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THE RULE OF FAITH AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

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by

Timothy Andrew Brown

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APPROVAL SHEET

THE RULE OF FAITH AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Timothy Andrew Brown

Read and Approved by:

_____
James M. Hamilton Jr. (Faculty Supervisor)

_____
Matthew D. Haste

Date_____

To Katie, who is far more precious than jewels.

To the Three who some said would never be.

May you pierce the world and shame the enemy.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AH	*Against Heresies*. By Irenaeus of Lyon.
ANF	*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Revised by A. Cleveland Coxe. 10 vols.
Dem. Ap. Pr.	*On the Apostolic Preaching*. By Irenaeus of Lyon. Translated by John Behr. Popular Patristics 17. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997.
NPNF[1]	*A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. 14 vols.
NPNF[2]	*A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Series 2. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. 14 vols.

PREFACE

In 2008, God opened the door for a recently married couple to start their lives in North Carolina and attend Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. My time at SEBTS was one of the most formative in my life. It was at SEBTS that I was encouraged to become a better worshipper of God. Becoming a better worshiper of God meant learning to hear his voice. Hearing his voice meant listening to Scripture. The greatest benefit of my time at seminary was learning how to read and study the Bible.

I am grateful for Steve McKinion, professor of Patristics and Christian Theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. McKinion has challenged me to learn the language of the Bible and confronted me to make sure that I did not just know about the Bible but that I actually *knew* the Bible.

My time at Southeastern also meant the meeting of Tracy McKenzie, professor of Hebrew and Old Testament. Dr. Tracy McKenzie challenged us by saying every text has a context, and the most immediate context of every text is its canonical context.

Further, without the loving support of my Katie and the patience of our children, this task would not have been possible. We have grown closer to each other and to King Jesus through this process. I have been delighted when my children have asked me to put the books down to go play and have been pleased to know that Katie has prayed for me all along the way. It is to Katie and my children that this work is dedicated. Next, apart from my parents, who continue to instruct me in the ways of the Lord, I would be lost. Finally, I am grateful for those who have called me pastor. They have always been in my mind as I write. I am thankful for their encouraging me to be all I can in honor of the King. I am blessed to have seen their growth, seen some of them come to

faith in Christ, and seen some of them lead others to Christ. We have wept together, laughed together, and enjoyed the providence of time together.

Additionally, I am grateful for James Hamilton, who agreed to supervise this project. Dr. Hamilton was a major contributing factor in my choice to come to Southern Seminary. His approval to supervise my project was a moment of great encouragement for me. Dr. Hamilton's feedback throughout this process has been invaluable. I am grateful for his challenges, sharpening, and time spent developing me to further consider Scripture and the beauty of the God and King it portrays.

Along the way, I had the privilege of getting to know the director of the Professional Doctoral Studies office, Matthew Haste. Dr. Haste has encouraged me to put my best foot forward throughout this process. The Professional Doctoral Studies office at Southern is dedicated to training the best theologians for the church. I am happy to have had been a part of a blossoming program.

Finally, I am grateful for the friendship of Stephen Lorance, who currently faithfully pastors while pursuing his PhD at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The contents of this thesis are the results of an ongoing conversation between friends.

Andy Brown

Newnan, Georgia

May 2020

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Christian confession centers on the claims of Scripture. Since the beginning, these claims have faced a host of critics. The modern era has seen the rise of what has been labeled a liberal hermeneutic that questions the truthfulness and authority of Scripture. Contrary to liberalism is the work of scholarship under the conviction of the authority, sufficiency, inspiration, and inerrancy of the Bible. This resurgence in a conservative direction has brought about a renaissance in hermeneutics. A key question that has emerged as the outworking of these post-liberal presuppositions is the search for the center as the Bible is interpreted. A great contribution in the search for the meaning of the text has been accomplished in the redefinition of the discipline of biblical theology.

According to James Hamilton Jr., biblical theology refers to "the interpretative perspective reflected in the way the biblical authors have presented their understanding of earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they are describing, recounting, celebrating, or addressing in narratives, poems, proverbs, letters, and apocalypses."[1] The discipline of biblical theology suggests an interpretive framework used to interpret every text. Far from an eisegetical reading of the text, this method exegetically interprets every passage of Scripture with the author's intent in mind. The exegetical task of biblical theology is not complete until each passage is traced throughout Scripture in demonstration of the Bible's coherence as one theological work.

Since the Bible is a work of revelation, and the definitive revelation of God is Jesus Christ, a Christ-centered hermeneutic does not sound far from a Christian

[1] James M. Hamilton Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 16.

interpretation of Scripture. At the heart of a Christ-centered hermeneutic is a desire to take the post-resurrection exegesis of Christ on the road to Emmaus as the way to interpret Scripture—that is, to read Scripture *Christocentrically*. However, even within the Christ-centered movement, a debate rages concerning how to read Scripture in light of Christ. Some suggest that Christ is the telos of Scripture, while others suggest that Christ is the center. Both sides of the debate agree that the Old Testament is Christian Scripture, but both sides disagree as to how the Old Testament speaks of Jesus.[2]

The ability to interpret the meaning of a text is not so easily assumed. Since the time of the Enlightenment and the rise of biblical criticism, the meaning of the text, specifically authorial intent, has been called into question. One of the key interpretive approaches that has appeared as a result of historical criticism is *heilsgeschichte*, or "salvation history." With a critical eye to the text, scholars discovered what they understood to be a discontinuity between the way the New Testament authors interpreted the Old and the historical setting that yielded the meaning of the Old Testament passage in question. The idea was that the New Testament authors were proof-texting the Old Testament, and, as a result, the meaning of the original conforms to a preconceived, theologically driven worldview.[3] This conclusion led to an articulation of *heilsgeschichte* that proposes that Scripture is a *witness* to revelation instead of revelation itself. Such an approach problematically subordinates the meaning of the text to the history surrounding

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[2] Daniel Block draws a distinction between Christotelic and Christocentric. Specifically dealing with Amos 8:11, Block says,

> How do we resolve this issue, and in so doing end the famine for the word of God in the land (Amos 8:11) and nourish our people with food that transforms and yields life? In my view the answer is Christotelic reading of Scripture and a Christocentric proclamation—or more accurately a Jesus- centered proclamation. This may appear to some as mere semantics, but to me there is a significant difference between Christocentric activity— whether hermeneutical or homiletical—and Jesus-centered activity. Daniel I. Block, "Christotelic Preaching: A Plea for Hermeneutical Integrity and Missional Passion," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 22, no. 3 (Spring 2017): 8.

[3] N. T. Wright tackles the question of Paul and proof-texting in *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 1450.

the text, thus distancing any hope of coming toward a unitary meaning of the text.[4]

The current resurgence of a Christ-centered biblical-theological hermeneutic is not a new pathway for exegesis but an old forgotten path (at least in some scholastic circles) that the church has benefitted from since its inception. A Christocentric reading of the text is an apostolic hermeneutic that was perpetuated by some significant patristic authors and picked back up by the Reformers,[5] whom contemporary biblical theologians seeking to read Scripture *Christocentrically* are currently reengaging today. This point is not without controversy. Many scholars are fine with going back as far as the Reformation to find a pathway for a Christocentric biblical theology, but many are leery of tracing a line back to the early church. This hesitance is due, in part, to the influence of liberal theologians such as Adolf von Harnack, who has unfavorably placed distance between many conservatives and the fathers of the early church. Those who read the fathers through historical-critical lenses are those who will face the most challenge from

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[4] Hans Frei says, "In the *heilsgeschichtliche* version of biblical theology its meaning and function of the temporal sequence of events and interpretative tradition to which the story refers, together with the interpretative stance taken towards this complex sequence. Meaning is the upshot of the interaction of these factors. Event and interpretation are logically distinct but not separately available". Hans W. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 181. Robert Wilken insists "the task of interpretation is never exhausted by a historical account. The text belongs to a world that is not defined solely by its historical referent." Robert Wilken, "In Defense of Allegory," *Modern Theology* 14, no. 2 (1998), 201.

[5] Stephen Nichols suggests, "Luther really appreciated the church fathers. I would say he was shaped by them. The other Reformers were shaped by them, too, especially John Calvin. But they were not governed by them—just as they would not want us to be governed by *their* teaching. They would want us to be *shaped* by it as we look to the Word of God." Stephen J. Nichols, "What Did the Reformers Think of the Church Fathers?" Crossway (blog), October 12, 2017, https://www.crossway.org/articles/what-did-the-reformers-think-of-the-church-fathers/?utm_source=Crossway+Marketing&utm_campaign=21cf44273a-20171015+-+Newsletter+3+-+Men&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0275bcaa4b-21cf44273a-283293925.

Further, Matthew Barrett says,

> Luther and the Reformers believed that for the early church fathers, Scripture *alone* (as opposed to Scripture *and* Tradition) was inspired by God, perfect and flawless as a source of divine revelation, and therefore the final and ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice . . . . Against Rome's accusations that the Reformers had departed from the tradition of the church fathers, the Reformers argued that their stance (T1) was actually the view of the fathers." (Matthew Barrett, *God's Word Alone—the Authority of Scripture: What the Reformers Taught . . . and Why It Still Matters*, Five Solas Series [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016], 45-46)

Additionally, see Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals: Why We Need Our Past to Have a Future* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 31, 57-60, where he asserts that the Reformation was a retrieval of the early church. Additionally, Ortlund suggests that Kevin Vanhoozer, J. I. Packer, and Timothy George all agree on the significant place the fathers had in the minds of the Reformers.

reading this thesis.

While each early author reflecting on Scripture should not be held in equal standing, there is a coherent hermeneutic that guides the earliest interpretations of Scripture. Speaking of this hermeneutic, Donald Fairbairn says, "The fathers believed that the entire Bible was a book about Christ, and therefore they were determined to read every passage of Scripture as being directly or indirectly about Christ, the Christian's relationship to Christ, or the church's relationship to Christ." He continues, "The church fathers started with the whole Bible, with its entire message, and they read each passage in light of the entire message. We start with narrow and work to the broad. They started with the broad and read each narrow passage in light of their understanding of the Bible's broad, overall message."[6] In Peter Leithart's words,

> Fairbairn gets patristic interpretation *exactly* right: He admits they were "overly exuberant," but argues that they were excessively excited about the right thing: "They correctly understood that the key to good interpretation is discerning the whole message of Scripture well, and they correctly saw that the Bible as a whole is fundamentally about Christ."
>
> For that reason, following their example is safer than following modern methods: "it is less dangerous to discern the Bible's central message clearly but read that message too enthusiastically into all passages than it is to read each passage individually without an adequate grasp of the central message."[7]

In the post-apostolic era of Christian interpretation, Irenaeus of Lyon stands without equal. Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp, who was a student of John, who was a disciple of Jesus Christ. The interpretations during this early post-apostolic period, in which Irenaeus stands as the first major figure due to his surviving works, represent a desire to faithfully carry forth the apostolic reading of Scripture. While seeking to defend the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), Irenaeus articulated an interpretation of Scripture coherent with what he calls the "canon of truth." This language refers to the

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[6] Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: An Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 110-11.

[7] Peter Leithart, "Patristic Hermeneutics," Leithart (blog), Patheos, August 25, 2011, http://www.patheos.com/blogs/leithart/2011/08/patristic-hermeneutics/.

regula fidei, or "rule of faith." As I will demonstrate, Irenaeus's approach concerning the "rule" is different than others' articulation of it in that he suggests that the rule is contained in the Scriptures and cannot be deduced apart from them. In other words, the rule cannot be detached from Scripture. A concept of the rule apart from the Scriptures is a different rule than the apostolic rule. Irenaeus's articulation of the rule of faith, following the apostles, is Christ according to the Scriptures.

The clearest articulation of this rule is found in *Against Heresies.* There, Irenaeus says, "The Church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith, in one God, one Christ, and the Holy Spirit, who made known by the prophets the economies of God worked by Christ."[8] Irenaeus's dependence upon Scripture will be addressed as I consider his work *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*.

This articulation and understanding of the rule of faith has radical implications for the historical-critical method. Irenaeus's view of Scripture operates from a completely different view of the text.[9] Taken at face value, the historical-critical method leaves no other choice than the Old Testament serving as only a witness to revelation. Standing against this view, Irenaeus says, "If anyone, therefore, reads the Scriptures with attention, he will find in them an account of Christ."[10]

For Irenaeus, Scripture is a "compendium or 'thesaurus', that is, a 'treasury', of images, words, and reports."[11] Irenaeus sees the different parts of Scripture as yielding a singular image of Christ. Using the analogy of a mosaic, Irenaeus says that the mosaic of Scripture is Christ the King. When the "precious jewels" and "gems" of the mosaic are

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[8] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.10.1 (*ANF*, 1:330).

[9] The textual worldview of Irenaeus will be developed in chapter four of this thesis.

[10] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.26.1 (*ANF*, 1:496).

[11] John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 149.

viewed together, a "beautiful image of the king which the skillful artist constructed" can be seen.[12]

Instead of a progressive unfolding of Scripture, Irenaeus understands the economy in terms of literary recapitulation. Meaning is deduced not in terms of the details behind the text but in light of the historical, crucified, and risen Savior who is risen according to the text (Old Testament). Thomas F. Torrance, in a section of his work concerning Melito of Sardis, represents this cruciform reading further articulated by Irenaeus:

> It was in the Old Testament types, arranged beforehand by the Lord, in the Patriarchs, in the Prophets, and in the whole people, that were fulfilled in the sacrifice and suffering of Christ that his divine reality and nature as the Savior of the world became manifest. However, with their fulfillment the temporal function of the type ceased.[13]

There is a "progressive" sense to the text. Scripture's unfolding is more prospective than progressive. A prospective view of Scripture places Christ as Scripture's referent. In this way, one can understand Scripture as both epistemologically and ontologically Christocentric. As John Sailhamer, with whom Irenaeus would likely agree, avers,

> The Old Testament is the *light* that points the way to the New Testament. The New Testament is not only to cast its light back on the Old, but more importantly, the light of the Old Testament is to be cast on the New. The books of the Old Testament were written as the embodiment of a real, messianic hope—a hope in a future miraculous work of God in sending a promised Redeemer. This was not an afterthought in the Hebrew Bible. This was not the work of final redactors. I believe the messianic thrust of the Old Testament was the whole reason the books of the Hebrew Bible were written.[14]

A Christocentric reading of Scripture is what I seek to engage throughout this

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[12] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.8.1 (*ANF*, 1:326).

[13] Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 80.

[14] John H. Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological* Society 44, no. 1 (March 2001): 23.

thesis. Prayerfully, this work will encourage the conversation to continue in the discipline of biblical theology and suggest that the resurgence of a Christ-centered hermeneutic is a path that has been well worn by many before us. As John Webster states, "Retrieval ought not be nostalgia, but the expectant search for new possibilities."[15] The ancient paths that were blazed in generations past will prove the ground on which Christians must walk for a faithful presentation of Christ according to Scripture.

Familiarity with Literature

Hermeneutics

Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* argues that Western Christian readings of the Bible before the rise of historical-criticism in the eighteenth century were different. Frei investigates the "breakdown of realistic and figural interpretation of the biblical stories, and the reversal in the direction of interpretation."[16] Frei encourages interpreters not to dismiss the place of narrative in interpretation, highlighting that many of the biblical narratives were essential to the "making of Christian belief."[17] I use Frei's work in this thesis to link the Enlightenment with the shift in hermeneutics that moderns currently face.

In *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology*, Köstenberger and Patterson highlight three dimensions of the text: author, text, and reader. Suggesting that each text is shaped by its author's intent, Köstenberger and Patterson encourage interpreters not to "interpret the text any way a given reader chooses."[18] Instead, the hermeneutical task is to determine the

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[15] John Webster, *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), xiii.

[16] Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, 9.

[17] Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, 10.

[18] Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation:*

meaning of the text. The meaning has the three dimensions mentioned earlier, and each one allows for the arrival of proper interpretation. Further, the interpretive task must span history, literature, and theology: "Only an approach to the study of Scripture that properly balances history, literature, and theology, will be adequate for the task."[19] I use Köstenberger and Patterson in this thesis to demonstrate the current trends in hermeneutics.

Anthony Thiselton, in *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*, places Friedrich Schleiermacher at the head of contemporary hermeneutics.[20] Thiselton presents a historical overview of hermeneutics, suggesting that the notion that "rules" be formulated for Bible reading began with the era of the church fathers.[21] He says, "The notion of 'rules' for interpretation has had a regular appeal to those conservative Christian writers for whom the concept of an infallible or inerrant biblical canon is essential."[22] Thiselton argues that hermeneutics is both a science and an art. "As a science it enunciates principles . . . and classifies the facts and results. As an art, it teaches what application these principles should have . . . , showing their practical value in the elucidation of more difficult scriptures."[23]

In, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description,* Anthony Thiselton writes, "It is impossible to do genuine scientific biblical study today without raising questions of hermeneutics."[24] To that end, Thiselton advises

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Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2011), 58.

[19] Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 78.

[20] Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009) 1.

[21] Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 2.

[22] Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 3.

[23] Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 3.

[24] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), xi.

an awareness of the ontological presuppositions of the exegete. His work looks specifically at ontological issues surrounding the discipline of interpretation by providing three benefits: A) to "elucidate the hermeneutical task, B) to unfold the meaning of parts of the New Testament, and C) to lead us beyond semantics and traditional linguistics by enlarging the interpreter's prior understanding and conceptual capacities."[25] In this philosophical look at the science of interpretation, Thiselton places four major figures in conversation with one another—Rudolf Bultmann, Hans-Georg, Gadamer, Martin Heidegger, and Ludwig Wittgenstein—comparing how the presuppositions of each play toward and away from each other. According to Thiselton, "The goal of biblical hermeneutics is to bring about an active and meaningful engagement between the interpreter and text, in such a way that the interpreter's own horizon is re-shaped and enlarged."[26] In other words, the Bible speaks today, and the goal of Scripture is transformation. Thiselton's work is an attempt to avoid engagement with Scripture being a task whereby the hearer "merely hears back echoes of his own attitudes or pre-judgments."[27] I use both of Thiselton's works in this thesis to better understand the historical and philosophical developments of the discipline of hermeneutics.

V. Philips Long, Tremper Longman III, Richard A. Muller, Vern S. Poythress, and Moisés Silva, combine six works in: *Foundations for Contemporary Interpretation*. This work is an effort to both identify and clarify the basic problems of interpretation that affect Bible reading in the contemporary age. Each author is committed to the divine authority of Scripture and "assume from the start that a right relationship with its divine author is the most fundamental prerequisite for proper biblical interpretation."[28] Theology

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[25] Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, xi.

[26] Thiselton, *Two Horizons*, xix.

[27] Thiselton, *The Two Horizons*, xx.

[28] Moisés Silva and Philips V. Long, *Foundations for Contemporary Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 15.

is the beginning point for proper exegesis. The six volumes are as follows: *Has the Church Misread the Bible?* (Silva); *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation* (Longman); *God, Language, and Scripture* (Silva); *The Art of Biblical History* (Long); *Science and Hermeneutics* (Poythress); and *The Study of Theology* (Muller).

David Dockery reflects on the principles and frameworks that shaped how the Bible has been interpreted through the ages of the church in *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*: *Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church*. Dockery seeks to demonstrate both how biblical interpretation shaped theology and how theology, in turn, shaped hermeneutics.[29] Comparing the hermeneutical debates of the early church with contemporary issues in modern biblical studies, Dockery primarily focuses on the "patristic approach to Scripture."[30] Specifically, he focuses on the methods and principles used by the fathers to interpret Scripture.[31] Since Dockery focuses on the principles use by the early church fathers, I valued his work as I develop this thesis and found his conclusions favorable.

In *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology*, Francis Watson understands biblical theology as an "interdisciplinary approach to biblical interpretation which seeks to dismantle the barriers that at present separate biblical scholarship from Christian theology."[32] Further, "Biblical theology is a theological, hermeneutical and exegetical discipline, and its hermeneutical and exegetical dimensions are placed at the disposal of its overriding theological concern."[33] The task of biblical theology is to understand the form of the Christian faith. The form of the Christian faith is a task of theology. Watson

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[29] David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 17.

[30] Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 18.

[31] Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now*, 20.

[32] Francis Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), vii.

[33] Watson, *Text and Truth*, vii.

seeks to place engagement with the text of Scripture on theological terms, thus redefining biblical theology. Watson's work as a revisionist in the discipline of biblical theology helps this thesis by grounding its development in the revision of the discipline of biblical theology.

James M. Hamilton Jr.'s, *What Is Biblical Theology?: A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* says, biblical theology seeks to understand the authorial intended message of the whole Bible.[34] In order to locate authorial intent, Hamilton suggests that the starting place should be the text itself.[35] Interpreters are invited to live in the world of the text instead of seeking to discover the world behind the text. The world of the text is a textual worldview presupposed by each writer of Scripture. This worldview begins with creation and ends in consummation. These presuppositions mean that as the authors are recording Scripture, they are interpreting events more than recalling events. The interpretation of events is guided by what God has said and done before as written earlier in Scripture. This point means that intertextuality guides interpretation more than mere visual observation. Guiding the authors of Scripture is the reality of God speaking and the faith to interpret events according to his Word.

Setting forth a Trinitarian hermeneutic, Kevin J. Vanhoozer's, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* argues that Scripture does have meaning, and the meaning is in the text itself. He writes "a theology of interpretation," as opposed to a book on the science of interpretation.[36] In order to be an effective interpreter, Vanhoozer suggests that students develop "an epistemology (theory of knowledge) and [a] hermeneutic (theory of interpretation)."[37] In

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[34] Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 15.

[35] Hamilton, *What Is Biblical Theology?*, 16.

[36] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, The Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 9.

[37] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 9.

reaction to postmodern trends that interpret meaning in subjective terms, Vanhoozer argues that "meaning is independent of our attempts to interpret it."[38] The works of Hamilton and Vanhoozer assist this project by ensuring that interpreters do not deviate from authorial intent.

In, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of at Two-Testament Bible*, Christopher R. Seitz reminds, the Bible, divided into two Testaments, is "neither a single long story, nor a two-part play, but a genre with its own unique character."[39] Key to understanding the relationship between the two Testaments is the rule of faith of the ante-Nicene period. In this way, the character of both Testaments is upheld, and both Testaments are understood as a single witness to God.[40] Accordingly, Seitz says, "The NT is not simply a later scriptural witness whose point is to show culminating events that temporally follow after those of the first Scripture. . . . It is not possible to speak of Christ without speaking of him 'in accordance with the Scriptures.'"[41] Seitz argues, "The theological dimensions of the OT is not chiefly grasped by a historical construction of what may or may not be going on when the second witness uses the first."[42] Instead, the Old Testament is Christian Scripture. "To Speak of the OT as Christian Scripture requires a genuine interpretation of its literal sense according to its canonical form and character."[43] Seitz's suggestion of that the Old Testament is Christian Scripture is the value of his work for this project.

Craig Bartholomew, C. Stephen Evans, Mary Healy, and Murray Rae (editors),

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[38] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 10.

[39] Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 11.

[40] Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture*, 18.

[41] Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture*, 18.

[42] Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture*, 20.

[43] Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture*, 23.

"Behind" the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation explores the relationship between interpretation and history by a host of scholars showing the range of movements of interpretive possibilities. These movements are organized into four categories: the historical turn, the literary turn, the postmodern turn, and a theological turn.[44] The ambition for this presentation is the dominance of historical criticism: "Historical criticism continues to dominate biblical studies in all sorts of ways."[45] In this thesis, I argue that meaning does not rest behind the text but in the text itself; thus, "*Behind" the Text* is an invaluable resource for my project. Further, Bartholomew says, "a theological turn will involve going back to premodern readings of OT texts and finding traditions that can be re-appropriated and developed in our day."[46]

Patristics

John Behr in *The Way to Nicaea* answers Jesus's question "Who do you say I am?" (Matt 16:15). Behr chooses to focus on the earliest of Christian interpretation, suggesting that exegesis drove theological reflection.[47] Offering a fresh approach to the early period of the church, Behr asserts, "The prolific scholarship on the early Church over the last century has been beneficial in a manner perhaps unexpected. It has meant that more attention has been given to understanding earlier writers on their own terms, rather than in stages."[48] Behr's historical and theological tracing of the ideas of the early church help readers better understand the early church fathers.

In *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*, Frances M.

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[44] Craig Bartholomew, introduction to *"Behind" the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al., Scripture and Hermeneutics 4 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003), 3.

