutic lacks divine-warrant, the sermon will as well. The first two sections explore the threats to the pulpit. The chapter concludes with the benefits of the presuppositional hermeneutic for the pulpit.

Appendix 1 examines Kevin Vanhoozer's *interpretive authority*, showing the importance of epistemology for hermeneutics.

Appendix 2 examines Martin Luther's *interpretive authority*, concluding that Luther did not uphold historical theology as an interpretive authority.

Appendix 3 examines the Redemptive-Historical hermeneutic, concluding that its systematic theology is not textually warranted as a hermeneutical authority.

VITA

Jonathan Daniel Anderson

EDUCATIONAL

B.S., Moody Bible Institute, 2001
M.Div., The Master's Seminary, 2005

MINISTERIAL

Associate Pastor, Grace Immanuel Bible Church, Jupiter, Florida, 2005-

ACADEMIC

Associate Professor of New Testament Greek, The Expositors Seminary, Jupiter, Florida, 2007-
Associate Professor of Church History and Bible Exposition, The Expositors Seminary, Jupiter, Florida, 2012-