[45] Bartholomew, introduction to *"Behind" the Text*, 14.

[46] Bartholomew, introduction to "*Behind" the Text,* 11.

[47] John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, vol. 1 of *Formation of Christian Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 3.

[48] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 5.

Young sets out to "reconfigure standard outlines of patristic exegesis of the Bible."[49] Contrasting methods that dismiss the fathers' exegesis, Young seeks to "challenge accepted generalizations" of the early period of post-apostolic interpretation and to "work with certain key texts and authors to provide living examples of the exegetical processes, its principles, underlying assumptions and practice."[50] I have engaged Young's work due to the challenge she brings to those who read the fathers through a liberal lens à la Harnack.

In *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics*, Thomas F. Torrance, suggests the early church sought to "secure . . . integrity . . . in the face of the dualist and determinist frames of thought then prevailing in the Graeco-Roman world."[51] This exegesis was in response to revelation received and then articulated in a culture that received the revelation for the first time as the apostles and disciples of Christ engaged in the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-19). There is, then, a relevance between theological speech and hermeneutics.[52] Torrance's concern "is not with the actual exegetical interpretation of Holy Scripture, but rather with the epistemological ingredients and implications of hermeneutics."[53] I highlight Torrance in this thesis due to his focus on general hermeneutics and patristics, placing each in conversation with the other.

Craig A. Carter argues in, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* that many modern theories of interpretation that begin with assuming that the approach to the Bible should be just as

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[49] Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 1.

[50] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and Christian Culture*, 4-5.

[51] Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 1.

[52] Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 6.

[53] Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 13.

any other book is "wrong, or at the very least, highly misleading."[54] Instead, Carter supposes the Bible be interpreted uniquely because it is unlike any other book due to inspiration. "The text may have one or several meanings because of the complexity of God and the Holy Spirit inspiring the text through a human author."[55] Carter's suggestion of one or more meanings is not looking to deduce meanings from what lies behind the text. His suggestion of levels of meaning always has Christ and theology as the beginning point for Christian exegesis. He suggests the pathway forward for proper exegesis is a recovery of the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity as demonstrated in premodern exegetical patterns.[56] "In other words, if we wish to draw on the deep nourishing resources of the Great Tradition, we must come to grips with how exegesis, metaphysics, and dogma hang together in Nicene Christianity."[57] Carter highlights specific premodern exegetes: Irenaeus, Athanasius, Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin. Carter's attempt to retrieve pre-critical exegesis makes his work a landmark for the contemporary conversation of retrieval.

In *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity*, John Behr offers a full contextual study of Irenaeus. Behr suggests that much can be learned in our modern times by considering Irenaeus—specifically, the present discourse surrounding the so-called "quest for the historical Jesus" that seeks to determine historical texts that were marginalized or excluded. Behr asserts that Irenaeus, and his expertise in dealing with those who call into question the text of Scripture, is worth a contemporary audience's consideration.[58] Behr calls for a reorientation of the study of Irenaeus. He says, "The

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[54] Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2018), ix.

[55] Carter, *Interpreting Scripture*, ix-x.

[56] Carter, *Interpreting Scripture*, xvi.

[57] Carter, *Interpreting Scripture*, xvii.

[58] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 1.

study of early Christianity needs to be attuned to the different geographic settings of the figures and texts studied, recognizing the difference between them."[59] This method will allow contemporary interpreters to hear the ancients on their terms instead of importing modern preconceptions about them. I have chosen Behr's work due to his expertise on Irenaeus and his regular suggestions that many modern theologians should re-read the fathers.

According to Parvis and Foster, in *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy,* the recent resurgence in Irenaean scholarship is a diversion from studying what he says about Gnosticism and considering what he says about Scripture and early Christian theology.[60] Consequently, Foster and Parvis assemble a team of scholars who seek to demonstrate the lasting legacy of Irenaeus upon Christian biblical interpretation. The hope of this work is to demonstrate the depth of Irenaeus's engagement with Scripture and the theology that guided his exegesis.

Gustaf Wingren in *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Theology of Irenaeus* proposes, according to Irenaeus, the central problem of theology is man and the becoming-man (or man and the incarnation), Wingren sets forth to demonstrate Irenaeus's thoughts in a systematic and dogmatic fashion.[61] Understanding Irenaeus's thoughts is challenging, Wingren avers, due to his historical distance. "Neither the Middle Ages nor the Reformation thought directly in the categories of the early Church, and all modern Christian theology is to a certain extent different from the dogmatics of the early period."[62] For Irenaeus, Christian anthropology was based upon Scripture;

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[59] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 6.

[60] Sara Parvis and Paul Foster, eds., introduction to *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 2.

[61] Gustaf Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), ix.

[62] Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, x.

therefore, one's understanding of Irenaeus requires both an understanding of the circumstances that led to how he viewed Scripture and an understanding that moderns carry their lenses by which they view the text. Wingren desires to take his readers to the text of Scripture, using Irenaeus as a guide. He says, "If we regard the theologians of the Church as being, in their various periods, our guides to the Bible, or interpreters of the Biblical theology, then we must assign to Irenaeus a place of very great importance."[63]

John Lawson, paints Irenaeus in the light of a pastor-theologian in *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus*. Lawson gives a commentary on the two most prominent works of Irenaeus: *Against Heresies* and *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*.[64] Lawson views the systemization of Irenaeus as contrary to Irenaeus's purpose. He says, "The actual work of Irenaeus contains only the raw materials for a profound theological system. The systematization is something that must be brought to him."[65] Lawson's and Wingren's works set the conversation for considering Irenaeus for generations.

According to Bushur in *Irenaeus of Lyons and the Mosaic of Christ: Preaching Scripture in the Era of Martyrdom*, "The Christian reading of Scripture before Origen has been neglected, or more often, dominated by Gnostic perspectives."[66] To remedy this void, Bushur recommends Irenaeus and his writings to argue for "a rich Christian engagement with Scripture long before Origen and the supposed conflict between Antioch and Alexandria."[67] Recognizing that there is more to Irenaeus than his engagements with his opponents, Bushur shows that Irenaeus was interested "not simply

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[63] Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, xii.

[64] John Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Saint Irenaeus* (London: Epworth Press, 1948), 6.

[65] Lawson, *The Biblical Theology of Irenaeus*, 12.

[66] James G. Bushur, preface to *Irenaeus of Lyons and the Mosaic of Christ: Preaching Scripture in the Era of Martyrdom* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[67] Bushur, preface to *Irenaeus and the Mosaic of Christ*.

in expounding the original intent of individuals texts, but in demonstrating how individual texts fit into one catholic narrative of salvation."[68]

In *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus of Lyons* Stephen O. Presley demonstgrates that theological assumptions shape Irenaeus's use of Genesis 1-3. Presley suggests that Irenaeus uses Scripture as a series of interconnections.[69] Irenaeus's reading of the first three chapters of Genesis illustrates a mind "actively engaged in surveying the entire corpus of scriptural material as he applies a variety of reading strategies and united disparate texts together."[70] Specifically, Presley points to nine strategies: (1) literary readings, (2) typological readings, (3) prophecy and fulfillment, (4) verbal connections, (5) organizational functions, (6) illustrative applications, (7) narratival or creedal, (8) prosopological interpretations, and (9) general-to-particular connections.[71] "These reading strategies are informed by his theological framework and demonstrative of highly intensive scriptural reading."[72]

Karlfried Froehlich, in *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* suggests, patristic principles of interpretation "reflect the theological framework in which the biblical writings were interpreted."[73] Central to this theological hermeneutic was "the basic conviction that God's revelation in Jesus Christ was central to God's plan of salvation."[74] Theological hermeneutics should not be seen as antithetical to exegesis. Instead, theology was determined through exegesis—that is, "biblical language

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[68] Bushur, preface to *Irenaeus and the Mosaic of Christ*.

[69] Stephen O. Presley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus of Lyons*, The Bible in Ancient Christianity 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 3.

[70] Presley, *The Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus*, 3-4.

[71] Presley, *The Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus*, 4.

[72] Presley, *The Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus*, 4.

[73] Karlfried Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, Sources of Early Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 1.

[74] Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, 1.

determined theology."[75]

According to Robert L. Wilken in *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God*, the early Christians were profound thinkers. As such, Wilken sets forth to demonstrate "how a Christian intellectual tradition came into being" and to show "how Christians thought about the things they believed."[76] Instead of suggesting that the early Christians molded their religion in the form of the culture around them, Wilken argues the opposite—the church shaped culture.[77] Consequently, a reading of the early Christian writings confronts the modern reader with minds steeped in Scripture; or, according to Wilken, a casual reader will find the "omnipresence of the Bible in early Christian writings."[78]

Primary Sources

Since Irenaeus will prove pivotal to my argument, there are two of his major works that I will consider: *Against Heresies* and *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. Irenaeus does more in his *Against Heresies* than demonstrate his knowledge of the many heresies and heretics that advertised themselves as being Christian. By demonstrating that he knows their teaching, Irenaeus effectively demonstrates how each heresy is in error by its deviation from Scripture and what he titles the "canon of truth" or "rule of faith." *Against Heresies* is the most robust picture of the patristic demonstration of the apostolic hermeneutic contained in the New Testament. Irenaeus suggests that the picture of Christ through the Scriptures is a mosaic of a king.[79] The heretics, while they interact with Scripture, do so from a different referent, thus rearranging the tiles until

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[75] Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, 1.

[76] Robert L. Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), xiv.

[77] Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, xvi.

[78] Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, xvii.

[79] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.8.1 (*ANF*, 1:326).

what is pictured is a different king who is not the King of Kings—that is, the crucified, resurrected, ascended, and coming again Christ.

In *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, Irenaeus gives a clear and concise exposition of apostolic preaching. In a masterful demonstration, Irenaeus never uses the writing of the apostles to demonstrate the hermeneutic behind their homiletic; instead, he interacts exclusively with the Old Testament. In this way, Irenaeus outlines the "rule of faith," which is a reading of Scripture through the lens of Christ's passion as an interpretive grid for preaching Christ from the Old Testament.[80] This "rule of faith" that Irenaeus defends is the fruit of reflection on key passages such as 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul tells the Corinthians that his important message to them was that Christ's death occurred "in accordance with the Scriptures" (vv. 3-4).[81] Irenaeus is not advocating for a method of interpretation detached from Scripture but an interpretation that is itself an expression of Scripture as a coherent mosaic of Christ.[82]

Void in Literature

The historical-critical lens has caused a void in the consideration of a pre-critical interpretation of Scripture. The reductionistic effects of the historical-critical period has meant that Irenaeus—and other pre-critical exegetes—and his view of the unity of Scripture should continue to be given fresh emphasis. Hans Frei categorizes these sentiments, saying, "As the realistic narrative reading of the biblical stories broke down, literal or verbal and historical meaning were severed and literal and figural interpretation, hitherto naturally affiliated procedures, also came apart."[83] In reaction

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[80] John Behr, trans., "St. Irenaeus of Lyon," in *On the Apostolic Preaching*, by Irenaeus of Lyon, Popular Patristics 17 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 3.

[81] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version.

[82] Irenaeus, *Dem. Ap. Pr.* 2 (Behr, 8).

[83] Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, 6-7.

against these tendencies of disregard, Gustaf Wingren accuses scholars of breaking up Irenaeus's theology "into two or more sections," thus discrediting the approach of Irenaeus as a "systematic theologian."[84] Further, Wingren highlights Irenaeus and his search for the unity of Scripture, crediting Irenaeus with the ability to demonstrate the "harmonious whole" of Scripture.[85] As Presley notes, "The appreciation of Irenaeus' intertextual scriptural interpretation was overlooked in previous studies that were working on the basis of the assumption and methods intrinsic to Higher Criticism."[86] A key question with which most modern interprets presently engage is that concerning history. If not careful, meaning can rest *behind* the text as opposed to *in* the text itself. Questions linger as to how much of the setting in life plays a factor in determining authorial intent. But how much can modern interpreters know about how much the ancient author knew? Did Moses intend to write about Christ? This question is a different question than Moses's writing about Christ. Does the question of Moses's intent matter in light of Christ's coming? The historical-critical approach does not seem to provide sufficient answers to these questions in a way that satisfies the manner in which the apostles interacted with Scripture.

The aim of this current project is to challenge those who are hesitant with considering the fathers suggesting their hesitancy is the negative aspects of the historical-critical method from the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, which brought a general suspicion to the text, has left modern conservative exegetes leery of considering the fathers, though I think their commonality is more common than realized. To address the hesitancy of considering the fathers and demonstrate the commonality between the current resurgence of biblical theology, I have chosen Irenaeus as a model.

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[84] Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 104.

[85] Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, xxi, 104.

[86] Presley, *The Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus*, 1.

Thesis

The influence of the historical-critical method lingers as interpreters ponder the proper interpretation of the Bible as Christian Scripture. This influence is most readily seen by the underlying suggestion of "two meanings" for Scripture: one meaning is deduced by the message behind the text, and the other meaning is found by a Christological reading of the text.[87] One way of reading the text detaches Christ from meaning, while the other suggests Christ is central to the text's meaning. If Christ is not the center of meaning, then Christians can be accused of misappropriating texts. The "double meaning" of what the text means *now* and what the text meant *then* has left interpreters on shaky ground devoid of a center and means difficulty for a unified meaning of the text. In order to recover the center of biblical interpretation, the apostolic hermeneutic as demonstrated in passages such as Romans 1:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, and Luke 24:27, which all point to a ruled, or guided, reading of the text understanding "Christ according to Scripture," must be reclaimed. The appropriation of the apostolic hermeneutic considered in this work is Irenaeus of Lyons. Irenaeus is the first major post-apostolic interpreter who articulates this hermeneutic through his notions of the "rule of faith," which suggests a Christocentric reading of Scripture.[88] Further, the rule of faith will be the suggested starting point for Christian exegesis.

In order to demonstrate this thesis, I will trace the resurgence of a Christ-centered hermeneutic and suggest that what lingers from the historical-critical method

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[87] For example, Daniel Block writes, "First, whenever we interpret a biblical text, the most important clues to its meaning must be derived from the immediate literary context, not later comments on the text." Daniel I. Block, *The Gospel according to Moses: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 119. In an article in *Christianity Today*, Block also designates Christ-centered interpretation and preaching as "exegetically fraudulent" and "hermeneutically irresponsible," arguing that such methods "may obscure the intent of the original author and in so doing may actually reflect a low view of Scripture." Block, "Christ-Centered Hermeneutics," *Christianity Today*, June 17, 2013, http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/june/christ-centered-hermeneutics.html.

[88] It is recognized that Irenaeus follows the same path as Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Melito of Sardis, and others. I have chosen Irenaeus due to the extent of his writings and the long-standing recognition of him as the first major post-apostolic theologian. For a more extensive treatment of this thought, see Parvis and Foster, *Irenaeus*.

has left a gap in truly seeing Christ as the center of Scripture. Instead of seeing the Bible *as a witness to* revelation, I will contend that the Bible *is* revelation. This contention means that the Bible progressively unfolds its one message, with commentary of that one message at different points in history. The greatest historical event that provides the definitive commentary for interpretation is the passion of the Christ. The passion, according to Irenaeus (as well as according to Luke and Paul, based on the passages cited above), is the hermeneutical key for understanding Scripture.[89]

Some are hesitant when trying to find a coherent apostolic hermeneutic because they believe that if there is an underlying principle of interpretation, then they must abandon the discipline of hermeneutics altogether. Often the hesitancy for a Christocentric reading of the Old Testament is the assumption that the Old Testament cannot speak on its own terms and proclaim Christ. Instead, the-oft cited accusation is a "Gentile-Christian appropriation of the Old Testament."[90] This appropriation means that the Christian community imported a meaning never intended by the Hebrew Bible. Critics often suggest that the principles of interpretation that guided the apostles were characterized by unstable principles such as allegory. These views lead to a reduction of the status of the Old Testament as only a witness to revelation.[91] An apostolic hermeneutic is more robust than either Alexandria or Antioch, than allegory, typology, or literalism. I will demonstrate that the early church was guided by a hypothesis of Scripture—better understood as a plot or outline—shown in their notion of the "rule of faith." The rule of faith is—according to the passages in Luke, Romans, and 1

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[89] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.26.1 (*ANF*, 1:496-97).

[90] Bertold Klappert, "Mose hat von more geschrieben," in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburstag*, ed. Erhard Blum et al. (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 629.

[91] Leonhard Goppelt writes, "The OT is not the inspired letter to the extent that it is for Judaism. It is a witness to redemptive history, to a provisional and inadequate salvation, and a prophecy that points beyond these things." Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New*, trans. Donald H. Madvig (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 202.

Corinthians cited above—Christ according to Scripture.[92] To show the fruit of the apostolic hermeneutic, I have chosen Irenaeus as a model to teach modern interpreters how to read Scripture the way the apostles did by considering his two surviving works: *Against Heresies* and *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. Finally, in order to demonstrate the implications of beginning with the rule of faith for Christian exegesis, I will look through the details of Matthew 28:18-20 and will suggest they serve to summarize the storyline of Scripture.

An Awareness of the Dangers Ahead

The aim of this thesis is an exercise of "retrieval." I am advocating for a fresh reading of the fathers through using Irenaeus as a model. Irenaeus wrote in a time much different than our own but dealt with the same ontological questions related to God and Scripture. Since his ministry came after the apologists, he can be classified as the first major post-apostolic theologian. His approach to the text as Scripture means we should give him (and others like him) a hearing without reading our own pre-suppositions into them. The task of retrieval is a historical task in that it seeks to enter the stream of conversation at a certain point, realizing there is a long, continual stream that begins, in the case of Irenaeus, long before and continues long after. The continuities between Irenaeus' time and ours is where we find the best fruit for retrieval. The best case for us is not to import our culture into Irenaeus nor his into our own. These realities make retrieval tedious. However, what can be appreciated from Irenaeus is what he advocated for: the faith once delivered to all the saints. From that position, we can meet Irenaeus on

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[92] As Behr writes,

> The Gospel is not located in a specific text; what came to be recognized as "canonical" Gospels are always described as "The Gospel according *to* . . . ." The Gospel is not fixed in a particular text, but, as we will see, in an interpretive relationship to the Scriptures—the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets. . . . Not only was there a commitment to a body of Scripture, but there was also the affirmation that there is a correct reading of Scripture, or more exactly, that there is a correct canon for reading Scripture, a canon expressing the hypothesis of Scripture itself. (Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 14)

common ground.

Gavin Ortlund gives four "perils of retrieval."[93] First, "distortion."[94] Distortion is defined as moving to quickly to the present issue without "sufficiently doing our homework."[95] Here, the past is consulted only to prop our pre-drawn conclusions. Retrieval,

> at its best will involve a deep respect for the original context and concerns of the resources being retrieved, a sensitivity to how easily they can be warped by too quickly an application, and a judicious employment of all the rigors of historical scholarship in engaging them.[96]

The second peril of retrieval, according to Ortlund, is "artificiality."[97] Like the first, this comes as a result of a lack of concern for the historical background of what is attempting to be retrieved. This is an overcompensation by the researcher to try and contemporize the historical context into one's own.

Third, "repristination."[98] The opposite swing of the first two, repristination, seeks to simply restate the past as if the past becomes the fixed moment from which all other positions must pivot. "This kind of retrieval," according to Ortlund, "leapfrogs over the problems associated with modernity, as though premodernity offered us a way out of these challenges simply by preexisting them."[99]

Finally, "minimalism."[100] Here, "all the difficult or cacophonous elements of the

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[93] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals: Why We Need Our Past to Have a Future* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 73-76.

[94] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval,* 73.

[95] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval,* 73.

[96] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval,* 73.

[97] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval,* 73.

[98] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval,* 74.

[99] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval,* 74.

[100] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval,* 75.

past resources are flattened out in the search for a common denominator of unity."[101] Ecumenism should not come at the expense of truth.

Orlund admits, "these dangers must be taken to heart. However, none of them, so far as I can see, are intrinsic to retrieval. They urge caution in the task but not its avoidance."[102] In the following pages, the reader will see my attempt of retrieval and will be the judge as to whether or not my suggestion of Irenaeus' articulation of the rule of faith should be consulted within the discipline of biblical theology. It is to the tedious endeavor of retrieval we embark upon in the next chapter.

[101] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval,* 75.

[102] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval,* 75.

CHAPTER 2

THE INFLUENCE OF HISTORICAL CRITICISM UPON MODERN HERMENEUTICAL METHODS

Hans Frei categorizes the history of biblical interpretation according to three movements: pre-critical, empirical, and idealistic. Pre-critical refers to methodologies that focus on the text of Scripture as the Word of God instead of the record of the acts of God. Within a pre-critical view, meaning is derived from the biblical text. An empirical view focuses on events external to the text. Finally, the idealistic view focuses on the ideas to which the text refers as the loci of meaning.[1] This chapter seeks to lay the pathway for the consideration of a pre-critical hermeneutic by suggesting that since the historical-critical method birthed from the Enlightenment, some modern conservative methods have reacted to critical hermeneutics at the expense of considering pre-critical hermeneutics. Specifically, I will focus on Irenaeus and his articulation of the "rule of faith." I seek to demonstrate that the problem with methods reacting against, but in the vein of, historical criticism is that they seek to "get behind the text." In order to accomplish this task, I will define the contours of the "behind the text" model. Then, I will put Irenaeus in conversation with modern scholarship vis-à-vis the prickly plurals of Genesis 1:26.

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[1] For a summary of these views, see Hans W. Frei, introduction to *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative: A Study in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Hermeneutics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974).

Inherited Hermeneutics

Some scholars suggest that the historical task of exegesis has its roots in the Antiochene school.[2] The Antiochene school of interpretation is often pitted against the Alexandrian school, and the two are frequently considered to be the two earliest schools of biblical interpretation.[3] Many scholars agree that the time of the Enlightenment was the point at which the question of the history behind the text was considered the proper way to find the meaning of a text.

Anthony Thiselton suggests two major shifts in New Testament interpretation. The first happened during the Enlightenment, in which the trajectory was "toward a single preoccupation with historical method."[4] A major outcome of this preoccupation was the suggestion that the Bible spoke then, but it does not speak now.[5] This line of thought suggests that there are two Jesuses. The first is the historical Jesus; the other is the one recorded in the Bible, the Jesus interpreted by the apostles. These two figures are not the same. One was a real person who may have had an extraordinary life; the other is purely a figure of imagination.[6] Thus, there was a proposed "ditch" between history and theology.[7]

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[2] See Stanley E. Porter and Beth M. Stovell, eds., "Introduction: Trajectories in Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*, Spectrum Multiview (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 13n14.

[3] The hermeneutics of Alexandria and Antioch are more robust than either allegory or literalism. Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 4.

[4] Anthony C. Thiselton, "New Testament Interpretation in Historical Perspective," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 10.

[5] Thiselton, "New Testament Interpretation in Historical Perspective," 12.

[6] Speaking of the quest for the "historical Jesus," John Behr asserts,

> *This* Christianity, one might say, is an interpretative text-based religion . . . . It would be anachronistic to suppose that in antiquity God's revelation was thought of as located in historical events behind the text, events to which, it is claimed, we can have access to by reconstructing them from the text, treating the texts as mere historical documents which provide raw historical data, subject to our own analysis, rather than in the interpreted events as presented in Scripture, where the interpretation is already given through the medium of Scripture. (John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, vol. 1 of *The Formation of Christian Theology* [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001], 15)

[7] For a discussion of "Lessing's Ditch," see Roger E. Olson, *The Journey of Modern Theology:*

While tracing the history of hermeneutics is beyond the scope of this project, being familiar with the conversation serves to set the bearings for my argument. Through this project, I am suggesting that more attention should be given to pre-critical models of interpretation due to the distance critical exegetical methods have set between the Bible and God's inspired Word.[8] This fact should not be taken for granted but must remain the determining factor for articulating a faithful hermeneutic. The doctrine of Scripture must be considered by the exegete. Sailhamer contends that before the Enlightenment, the Bible was treated as a unity.[9] This fact should cast suspicion on the methods of hermeneutics birthed from the Enlightenment. Giving attention to pre-critical interpretations does not mean we accept pre-critical methods "uncritically." Instead, we have an openness to these methods since they were able to approach to Scripture without having to react against the suspicion brought upon by the Enlightenment. This does not mean that the pre-critical period is without its own "baggage." Their "baggage" is different than our own. Since the Enlightenment brought a general suspicion to the nature of Scripture, and pre-critical methods are "pre-critical" we can approach them with the proper distinctions of pre and post-critical in mind.

Craig Bartholomew agrees with the assessment that the Enlightenment brought about a shift in interpretation by plainly saying, "The historical-critical paradigm of interpretation has its immediate roots in nineteenth-century Germany."[10] The reason this methodology is called "historical-critical" is, as Christopher R. Seitz points out, "a highly

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From Reconstruction to Deconstruction (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 167-69.

[8] Thiselton points out that the Enlightenment was a period shrouded by the doubt brought by Descartes. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 12

[9] John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 34.

[10] Craig Bartholomew, introduction to *Renewing Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene, and Karl Möller, Scripture and Hermeneutics 1 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2000), xxiii-xxiv.

existential understanding of history as a medium of God's revelation."[11] This concern led to methodologies that grounded the meaning of a text outside—or behind—the text. Reconstructing the world of the biblical authors became the *primary* point for discovering meaning.[12] The reconstruction of the world of the author attempts to answer why certain phrases were chosen over others. This version of authorial intent has more to do with the circumstances surrounding the author than what the actual author wrote. As Stanley Porter and Beth Stovall point out, "This form of hermeneutic focused on the mind of the author, along with the impact of his or her socio-historical setting, as the means of gaining meaning from a given text."[13] In other words, the authentic story of the text is the story *behind* the text. My advocation is that the authentic story of the text is *within* the text. By text I mean the whole canon.

The "behind the text" methodology contrasts with "within the text" methods. The latter approach seeks to arrive at the meaning of the text by first focusing on the text itself (e.g., grammar, textual unity, poetic seams). The interpreter must be careful not to be dismissive of the historical background or to under-emphasize authorial intent. A hermeneutic that abandons authorial intent runs the risk of becoming reductionistic and flat. For example, much can be discovered from the historical background when asking what Jesus meant when he said that Abraham rejoiced to see the days of Jesus (John 8:65). In what way does Abraham, a character within a work of Moses (assuming a Mosaic authorship of Genesis), long for the days of Jesus? Kevin Chen notes that the point of the Pentateuch is the Messiah, not Sinai.[14] He arrives at this conclusion by

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[11] Christopher R. Seitz, *Word without End: The Old Testament as Abiding Theological Witness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 31.

[12] Christopher R. Seitz, *Word Without End,* 32.

[13] Porter and Stovell, "Trajectories in Biblical Hermeneutics," 14.

[14] Kevin S. Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2019), 4.

holding tightly to authorial intent. More will be said on this below. Chen argues, "The Pentateuch itself sets forth an authorial intended, coherent portrait of the Messiah as the center of its theological message."[15] In a similar move as his mentor, John Sailhamer, Chen suggests that the prophecies concerning the Messiah are "'scattered, or dispersed', just as a prism disperses light into its component wavelengths, including a rainbow of colors of the visible spectrum."[16] Chen's view of the authorially intended message of the Pentateuch views the Messiah as both central and intended. The instance in John cited above (8:65) is not Jesus's reinterpretation of historical events, as some might suggest, but is an example of Jesus showing that he is what Moses intended when Moses wrote the Pentateuch.[17] What Jesus says in John 8 is to be understood within the context of what he says earlier in John 5, where Jesus discloses his viewpoint of authorial intent: "If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me" (v. 46). Jesus goes on to extend a stern warning both for his audience and for people today: "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?" (v. 47).

Contemporary Relevance

One question this thesis seeks to address is how much of our current mode of hermeneutics still has aspects birthed from liberal hermeneutics? Of those lingering aspects, how much can be disposed of and what should be kept? This section seeks such a balance. A key aspect that must be dispensed with from the nineteenth century's

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[15] Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch*, 5.

[16] Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch*, 6.

[17] Robert Wall argues that "Scripture (both Old Testament and New Testament) includes not only narratives of events but also bears inspired witness to God's revelation. Additionally the New Testament interpretation of Old Testament texts sometimes rewrites them or alters their communicative intention." Robert W. Wall, "The Canonical View," in Porter and Stovell, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 197. Wall's line of reasoning is further proof that modern exegetes suggest that the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament is an interpretation never intended by the biblical authors. I disagree. The apostles did not read a meaning into the text that was not there; instead the apostolic interpretation is the authorially intended meaning of Scripture.

historical-critical approach is the notion that Scripture is a merely a *witness* to salvation history. John Behr points out what lingers when he writes,

> We have become accustomed to reading Scripture primarily in historical terms, debating what we believe to be "historically true", what was the historical context in which it was written and redacted, and its reception by the initial readers, and, if we still think of it as "sacred", its reception will probably be understood as an interaction between God and the author in their own historical context.[18]

Behr warns the modern interpreter to be careful to not let history become authoritative over Scripture. At the same time, exegetes should not detach their exegesis from history. In contemporary conversation, the question of the historicity of the text is vital. For example, the hermeneutics surrounding the current "God and the gay Christian" debate centers on interpreting the text around what Paul meant *then*. Certain camps contend that what Paul meant then is not what is currently meant now.[19] Historical studies help in this case.

As interpreters navigate the waters of interpretation, trying to avoid the shallow shore of historical criticism, they should be aware of two tenets of a critical hermeneutic that still exist: (1) the notion that Scripture is a witness to revelation and (2) the notion that Scripture has "two meanings" instead of one unified meaning. Both of these issues overlap in the consideration of authorial intent.

Scripture as a Witness to Revelation

In his discussion of Old Testament theology, Sailhamer asks, "Does an OT theology focus its attention on the scriptural text of the OT itself, or is the text primarily a

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[18] John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 128.

[19] In 2017, the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood published "The Nashville Statement." In 2018, the Presbyterian Church (America) hosted the Revoice Conference, where the debate about God and the gay Christian was central. Hermeneutics is at the core of these issues. The 2018 decision by the PCA event led Kevin DeYoung, himself a member of the Presbyterian Church (America) to write *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015). In the book, DeYoung engages those whose arguments are revisionist interpretations based on the sexual revolution.

witness to the act of God's self-revelation in the events recorded by Scripture?"[20] In other words, is the main factor in the interpretation of the text the text itself or the events behind the text? Is history the chief medium of revelation, or is Scripture the chief medium? Is the Bible the Word of God or merely the record of the God's acts? Sailhamer says further that some well-intending evangelical theologians "treat the text of Scripture as a means of getting at what they perceive to be the real locus of God's revelation—the events in the history of Israel or the religious ideals that lie behind the text."[21]

To be clear, I am not suggesting a position that pits history against the text of Scripture. On the contrary, I am suggesting that the text of Scripture *is* history. As inspired, Scripture provides the details *behind* history, so to speak. Scripture explains how God is summing up all things in Christ. As an evangelical, I affirm both that God has acted in history and that the Bible is historically true. Hence, I am submitting that Scripture is the locus of revelation. Therefore, I wish to contend that revelation occurs in history as articulated through Scripture and not that history is revelation apart from Scripture.[22] As Seitz suggests, "The Old Testament has a salvation-historical dimension, but that dimension is by no means the chief way to understand the Scriptures of Israel as a Christian wittiness."[23]

Disjoining a Unified Meaning

Skeptics suggest that the apostolic interpretation of the Old Testament is eisegetically formulated, meaning that the authors of the Hebrew Bible never intended

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[20] Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 36.

[21] Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, 37.

[22] For a treatment of Gerhard von Rad, see Seitz, *Word without End*, 28-40, where he suggests that Rad was a historical critic with a theological purpose.

[23] Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 191. This citation begs the question "What is the chief way to interpret Scripture?" I will argue more directly later that the chief way is the rule of faith.

their writings to portray Christ.[24] This hermeneutic has led to a fracture in the quest for a unified meaning. Scholars who disconnect the text do so by suggesting that there are two meanings, one that Moses intended and one that has been appropriated through Moses by the apostles. The notion of "two meanings" of Scripture inevitably involves determining meaning by going behind the text.

The authority given to the history behind the text can take an authoritative role even in conservative scholarship. For example, Daniel Block recommends that one should arrive at a meaning of the text in this way: "First, whenever we interpret a biblical text, the most important clues to its meaning must be derived from the immediate literary context, not later comments of the text."[25] He goes on to say, "Second, biblical texts must always be interpreted in the light of the broader cultural context from which they derive, not the culture of a later time, let along pervasive modern understandings of these texts."[26] The first of the two meanings are located in the original setting, what it meant then. The second meaning is derived from a vantage point of looking backward in light of the passion. There are, thus, two broad meanings for a text that must be considered to determine meaning: what the text meant then and what the text means now. Conservatives use this approach, with salvation history as the guard rails, to ensure that contemporary interpreters are not changing what the Bible says now to mean something other than what it meant then. At this point, some contemporaries would be uncomfortable saying "Christ according to Scripture was always the intention of the text," but this expression is exactly what I—through this project—am trying to push

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[24] Bertold Klappert points to a "Gentile-Christian appropriation" of the Old Testament. Bertold Klappert, "Mose hat von more geschrieben," in *Die Hebräische Bibel und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburstag*, ed. Erhard Blum et al. (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 629. This "appropriation" suggests the Christians hijacked the intended meaning of the Old Testament.

[25] Daniel I. Block, *The Gospel according to Moses: Theological and Ethical Reflections on the Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 119.

[26] Daniel I. Block, *The Gospel according to Moses,* 119.

contemporary conservative interpreters to say.

Authorial Intent

Walter Kaiser and Moisés Silva argue that "it is the author's intended meaning that must be the starting point from which all understanding begins."[27] It would be a self-defeating enterprise to set out a pathway critical of modern hermeneutical principles while denying authorial intent. As Kevin Vanhoozer points out, one must avoid a hermeneutical system wherein the text "becomes only a mirror or echo chamber in which we see ourselves and hear our own voices."[28] Vanhoozer goes on to point out that the denial of authorial intent has its roots in the teaching of Friedrich Schleiermacher,[29] who according to Roger Olson, was responding to the Enlightenment and attempting to produce his own theological method.[30] Olson goes on to say that Schleiermacher's theological method is called a "Copernican revolution in theology because it put human experience, rather than authoritative revelation, at the center of the theological enterprise."[31]

Therefore, one must affirm that "the meaning of a text is what the author intended."[32] At the same time, one must affirm a unified meaning of Scripture. As James Hamilton Jr. writes, "The only access we have to the interpretive perspective of the biblical authors is what they wrote. Rather than try to go behind the text to get at what

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[27] Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva, *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*, rev. and exp. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 40.

[28] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, Landmarks in Christian Scholarship, 10th anniversary ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 24.

[29] Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?*, 24.

[30] Olson, *The Journey of Modern Theology*, 134.

[31] Olson, *The Journey of Modern Theology*, 135.

[32] G. K. Beale, "Questions of Authorial Intent, Epistemology, and Presuppositions and Their Bearing on the Study of the Use of the Old Testament in the New: A Rejoinder to Steve Moyise," *Irish Biblical Studies* 21 (1999): 155.

really happened, as though the text is mere propaganda, we are trying to understand what the biblical authors have written."[33] This conclusion leads Aubrey Sequeira and Samuel Emadi to say, "Only in light of later revelation and through the interpretive perspective of Christ and the apostles is the redemptive-historical significance of an OT text fully revealed."[34] In other words, a text can be ontologically Christocentric without the Christocentrism being known—epistemologically—by the human author at the time of writing. It is haphazard to approach a text without ontology or epistemology. Our interpretative perspective (post-passion) means we "have the prophetic word more sure" (2 Peter 1:19). This fact guides our interpretation from our historical vantage point. At the same time, we must have multiple layers of meaning while holding towards a unified meaning now centered in Christ.

Authorial intention includes the entire spectrum of inspiration—both human and divine. The biblical authors were moved by the Holy Spirit, whose role is to testify about the Son. Thus, the Spirit's role in the record of the text must also be considered. This conception of inspiration acknowledges the progressive nature of revelation, but not to the degree that doctrines that were not originally present in the text are then read back into the text. "Progressive revelation," in this sense, means that later texts serve as commentary on earlier texts. Because Scripture is God's self-disclosure, each text, regardless of epoch, contains ontological truth. The text's ontology, as intended by the author(s), does not change as the epistemology surrounding it might. For example, when one reads Genesis 1:1-3, the doctrine of the Trinity is not a later development.

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[33] James M. Hamilton Jr., *With the Clouds of Heaven: The Book of Daniel in Biblical Theology*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 32 (Nottingham, UK: Apollos, 2014), 21. Further, N. T. Wright says, "God decisive saving self-revelation has taken place precisely not primarily in their writing but in the events to which they bear witness." N. T. Wright, *History and Eschatology: Jesus and the Promise of Natural Theology* (London: SPCK, 2019), 107. The problem here is Wright's dichotomy between text and event. By placing a division between text and event, Wright cracks the window to make less of the divine interpretation of the event that we can access through divine revelation.

[34] Aubrey Sequeira and Samuel C. Emadi, "Biblical-Theological Exegesis and the Nature of Typology," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 13.

Ontologically, the doctrine is there because it is God's self-communication, even if the epistemology is developed progressively.

An over-emphasis on human authorial intent is the place where the influence of historical criticism is the most prevalent.[35] One side denies authorial intent, another seeks to determine authorial intent by tracing the historical meaning, and still another seeks to determine authorial intent by reading backward in light of the crucifixion of the Son. My intention with this project is to discover a way to understand why Moses and Elijah meet the incarnate Son on the mountain (Matt 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36), what Jesus meant when he said that "Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day" (John 8:56), and what Jesus meant when he said that Moses "wrote of him" (John 5:46). To arrive at a full-orbed understanding of the biblical author's intent, the question "What did the text mean?" must be joined together with the question "What does the text mean?" These questions must be answered in order to determine a unified meaning of the text.

Furthermore, it is imperative to ensure that there is no competition between the human author and the divine author. A denial of the sufficiency and inerrancy of Scripture is unwarranted at this point. Scripture, as John Webster explains, is "an element in the drama of God's redeeming and communicative self-giving."[36] God, being a sovereign and perfect communicator, used individuals in a cosmos he created to be his vessels to clearly communicate his message. Craig Carter makes this argument as he explains Peter's point in 1 Peter 1:10-12 concerning Isaiah: "Isaiah might not have fully understood his own vision of the Suffering Servant, but the Triune God who spoke

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[35] "For Schleiermacher, understanding was related to the author's intention . . . . He argued that the theme of an author's text was a product of the author's nature. The ultimate aim, therefore, was to get through to an author's unique individuality, a psychological interpretation." David S. Dockery, *Biblical Interpretation Then and Now: Contemporary Hermeneutics in the Light of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992), 163.

[36] John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*, Current Issues in Theology 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 42.

through the prophet and sanctified his words for divine use had a greater understanding than the prophet had."[37] Such recognition is the tight line one must walk to ensure that one's hermeneutics are clear and Christ-centered.

The question of authorial intent cannot be left simply to what Moses, David, Daniel, Luke, and others intended at the time of writing. A proper balance must be met between divine and human authorship. As an example of an *imbalanced* view, Alvin Plantinga exhorts the interpreter not to neglect the principle author of Scripture: "The fact that the principle author of the Bible is God himself means that one cannot always determine the meaning of a given passage by discovering what the human author had in mind."[38] Plantinga's position takes the human authorial intent out of the equation to a degree that most would find uncomfortable. By elevating God as "the principle author," Plantinga subverts the human author altogether. Such a tactic does not do justice to what Jesus himself said of certain biblical authors and characters. For example, Jesus said to the Old Testament experts of his day, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me" (John 5:46). Furthermore, the Bible's definition of inspiration involves men who were moved by God: "No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:21).

Second Peter 1:21 should serve as the starting place for one's understanding of authorial intent. Saying "men were carried along by the Spirit" is an admission that there are two dimensions to the text—human and divine. While there are two "authors" of Scripture, the two different agents of inscripturation should not be seen as competing with each other. Holding the two authors as distinct yet together for the same end has

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[37] Craig A. Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition: Recovering the Genius of Premodern Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 58.

[38] Alvin Plantinga, "Two (or More) Kinds of Scripture Scholarship," in *"Behind" the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al., Scripture and Hermeneutics 4 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 2003), 26.

implications on various approaches of interpreting the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. One such view this approach impacts is typology. Chen states, "Typology is 'primarily a method of *historical* interpretation, based on the continuity of God's purpose throughout the history of his covenant.'"[39] Typology, in these historical terms, has major implications on authorial intent. Chen cites Genesis 3:15 as an example: "A typological approach, for example, allows for seeing the 'seed of the woman' as a type of Christ while at the same time remaining non-committal regarding whether Genesis 3:15 is actually a direct Messianic prophecy and thus intended by the author to be understood as such."[40] Whether typology, in historical forms, or allegory, which is less concerned with historicity, both approaches to the Old Testament put distance between the text and the intention of the author. In the Christian sense, believers are not left to wonder what the author intended. Christ has given his followers Scripture's intent by conforming his own life to Scripture and through the post-passion disclosure of the intention of Scripture. Now what has to be said about the text is what Christ said of them: "Everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead'" (Luke 24:44-46). As Chen states, "Both the New Testament and the Old can be unreservedly regarded as 'equally Christian Scripture' (rather than elevating the New Testament over the Old Testament), such that the 'two Testaments, breathing the same spirit, point to each other.'"[41] In other words, a Christian reading of the Old Testament is neither a misreading of Scripture nor a misappropriation of the intention of the text. Instead, the Old

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[39] Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch*, 10.

[40] Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch*, 15.

[41] Chen, *The Messianic Vision of the Pentateuch*, 23.

Testament is Christian Scripture.[42]

Genesis 1:26-27 in Conversation with Irenaeus and Modern Scholars

In order to specifically point toward the benefits of the rule of faith as the starting point for Christian exegesis, and to demonstrate the temptation to import historical-critical hermeneutical principles, the following section places Irenaeus in conversation with modern scholars on the interpretation of Genesis 1:26-27. I am defining "modern" as those who are post-Enlightenment, meaning that their cultural lenses are shaded by the haze of the Enlightenment. Placing the interpretation of two historical critics in conversation with conservative scholars and Irenaeus should demonstrate the value of the rule of faith as the starting place for Christian exegesis. I articulate the finer details of the rule of faith in the next chapter of this thesis. For now, the reader is encouraged to hold close to the understanding of the rule of faith as defined in the scriptural terms of "Christ according to Scripture." In this section, my intention is to lay the conversation partners beside one another.

Historical Critical Scholarship

The first historical-critical scholar under investigation is John Skinner, particularly, his comments in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*. The first edition of Skinner's work was published in 1910, with the second in 1930, followed by a revision of the second edition in 1951. I point out these details to demonstrate the decades of influence that Skinner's commentary has had.

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[42] As Thiselton points out, for Paul, the Old Testament paves the way for understanding the New Testament. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 76-77. If this notion is true, then it shuts the door suggesting that the New Testament authors misuse the Old Testament as a prooftext. Thiselton goes on to point out, "Many metaphors such as the olive tree, would be unintelligible, without their Scriptural background (Romans 11:17-24)" (77). Further, C. H. Dodd provides insight into the way the New Testament interpreters understood the Old Testament: the New Testament writers who interpreted the Old Testament "in general remain true to the main intention of the [original] author." C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology* (London: Fontana Books, 1965), 130.

Skinner remarks that the creation of man is the eighth work of God. Accordingly, the "Let us make" in Genesis 1:26 indicates "either a self-deliberation or consultation with other divine beings."[43] Referencing the first-person plural pronouns in 1:26, Skinner admits, "The older Christian community generally find in the expression an allusion to the Trinity (see even Calvin); but that doctrine is entirely unknown to the OT, and cannot be implied here."[44] To explain the plural pronouns, Skinner says, "The most natural and most widely accepted explanation is that God is here represented as taking counsel with divine beings other than himself viz. the angels or hosts of heaven."[45]

Skinner does not go so far as to say that humanity is created in the image of angels; however, his anthropology leaves much to be desired. While acknowledging humanity as created in the image of God, Skinner is not inclined to place the weight of anthropology on the shoulders of the *imago Dei*. Skinner says, "The idea of likeness between God and man frequently occurs in classical literature, and sometimes the very term of this is employed. To speak of it, therefore as 'the distinctive feature of the Bible doctrine concerning man' is an exaggeration. . . . The origin of the conception is probably to be found in the Babylonian mythology."[46]

The earliest of post-apostolic Christian interpretation understanding of the image that placed anthropology squarely on the shoulders of the *imago Dei*, according to Skinner, "is not something peculiar to man's original state and lost by the Fall."[47] In all fairness to Skinner, his exegesis is text-driven, basing the preceding on what is said in the post-diluvian text of Genesis 9:6, which assumes that the image is intact and not lost.

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[43] John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 2nd ed., International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), 30.

[44] Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, 30.

[45] Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, 31.

[46] Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, 31.

[47] Skinner, *Commentary on Genesis*, 32.

Concerning the image, Skinner says, "The image marks the distinction between man and the animals, and so qualifies him for dominion: the latter is the consequence, not the essence, of the divine image." Skinner then wags his finger in the face of many popular patristic authors, many of whom he calls by name, with the proverbial "etc." attached at the end of those lists of specific patristic interpreters. Here, the pre-critical patristic hermeneutic, which includes Irenaeus's approach, is dismissed wholesale.

The second historical critic under investigation is Gerhard von Rad. In the revised edition of his commentary on Genesis in The Old Testament Library Series, he says that the interpretation of the *imago Dei* cannot be "detached from its broader connection with such evidently common Oriental ideas."[48] Furthermore he suggests, "The simple meaning [is] that this image is to correspond to the original image, that is to resemble it." What is meant by "simple meaning" is made clear. He says, "The interpretations, therefore, are to be rejected which proceed from an anthropology strange to the Old Testament and one-sidedly limit God's image to man's spiritual nature, relating it to man's 'dignity' his 'personality' or 'ability for moral decision,' etc." Rad strives hard to ensure that exegetes do not "split the physical from the spiritual," and he is to be commended for such efforts. What is concerning, however, is his suggestion of reading an unintended meaning into the text that limits the text to the meaning deduced from "ancient Oriental myths." Furthermore, he says, "We have no reason to suppose that it completely gave way to P's theological reflection, to a spiritualizing and intellectualizing tendency."[49] Concerning the plural pronouns of Genesis 1:26, Rad says, "The extraordinary plural ('Let us') prevents one from referring to God's image too

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[48] Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H Marks, rev. ed., Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 58.

[49] By "P's," Von Rad is a referring to the "Priestly" author vis-à-vis the Documentary Hypothesis. The Documentary Hypothesis suggests multiple authors, known as JEDP, for the Pentateuch: J, or Jahwist; E, or Elohist; D, or Deuteronomist; and P, or Priestly.

directly to God the Lord. God includes himself among the heavenly beings and thereby conceals himself in this multiplicity. That, in our opinion, is the only possible explanation for this strikingly stylistic form."[50] Approaching the text from a historical-critical perspective means reading the text with the immediate cultural context in mind. Specifically, the Bible does not stand as the book of books but as any other book claiming to be divine at its time.

Conservative Evangelical Scholarship

From considering historical-critical scholars we move to those who are conservative and evangelical. These men believe the Bible to the be inspired, inerrant Word of God. This strikes a contrast between them and those considered before. We first consider Professor Wenham. Gordon Wenham does not see a hermeneutical distinction between "image" and "likeness."[51] He then says,

> According to traditional Christian exegesis (from Irenaeus *ca.* 180 A.D.), the image and the likeness are two distinct aspects of man's nature. The image refers to the natural qualities in man (reason, personality, etc.) that make him resemble God, while the likeness refers to the supernatural graces, e.g. ethical, that make the redeemed godlike. While these distinctions may be useful homiletically, they evidently do not express the original meaning. The interchangeability of "image" and "likeness" (cf. 5:3) shows that this distinction is foreign to Genesis, and that probably "likeness" is simply added to indicate the precise nuance of "image" in this context.

In Peter Gentry and Stephen Wellum's *Kingdom through Covenant*, a common thread of background linguistic studies manifests when they suggest,

> In biblical revelation, God communicates in the culture and language of the people. Yet, in employing language people understand he also fills the term with new meaning. The key to correct interpretation, therefore, is to *compare and contrast* the biblical text and the data from the contemporary cultures. One must avoid not only the similarities between the Bible and the ancient Near Eastern background but also

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[50] Von Rad, *Genesis*, 58.

[51] Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 29-30.

the differences, which show the new meaning being revealed by God.[52]

With the ancient Near Eastern studies as the wind in mind, Gentry and Wellum move to analysis of *ādām*, suggesting, "Likeness indicates that *ādām* has a special relationship to God like that of father and son."[53] Moreover,

> Genesis 1:26 defines a divine-human relationship with two dimensions, one vertical and one horizontal. First it defines human ontology in terms of a covenant relationship between God and man, and second, it defines a covenant relationship between man and the earth. The relationship between humans and the creation may be expressed by the terms kingship and servanthood, or better, servant kingship.[54]

Progression further into Gentry and Wellum's analysis shows how the two authors comprehend Genesis 1:26-27 in terms of the new covenant. Here, they see Genesis 1:26 in a prophetic sense.[55] From here Gentry and Wellum consider another scholar who has done exceptional work in exegesis; Kenneth Mathews.

Mathews's summary of how to deal with the first-person plural pronouns of Genesis 1:26 demonstrates the lack of Christian influence in the varying views. This actuality should alarm those who seek to read the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. More than proof-texting, we are seeking to understand God's revelation, mainly, the self-disclosure of himself through the incarnate Son, who is the definitive revelation of God (Heb 1:1-2) and patterned his life after the models of the Old Testament. As Gentry and Wellum note, the whole canon is at our disposal when seeking to understand revelation.[56]

Gentry and Wellum comment, "He [Mathews] then develops the interpretation that it [the first-person plural pronoun] refers to divine dialogue with the Godhead, although he admits that this can only be entertained as a possible 'canonical' reading of

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[52] Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 190 (emphasis original).

[53] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 195.

[54] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 200.

[55] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 201.

[56] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 202.

the text."[57] They go on to say, "This admission, in fact, shows how unlikely his [Mathews's] final proposal is to be right." When considering Mathews, one discovers that he is suspicious of the way tradition has handled the text. Mathews says, "The interpretation proposed by the Church Fathers and perpetuated by the Reformers was an intra-Trinity dialogue. However, this position can only be entertained as a possible 'canonical' reading of the text since the first audience could not have understood it in the sense of a trinitarian reference."[58] Here, Mathews reveals his final proposal, a proposal that demonstrates his struggle: "Although the Trinity cannot be derived solely from the use of the plural, a plurality within the unity of the Godhead may be derived from the passage."[59] Gentry and Wellum's struggle with this passage can be sensed as well. They say, "The Bible is a divine-human book. A reference to the Trinity may possibly have been intended by the divine author, but this cannot be discovered until one comes to the New Testament."[60]

Summary of Modern Scholars on Genesis 1:26-27

Both historical critics and conservative evangelical scholars approach Genesis 1:26-27 with hesitancy when discussing a possible reference to the Trinity. I suggest that such assertions are the result of what is left over from historical-critical methods and other ways of viewing the text with the suspicion brought about through the Enlightenment. Further, Gentry and Wellum point out, "D.J.A. Cline argues that the plural refers to a dialogue between God and the 'spirit of God' in a New Testament

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[57] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 202.

[58] Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 162.

[59] Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 162-63.

[60] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 202.

sense." Then, Gentry and Wellum emphatically say,

> It is virtually impossible that such a meaning was intended by the human author of Genesis 1 or even understood by the original audience. Interpretation that rides roughshod over the human authorship and audience in the text in this way is highly suspect. Canonical reading of the text is imperative, but this appears more along the lines of special pleading.[61]

The only formidable solution for Gentry and Wellum is to view the plural pronouns as referring to God's dialogue with the heavenly court.[62]

Irenaeus on Genesis 1:26-27

There is a general suspicion that Irenaeus' methodology is not exegesis. Charles Kannengiesser captures this point well when he says,

> Most ancient interpreters turned to Scripture with intentions which modern exegetes would consider inappropriate, for they did not study the text in its own right but for what it meant for their community of believers . . . . In Irenaeus' work *Against Heresies*, we can scarcely speak about "exegesis" in the technical sense, though we find in it a vibrant defense of biblical truth.[63]

Is this a fair reading of Irenaeus? Thomas Holsinger-Friesen does not think so. He says, "The claim that a theologian who studied the scriptural text with an aim to discern its meaning for a 'community of believers' cannot be said to be doing exegesis would seem to imply an overly constrictive understanding of that notion."[64] If the description of exegesis is expanded beyond the horizons pointed out by Holsinger-Friesen, then Irenaeus can and should be regarded as an exegete. Accordingly, Holsinger-Friesen says, "Doing justice to the integrity of a sacred text 'in its own right' (to use Kannengiesser's

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[61] Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 203-4.

[62] For an argument in favor of the appeal to the heavenly court reading, see Gentry and Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant*, 204-8.

[63] Charles Kannengiesser, "The 'Speaking God' and Irenaeus' Interpretative Pattern: The Reception of Genesis," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 15, no. 2 (1998): 337.

[64] Thomas Holsinger-Friesen, *Irenaeus and Genesis: A Study of Competition in Early Christian Hermeneutics*, Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplements 1 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 106.

words) and employing it for a diverse set of theological and ecclesial tasks were not, for Irenaeus mutually exclusive goals. Indeed, he would have denied that this dichotomy were [*sic*] even possible."[65]

Gustaf Wingren's reference to Irenaeus's uses of Genesis 1:26 in "widely different contexts"[66] has invited scholars to solve the mystery of Irenaeus's methodology.[67] According to Denis Minns,

> More recently, scholars have found [Irenaeus's] use of the text [Genesis 1:26] to be self-contradictory and to reflect his uncritical use of various mutually incompatible sources. Others, again, have proposed elaborate defenses of his fundamental consistency . . . . That [Irenaeus] drew upon various exegetical and theological traditions current within the Church of his time is neither surprising nor reprehensible and should not at once rule out the possibility that his theology on this point was coherent and consistent.[68]

Hans Frei points out the effects of critical scholarship upon pre-critical exegesis when he points out the breakdown of the narrative reading of the Bible. He says, "As the realistic narrative reading of the biblical stories broke down, literal or verbal and historical meaning were severed and literal and figural interpretation, hitherto naturally affiliated procedures also came apart."[69] These methods have impacted the reception of Irenaeus. Wingren, lamenting the way Irenaeus has been underappreciated in recent times, says, "One fact is beyond dispute: none of the modern theologians who have broken up his [Irenaeus's] theology into two or more sections comes anywhere near Irenaeus as a systematic theologian."[70]

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[65] Holsinger-Friesen, *Irenaeus and Genesis*, 107.

[66] Gustaf Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation: A Study in the Biblical Theology of Irenaeus* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), xivn4.

[67] Holsinger-Friesen, *Irenaeus and Genesis*, 109.

[68] Denis Minns, *Irenaeus*, Outstanding Christian Thinkers (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1994), 60.

[69] Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, 6-7.

[70] Wingren, *Man and the Incarnation*, 104.

Stephen Presley notes, "No single hermeneutical background can account for the breadth of Irenaeus' exegetical practices."[71] The hermeneutical practices that Presley specifically mentions are "literary readings, typological readings, prophecy and fulfillment, verbal prosopological interpretations, and general to particular connections."[72]I mention these strategies to demonstrate Irenaeus's intensive engagement with Scripture. Irenaeus "represents one definitive example of an early Christian interpreter modeling the apostolic hermeneutic in the late second century."[73]

A glance at one section of *Against Heresies* will serve to give a flavor of Irenaeus's use of Genesis 1:26-27. *Against Heresies* 4.20 marks a shift in the overall structure of Book Four. The shift is significant for this particular project in that it demonstrates Irenaeus's view of the unity of the two Testaments of Scripture. The point that unifies both Testaments is that they are both under the administration of one God and Father. The thesis of this section of *Against Heresies* is the oft quoted Irenaean axiom: "The glory of God is a living human being."[74] Irenaeus believes that through the incarnation, immortality participates in the divine glory of God, and, as a result, creation participates in the divine glory of God. Presley points out, "This section, in particular, provides some of the most intricate textual networking in all of [*AH*] 4."[75] Genesis 1:26-27 serves as the launching point for these textual connections.[76]

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[71] Stephen O. Presley, *The Intertextual Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus of Lyons*, The Bible in Ancient Christianity 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 3.

[72] Presley, *The Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus*, 4. Matthew Bates defines "prosopological exegesis" as a reading technique whereby an interpreter seeks to overcome a real or perceived ambiguity regarding the identity of the speakers or addressees (or both) in the divinely inspired source text by assigning nontrivial prosopa (i.e., nontrivial vis-à-vis the 'plain sense' of the text) to the speakers or addressees (or both) in order to make sense of the text." Matthew Bates, *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation: The Center of Paul's Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 218.

[73] Presley, *The Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus*, 10.

[74] Irenaeus *AH* 4.20.7 (*ANF*, 1:489-90).

[75] Presley, *The Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus*, 145.

[76] Within *AH* 4.20.2, Irenaeus draws intertextual links between an Old Testament reference

For Irenaeus, Genesis 1:26 is a reference to the Trinity.[77] While referencing Genesis 1:67, he says, "Thus therefore was God revealed; for God the Father is shown forth through all these [operations], the Spirit indeed working and the Son ministering while the Father was approving, and man's salvation being accomplished."[78] There is no option, in Irenaeus's textual worldview, for understanding the plural pronouns in any other way. In Irenaeus's writings, this reference is a reference to the God of creation who formed man from the clay—the God who is Father, Son, and Spirit. This conclusion is a far cry from proof-texting or attempting to import a doctrine developed later into an earlier text without the intention of the earlier text in mind. Instead, this is Irenaeus's view of anthropology and creation's being formed by who God has revealed himself to be in Christ. Irenaeus's ease to address the Trinity throughout this passage is commendable. His main point of exegesis from this text is that God is solely responsible for the creation of humanity. It becomes clear in his writings that there is no God except the triune God. Irenaeus makes no apology for this sentiment and shows no concern for what original audiences might have known. Instead, his concern, even if it be for his community of believers, is to faithfully present God as he is—Trinity. From the text, it becomes necessary for Irenaeus to ensure that the divine creation of humanity was unmediated. In other words, as Irenaeus says, "It is not possible to live apart from life, and man's life is found in fellowship with God; but fellowship with God is to know God, and to enjoy his goodness."[79]

Digging deeper into the exegesis, one can see—again—the necessity for the

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(Mal 2:10), an apostle (Eph 4:6), and a Gospel (Matt 11:27). "The canonical linkage is a means for Irenaeus to marshal the entire corpus of divine revelation in one continuous witness to the Father's creation of all things." Presley, *The Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus*, 147.

[77] Irenaeus *AH* 4.20.1-8 (*ANF*, 1:487-490).

[78] Irenaeus *AH* 4.20.6 (*ANF*, 1:489).

[79] Irenaeus *AH* 4.20.5 (*ANF*, 1:489).

Trinity in the textual worldview of Irenaeus. In *Against Heresies* 4.20.1, the language that serves as the cue for the necessity of the Trinity is "He taking from himself the substance of the creatures."[80] This note is drawn from the plural pronouns of Genesis 1:26. Presley notes, "Conceptually speaking, the act of creation necessarily includes the activity of all three persons, so that 'He taking from himself' formed all things by means of the Son and the Spirit communicates the creation of humanity as the corporate action united in will and purpose."[81]

Summary of Irenaeus's Use of Genesis 1:26-27

Looking ahead to *Against Heresies* 4.20.4, where Irenaeus gives his summary "There is therefore one God, who by the Word and Wisdom created and arranged all things,"[82] one can see a parallel to what Irenaeus said earlier in 4.20.1, where he discussed Genesis 1:26. An analysis of what lies between 4.20.1 and 4.20.4 reveals references from Genesis, Proverbs, Malachi, Matthew, Ephesians, 1 Peter, Colossians, and Revelation. The point drawn should be the unity Irenaeus sees in Scripture of the nature of God's existing as Father, Son, and Spirit before the foundation of the world. As Presley avers, "All three persons, therefore, are present in Genesis 1:26 and actively involved in the creation of all things."[83] To make this statement avoids reading the text in isolation from the rest of the canon and takes little concern for the original audience's reception. Constructing the world behind the text does not enter into the exegesis of the early church father. Irenaeus cannot dismiss the Trinitarian nature of Genesis 1:26-27, nor can he displace his discussion of the Trinity to the fringes of his exegesis. The

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[80] Irenaeus *AH* 4.20.1 (*ANF*, 1:488).

[81] Presley, *The Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus*, 146.

[82] Irenaeus *AH* 4.20.4 (*ANF*, 1:488).

[83] Presley, *The Reception of Genesis 1-3 in Irenaeus*, 148.

Trinity, which is at the core of the rule of faith, shapes his entire textual worldview and specifically forms how he engages the plural pronouns of this passage.

An Invitation to Pre-Critical Hermeneutics

On the importance of understanding the roots of Christian interpretation, Seitz says, "A proper understanding of the significance of a critical period of early church history is necessary, hermeneutically, if we are to appreciate the character of Christian Scripture.[84] Timothy Gabrielson suggests that hermeneutics in an evangelical classroom is usually portrayed one of two ways: linear or spiral. Concerning the linear approach, Gabrielson points out a three-part algorithm that involves discovering original meaning, extracting the original meaning's principles, and then applying these principles to contemporary situations. An example of these principles in action can be seen in the NIV Application Commentary or in Andreas Köstenberger and Richard Patterson's *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation* (2011). The spiral portrayal "assumes the historical 'situatedness' of both the ancient text and the contemporary interpreter, thus requiring back-and-forth between the past and present to make understanding increasingly precise."[85] These two portrayals are fraught with principles birthed from the Enlightenment and historical criticism. The single lingering issue that remains is a critical exegesis that looks beyond the text itself and tries to get behind the text. This is not to suggest that a historical-critical/grammatical approach has no place, but that place must not transcend the reality of a crucified and risen Christ as the most important consideration for interpretation. Perhaps a third portrayal that is often overlooked is the consideration of exegetical methods that pre-date the influence of the higher criticism of the Enlightenment. Perhaps the way forward is by humbly walking the ancient paths of

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[84] Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture*, 191.

[85] Timothy A. Gabrielson, "Along the Grain of Salvation History: A Suggestion for Evangelical Hermeneutics," *Trinity Journal* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 72.

hermeneutics laid by Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus. I have chosen Irenaeus as a primary example of the pre-critical hermeneutic that I am advocating.

In the preface to his *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, Craig Carter summarizes a contemporary biblical hermeneutic for many evangelicals that includes beginning with the Bible as any other book and seeking to discover what a particular author intended to communicate to his particular audience. Carter understands this "conventional" approach to hermeneutics as either "wrong or, at the very least, highly misleading."[86] Carter goes on to assert that many practices of hermeneutics in some academies is,

> an agent of secularization in the church and needs to be reformed so that it becomes a servant of Christian theology and spirituality rather than a confusing amalgam of history, philosophy, archeology, literary theory, sociological theory, and philosophy operating with unacknowledged metaphysical assumption and without any material center.[87]

My point, why would those who are conservative and evangelical carry over methodologies that resemble those who are critical of the biblical text? Further, has their carry over of certain methodologies from biblical criticism led to a suspicion of pre-critical methods of interpretation? To combat this trend, Carter recommends that we give premodern exegesis and ancient reading practices a fair hearing.[88] It is these ancient practices that I will explore in the next chapter.

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[55] Carter, *Interpreting Scripture with the Great Tradition*, ix. See also Olson, *The Journey of Modern Theology*, 134-35; Hamilton, *With the Clouds of Heaven*, 21.

[87] Carter, *Interpreting Scripture*, x.

[88] To become familiar with the conversation of considering pre-critical hermeneutics, see David C. Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis" *Ex Auditu* 1 (1985): 74-82; Daniel J. Treier, "The Superiority of Pre-Critical Exegesis? *Sic et Non*," *Trinity Journal* 24, no. 1 (2003): 77-103 (response to Steinmetz); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Ascending the Mountain, Singing the Rock: Biblical Interpretation Earthed, Typed, and Transfigured," *Modern Theology* 28, no. 4 (2012): 781-803.

CHAPTER 3

THE RULE OF FAITH AND THE UNITY OF SCRIPTURE

Acts 8 recalls a fascinating story of the growth of the early church. Philip was told to head south to meet a traveler headed home after a time of worship in Jerusalem. Philip met an Ethiopian eunuch reading a portion of Isaiah that deals with the death of the Suffering Servant. Philip, led by the Lord, asks the eunuch if he understands what he is reading. The eunuch needs a guided reading to assist in his interpretation.

In this chapter, I consider the converging point of the rule of faith and the discipline of biblical theology. The patristic notion of the rule of faith, as demonstrated by Irenaeus, provides a formidable solution for understanding the relationship between bold Old and New Testaments. Irenaeus's solution sees unity between both Testaments centered on the incarnate reality of the resurrected and ascended Christ. In order to make this argument, I will begin with understanding biblical theology and the quest for a unified meaning. From there, I will address crucial issues that hinder many contemporary scholars from considering the early church. Then, I will propose a definition and understanding of the rule of faith and the unity of the Bible. Finally, I will look to two contemporary authors' understanding of the rule and compare them with that of Irenaeus.

Biblical Theology and the Quest for a Unified Meaning

James Hamilton Jr. begins *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment* by pointing to the importance of a unified center for biblical theology.[1] This position is opposed to some who do not believe a unifying center of biblical theology can hold. In addition, many scholars question whether the Bible tells a coherent story. The trend of dissolving a center of meaning is a direct result of the philosophical spirit that has captivated the modern age. David Wells states,

> Whatever else one may say about modernization, one of its principal effects has been to break apart the unity of human understanding and disperse the multitude of interests and undertakings away from the center, in relation to which they have gathered their meaning, pushing them to the edges where they have no easy relation to one another at all.[2]

Interpreters in the modern age must be aware of these tendencies of dissolving the center of meaning exposed by Wells. Biblical theology, as an academic discipline, must be aware of, and seek to overcome, any system that severs a unified meaning from Scripture.

Biblical theology,[3] one must remember, is always done from some systematic perspective.[4] Citing Henning Graf Reventlow, Hamilton understands biblical theology as "the attempt to discover a particular concept or central idea as a connecting link between the two Testaments or as their 'centre,' around which a biblical theology can be built up."[5] As the title of his book suggests, Hamilton's thesis is that the theme of God's glory

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[1] James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 38. This assertion is not Hamilton's definition of biblical theology. Hamilton presents his definition on 43n5.

[2] David F. Wells, *No Place for Truth, or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 7.

[3] Christopher Seitz notes that there is "no consensus regarding the nature of biblical theology." Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 10. Further, defining biblical theology is a task of precession due to the various renderings. For a treatment on the various views of biblical theology, see D. A. Carson, "New Covenant Theology and Biblical Theology," in *God's Glory Revealed in Christ: Essays in Honor of Thomas R. Schreiner*, ed. Denny Burk, James M. Hamilton Jr., and Brian Vickers (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2019), 17-32.

[4] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 46.

[5] Henning Graf Reventlow, *Problems of Biblical Theology in the Twentieth Century*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), vii, quoted in Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation*

in salvation through judgment is the center of the Bible. In this chapter, I endeavor to root Hamilton's fruitful scholarship—and that of other biblical theologians who are committed to the unity of Scripture—in the Irenaean understanding of the rule of faith. Without a guided reading, which is what Hamilton (and others) provide, and without the rule of faith, a unifying center for Scripture is not possible. The rule of faith "opened the Scriptures to a reading of extended senses, which were argued to be embedded in the literal sense of the OT in its given form and historical life, in order to clarify the most basic theological and Trinitarian confession in the church's lived life."[6] The rule of faith is the foundation for further Christian exegesis.

The primary aim of biblical theology, according to Hamilton, is to "understand and embrace the worldview of the biblical authors." He goes on to suggest the need for a guided reading: "In order to do this, we have to know the story they take for granted, the connections they see between the events in that story, and the ways they read later parts of the story by the light that emanates from its earlier parts."[7] Biblical theology, then, is the "interpretive perspective" of the biblical authors. Hamilton continues, "The biblical authors operated from a shared perspective." Thus, "biblical theology seeks to understand the Bible in its own terms, and its own chronology, as reflected in its canonical form. One of the key tasks of biblical theology is to trace the connections between themes and show the relationships between them."[8]

Grant R. Osborne defines biblical theology as "that branch of theological inquiry concerned with tracing themes through the diverse sections of the Bible (such as

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through Judgment, 47-48.

[6] Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture*, 19.

[7] James M. Hamilton Jr., *What Is Biblical Theology? A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 12.

[8] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 45.

wisdom writings or the Pauline Epistles) and then with seeking the unifying themes that draw the Bible together."[9] This approach differs from wooden exegesis in that biblical theology goes further than exegesis. A biblical theology begins with exegesis and then uses exegesis as its basis to discover meaning through the immediate context and other appropriate exegetical means. But a biblical theology goes further and endeavors to discover an overall thematic unity undergirding each passage.[10]

Biblical theology considers the text its priority. This perspective is opposed to prioritizing one's experience with the text. Biblical theology holds that truth always comes through the text. Our faith must first answer the question of the text. The text takes priority over assumptions or what may be read into the text. The text is where the truth is; the theologian's job, as one that seeks to be biblical, is to uncover or exegete the truth of the text. To do so, a sound method that strives to discover the message of the text must take priority. It is not enough to use the text; the text must be allowed to shape the systems the interpreter uses lest the interpreter be guilty of imposing upon the text. Truth can only be discovered from the text.[11]

The Jerusalem council of Acts 15 is perhaps the best place to find the fruit of orthodoxy brought about by text-driven questions. At the council, two parties took center stage. One party was teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation. This occurrence led Paul, Barnabas, and the rest of the apostles to announce that salvation was by faith alone—but not by a faith that is alone, as James would later articulate in his Epistle. In citing Acts 15, I hope to demonstrate that questions and controversy provide opportunities for theological precision and that those who promoted the necessity of

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[9] Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, rev. and exp. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 349.

[10] Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 348.

[11] John Webster, *Word and Church: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 1.

circumcision for salvation did so from a textual basis. In other words, the position that was contrary to the apostolic proclamation of salvation in Jesus was one based upon an interpretation of Scripture. Simple exegesis is not sufficient to determine the meaning of the text. There must be a rule that guides one's reading as one seeks to discover the truth of the Word. Such a rule, or standard, seems to be what biblical theologians are chasing. This project will succeed if the hesitancy to consider a guided reading is overcome.[12]

Challenges to the Hermeneutics of the Early Church

Each age of interpretation is fraught with baggage. Interpreters must be aware of their cultural lenses lest they are blinded by them. From our modern perspective, it is easier to look back with a critical lens than to uncover the blind spots in our position. Much of the baggage associated with the fathers have been imported from the Enlightenment. Thus, as the fathers are considered, of which Irenaeus is one, the possibility that a contemporary audience has read them wrong or through the lens of the Enlightenment should be taken into account. This is not to suggest that the early post-apostolic interpreters cannot be criticized—after all, the Reformers often criticized them—but it should mean that contemporary efforts should distance itself from the critical scholarship of the Enlightenment.

Francis Watson suggests that the Enlightenment was the first period to damage the modern consideration of the fathers. He says, "Although it is conceded that pre-critical exegesis may occasionally have had interesting and sensible things to say (especially where it appears to anticipate modern insights), this tradition as a whole is

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[12] A guided reading is not a hermeneutical free for all. A common critique of the Theological Interpretation of Scripture (TIS) is the unanswered question "Which theology guides the interpretation?" Kevin Vanhoozer says that scholarly tools should not be abandoned "in order to interpret the Bible theologically." Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ed., "Introduction: What is Theological Interpretation of the Bible," in *Dictionary for the Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al. (London: SPCK, 2005), 22. See also Gregg R. Allison, "Theological Interpretation of Scripture: An Introduction and Preliminary Evaluation," *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 28-36.

placed under a cloud of suspicion."[13] Watson continues, "Henceforth biblical scholars will not assume that they can be assisted by the biblical interpretation of Irenaeus or Augustine, Luther or Calvin."

Critics point to three key areas to dismantle the credibility of a patristic hermeneutic: disregard for history, allegory, and Hellenism. Each of these is "at best one-sided and at worst seriously misleading. Early Christian hermeneutics is—at least potentially—more sophisticated and more nuanced than is recognized by its detractors."[14] I will focus most of my attention on Hellenism because I understand this point as being the most damaging charge against the fathers.

Disregard of History

Frances Young points out that "the results of the Fathers' exegetical methods have often been dismissed because of their so-called disregard of history." She goes on to suggest that the modern methods that highlight history do so at the expense of an important dimension of the text: "The Fathers would condemn much modern exegesis for its exclusive focus on the 'earthly', and its lack of concern with the 'heavenly' dimensions of the text."[15] Here, the first two allegations intersect—a disregard for history leads the interpreter to allegorize the text.

At this point, Young suggests, "Without a form of allegory that at least allows for analogy, the biblical text can only be an object of archeological interest."[16] The term "allegory," to which contemporary thinkers often refer, may be a miscommunication of

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[13] Francis Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), 305.

[14] Watson, *Text and Truth*, 307.

[15] Francis M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

[16] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and Christian Culture*, 3.

what the fathers were attempting to accomplish in their interpretation. Using Athanasius of Alexandria as an example, Young suggests that his exegetical methods should not be categorized as either literal or allegorical; instead, they should be characterized as "deductive." By deductive, Young means that "attention given to the meaning of words, their particular biblical sense, the syntax and the content of the text in question—the basic techniques of the grammaticus attending to the verbal configuration of a passage."[17] In other words, "proper exegesis is achieved not simply by paying attention to words and syntax, but by attending to more overarching considerations about what is appropriate to the divine reality of which the text speaks."[18] This articulation sounds similar to the biblical theologian's quest for a unified meaning of Scripture.

In the words of Thomas Torrance, "Biblical language involves a polar relation between man and God, language that man can understand and use, and yet it is used about God who in his divine nature is incomprehensible to man and cannot be expressed in his creaturely speech."[19] Considering Athanasius is not a deviation from Irenaeus. Young directly links Athanasius and Irenaeus when she says, "Athanasius appeals not so much to the immediate context, involving humiliation before promotion, though he does do that, but to the whole plot that that passage summarizes—in other words to the hypothesis of scripture Irenaeus had identified, the overarching story outlined in the 'Canon of Truth.'"[20]

Another link between both Athanasius and Irenaeus is that each respectively dealt with heresies that sought a distortion of Scripture. To combat those using Scripture to prop up their position, both Irenaeus and Athanasius appealed to Scripture. Their

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[17] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and Christian Culture*, 40.

[18] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and Christian Culture*, 38.

[19] Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 398.

[20] Young, *Biblical Exegesis and Christian Culture*, 43.

appeal was more than proof-texting; it was to the hypothesis or scope of Scripture. Further, their appeal was to the rule of faith.

Supposed Hellenism

In a fascinating chapter written in the Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, Gerald Bray calls attention to the church fathers and biblical theology. Bray suggests, "If we believe that 'biblical theology' is the attempt to grasp Scripture in its totality, according to its own categories and inner dynamic," then the claim that the fathers were biblical theologians can stand "even if we have to make some reservations when it comes to the phrase 'according to its own categories.'"[21] The difference is the importation of the difficulty modern interpreters have when defining biblical theology. For example, Bray points out that some modern biblical theologians, such as James Barr, would have difficulty with the concept of defining the fathers as biblical theologians. Issues that are raised are in line with what I believe is a misreading of the fathers due to an imposed Enlightenment reading of them.[22] Often, the major complaint raised against the fathers is that of the Hellenization of Christianity. The argument goes something like this: "The Fathers hermeneutics did not allow the text to speak on its own terms; instead, they imported (eisegetically) into the text the prevalent philosophies of Greek and Roman culture."[23]

According to N. T. Wright, F. C. Bauer was the first to make a distinction between Jewish Christianity and Hellenistic Christianity.[24] Christians, it is said, moved

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[21] Gerald Bray, "The Church Fathers and Biblical Theology," in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al., Scripture and Hermeneutics 5 (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004), 23.

[22] Watson, *Text and Truth*, 307.

[23] Christoph Markschies, "Does It Make Sense to Speak about a 'Hellenization of Christianity' in Antiquity?" *Church History and Religious Culture* 92, no. 1 (January 2012): 5-34.

[24] N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 343.

away from their Jewish roots to pursue the Hellenistic culture around them. This supposed Hellenization of Christianity would have to include Gnosticism. The Gnostics were those Irenaeus directly opposed. A Hellenized version of Christianity is a paganized version.

Christianity kept a close tie with its Jewish roots. The closest example is in the insistence by both Judaism and Christianity of monotheism. Wright suggests that Christians did not capitulate to the philosophical forms of their day; instead, they transformed them. In that transformation, their identity was maintained.[25] Monotheism was a novelty in the ancient world. "Neither Judaism nor any pagan religion or philosophy could claim to have a closely defined set of beliefs that everyone adhering to it was expected to profess publicly and defend against all comers."[26] The rule of faith helped guard the pressures of syncretization felt by the first-century Christians.[27]

The notion of the Hellenization of Christianity became popularized by Adolf von Harnack. He infamously said, "The Christological dogma . . . is a product of the spirit of Hellenism on the soil of the Gospel."[28] One may recall that Harnack's ideas paved the way for liberalism. Could it be that the ghost of Harnack still haunts patristic studies? Could it be that many modern interpreters are aware of a version of patristic

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[25] N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 243.

[26] Gerald L. Bray, "Introduction: *The First Article of the Creed*," in *We Believe in One God*, ed. Gerald L. Bray, Ancient Christian Doctrines 1 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), xxix.

[27] Bray says that in contrast to Judaism,

> paganism was notoriously receptive to almost any kind of belief, and one of the biggest problems pagans faced, even within the recognized philosophical schools, was to establish some sort of coherence in their world view. Eclecticism and syncretism were common among them, and the available evidence strongly suggests that this tendency was growing in the first Christian centuries as new syntheses of Green and Eastern (Syrian, Egyptian, and Persian) ideas continued to emerge in the Roman world. (Bray, "*The First Article of the Creed*," xxix)

[28] Adolf von Harnack writes, "Das Dogma ist in seiner Conception und in seiner Ausbau ein Werk des griechischen Geistes auf dem Boden des Evangeliums." "In its work and expansion, Dogma is a work of the Greek spirit on the gospel." Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 1, 5th ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1931), 20, quoted in Oskar Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 322.

exegesis that has been baptized by Harnack? Those most skeptical of the fathers are likely those who have not personally interacted with the writings of the fathers. Instead, they have read others who have read them, not realizing that Harnack may have influenced those whom they read.[29]

Using the example of the Christology of the creed, the perspective offered by Oskar Skarsaune of the hermeneutic of the fathers is telling:

> Now if we could ask the church fathers themselves what they thought was the background of the Christology of the eastern creed, they would no doubt have answered, this creed is biblical through and through, not only in substance, but also in wording. And by "biblical" they would have meant that every word and clause in the creed can be substantiated from the Old Testament, not only the New.[30]

Also, these same arguments, specifically Hellenization, are used by others to suggest that certain doctrines are a result of a flawed hermeneutic. The casualty of this argument is often the doctrine of the Trinity. Oftentimes, what is in question is the locus of authority. Appeal to pagan literature and renderings of thought is the approach that Paul takes in the pagan context of Athens in Acts 17. For Paul—and the fathers—the locus of authority was Scripture. As Christopher Hall suggests, all of the church fathers "possessed minds saturated in the biblical narrative."[31] Appealing to Irenaeus, Hall demonstrates that the main counterpoint Irenaeus had with the Gnostics was their misreading of Scripture. To combat this error, Irenaeus used Scripture extensively. His appeal to Scripture serves to argue that the locus of authority is Scripture. The Gnostics appealed to a secret reading of Scripture. Irenaeus argues against a secret reading by pointing to a plain reading of the text, a reading available to anyone who reads. In the

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[29] According to Robert Louis Wilken, "Most scholars, following Adolf von Harnack, the great nineteenth-century historian, have interpreted the history of early Christianity almost wholly in relation to Greco-Romans culture." Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 116.

[30] Skarsaune, *In the Shadow of the Temple*, 325.

[31] Christopher A. Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 8.

words of Irenaeus, the Scriptures are "the ground and pillar of our faith."[32]

Bray suggests,

> The main difference between ancient and modern approaches to "biblical theology" is that the ancients thought that the Bible was an objective revelation from (and of) the eternal, unchanging God. Most modern commentators, on the other hand, think more in terms of an essentially subjective spiritual insight or inspiration occurring to the authors of Scripture and so deriving authority from their experience, not from the God of whom they speak.[33]

The difference that Bray brings to the forefront is the challenge that an unqualified view of inspiration brings to hermeneutics. "The Bible says to me" represents an unqualified view of inspiration. This understanding is opposed to plainly "the Bible says" as an objective revelation.

One cannot consider Irenaeus in a vacuum. His textual worldview is often dismissed due to a general dismissal of patristics with regard to hermeneutics. There may be less of a hesitancy to use the fathers in a homiletical sense, but more hesitancy occurs when one suggests that they can teach us how to read the Bible. Because of this hesitancy, mixed with the three critiques mentioned in this section, many scholars do not consider a patristic hermeneutic to be a valid one. My intent is to open the door for such consideration as a whole so that I can look specifically at Irenaeus.

Defining the Rule of Faith

According to Scripture, the rule of faith is "Christ according to Scripture." This definition comes from three key passages: Luke 24:44-46, Romans 1:1-6, and 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. Each of these passages helps highlight Jude's exhortation to "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). Anthony Thiselton's keen observations about the rule of faith prepares the way to understand the rule in a

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[32] Irenaeus, *AH* 3.1.1 (*ANF*, 1:414).

[33] Bray, "The Church Fathers and Biblical Theology," 28.

broad sense. He says, "In the era of the Church Fathers (up to around A.D. 500) and from the Reformation to the early nineteenth century, hermeneutics was regularly defined as '*rules* for interpreting Scripture.'"[34] The rule of faith guides one's interpretation as the starting place for Christian exegesis.

When defining the rule of faith, there are two trajectories often taken. One trajectory is communal, while the other is canonical. One suggests that a people form the Word, while the other contends that the Word forms the people. One emphasizes tradition; the other prioritizes Scripture. The Roman Catholic baggage that comes from considering the rule of faith is enough to make many Protestants, especially evangelicals, leery of considering the rule. The focus of this project is to demonstrate that the text, not the community, guides the rule of faith.

Everett Ferguson defines the rule of faith as a "summary of apostolic preaching and teaching, to be found most authoritatively in written form in the Scriptures."[35] Here, the emphasis on defining the rule of faith comes first by looking at the apostolic teaching in Scripture. This approach is opposed to defining the rule of faith by beginning with creeds or confessional statements that the church has produced. The rule of faith leads to the creeds, confessions, and definitions, not vice versa.

Justin Martyr, a contemporary of Irenaeus, was the first post-apostolic writer to hint at a rule of faith. Answering Rusticus's question "What is your dogma?", Justin replies,

> That according to which we worship the God of the Christians, whom we reckon time on from the beginning, the maker and fashioner of the whole creation, visible and invisible; and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who had also been preached beforehand by the prophets as about to be present with the race of men, the

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[34] Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 2 (emphasis original).

[35] Everett Ferguson, *The Rule of Faith: A Guide*, Cascade Companions 20 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), xi.

herald of salvation and teacher of good doctrines.[36]

The emphasis Justin places on Scripture as the source that defines Christian teaching is noteworthy. Jesus, as Justin indicates, has a life that conforms to what has been proclaimed in Scripture. The rule of faith tries to find the pattern of Christ's life in the Old Testament and thereby uses his life as the proper understanding (or rule) for Scripture.[37]

D. H. Williams addresses these issues in his book *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants*. He suggests that the rule of faith is not something external to the Bible but "the real teaching of the Bible."[38] To make this point, Williams first appeals to Irenaeus, saying, "In historical terms, the rule of faith was what the church was preaching. It was Tradition in living color, just as we saw the preaching through the church's activity in the book of Acts—by word of mouth."[39] To further demolish the notion of making a strong distinction between the rule and Scripture, Williams avers, "The idea that there existed an authentic apostolic Tradition which was orally transmitted within the church yet never mentioned in Scripture or supported by the basic Rule was unknown to the early church." He then indicates,

> Tradition cannot be alleged as an authority for anything ruled out by Scripture. This will be essentially the argument which the sixteenth-century Reformers will use against the medieval Catholic Church. The conflict between the early Reformers and Rome was not one of Scripture versus Tradition, but rather a clash over what the

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[36] Justin Martyr, *The Martyrdom of the Holy Martyrs* 1 (*ANF*, 1:305).

[37] Answering the question of the Christian use of the Old Testament, Watson looks to Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with Trypho* as a model of a patristic exegesis that should not be quickly dismissed. Watson, *Text and Truth*, 307. For the purpose of this project, Justin's interaction with Irenaeus is valuable. Irenaeus mentions Justin in *Against Heresies* 1.28. Irenaeus and Justin should be understood as contemporaries who are contending for the same truth—viz., the Christian understanding of the Old Testament.

[38] Daniel H. Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism: A Primer for Suspicious Protestants* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 96.

[39] Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism*, 96.

traditions had become, or between concepts of tradition.[40]

An appeal to Irenaeus suggesting that the rule is the "real teaching of the Bible" means that one must consider his actual writings to see whether Scripture is the rule. Peckham points out that "in *Against Heresies* and *Fragments*, Irenaeus quotes from twenty-five of twenty-seven New Testament books (Philemon and 3 John excluded) and his writings contain quotations or verbal allusions to 77.9% (201 of 258) of the chapters in the canonical New Testament."[41]

A close reading of *Against Heresies* reveals that Irenaeus understands the rule as the real teaching of the Bible. For example, he says,

> Nor will any of the rulers in the Churches, however highly gifted he may be in point of eloquence, teach doctrines different from these (for no one is greater than the Master); nor on the other hand, will he who is deficient in power of expression inflict injury on the tradition. For the faith being ever one and the same, neither does one who is able at great length to discourse regarding it, make any addition to it, nor does one, who can say but little, diminish it.[42]

On this point, Irenaeus's admonition sounds familiar to the apostle Paul's admonition to the Galatians, who had succumbed to false teaching. Paul says, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:8). Irenaeus's appeal to tradition seems to be the same as the apostolic appeal. This "tradition" is closed, to which nothing could be added. Irenaeus contends that those who oppose true doctrine do so by twisting the Scriptures. They use the Scriptures to their own advantage and are proclaiming different doctrines that do not align with—to use Jude's term—the "faith once delivered."

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[40] Williams, *Retrieving the Tradition and Renewing Evangelicalism*, 97.

[41] John Peckham, *Canonical Theology: The Biblical Canon, Sola Scriptura, and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 110.

[42] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.10.2 (*ANF*, 1:331).

Elements of the Rule of Faith

The rule of faith is not an extra-canonical hermeneutical arbiter that came about in the face of adversity to respond to heresy. Instead, the rule suggests that the scope or intention of Scripture is exegeted from Scripture.

Peckham brings up a valid question when he states, "To be sure, Scripture can be (and has been) treated like a wax nose. Yet why would one think that tradition itself, including the Rule of faith, might also be treated as such?"[43] Peckham answers by going to Irenaeus, who suggests that the Gnostics were the ones who were guilty of using Scripture to justify their own position, thus they treated Scripture as a wax nose, bending it to their own means and violating its form. Pointing to Irenaeus, Peckham says, "For Irenaeus, conversely, the 'proofs [of the things which are]' contained in the Scriptures cannot be shown except from the Scripture themselves." Peckham suggests that the Scriptures, for Irenaeus, are complete and comprehensible in and of themselves. In other words, the rule of faith is to be understood as the teaching of Scripture, not a teaching that is laid upon Scripture. The rule of faith is exegetical as opposed to eisegetical.

Irenaeus, and many other early church fathers, had a very high view of Scripture. In *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, Christopher Hall uses three quotations from Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* as the prescript that forms his thesis that the early church viewed the Bible as divine revelation and authoritative and as the "ground and pillar of our faith."[44] As opposed to some positions that detach the rule from Scripture to suggest that the rule is proof that the community is responsible for the formation of the Word, upon further investigation, the opposite is true: the Word formed the community, and the rule is one proof of such a formation. The rule represents a faithful articulation of the teaching of Scripture.

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[43] Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 122.

[44] Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, 208.

In his chapter in the festschrift for Joseph T. Lienhard, Jonathan Armstrong charts three paths given by scholars in an attempt to understand the rule of faith. First, Theodore Zahn, a scholar best known for his massive volumes on the New Testament canon,[45] sought to identify the rule of faith with the baptismal formula,[46] which means that he detached the rule of faith from Scripture. He declared, "As to the question of what the ante-Nicene church considered to be the rule of faith, the rule of truth, or the rule of the church, the answer is first of all: never the Bible or any certain section thereof."[47]

Next, Armstrong points out that "Zahn's thesis deeply colored the conclusion of Adolf von Harnack, also a German scholar whose shadow looms large in Patristic studies. . . . [Harnack] "allowed the possibility of a direct association between the regula fide and the Scriptures."[48] While Harnack allowed for the possibility of association, he does not directly deduce a one-to-one ratio between Scripture and the rule. Harnack suggested that Irenaeus's defense against Marcion and the Gnostics was "not a specific rendition of the tradition" but an "apostolic criterion." This apostolic criterion was what was playing in the background of articulations from the church as demonstrated in the baptismal confession.[49] Though Harnack attempted to redirect Zahn, he further established his overall thesis of identifying the rule of faith with the baptismal formula.

Finally, in direct contrast to both Zahn and Harnack, Johannes Kunze suggested that the rule of faith and the baptismal formula were not identical. Armstrong writes, "In his quest to discover the relationship between the rule of faith and the

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[45] Theodore Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909).

[46] Jonathan J. Armstrong, "From the κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας to the κανὼν τῶν γραφῶν: The Rule of Faith and the New Testament Canon," in *Tradition and the Rule of Faith in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph T. Lienhard, S. J.*, ed. Ronnie J. Rombs and Alexander Y. Hwang (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 32.

[47] Armstrong, "The Rule of Faith and the New Testament Canon," 33-34.

[48] Armstrong, "The Rule of Faith and the New Testament Canon," 34.

[49] Armstrong, "The Rule of Faith and the New Testament Canon," 34-35.

Scriptures, Kunze concludes that two possibilities are most likely: either the rule of faith eventually became the canon of Scripture, or the church always understood the dual dimensions of baptismal confession and Scripture to be present in the rule of faith."[50]

There are two directions to scholarship when considering the rule of faith. One direction seeks to make a distinction between the rule of faith and the Scriptures, while the other seeks to suggest that the rule of faith is shorthand for an interpretive guide to the Scriptures. The tradition of Zahn and Harnack suggests that the rule is extra-scriptural, that is, something added to Scripture. On the other hand, Johannes Kunze, Valdemar Ammundenson, John Behr, and others suggest that the rule is intra-scriptural and represents not what the Scripture produces but the proper way to interpret Scripture. It is important to remember that the rule develops as the identity of the church is in question. The benefit to seeing the rule as intra-scriptural—as opposed to extra-scriptural—is the assertion that Scripture, and not tradition (or the community), is the priority.

Origins of the Rule of Faith

After his resurrection but before his ascension, Jesus meets two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24. Along the way to Emmaus, Jesus points the two men to the Scriptures to explain the necessity of his passion. Further, the rule of faith appears in two different places in Paul's letters. The first is 1 Corinthians 15:3-5: "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." The second is Romans 1:1-4:

> Paul a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his

[50] Armstrong, "The Rule of Faith and the New Testament Canon," 37.

resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Another reference to the Rule is in Jude 3, where the church is encouraged to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. Scripture forms the substance of our faithful articulation of truth. Irenaeus picks up on this notion and uses the phrase "rule of faith" to faithfully articulate the truth of Scripture.

"Rule of faith" (κανὼν τῆς πἰστεως) was not Irenaeus's preferred phrase; instead, Irenaeus preferred to use the phrase "rule of truth" (κανὼν τῆς ἀλεθείας). The only difference is one of syntax. On several occasions, the phrases "canon of truth" and "rule of faith" are used to describe the same concept.[51] By tracing the concept, one will be able to understand further what is meant by use of the phrase "rule of faith." From the phrase "canon of truth," Irenaeus does not mean a standard for determining the truth but "truth itself as the standard."[52]

Irenaeus was responding to the threat of Gnosticism in the second century. In order to understand the teachings of the Gnostics, one must discover their understanding of the Old Testament. The Gnostics and their supporters suggested that the Old Testament had no authority. The God of the Old Testament, according to the Gnostics, was a lesser deity—"the Demiurge." This God was not the same God encountered in the New Testament. Accordingly, many of the New Testament books were edited at their discretion. The chief editor of the text was Marcion. Marcion was a significant opponent against whom Irenaeus used the rule of faith in order to demonstrate how he had strayed from orthodoxy.[53]

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[51] Tomas Bokedal, "The Rule of Faith: Tracing Its Origins," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2013): 233-55.

[52] Ferguson, *The Rule of Faith*, 17.

[53] Both Tertullian and Irenaeus were critics of Marcion. William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, eds., *Christian Apologetics Past and Present: A Primary Source Reader*, vol. 1, *To 1500* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 86.

The Rule of Faith according to Irenaeus

In Irenaeus's writing, the rule of faith is most prevalent in *Against Heresies* 1.10.1, 3.4.2, and 4.33.7 and *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* 6 and 47. Though many other patristic writers used the rule, either in term or form, I will concentrate on tracing the theme according to Irenaeus. There are two overarching elements that make up the rule: (1) a Trinitarian concept of God and (2) the authority of Scripture. Scripture is subdivided into three sections: patriarchs, prophets, and apostles.

Irenaeus understands the rule of faith as a hermeneutical framework of proper interpretation. The rule forms the framework that demonstrates the meaning of God's revelation. If not for the rule, revelation can be twisted and distorted. In refuting Valentinus, Irenaeus argues that the Valentinians pull apart the system of Scripture to create their own:

> They gather their views from other sources than the Scriptures; and, to use a common proverb, they weave ropes of sand, while they endeavor to adapt with an air of probability to their own peculiar assertions the parables of the Lord, the sayings of the prophets, and the words of the apostles, in order that their scheme may not seem altogether without support.[54]

The rule, according to Irenaeus, is not distinguished from the Scriptures. He argues that heretical teaching of Scripture is achieved by disregarding the "order and connection of the Scriptures" and "dismember[ing] and destroy[ing] the truth."[55] Those who promote false teachings are those who avoid the plain reading and pervert the truth. Irenaeus states, "These things are such as fall plainly under our observation and are clearly and unambiguously in express terms set forth in the sacred Scriptures." He continues, "The body of truth remains entire, with a harmonious adaptation of its members and without any collision of its several parts."[56]

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[54] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.8.1 (*ANF*, 1:326).

[55] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.8.1 (*ANF*, 1:326).

[56] Irenaeus, *AH* 2.27.1 (*ANF*, 1:398).

Irenaeus's plea against his opponents concerns their misuse of Scripture. Of them, he says, "The method by which these men employ to deceive themselves, while they abuse the Scriptures by endeavoring to support their own system out of them."[57] As Thiselton notes, "Irenaeus calls, in effect, for a proper attention to context and genres and other parts of the Bible." Thiselton goes on to assert, "No doubt the Gnostics claim a rationality of their own, and argue that the Fathers of the Church interpreted everything christologically."[58]

The value of the Rule of faith is it views Scripture as fully sufficient to proclaim Christ. As Seitz writes, "The Scriptures of Israel are views as fully sufficient to preach Christ, prophesy Christ, adumbrate Christ, demonstrate Christ and the Holy Spirit both as active and functioning from beginning to end, though various economies of the Scriptures' long story."[59] The Old Testament not only anticipates Christ; it proclaims Christ. In other words, the message of the Old Testament is fundamentally the same as the New. The "newness" of the New Testament is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Seitz points out that the link between the Testaments is the same God who inspires both. Christ's link to God is an ontological link. Accordingly, Seitz suggests,

> This is the chief concern of an appeal to a rule of faith, that is, demonstrating that the God of the Scriptures and Jesus are one, and active together in the selfsame witness. Prior to the existence of a second canonical witness, the first is doing primary theological work in an incipiently trinitarian sort, and the cruciality of that is undiminished by the existence of the apostolic writings.[60]

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[57] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.9.1 (*ANF*, 1:329).

[58] Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 96. Interestingly, Marcion "rejected reinterpreting parts of the Bible by allegorical interpretation, insisting on its literal meaning" (94).

[59] Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture*, 193.

[60] Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture*, 194n5.

The Rule of Faith in Modern Studies

I will now consider the modern study of the rule of faith. Specifically, I place the view of two authors—Joel Green and Kevin Vanhoozer—in concert with each other in order to explore a variety of interpretive views concerning the rule of faith. The connection between these two interpreters centers on the contemporary movement in hermeneutics called the theological interpretation of Scripture (or TIS).[61] I have chosen these two authors to demonstrate the variance they have when considering the question of Scripture and tradition.

Green places a dividing wall between the rule of faith and Scripture. He says, "From a historical perspective, we cannot argue that the church's rule of faith is built on top of the foundation provided by the Old and New Testaments."[62] The historical reference that Green points to is the fact that a codified canon was not in place at the time of the articulations of the rule of faith. Green further suggests that the rule of faith should not be used to "predetermine the meaning of the Bible or to read later doctrinal formulations back into the Bible."[63] In this rendering, the rule of faith is something distinct from the Bible. Green's hesitancy for the rule of faith is the notion that an appropriation of the rule means prioritizing ecclesiology over Scripture.

Vanhoozer represents a different understanding of the rule of faith than that of Green. Like Green, Vanhoozer does not favor prioritizing the church over Scripture. Unlike Green, however, Vanhoozer does not place a strict dichotomy between the rule and the Bible. The rule, according to Vanhoozer, should not be understood to mean the canon of Scripture is insufficient for deducing meaning. "The purpose of the rule is to

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[61] For more information, see Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

[62] Joel B. Green, *Practicing Theological Interpretation: Engaging Biblical Texts for Faith and Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 72.

[63] Green, *Practicing Theological Interpretation*, 77.

provide readers of Scripture with the right presuppositions as to its basic subject matter."[64] The rule is not the canon; the canon is the rule. According to Vanhoozer, "The rule of faith is nothing less than a summary of Scripture's own story line: It is generally understood to have been drawn from Scripture, and in biblical interpretation it is reapplied to scripture." He continues, "The church fathers never intended the rule to control what Scripture must mean but rather to confess what Scripture does mean."[65] The rule assures that Scripture will be seen as a unified narrative. The unity of Scripture is the highest strength to the rule of faith. The presupposition of the unity of Scripture lies within the rule. Proper interpretation cannot be achieved without consultation of the unity of the text. The Old and New Testaments do not stand alone; they stand as two portions of a unified canon.[66]

Vanhoozer approaches the rule differently than Green. Whereas Green places great emphasis on the ecclesial elements of the rule, Vanhoozer sees the rule as a complement to Scripture. He says, "Far from being an extratextual supplement imposed by the believing community upon Scripture, the rule of faith is actually a servant of intratextuality."[67]

Understood in this way, the rule of faith grants a greater understanding of the often-quoted mantra "Scripture interprets Scripture." Within the rule are presuppositions about Scripture that allow further clarity on how an interpreter uses Scripture to interpret Scripture. The presuppositions that exist—if the rule is followed—are presuppositions that come from Scripture itself, not from outside influences. Scripture is the authority; the rule of faith provides a safeguard to ensure that the interpreter will keep Scripture in its

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[64] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 203.

[65] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 206.

[66] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 204.

[67] Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 206.

proper authoritative place.

Conclusion: Back on the Road from Jerusalem

On the road from Jerusalem, the Ethiopian eunuch replies to Philip, saying, "How can I unless someone guides me?" (Acts 8:31). Concerning the passage in Isaiah, the eunuch then asks, "About whom does the prophet say this, about himself or someone else?" (v. 34). The text reads, "Then Philip opened his mouth and beginning with the Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus" (v. 35). Quite simply, Philip believes that Isaiah wrote write about Jesus. Due to his surviving works, Irenaeus was one of the first major figures outside of the apostles to demonstrate perpetuation of this tradition. I now turn my attention to considering the textual worldview of Irenaeus.

CHAPTER 4

CONSIDERING AN ANCIENT PATH: THE TEXTUAL WORLDVIEW OF IRENAEUS

One of Christianity's most formidable opponents was a Roman intellectual named Celsus. He "knew the truth of Christ's teaching depended on Christianity's relationship with Judaism."[1] Celsus's angle of attack was his suggestion that Christianity was illegitimate because Christians had no tradition of their own.[2] It was in the context of Celsus that Christians learned to clarify their position on the importance of the Old Testament. Moreover, it was Celsus, more than any other, who brought this discussion to the forefront due to his position as a Roman intellectual in an empire considering Christianity. He did so as an opponent, but his opposition provided an opportunity for clear articulation. This chapter seeks to develop the textual worldview of Irenaeus. Through developing the historical context of Irenaeus' time, the reader can appreciate the challenges Irenaeus faced and his tools for combatting these challenges – Scripture. His

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[1] Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 114.

[2] Wilken further says,

> The significance of Celsus' argument that Christianity was an apostasy from Judaism has seldom been recognized in discussions of pagan criticism of Christianity or of early Christian apologetics. The persistence of this theme among critics suggests that the debate between Christianity and Hellenism was not simply a two-way debate, as has been assumed for generations. Most scholars, following Adolf von Harnack, the great nineteenth-century historian, have interpreted the history of early Christianity almost wholly in relation to Greco-Romans culture. The relation to Judaism is, however, very significant to understanding the development of Christianity in the Roman world. (Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, 116)

view of Scripture will be demonstrated as a unified witness to Christ – the definitive revelation of God.

Celsus

Celsus published *True Doctrine* about the year AD 170.[3] Around this time, violent persecution broke out in the western part of the Roman Empire—in Lyon, which in modern-day France. In 177, Irenaeus was sent to Rome bearing letters from the martyrs to Eleutherius. According to Irenaeus, his mission was a call to Christian communities to unify around the gospel "according to Scripture."[4]

It is within this context that the writings of Irenaeus must be considered. Only two writings of Irenaeus survive, *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching* and *Against Heresies*. Irenaeus wrote during a time when many communities articulated a version of Christianity that was different than Christ according to the Scriptures. Though Irenaeus makes no reference to Celsus in his writings, one can infer, due to the reach of Roman influence, that the argument of Celsus represented the culture that Christianity confronted as it expanded from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. Celsus's argument was not unique; Celsus joins a line of those who suggest that Christians got the Old Testament wrong. Whereas Celsus was an attack from without, Marcion represented an attack from within. Central to both Celsus and Marcion was the Old Testament.

Marcion

Marcion grew up in a Christian home. His father was a bishop. Sometime during his youth, he developed a dislike for both Judaism and the material world. When Marcion became a bishop, he carried these proclivities with him. These particular dislikes

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[3] Celsus's work was followed, many years later, by a massive reply by Origen of Alexandria around AD 248. This late reply demonstrates that Celsus's argument carried considerable sway.

[4] Irenaeus, *AH* 3.3.4 (*ANF*, 1:416).

became a dominant part of his bishopric.[5] Marcion set aside the Old Testament, reasoning that the God of the Old Testament was inferior to the God represented in the New. This judgment was motivated by his dislike of Judaism and the material world. These two preconceptions, joined with his appreciation of the Pauline Epistles and Luke's Gospel, resulted in the articulation of a different faith than "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). According to Justo L. González, Marcion reasoned that "all other ancient Christian books were plagued by Jewish views" and were the "handiwork of Judaizers seeking to subvert the original message."[6] Although Marcion sought to uphold the faith once delivered, he instead traded Christianity for an idol of his own making. Per González, "Marcion posed an even greater threat to the church than did the Gnostics."

Irenaeus would say that Marcion was following the pattern of former heretics who formed one set of doctrines out of a "totally different system of opinions."[7] At the heart of the Marcion crisis was the question of the Old Testament. Marcion was an advocate for the outright dismissal of the Old Testament; he founded his new movement on the dismissal of any elements of Judaism. One should keep in mind that he did these things thinking that he was fulfilling Jude's exhortation—contending for the faith once delivered. However, his dismissal of the Old Testament brought about a "reinterpretation of the doctrines of creation, incarnation, and resurrection."[8] Christians would respond to this early and formidable challenge by using what has become known as the Apostles' Creed.[9] It is worth mentioning, however, that the formation of the creed, like other

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[5] Justo L. González, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, vol. 1 of *The Story of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 61.

[6] González, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, 62.

[7] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.21.1 (*ANF*, 1:353).

[8] González, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, 62.

[9] González, *The Early Church to the Dawn of the Reformation*, 64.

creeds, was not an attempt to subvert Scripture. Instead, creeds were formed to safeguard Scripture from misinterpretations such as those proposed by Marcion. The creed highlights the proper interpretation of Scripture bolstered by the writings of pastor-theologians such as Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian of Carthage, Origen of Alexandria, and Irenaeus of Lyon—all of which were the genuine contenders of the faith once delivered.

Irenaeus

Irenaeus was born somewhere between AD 130 and 140. By his recollection, he remembers seeing Polycarp, a disciple of John the Beloved, in his youth in his hometown of Smyrna (modern day Izmir, Turkey). A feature that seemed to stick with him from his interaction with Polycarp was Polycarp's deliverance of Christ according to the Scriptures in the face of many other false teachings. Irenaeus recalls an exchange between Marcion and Polycarp: "Marcion, who met him on one occasion, said, 'Dost thou know me?' 'I do know thee, [Polycarp replied] the firstborn of Satan.'"[10] In contrast to the heretics, Irenaeus suggests that Polycarp can teach Christians "the character of faith and the preaching of the truth."[11]

When Irenaeus was appointed bishop of Lyon, he discovered that strange teachings permeated his city and congregation. His acuity led him to discern that the false teachers were using similar language to infiltrate the truth with falsehood. Throughout his engagements with the heretics, the question that surfaced often concerned the Christian use of the Old Testament. As the apostle Paul reminds the Corinthians in his letter, the Christian faith depends on a Christ "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3-4). In his writings, Irenaeus labors to show this same Christ—a Christ according to the Old

[10] Irenaeus, *AH* 3.3.4 (*ANF*, 1:416).

[11] Irenaeus, *AH 3.3.4* (*ANF*, 1:416).

Testament.

While there are extant writings of other fathers, both before and after Irenaeus, Irenaeus stands at the beginning of the theological tradition of the church. In his work, especially *Against Heresies* Books 3-5, he is the first to lay out the whole spectrum of theology (from creation to Christology to Eschatology). Irenaeus is the first writer to use all of the biblical canon, except Philemon and 3 John. Irenaeus is the first outside the New Testament to articulate the idea of a rule of faith for a guided reading of the text. He is the first to give a biblical theology from Adam to Christ, from beginning to end, and he answers how the economy of God fits together as a single economy.[12]

As mentioned above, there are only two surviving works from Irenaeus: *Against Heresies* and *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. John Behr states, "Subsequent generations seem to have remembered Irenaeus more for his anti-heretical writings than for his theological vision."[13] Often neglected is Irenaeus's interaction with Scripture as his means of refuting heresies.

This section considers the theological vision of Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* and *The Demonstration*, are highlighted to suggest that Irenaeus understands Jesus as the crucified and risen Lord according to the Old Testament. Irenaeus reads the Old Testament in an apostolic sense, where Scripture portrays a mosaic of Christ. The passion of Christ provides the hermeneutical key for understanding Scripture. After considering the writings of Irenaeus, three conclusions will be drawn concerning his hermeneutic: (1) Scripture is its own best interpreter; (2) a guided reading is essential for a proper interpretation; and (3) there is but one God in both Testaments. Finally, a brief word on Irenaeus's concept of recapitulation that will serve to sync all three conclusions.

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[12] These ideas and more are articulated further in Sara Parvis and Paul Foster, eds., *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012).

[13] John Behr, trans., "St. Irenaeus of Lyon," in *On the Apostolic Preaching*, by Irenaeus of Lyon, Popular Patristics 17 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 4-5.

The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching

The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching is "the earliest summary of Christian teaching presented in a non-polemic or apologetic manner."[14] This writing was not rediscovered until 1904 from a manuscript dating back to the sixth century. The most striking feature of this work is Irenaeus's lack of direct New Testament reference in demonstrating the apostolic proclamation. However, such a lack of reference to the New Testament should not be understood as a disregard of the New Testament as Christian Scripture. On the contrary, "Irenaeus is the first patristic writer to make full use of apostolic writings as Scripture."[15] He does so in *Against Heresies*. His lack of direct New Testament reference in *The Demonstration* serves his purpose to present Christian teaching as the proper interpretation of the Old Testament. The Old Testament contains the revelation of Christ. Such a statement is a challenge for those who are dismissive of the Old Testament. In the words of Behr, "The apostolic preaching is both the key to understanding the Old Testament and the confirmation of its fulfillments, while, on the other hand, it is the Old Testament that shapes the whole of Christian revelation itself."[16]

The Demonstration offers its readers a glimpse into second-century Christianity's Christocentric reading of the Old Testament. Such an effort is in line with Christ's own words in Luke 24:27. *The Demonstration*, so named by Irenaeus, is an exposition and proof of the authority of Scripture and is an example of the Christian hermeneutic that insists that the Jesus worshipped by Christians is Christ according to the Scriptures.

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[14] Behr, "St. Irenaeus of Lyon," 7.

[15] John Behr, trans., "The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching," in *On the Apostolic Preaching*, by Irenaeus, 15.

[16] Behr, "The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching," 13.

Thomas F. Torrance's words on the importance of the Old Testament for Christianity are worthy of consideration:

> It was indeed in the course of the Old Testament revelation that nearly all the basic concepts we Christians use were hammered out by the Word of God on the anvil of Israel. They constitute the essential furniture of our knowledge of God, in and through Jesus. If the Word of God has become incarnate among us apart from all that, it could not have been grasped—Jesus himself would have remained a bewildering enigma. It was just because Jesus, born from above as he was, was nevertheless produced through the womb of Israel, mediated to us through the matrix of the conceptual, linguistic patterns, that he could be recognized as the Son of God and Savior and his crucifixion could be interpreted as an atoning sacrifice for sin.[17]

Simply stated, if Christians did not have the Old Testament, then Christ would be unrecognizable. More specifically, the Old and New Testaments combine into one economy of redemption

> climactically fulfilled in the Incarnation, and the bearing of the Word of God through the Holy Spirit on historical facts and events in such a way that in Jesus Christ events and messages, the Word and the words, the Truth and truths, are intrinsically integrated, and cannot be torn apart without serious dismemberment of the faith.[18]

Evidence from within *Against Heresies* may point to *The Demonstration* as Irenaeus's intentional proof of his argument used to refute heresies. At the end of Book 2, Irenaeus says,

> The remainder of those who are falsely termed Gnostics, and who maintain that the prophets uttered their prophecies under the inspiration of different gods, will be easily overthrown by this fact, that all the prophets proclaimed open God and Lord, and that the very Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things which are therein; while they moreover announced in the advent of His Son, as I shall demonstrate from the Scriptures themselves, in the books which follow.[19]

What follows in the beginning of Book 3 carries this theme, but *The Demonstration* is the exemplary and concise form the outline of Book 3 of *Against Heresies*.

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[17] Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster Press, 1983), 18-19.

[18] Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 57.

[19] Irenaeus, *AH* 2.35.2 (*ANF*, 1:412).

In the preface of *The Demonstration*, Irenaeus writes to Marcianus to strengthen his faith through a presentation of the preaching of the truth. In so doing, Irenaeus reminds his friend that faith requires perseverance. The direction of perseverance is the rule of faith made known through the Scriptures, which tell of the passion of the Christ. Other teachings that do not conform to this rule are not conforming to reality. What is true and honorable will show itself in behavior. Irenaeus says, "Or what profit indeed can come from holiness of body, if truth is not in the soul."[20] Here, Irenaeus states that the discipline of hermeneutics is incomplete without what the reality of the Word brings to bear on the one seeking understanding. Indeed, the hearts of interpreters and their motivations must come into play as one considers the message they are sharing. Those who do not conform to the rule pervert and twist the truth. They are the ones whose behavioral patterns are named in Psalm 1: they walk in the counsel of the ungodly; "they are ungodly who do not worship Him Who Is, true God."[21]

The preface is then followed by a pattern of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration. Irenaeus does not explicitly use these terms; however, the use of these terms, especially in the resurgence of biblical theology, can be applied analogously to the structure of his work. Irenaeus lays out the grand narrative of Scripture to show how specific portions of Scripture are summed up in Christ.[22] Chapters 17-30 demonstrate how God shapes history for the salvation he will provide through the Son.

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[20] Irenaeus, *Dem. Ap. Pr.* 2 (Behr, 40).

[21] Irenaeus, *Dem. Ap. Pr.* 2 (Behr, 40).

[22] For example, commenting on Psalm 109:1, Irenaeus says, "So in a fitting manner Christ says, by David, that the Father Himself speaks with Him, and most properly does He say still other things concerning Himself through the prophets.... Irenaeus, *Dem. Ap. Pr.* 2 (Behr, 73).

Against Heresies

In *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus says: "Inasmuch as certain men have set the truth aside and bring in lying words and vain genealogies . . . ."[23] The trajectory of the work speaks out against heresies that are attempting to adulterate Christian teaching. In Book 1, Irenaeus goes on to demonstrate, in detail, his knowledge of the Gnostic heresies. His precision allows him to critique the inconsistencies of their system in Book 2. A casual reader of Irenaeus should not begin with the first two books of *Against Heresies* when searching for Irenaeus's hermeneutic.[24] In Books 3-5, Irenaeus turns his attention more directly toward Scripture, saying, "Since, therefore, the tradition from the apostles does thus exist in the Church, and is permanent among us, let us revert to the Scriptural proof furnished by those apostles who did also write the Gospel, in which they recorded the doctrine regarding God, pointing out that our Lord Jesus Christ is truth, and that no lie is in him."[25] He skillfully interweaves passages from both Testaments to "demonstrate there is but one God, who has made himself known in his one Son, Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to the one human race, through one all-encompassing divine economy or history."[26]

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[23] Irenaeus, *AH* preface to Book 1 (*ANF*, 1:315).

[24] Behr points out that *Against Heresies* is "difficult to read." Behr, "The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching," 15. He goes on to suggest that "Irenaeus is a clear and penetrating writer, but the coherence and unity of this work is determined by the Scripture which he exegetes, not, as we would expect today, in a systematic, linear, or logical development of the thinkers own train of thought." This view of Irenaeus represents a departure from a previous generation's appropriation of his work. Behr, quotes Johannes Quasten, who says, "The whole work suffers from a lack of arrangement and unity of thought. Prolixity and frequent repetition make its perusal wearisome. . . . Evidently he did not have the ability to shape his materials into a homogenous whole." Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 1, *The Beginnings of Patristic Literature* (Utrecht, Holland: Spectrum, 1950), 289, quoted in Behr, "The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching," 15.

[25] Irenaeus, *AH* 3.5.1 (*ANF*, 1:417).

[26] Behr, "The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching," 15.

Irenaeus's Hermeneutic

From *The Demonstration*. In chapter 52 of *The Demonstration*, Irenaeus articulates his overarching principle of interpretation. He says, "Since it is not possible to draw up an ordered account of all the Scriptures, from these [passages] you can also understand the others, which speak in a similar manner, believing Christ and seeking wisdom and understanding from God, in order to understand what was said by the prophets."[27] Irenaeus implies that Scripture interprets Scripture.

Irenaeus ties the rule to Scripture. In the introduction to *The Demonstration*, Irenaeus says,

> But, since at this present time, we are separated from each other in body, we have not hesitated to speak a little with you, as far as possible, by writing, and to demonstrate, by means of summary, the preaching of the truth, so as to strengthen your faith. We are sending you, as it were, a summary memorandum, so that you may find much in little, and by means of this small work understand all the members of the *body of truth*, and through a summary received the exposition of the things of God so that in this way, it will bear your own salvation like fruit, and that you may confound all those who hold false opinions and to everyone who desires to know, you may deliver our sound and irreproachable word in all boldness.[28]

In addition to the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture, Irenaeus suggests that the "apostolic preaching, the presentation of Christ, according to the Scriptures [i.e., the Old Testament], is the key to understanding Scripture fully."[29] One should keep in mind that such a demonstration is done without direct reference to the New Testament. Again, without disregarding the writings of the apostles, or seeing them as inferior to Scripture, Irenaeus demonstrates how the apostles proclaimed Christ—a proclamation that is always according to the Scriptures. The Old Testament proclamation is more than

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[27] Irenaeus, *Dem*. *Ap. Pr.* 52 (Behr, 74).

[28] Irenaeus, *Dem*. *Ap. Pr.* 1 (Behr, 39; emphasis added). A close reading of the substance of *The Demonstration* yields an understanding that Irenaeus refers to Scripture when he says "body of truth." He goes on to say, "Lest we suffer any such thing, we must keep the rule of faith unswervingly, and perform the commandments of God, believing in God and fearing him, for he is Lord, and loving him, for he is Father." Irenaeus, *Dem*. *Ap. Pr.* 3 (Behr, 41).

[29] John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, vol. 1 of *The Formation of Christian Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 113.

merely promise fulfillment; it also proclaims Jesus as the sent, crucified, risen, and coming again Christ. Thus, Christ is at the center of the Old Testament's proclamation.

From *Against Heresies*. By far, the most enduring work of Irenaeus is *Against Heresies*. In it, Irenaeus makes extensive use of the apostolic writings—in contrast to *The Demonstration*, where he not does utilize them. Key to the Gnostic and Marcionite interpretation was their Pauline interpretation. Irenaeus uses Paul's writings extensively to show that the Gnostic and Marcionite interpretation represents a deviation from the text. The heretics were using Scripture, but missing from their use of Scripture was a guided reading. Their lack of a guided reading meant they were—so to speak—misguided.

The heretics' deviation was a deviation from truth. The subject of Scripture is Christ from beginning to end. While making the point that there is but one author of both Testaments, Irenaeus says, "One and the same householder produced both covenants, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who spoke with both Abraham and Moses, and who has restored us anew to liberty, and has multiplied that grace which is from himself."[30]

Irenaeus understands Jesus's words "Moses wrote of me" in John 5:46 to mean that the writings of Moses are Christ's words.[31] Irenaeus logically extends this view of Moses to the rest of Scripture: "This prophetic element is clearly important for Irenaeus, and it represents a very dynamic quality to his presentation of the economy of God unfolded in the scriptural history of salvation . . . . Not only is the subject of Scripture, from beginning and end, Jesus Christ, but he is also its ultimate author."[32] Both qualifiers are important: dynamic quality and scriptural history of salvation. This understanding yields multiple layers of meaning, where each layers further reveals the whole—Christ.

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[30] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.9.1 (*ANF*, 1:472).

[31] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.2.3 (*ANF*, 1:464).

[32] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 115.

Moses speaks about Christ, and his words are Christ's. Both dynamics can be true according to this view.

To demonstrate how Scripture unfolds, Irenaeus uses a metaphor of a mosaic of a king to challenge the Valentinians.[33] Irenaeus says, "They gather their views from sources other than the Scriptures.[34] Though these false teachers suggest that they are using Scripture, Irenaeus suggests that they are using Scripture as it was never intended. Instead, they are twisting and perverting the text to have it fit their agenda instead of allowing the text to set their agenda. Specifically referring to the Gnostics, James G. Bushur says, "An archetype that is limited to the transcendent, spiritual world, changes the setting or atmosphere in which the images of scripture live and move."[35] In other words, the Gnostics were guilty of reading Scripture without an archetype.[36]

Of those who distort Scripture, Irenaeus says,

> In doing so, however, they disregard the order and connection of the Scriptures, and so fast as in them lies, dismember the destroy the truth. . . . Their manner of acting is just as if one, when a beautiful image of a king has been constructed by some skillful artist out of precious jewels, should then take this likeness of the man all to pieces, should rearrange the gems, and so for them together as to make them into the form of a dog or of a fox, and even that but poorly executed; and then should they maintain and declare that this was the beautiful image of the king which the skillful artist constructed, pointing the jewels which had been admirably fitted together by the first artist to form the image of the king, but have been with bad effect transferred by the latter one to the shape of a dog, and by thus exhibiting the jewels, should deceive the ignorant who had no conception what a king's form was like, and persuade them that that miserable likeness of a fox was, in fact, the beautiful image of the king.[37]

Irenaeus' mosaic represents his Christocentric reading of Scripture. By insisting that the

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[33] Valentinus was Irenaeus's most formidable opponent. James G. Bushur, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the Mosaic of Christ* (London: Routledge, 2017), 85.

[34] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.8.1 (*ANF*, 1:326).

[35] Bushur, *Irenaeus and the Mosaic of Christ*, 86.

[36] Bushur, *Irenaeus and the Mosaic of Christ*, 84.

[37] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.8.1 (*ANF*, 1:326).

text be read in this way, he demonstrates the seriousness of the conversation on the Emmaus road in Luke 24:25-27. According to Irenaeus, the Old Testament is a mosaic that reveals Christ. Such a rendering resembles John Sailhamer's belief that the "messianic thrust of the Old Testament was the *whole* reason the books of the Hebrew Bible were written."[38] True exegesis is accomplished when the interpreter draws the same conclusions that the text intends to draw. In the case of Scripture, the text paints a portrait of a royal king.

Later, Irenaeus says, "If anyone, therefore, reads the Scriptures with attention, he will find in them an account of Christ, and a foreshadowing of the new calling."[39] Irenaeus relates Christ to the treasure hidden in the field. Irenaeus sees Christ as the hermeneutical key that unlocks the intention and meaning of the Scriptures. There can be no true division, like Marcion and the Gnostics suppose, between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New. Irenaeus says, "In both Testaments, there is the same righteousness of God."[40] Thus, according to Behr, "the claim that the crucified Christ, the Gospel preached by the apostles, unlocks the treasury of Scripture is simply the reverse side of the fact that the apostolic preaching of the Gospel is, from the beginning, 'according to the Scriptures,' exegeting Scripture to interpret Christ."[41] The subject of Scripture, for Irenaeus, is always the crucified and risen Christ.

Irenaeus understands the cross as a singular event in history with eternal significance so that "the only perspective from which one can speak of the Word of God is that of the Cross."[42] According to Torrance, the cross represents the "permanent

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[38] John H. Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological* Society 44, no. 1 (March 2001): 23 (emphasis original).

[39] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.26.1 (*ANF*, 1:496).

[40] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.28.1 (*ANF*, 1:501).

[41] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 121.

[42] John Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons: Identifying Christianity*, Christian Theology in Context

actualization of the divine will within a renewed creation centered in and gathered up in the Incarnate Son."[43]

Recapitulation

The textual worldview of Irenaeus is not bogged down by the criticism with which modern scholars must interact.[44] This notion does not mean that his methods are free from baggage but merely different from what modern exegetes encounter. As modern conservative exegetes try to go beyond the historical-critical method, they should find a companion by considering Irenaeus. The basis of such a consideration is the foundation upon which Irenaeus stands—Holy Scripture.

I offer one final key to understanding Irenaeus, a concept he regularly employs to understand the Testaments—recapitulation. Behr helpfully summarizes this position:

> The rhetorical device of "recapitulation" serves to provide a summary of the whole case or a restatement of the argument in an epitome or resume, bringing together the whole into one conspectus, so that, while the particular details will have made little impact because of their number or apparent insignificance, the picture summarily stated as a whole will be more forceful, giving new significance to each particular detail and bringing them all together into one.[45]

Accordingly, Torrance says,

> Recapitulation means that the redemptive activity of God in Jesus Christ was not just a transcendent act that touched our existence in space and time at one point, but an activity that passed into our existence and is at work within it, penetrating back to the beginning in the original creation retracing and re-affirming in it the Divine Will, and reaching forward to the consummation in the new creation in which all things are gathered up, thus *connecting the end with the beginning*. The whole continuum of existence in space and time is affected by recapitulation, for it has a retroactive effect upon the past in undoing evil and predeterminitive effect upon the future in restoring creation to its true end, thus giving direction and unity to the

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(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 134.

[43] Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 120.

[44] N. T. Wright suggests that much consideration for classic writers comes as an attempt to react against the Enlightenment and post-modernism. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 118.

[45] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 137.

whole of history.[46]

Scripture, according to Irenaeus, is more than a "biography of the Word within which existence 'as' Jesus Christ is but one phase."[47] This view allows both Testaments to testify to the same reality of God. Irenaeus develops this view theologically due to his overriding concern for the oneness of God. Because God has always worked through his Word, the incarnation of the Son serves as a recapitulation of the entire economy of God. This proclamation of Christ, according to the Scriptures, is the embodiment of the whole of Scripture.

Irenaeus says, "There is therefore, as I have pointed out, one God the Father, and one Christ Jesus, who came by means of the whole economy, recapitulating all things in himself."[48] For this reason, Irenaeus can attribute the many acts of God in the Old Testament to Christ. He says,

> At one time, indeed speaking with Abraham, when about to eat with him; at another time with Noah, giving to him the dimensions of the ark; at another time inquiring after Adam; at another, bringing down judgment upon the Sodomites; and again, when he becomes visible, and directs Jacob on his journey, and speaking with Moses from the bush.[49]

Irenaeus's purpose, in reaction to false teaching, is to show that the Old Testament writings "do everywhere mention the Son of God and foretell his advent and passion. From this fact, it follows that they were inspired by one and the same God."[50] Reading the writings of Irenaeus reveals this last statement of the Old Testament *everywhere* mentioning the Son as hyperbole. The statement reveals the overarching understanding of Scripture for Irenaeus – Scripture is Christocentric.

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[46] Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 121 (emphasis original).

[47] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 129. See also Irenaeus, *AH* 3.16.7; 4.20.1 (*ANF*, 1:443; 487-88).

[48] Irenaeus, *AH* 3.16.6 (*ANF*, 1:442).

[49] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.10.1 (*ANF*, 1:473).

[50] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.10.1 (*ANF*, 1:473).

The Passion as Determinative

In contrast to modern movements that seek to retrace the historical Jesus, Irenaeus

> does not attempt to retrieve the "historical Jesus", understood as the life and teaching of Jesus prior to his Passion, but rather to understand the same Jesus on the basis of his Passion through the interpretation of the Scriptures—that is, what we now call the "Old Testament" or the "Hebrew Scriptures"—following the apostles in an ongoing dialogue.[51]

Irenaeus saw himself as contending for the faith once delivered through appropriating the hermeneutics of the apostles. Thus, Irenaeus thought that Christians can access the hermeneutical methodology of the apostles.[52] And the access point to the apostolic hermeneutic is the rule of faith.

Irenaeus viewed Scripture not as mere history but as a

> thesaurus, a treasury of words and images that fit together as a mosaic depicting Christ, and so for his concerns is for the coherence of this interpretation with Scripture, rather than the historicity of the accounts. . . . This does not mean that he dismisses history, but that he recognized . . . that in all this we are always already dealing with interpretations, and in a sense, his own theology is therefore *more historically grounded* than those quests for the "historical Jesus" in that it does not presume to get behind the Passion or bracket the Cross, as if it had never happened, but accepts it as the defining moment.[53]

This view of Scripture helps one to understand what could be a stumbling block to many when considering Irenaeus. *Against Heresies* 3.1-2 contains what has been used by the Roman Catholic Church to suggest that Irenaeus advocated for the papacy.[54] Since

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[51] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 10.

[52] On the basis that the apostles were inspired but other exegetes were not, Richard Longenecker does not believe that an apostolic hermeneutic can be retrieved. Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 193-98. Contrary to this position, Chou argues that the apostles hermeneutic was in continuity with the prophetic hermeneutic of the Old Testament. In a quest to find the logic of the biblical author, Chou suggest that much modern hermeneutics "fail to acknowledge the principles and practices of the biblical writers themselves" (back cover). Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018), 13-24.

[53] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 10 (emphasis added).

[54] To see how Roman Catholics use Irenaeus see Klaus Schatz, *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 8-10.

Irenaeus's textual worldview is defined by the passion, and since he believes—as opposed to those he deems heretics—the hermeneutic of the apostles is accessible, he believes there are those teachers of the truth, whom he lists by name in the beginning of Book 3 of *Against Heresies*, who have consistently taught the same truth revealed in Scripture. The succession Irenaeus advocates for is more than a succession of persons. Irenaeus argues for a succession of truth. Interestingly, and contrarily to Roman Catholicism, at the beginning of Book 3, Irenaeus does not list Peter as the first bishop of Rome.[55] This point stands in contrast to Roman Catholic tradition. Though the seed of thought appears present in Irenaeus I argue that Irenaeus does not say the same thing Roman Catholics say. This fact further casts suspicion upon the notion that Irenaeus advocated for a mere succession of persons.[56] The idea of a preservation of truth allows Irenaeus to argue against those who contradict the truth preserved by the church. In *Against Heresies* 1.10.1, Irenaeus argues that the church has preserved the faith throughout the world. In his own time, the church that had preserve the faith throughout the world was at Rome. Further, in *Against Heresies* 3.3.2, Irenaeus says, "For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its preeminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolic tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere."[57] The preeminent authority referenced is the faithful apostolic tradition that stands against the heretics of Irenaeus' day. Though Roman Catholics have used this to their own advantage, I believe they are misreading Irenaeus' intent to point to a succession of truth more than a perpetuity of persons. At that time, Rome was an exemplary church due to their insistence on the Rule of faith. The same might not be true in our time. This

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[55] Irenaeus, *AH* 3.3.3 (*ANF*, 1:415).

[56] Arnold Ehrhardt, *The Apostolic Succession in the First Two Centuries of the Church*. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1953), 119.

[57] Irenaeus, *AH* 3.3.2 (*ANF*, 1:415-416)

example from Irenaeus is given to demonstrate our retrieval cannot be without discernment.

Irenaeus's appeal to the church and tradition concerns more of a succession of truth rather than a perpetuity of persons. According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:23-27 and 15:3-5, tradition is what he has *received*. This transitioning is what we see Jesus doing as he encounters the disciples on the Emmaus road. Likewise, according to Behr,

> The "tradition" appealed to by Irenaeus is not just some customary teaching or practice, but what the apostles "handed down" as the matrix and means for encountering the Christ they proclaimed, a particular approach and practice, pivoted on the Passion of Christ, understood through the Scriptures, and enacted in the Eucharist.[58]

The Rule of Faith as the Guide

The passion stands paramount not simply because it happened but because of the way it happened. Paul states that Christ's death, burial, and resurrection were "according to Scripture" (1 Cor 15:3-4). That later part most concerned Irenaeus. The rule of faith is not a series of doctrines detached from Scripture but "an expression, which can vary depending on the context, of the coherence of Scripture as a mosaic of Christ."[59] The rule of faith is intended to be a starting place for further Christian reflection, not a means to "curtail reason or further thought."[60] Accordingly, Eric Osborn says, "The rule did not limit reason to make room for faith but used faith to make room for reason. Without a credible first principle, reason was lost in an infinite regress."[61]

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[58] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 115.

[59] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 11.

[60] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 11. Further, "It is transparently false to claim that *in all cases* 'external' factors fail to shed light on the meaning of a biblical text." Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 26.

[61] Eric Osborn, "Reason and the Rule of Faith in the Second Century," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honor of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 57.

Irenaeus articulates the rule of faith often in *Against Heresies*.[62] The rule sets Christian reflection on Scripture apart from those who use Scripture for their own ends.[63] In *Against Heresies* 1.8, Irenaeus introduces the notion of "hypothesis." He says that his opponents have based their exegesis on their own hypothesis rather than the rule of faith, or Christ according to Scripture. "Hypothesis" in this sense means an ordering of a drama or epic.[64] Accordingly, Irenaeus says that his opponents distort the picture presented in Scripture, creating another.[65] "They have not accepted the coherence of the Scriptures, as speaking about Christ, but have preferred their own fabrication, created by adapting passages from Scripture to a different hypothesis, attempting to endow it with persuasive plausibility."[66]

The rule of faith implies a Christocentric reading of Scripture and is identified with the gospel. "The Gospel, in other words, is not simply a liberating message independently proclaimed on its own terms, rather the very shape and temp in which it is proclaimed by the apostles whom 'the power of the Gospel' has been given, are drawn from the Scriptures."[67] Irenaeus refers to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the singular, thus referring to the one gospel of which each evangelists write. This decision demonstrates his consistency in seeing Scripture as a symphony or mosaic of Christ.[68] There is one Gospel to which the four Gospel writers reference and bear witness.

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[62] See, e.g., Irenaeus, *AH* 1.10; 2.25-28; 3.1-5; 4.20.1-4; 5.16.3-20.

[63] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.8.1 (*ANF*, 1:326).

[64] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 106.

[65] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.8.1 (*ANF*, 1:326).

[66] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 106.

[67] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 126.

[68] Irenaeus, *AH* 1.8.1 (*ANF*, 1:326)

Conclusion: The Benefits of Reading Irenaeus

The benefits of the textual worldview of Irenaeus are manifold. Behr pinpoints four benefits to reading Irenaeus. First, a casual reading of Irenaeus will convey a mind steeped in Scripture. As such, he views the text as sacred Scripture, that is, the text is revelation, as opposed to the text being a witness to revelation. The text as a witness to revelation is derived from scholarship's determination to reconstruct the historical context behind the text. Instead of viewing the text as a window to another world, the text itself is the world, according to Irenaeus. Speaking of modern trends in hermeneutics, Behr notes,

> The task of exegesis thus becomes to expound the "meaning" of the text, either within its historical context, or as more recent scholarship has argued, within it is canonical or rhetorical context. Irenaeus, however, is not concerned with any of this. Instead as the image of the mosaic already indicates, he sees Scripture as being, as it were, *a compendium or "thesaurus", that is, a "treasury", of images, words, and reports, which give flesh to the Christ proclaimed by the apostles, who in turn reveals the work of God deployed throughout the whole economy described in Scripture.*[69]

The second benefit is that Irenaeus views the text as relevant. "Relevant" in this sense points to Scripture's intention. Scripture does more than inform readers about past events. Instead, through Scripture, the Spirit speaks conforming Christians into the image of Christ. Paul tells the Corinthians that "these things [i.e., the events recorded in the Old Testament] happened to them as an example [τυπικῶς], but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages have come" (1 Cor 10:11).

Third, "Scripture is perfect and perfectly harmonious."[70] The melody of the harmony of Scripture is Christ. "He himself is disseminated throughout Scripture."[71] Christ's "opening the Scriptures" on the Emmaus road grants one the opportunity to stand back from the mosaic that is Scripture to see what—or better, who—it reveals.

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[69] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 128 (emphasis original).

[70] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 129.

[71] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 129.

Finally, the inspiration of Scripture cannot be avoided when considering Irenaeus. The rule of faith means that there is a right way and a wrong way to read Scripture. The right way is according to the way the risen and ascended Christ has taught. Behr asserts,

> Irenaeus' account of how Scripture is to be read assumed that the divinely inspired content of Scripture is not known until the books are opened by the Cross of Christ, and so their "inspiration" cannot be separated from the act of opening, nor for that matter, from the "inspired" reading, and both, together, turn upon the act of opening the Scriptures by the one of whom they speak, or in reverse, the one who speaks in them.[72]

This view of inspiration allows Irenaeus to extend Jesus's comment in John 5:46, "Moses wrote of me," to the rest of the Old Testament.[73]

The textual worldview of Irenaeus stands in contrast to that of many of his contemporaries as well as that of many modern thinkers. Since Scripture is Christocentric, not simply Christotelic, Irenaeus can readily claim the writings of Moses as the writings of Christ.[74] Christ is the subject of Scripture. John Behr notes, "The subject of Scripture, from beginning to end, is Jesus Christ."[75] In the words of Irenaeus,

> The Spirit of God pointed out by the prophets the things to come, forming and adapting us beforehand for the purpose of our being made subject to God, but it was still a future thing that man, through the good pleasure of the Holy Spirit, should see [God], it necessarily behooved those through whose instrumentality future things were announced, to see God . . . not only prophetically announced, but that he should also be seen by all his members who are sanctified and instructed in the things of God, that man might be disciplined beforehand and previously exercised for a reception into that glory which shall afterwards be revealed in those who love God.[76]

The text of Scripture is more than a window to view a story behind the text.

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[72] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 130.

[73] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.2.3 (*ANF*, 1:464).

[74] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.2.3 (*ANF*, 1:464).

[75] Behr, *Irenaeus of Lyons*, 136.

[76] Irenaeus, *AH* 4.20.8 (*ANF*, 1:490).

Scripture is a mosaic that reveals a portrait of a king. The king that Scripture reveals is the eternal Son who was sent to be crucified, risen, and taken up and who is soon coming again.

CHAPTER 5

A DEMONSTRATION OF A RULED READING: MATTHEW 28:18-20 AS A SUMMARY OF THE STORYLINE OF SCRIPTURE

A proper understanding of the rule of faith cannot be reached until what the early church called the "hypothesis of Scripture" is understood. "Hypothesis" refers to Scripture following a general outline, one that is highlighted through the rule of faith. Understanding the idea of an outline or hypothesis for Scripture helps as one tries to determine why the rule is not narrower in focus. Christopher Seitz states,

> The rule does not take the same form when we see it articulated, because it is not a fixed formula and does not point to an incipient creedal declaration or response or externalized or externalizable statement. It is not an effort at a precise statement of the "hypothesis" of Scripture but rather is *based* upon a proper identification and appreciation of this, as over against alternatives.[1]

The rule of faith is articulated clearly near the conclusion to Paul's letter to the Corinthians. Paul reminds them that the gospel he preached to them was Christ—"that Christ died for our sins *in accordance with the Scriptures*, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day *in accordance with the Scriptures*" (1 Cor 15:3-4; emphasis added).[2] These Scriptures, to which Paul refers, are made clear as some of the disciples

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[1] Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 195 (emphasis original).

[2] Note the extent to which Paul understands the gospel. The gospel is more than something that prepares someone for death; the gospel is the entire worldview of the Scriptures.

encounter the resurrected Christ on the Emmaus road. Jesus says to his two disheartened disciples who were questioning all of the events that had recently taken place, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that *everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms* must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44; emphasis added). Then, in a fashion similar to Paul's declaration to the Corinthians, Luke explains that Jesus "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written that the Christ should *suffer and on the third day rise from the dead*" (vv. 45-46; emphasis added).[3] In these two passages, both Luke and Paul emphasize the Old Testament's proclamation of a crucified and risen Christ. The foundation of the Christian proclamation is Jesus according to the Scriptures—that is, Jesus according to the Old Testament.

The rule of faith helps one understand the relationship between Jesus and the Old Testament. When people encounter the New Testament, they encounter a particular set of writings that builds off of the foundation of the worldview set forth in the Old Testament. The New Testament alludes to, or quotes from, the Old Testament extensively. Given the witness of the text, the avoidance of the Old Testament is non-negotiable for Christians. The New Testament, which primarily deals with the incarnate Son of God, suggests that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. The apostolic witness to Jesus is a witness that explains the significant life of Jesus using the same images as the Old Testament. Given this reality, one can suggest that the New Testament demonstrates a unique interpretation of the Old Testament. The unity between both Testaments is the theological reality of Jesus Christ.

In the preface of their work *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson suggest that theology holds the Bible together:

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[3] This summary passage in Luke (i.e., 24:36-49) has launched a multitude of inquiries concerning the Christian use of the Old Testament.

> If contemporary readers do not think the Bible holds together in any theological sense (as the editors and contributors do), every thoughtful reader must acknowledge that the biblical books themselves have been read that way from the time of their early circulation, and that the writers of the NT books saw themselves (not in some Marcionite fashion) as originators who could cheerfully dispense with whatever they wanted from the OT, but as those who stood under the authority of those OT documents even as they promulgated fresh interpretations from those documents.[4]

Beale and Carson have no issue with suggesting that theology guides exegesis. There should be no separation between theology and exegesis. On the contrary, theology is the fruit of proper exegesis. From this theological perspective, I seek to look specifically at Matthew 28:18-20 and suggest that the passage purposefully alludes to the Old Testament and serves as an summary for the storyline of Scripture—a summary that demonstrates the story of what the Father has been doing in the world through the Son by the Holy Spirit. To demonstrate this point, I will first exegete Matthew's Gospel and then move toward a theological interpretation of Matthew 28:18-20 through the lens of the rule of faith and hypothesis of Scripture.[5] Overall, it is my goal here to show how to approach Scripture in a way that blends both Irenaeus's rule of faith and hypothesis of Scripture and the best practices of biblical theology.

Matthew's Use of the Old Testament

Craig Blomberg states, "The Hebrew Scriptures—or Christian Old Testament—permeate Matthew's Gospel. Approximately fifty-five references prove close enough in wording for commentators typically to label them 'quotations,' compared to about sixty-five for the other three canonical Gospels put together."[6] Robert Coleman

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[4] G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds., introduction to *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), vii.

[5] Torrance writes, "Theological statements, that is, reflective statements as to the message and content of the biblical statements, are made, however not just by stringing together biblical citations, but rather by hard exegetical activity in which we interpret biblical statements in the light pf the Truth to which they direct us from all sides." Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*. (London: SCM Press, 1965), 33.

[6] Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in Beale and Carson, *New Testament Use of the Old*, 1.

counts "approximately one hundred Old Testament references in Matthew, most of them from the books of Psalms, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Jeremiah in that order."[7] Coleman emphasizes these three references in particular to point out that Matthew uses references from across the Law, Prophets, and Writings—in other words, the entire Old Testament.[8]

The first book of the New Testament canon is the Gospel of Matthew. From the outset, Matthew invites his readers to experience the Old Testament. The first key word of Matthew is a word reminiscent of the first book of the Old Testament. Matthew records the genealogy (γενέσεως, literally "genesis") of Jesus Christ. Citing the work of W. D. Davies and D. Allison Jr., David L. Turner points out that by the first century, the first book of the Bible was commonly known as Genesis and "that Matthew seems to view Jesus as a new beginning of God's creation." Turner, à la Davis and Allison, translates Matthew 1:1 as "Book of the New Genesis wrought by Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham."[9]

This first reference sets the tone for the entire Gospel. The many references to the Old Testament are likely the reason for its placement first in the order of New Testament books.[10] R. T. France asserts that Matthew is "primarily concerned to show Jesus as the one in whom the hopes of the Old Testament find their fulfillment."[11] While discussing the outline of Matthew, France says, "Matthew demonstrates that the overall

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[7] Robert O. Coleman, "Matthew's Use of the Old Testament," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 5, no. 1 (October 1962): 29.

[8] The Law, the Prophets, and the Writings is the tripartite ordering of the Old Testament (or Tanak).

[9] David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 56. Turner depends on W. D. Davies and D. Allison Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, *Introduction and Commentary on Matthew 1–7*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988).

[10] Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 21. This explanation seems to satisfy those who insist that Matthew was not the first Gospel written as well as those who insist that Matthew was the first Gospel written.

[11] R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 1 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 73.

framework of Jesus' preparation for his ministry corresponds to the pattern laid down in the Old Testament." He goes on to say that each division of Matthew "is heavily weighted down to showing the correspondence of Jesus' preparation to the Old Testament pattern."[12]

By recalling the genealogy of Jesus, Matthew immerses his readers in the narrative of the Old Testament. Certain phrases such as "after the deportation to Babylon" (1:12) either assume his readers' familiarity with the story of the people of God in the Old Testament or require the recipients of Matthew's Gospel to familiarize themselves with the narrative of the Old Testament. Jonathan Pennington observes, "The Gospels are written in the narrative form of most of the Jewish Scriptures, conscious of and clearly mimicking these stories, intertextually and figuratively explaining the events of Jesus' life as the goal and telos of the story of God."[13] Such a view of both the life of Jesus and the history of the people of God in the Old Testament suggest the significance of the life of Jesus as purposefully describing an event that is the culmination of all events. The life of Jesus and the life of the people of God through the ages together serve a purpose greater than the mere recalling of historical events; these highlighted events are particularly chosen to recall the acts of God in history.[14] Matthew is not merely telling his readers a story of the most significant *man* in history; he is showing how this one *man*, in his solitary life, is the summation of *all* of history.[15]

One particular passage of Matthew stands out to suggest that the author's

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[12] France, *Matthew*, 74.

[13] Jonathan T. Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 247.

[14] John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch*, Current Issues in Theology 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 51.

[15] This point is confirmed by the presentation of Christ as both the fulfillment of the history of Israel (i.e., pointing to the past) as well as the eschatological components of the Olivet Discourse and the ever-abiding presence of Christ throughout the ages ("I am with you always, to the end of the age," Matt 28:20). Matthew presents Jesus as the center of history. History prior has been leading to his incarnation, and for all of history moving forward, Christ will be abiding with his disciples.

purpose is more than a biographical sketch of the historical life of Jesus. By the time readers come to Matthew 2:15, the Gospel-writer's intention becomes even more clear as he overlays a reference from Hosea upon the events happening in Jesus's. The unique feature of the Hosea passage is the multiple facets of interpretation that it demands. The statement "Out of Egypt I called my son" is a quotation from Hosea, who uses the events of the exodus to remind his readers of the faithfulness of God. This moment, used by Hosea in reference to the exodus, is laid over the moment Jesus, Mary, and Joseph flee from Bethlehem—and Herod—to Egypt. As Craig Bartholomew observes,

> On the surface it is of course not at all obvious how Hosea 11:1 is fulfilled in Jesus escaping from Egypt. But as one reflects more deeply on Jesus' relationship to Israel one starts to see how profound the sense might be in which Jesus fulfills God's call of his people out of Egypt. *Out of Egypt* is thus useful shorthand for evoking the challenges *and* the richness of biblical theology.[16]

Matthew's use of Hosea shows readers that the Gospel-writer believes the life of Jesus to be fulfilling Scripture. Thus, as Leon Morris asserts, "the outworking of the divine purpose is accomplished in [Christ]."[17] Morris continues to make an important point by citing Carson, who says, "The NT writers insist that the OT can be rightly interpreted only if the entire revelation is kept in perspective as it is historically unfolded. In a kind of Israel-Jesus typology, what could be said of the old Israel could on occasion have its application to Jesus."[18] In other words, the life of Jesus is a recapitulation of Israel.

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[16] Craig Bartholomew, introduction to *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al., Scripture and Hermeneutics 5 (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004), xxiii (emphasis original).

[17] Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 43.

[18] D. A. Carson, "*Matthew*," in vol. 8 of *Matthew, Mark, Luke Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 92-93, quoted in Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 43.

Jesus as the Recapitulation of Israel

The most important life in history is the life of Jesus. Christ is the way, as Paul says, that God has made known the "mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:9-10). In Ephesians, Paul says that Jesus is the key for the proper interpretation of Scripture, and Christ is the proper interpretation of all of history, all of reality. Christ is the subject of Scripture, and as the uniter of all things, he is the sum of all things.

As Matthew states, Christ came in a certain time and according to a certain pattern, a pattern that Matthew discloses in his first chapter as a succession of fourteen generations. Matthew demonstrates that Jesus fits into the third group of fourteen. There is no explanation given by Matthew as to why the number fourteen is important, though readers can determine that fourteen is significant for Matthew. By placing Jesus at the end of the third group of fourteen, Matthew makes a strong case for Jesus as the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament. Blomberg interprets the genealogy of Jesus as "Matthew operating typologically." Further, Blomberg argues that Old Testament events are viewed as "crucial significance in the history of salvation, are seen to display patterns of God's activity, which are being repeated in the events surrounding Jesus birth."[19] I would take Blomberg's assessment further and suggest that demonstrating the significance of Jesus's life in this way sees Jesus as the recapitulation and fulfillment of the Old Testament.

When one reads the phrase "Old Testament," one should think not of something static but of a history of God's revelation, which is summed up in the Son. In his book *The Mediation of Christ*, Thomas F. Torrance suggests that the whole history of Israel (i.e., the entire Old Testament) is there to prepare for the patterns that Christ

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[19] Blomberg, *Matthew*, 57.

fulfills. According to Torrance,

> If the Word of God had become incarnate among us apart from all that [referring to the Old Testament], it could not have been grasped—Jesus himself would have remained a bewildering enigma. It was just because Jesus, born from above as he was, was nevertheless produced through the womb of Israel, mediated to us through the matrix of those conceptual and linguistic patterns, that he could be recognized as Son of God and Savior.[20]

Israel, according to Torrance, should not be understood

> in the mechanical way of a human potter with his impersonal handiwork but in the way in which a father imparts distinctive characteristics to his offspring. This God established a special partnership of covenanted kinship with Israel, so that within the intimate structure of family relations he might increasingly imprint himself upon the generations of Israel in such a way that it could become the instrument of his great purpose of revelation.[21]

Torrance's assessment seems to align with the opening of Hebrews, which says, "Long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son" (Heb 1:1-2).[22] This assessment would also seem to align with the pattern set by Matthew in his Gospel. The apostolic interpretation of the life of Jesus sees significance in Christ as the pattern of the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Jesus as recapitulating Israel is not a new concept in Christian interpretation. Irenaeus took seriously Christ as the only proper way to interpret Scripture. For him, Christ is the subject of Scripture, and every passage should be interpreted through the Son. John Behr, commenting on Irenaeus's hermeneutic says, "The claim that the crucified Christ, the Gospel preached by the apostles, unlocks the treasury of Scripture is simply the reverse side of the fact that the apostolic preaching of the Gospels is, from the

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[20] Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster Press, 1983), 19.

[21] Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 7.

[22] By writing of God's speaking through the prophets, the author of Hebrews may intend for readers to understand this phrase as shorthand for the Old Testament. The tripartite ordering of the Old Testament is the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. The Prophets include the narrative history of Israel.

beginning, 'according to the Scriptures,' exegeting Scripture to interpret Christ."[23] Exegeting Scripture to interpret Christ is exactly the way that Matthew begins his Gospel. Interpreting Jesus is an exercise in exegesis of the Old Testament.

Behr continues, "For Irenaeus, this relationship between Scripture and the Gospels established by the preaching of the Cross is precisely that described by the term 'recapitulation' (ἀνακεφαλαίωσις)."[24] The text and the person of Christ are inseparable—word and Word. Matthew presents Jesus as the recapitulation of the Old Testament. Matthew later shows that Jesus was in the wilderness for forty days just as Moses and Israel were in the wilderness for forty years. Just as God gave Israel the law on a mountain through Moses, so also does God give his people a new law on a mountain from Jesus. Tracing all of the allusions in Matthew is beyond the scope of this present project. I note these examples to show that Matthew purposefully narrated the life of Jesus to remind his readers of Israel.

Providing a taste of Matthew's presentation of Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament, James Hamilton Jr. says, "The gospel according to Matthew presents Jesus as the typological fulfillment of Israel's story."[25] Commenting on the opening of Matthew, Hamilton says, "Matthew's genealogy and narratives of the early life of Jesus establish connections between Jesus and the story of Israel at both prophetic and typological levels."[26] Hamilton then points out that the early narrative of Jesus is a "mini-exodus": "As Israel went through the sea, Jesus passes through the waters of baptism, overcomes temptation in the wilderness ascends the mountain to teach God's word and

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[23] John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, vol. 1 of *The Formation of Christian Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 121.

[24] Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, 123.

[25] James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 363.

[26] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 359-60.

then conquerors the land."

The point: Jesus relives all the Old Testament in summary form. As Irenaeus says,

> For I have shown that the Son of God did not then begin to exist, being with the Father from the beginning; but when He became incarnate, and was made man, He commenced afresh [ἀνακεφαλαίωσις] the long line of human beings, and furnished us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam—namely, to be according to the image and likeness of God—that we might recover in Christ Jesus.[27]

Understanding Christ as the recapitulation of "the long narration of human beings" means that his recapitulation, in brief, is the way in which he redeems. Redemption in this sense is not him taking believers back to Adam but him taking believers beyond Adam, to what God created Adam for, to create a people for himself.

This message of redemption is the message of Matthew. I will now explore Matthew's message, demonstrating that Matthew 28:18-20 is essential to understanding Mathew's Gospel.[28] Beginning with an exegesis of Matthew 28:18-20, I will move on to demonstrate that this passage is a summary and recapitulation of the Old Testament, ultimately suggesting that this passage serves as a summary for the storyline of the Old Testament. The demonstration of Matthew 28:18-20 as a summary for the storyline of Scripture depends upon a ruled reading of Matthew. A ruled reading takes seriously Jesus as the recapitulation of Scripture and interprets Jesus in light of the rule—that is, according to Scripture. In the following section, I will interpret each verse of Matthew 28:18-20 in light of the whole story of Scripture, with Christ at the center of my exegesis. Irenaeus' interactions with Matthew 28:18-20 are not considered. Rather, this section attempts to take the best of the principles advocated for in chapter four of this thesis and

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[27] Irenaeus, *AH* 3.18.1 (*ANF*, 1:446). Irenaeus presents Christ as the recapitulation of the Old Testament in 3.21.10-23.8. See also D. Jeffrey Bingham, *Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel in Adversus Haereses*, Traditio Exegetica Graeca 7 (Leuven, Brussels: Peeters, 1998), 62.

[28] There is disagreement as to whether Matthew 28:18-20 serves as a summary to the Gospel of Matthew. For a counter view, see David C. Sim, "Is Matthew 28:16-20 the Summary of the Gospel?" *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 70, no. 1 (January 2014): 1-7.

puts them into practice.

Exegesis of Matthew 28:18-20

The significance of the last words of Matthew cannot be overstated. S. E. Johnson says, "No part of the Bible, with the possible exception of the letter to the Romans, has done more to give Christians the vision of a world-wide church."[29] The dynamic concluding paragraph of the Gospel recounts the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus to his disciples, where he commissions them as his witnesses and entrusts them with the proclamation of his message (i.e., his life) to the ends of the earth. Every phrase in the Great Commission is important, and through exegesis of it, I will demonstrate that these verses not only summarize Matthew's Gospel but also summarize the entire Old Testament.

Several presuppositions undergird seeing Matthew 28:18-20 as a summary statement of the storyline of the Old Testament. A strong conviction that guides this interpretation is Matthew's idea of fulfillment in his presentation of Jesus. Origen of Alexandria makes a provocative statement: "The Gospel is the first fruits of all the Scriptures."[30] The subject matter of each of the four Gospels is a presentation of Jesus. Origen's comment tries to take seriously each Gospel's presentation of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

There is a heavy emphasis from the earliest of Christian interpretations that the Gospels should—together—be the guide for understanding the canon. Pennington points out that the early church understood the Tetrevangelium (four-fold gospel) as playing a "consciously central role in understanding all the Scriptures."[31] This point does not mean

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[29] S. E. Johnson, *General Articles on the New Testament, the Gospel according to St. Matthew, the Gospel according to St. Mark*, in vol. 7 of *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1951), 620.

[30] Origen of Alexandria, *Commentary on John* 1.4 (*ANF*, 9:299).

[31] Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, 237.

that the New Testament is read back into the Old or that the New Testament authors reinterpret the Old. The New Testament does not create new meanings for old texts; instead, it demonstrates, by fulfillment, what the Old Testament meant long ago. In Matthew, it is common to think of the Sermon on the Mount as contrasting the meaning of the Torah with the words of Jesus. Jesus's saying "You have heard that it was said . . . , but I say to you . . ." (see, e.g., Matt 5:21) is not intended to contrast meanings but to demonstrate the *sensus plenior* of the text in light of the incarnation of the Son.

Pennington points out that the Gospels are central for understanding *all* of Scripture; the Gospels "serve a skeleton-key role in unlocking the whole Bible."[32] The subject of the Gospels is, in narrative form, the life of Jesus. Irenaeus' term to describe this is "recapitulation"—that is retelling, reliving, and summarizing the entire history of the people of God in the person of incarnate Son of God. There is a theology that undergirds the development of the Gospels. As Pennington again asserts, "The Gospels provide the closest thing we have to a comprehensive theology of the Scriptures."[33]

With these thoughts in mind, this section seeks to demonstrate that Matthew 28:18-20 serves not simply as a conclusion to Matthew but as a summary of the Old Testament. Christ's last words to his disciples reveal how he has recapitulated and fulfilled the story of Israel. In order to draw these conclusions, Matthew 28:18-20 will be explored, exegeting each phrase through the lens of recapitulation.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." When God created man and woman in the garden, he did so with a specific mandate. God's vision for humankind reads, "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. And have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and have dominion over every living thing that moves on

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[32] Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, 247.

[33] Pennington, *Reading the Gospels Wisely*, 248.

the earth'" (Gen 1:28). As the story continues, a serpent, a creature that humanity was supposed to dominate, entices the woman, and then both the man and the woman sin, thus forfeiting the dominion that humanity was created to have (Gen 3:1-7). After the man and woman's disobedience, God says that the ground that was intended to be cultivated and subdued will now produce thorns and thistles (vv. 17-18). As the humans are expelled from the garden, they are expelled from the presence of God (vv. 22-24). Sin's consequences come to bloom in the form of strife; brother rises against brother, and eventually nation comes against nation as humanity is separated into two distinct groups: those who call on the name of the Lord and those who do not (Gen 4).[34]

As the narrative of the Old Testament unfolds, it does so from the central poem in Genesis 3:15. In the midst of the fall narrative, God promises that a seed will come from the woman who will crush the head of the serpent, though his own heel will be bruised. First, Abel appears, whose blood is spilt, who is then replaced by Seth, who dies. Then, very early on, Noah (נֹחַ) appears, who, according to the text, will bring relief (יְנַחֲמֵנוּ). As the narrative progresses, readers encounter prominent figures such as Abraham, Moses, David, and the rest of Israel's kings, all of whom fail to reestablish the dominion that Adam lost. Along the way, the text provides reminders of God's intention, set forth in the promise of Genesis 3:15, as well as anticipation of someone who will fulfill the vision God had for humanity, a vision that seems to grow dim as the history of Israel unfolds. As the Old Testament comes to a close, it closes with a gentile king inviting the people of God to come back into the land they lost on account of God's judgment due to their disobedience. The New Testament opens with a presentation of Jesus as the one who accepts that invitation and initiates his dominion over all the earth.

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[34] For an excellent treatment on Adam's "failed task," see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 87.

As Hamilton puts it, Jesus establishes his dominion through judgment.[35]

Matthew introduces Jesus with a term that intentionally takes readers back intentionally to Genesis; Matthew's choice to refer to Jesus by using γενέσεως ("genesis") for "genealogy" is intended to say that this seed of the virgin's womb, who is God incarnate, will be the one to fulfill the hope laid out in Genesis 3:15 and played out through the history of Israel. Matthew introduces Jesus by placing two prominent figures—David and Abraham—at the head of his genealogy. By retracing Israel's history in three sets of fourteen generations, Matthew intends to demonstrate that Jesus is the fulfillment and hope of the history of Israel.

Not only is Jesus the fulfillment; the life of Jesus is also the recapitulation of the story of Israel. This reality is seen most prevalently in Matthew's quotation of Hosea, where Jesus takes the role of Israel in the exodus. The exodus is the archetypal salvation event in the history of Israel. Christ purposefully places himself in the same paradigm of salvation by being baptized on the banks of the Jordan river by a prophet (i.e., John the Baptist; Matt 3:13-17), whom readers learn is the greatest born among women (11:11), who himself fulfills the hope of the Elijah who will come preparing the way for the Messiah (11:14).

The clearest reference for understanding Christ as receiving the dominion and authority that was lost appears in Matthew 4, where Christ is tempted by the same serpent who was in the garden. Though the "tempter" does not take the form of a serpent, nor is the narrative set in a garden, Christ takes on the role of a new Adam, a last Adam who obeys completely God's commandments. Whereas the first Adam failed in a garden paradise, the last Adam has prevailed amid a desolate desert, thus demonstrating that he is the greatest "Adam" of them all.[36]

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[35] Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*, 80.

[36] "Adam" is in quotation marks because some scholars recognize Noah as a type of Adam.

After Christ's triumph through temptation, Matthew presents Jesus as a new Moses who gives a new law on a mountain. Upon the completion of the sermon, Matthew records, "The crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching *as one who had authority*, and not as one of their scribes" (7:28-29; emphasis added). From there, readers see the dominion and authority of the Son being carried out as he calls twelve disciples, heals the sick, casts out demons, and calms the stormy sea of Galilee. John the Baptist questions Jesus, asking what many of Matthew's readers, whose minds are drenched with the many Old Testament allusions, would have asked: "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (11:3). Jesus's response in the next verse is a demonstration of his authority. Jesus says, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (v. 4). These points all demonstrate Jesus's undoing the curse that Adam's sin brought into the world, thus reestablishing for humanity the dominion that they lost.

Though the dead are raised, the question of dying, the capstone of curses brought about through Adam's sin, still remains. If Christ has all authority, then it must include authority over death. Matthew presents Jesus as a sent Son who came, served the destitute, lived a sinless life, was crucified (though the authorities who authorized his crucifixion found nothing in his life that would merit such a penalty), died, was laid in a tomb, and—three days later—was raised from the dead.

From this vantage point, the once-crucified-now-risen Lord declares, "All authority has been given to me." France points out that "has been given" is an "ingressive aorist indicating that the prophecy of the Son of Man in Daniel 7 is fulfilled through

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See, e.g., Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 179-210.

resurrection."[37] An amazing contrast is drawn between the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 and the risen Lord who has authority.[38] The way the Son was given authority is through his overcoming, and undoing of, all sin and the consequences of sin from Adam. The life of Jesus is the way that he overcomes—a life, as the author of Hebrews says, that is indestructible (Heb 7:16).

"Go therefore and make disciples." God's vision for humanity was one of the reproduction of worshipers. Beale says, "Genesis 1:27 provides the means by which the commission and goal of verse 28 was to be accomplished: humanity will fulfill the commission by means of being in God's image."[39] Being in God's image means worshipping and obeying. The reproduction intended for Adam and Eve was one in which they would produce those who would worship and obey God. The New Testament language for someone who worships and obeys is "disciple."

In Matthew, Jesus begins his ministry, after overcoming the wilderness temptation, by preaching a message of repentance (Matt 4:17). After Jesus's call to repentance, the first of the disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—leave their tasks *immediately* and follow Jesus. From that scene, Matthew shifts to present the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus uses a formula to introduce his sayings: "You have heard that it was said . . . , but I say to you . . . " (see, e.g., 5:21). The ministry of Jesus is a ministry that calls people to follow him. Following Jesus means, as he will tell his disciples in Matthew 16:24-28, denying oneself and taking up one's cross.

Through recapitulating the story, Jesus is calling to mind both the garden mandate to fill the earth with those who worship and obey as well as the promise made to Abram ("exalted father"), who became Abraham ("the father of a multitude").

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[37] France, *Matthew*, 419. Most scholars see Dan 7:14 as the only reference of fulfillment in Matt 28:18-20.

[38] Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 745.

[39] Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 81.

Interestingly, the word given to Abraham, whom Hebrews refers to as a sojourner seeking an eternal city (Heb 11:8-10), "go," is also given by the Son of Abraham to his followers as they, too, like Abraham, have their hope fixed on "the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (Heb 11:10). Jesus is the way that both the mandate given to Adam and the promise made to Abraham are fulfilled.[40] Although, this time, reproduction is through being born again.

"Of all nations." Closely connected with the initial call to Abraham is the extent of the authority that Christ intends as the extension of his reign. As Habakkuk says, the knowledge of the glory of Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Hab 2:14).[41] There are also allusions back to the mandate set forth for humanity in the garden as they are told to have dominion over all the earth.

The nations appear early in the biblical narrative. From these nations that scatter and then gather and then are scattered again, Abraham is called. Abraham is the one through whom all the families of the earth are blessed (Gen 12:1-3). The one who is told to go is also the one through whom the nations will benefit most by his going. Abraham goes in obedience and is later promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sands on the shore of the sea (Gen 15:4-6; 22:15-17).

Abraham is the one through whom God will make a people who will bring the salvation of the Lord to the ends of the earth. The people that God is making through Abraham are to serve as a light to the nations.[42] Jesus tells his followers in Matthew 5:13-

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[40] Gregg Allison sees the new covenant church as fulfilling the promise made to Abraham in Gen. 12. Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 91.

[41] Interestingly, John uses the word "glory" (in John 1:14) to refer to what he saw in Jesus. The apostolic proclamation is a proclamation of the person and work of Jesus Christ. In Jesus, both knowledge and glory are combined.

[42] Two prominent passages in Isaiah make this point (Isa 42:6-7; 46:9). Both passages point to the Servant as the light that draws the nations. Jesus, in return, fulfills this prophecy and then declares that his disciples, as his witnesses, are the light of the world.

16 that they are the light of the world, a city on a hill who are intended to let their good works shine to the glory of the Father. As Jesus says, the light that shines is a light for the whole world.

The nations are introduced early in Matthew. As one investigates the genealogy of Jesus, one sees representatives of the nations. Two unlikely women make the list: Rahab and Ruth (1:5). Both women are gentiles; they are not from the bloodline of Abraham, but they are considered for their faith. One also sees the nations in one of the more famous scenes of Matthew as wise men from the east come seeking "he who has been born king of the Jews" (2:2).

"Baptizing them." Paul links baptism with the exodus as he uses this phrase in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2. While warning the Corinthians about the dangers of idolatry, Paul says, "For I do not want you to be unaware brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were *baptized* into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (emphasis added). There are obvious differences between the baptism that Jesus references and the point Paul makes from the exodus. For example, the "baptism" that Paul refers in the exodus was not a covering with water but a passing through water miraculously on dry ground. Commenting on this passage, David E. Garland points out, "The exodus was understood as an act of redemption, so it was no stretch for him [Paul] to associate it with the events and symbols of Christian redemption."[43] Paul links Christian baptism with the exodus. Christ as the recapitulation of Israel invites us to share in the salvation that he has been working since the beginning.

Paul is not the only apostle to take the foundational Christian symbol of baptism and ground it in the historical narrative of the Old Testament. Peter, referring to Noah and the ark, says, "Baptism which corresponds to this, now saves you" (1 Pet 3:21).

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[43] David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 450.

Thomas Schreiner sees a typological thrust to this text: "The water that deluged the world in Noah's day and through which Noah was saved functions as a model or pattern for Christian believers."[44]

Baptism can be viewed as believers in the Son partaking in God's story of redemption through the ages. Just as the exodus and the Noah's ark were both acts of salvation, and both acts involved water, so also is baptism the time during which we relive, or recapitulate, the story of Israel through our experience, an experience that Christ has relived at his own baptism. Here, as this phrase continues from baptism to the Trinity, Matthew suggests that the story of Scripture is the story of what the Father has been doing in the world through Son by the Holy Spirit.

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This summary statement is perhaps the most significant portion of Matthew's Great Commission. This statement is not Matthew's first reference to the Trinity, but it is surely his most explicit. Morris points out that "name" is singular, denoting the oneness of the Triune God.[45] For a Christian interpretation of the Old Testament, there can be no greater contemplation than the Trinity. The reason, as Kevin Vanhoozer points out, is that "God is first and foremost a communicative agent, one who relates to humankind through words and the Word. Indeed, God's very being is a self-communicative act that both constitutes and enacts the covenant of discourse: speaker (Father), Word (Son), and reception (Spirit) are all interrelated."[46]

The aim of Vanhoozer's *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* is to develop a Trinitarian hermeneutic. Matthew's use of the singular "name" and his Trinitarian

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[44] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary, vol. 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 193.

[45] Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 748.

[46] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge*, Landmarks in Christian Scholarship, 10th anniversary ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 456.

formula at the end of his Gospel are unique and explicit. Matthew 28:19 is the only place in Scripture that has the phrase "of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." If Matthew's point is to present Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament, what are interpreters to make of the Trinitarian formula, and how does this relate to the explicit monotheism of the Old Testament? As one encounters the Old Testament, there are two key places where God manifest his glory. Both places of manifestation concern the "name" of God. First, as Jacob wrestles with "a man," the man changes Jacob's name to Israel. Jacob asks the man for his name, to which the man replies, "Why is it that you ask my name?" (Gen 32:24-29). Jacob never finds out this "man's" name. Second, as Moses is desiring to see the glory of God, God says, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and proclaim before you my *name* 'The Lord'" (Exod 33:19; emphasis added). There is a mystery in the text concerning the name of God. Agur, son of Jakeh, picks up on this mystery when he asks, "Who has ascended and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? *What is his name, and what is his son's name?* Surely you know!" (Prov 30:4; emphasis added). Readers of Proverbs find the answer to the riddle as they encounter Jesus, who reveals the "name" of God.[47] This name is revealed after Christ's passion, after his resurrection, and prior to his ascension into heaven once "all authority has been given" to him, thus linking the confession of the church with the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

John Chrysostom understood the Trinitarian formula of Matthew 28:18-20 as a summary of Christian teaching.[48] Further, Athanasius of Alexandria used this passage

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[47] This point could be stretched further into the New Testament by pointing to Phil 2 and a reference to Isa 45. There is no direct Old Testament quotation in Philippians; however, a strong case can be made that Phil 2:10-11 alludes to Isa 45:23. By pointing back to this section of Isaiah and ascribing to Jesus "the name that is above every name" (Phil 2:9), Paul makes a strong case for the deity of Christ.

[48] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel according to Matthew* 90.2 (*NPNF*[1], 10:530-32).

often in his refutation of heresy, suggesting that the Trinitarian formula represented in Matthew was the "character of Christianity" or "the scope of Scriptures."[49] The significance of the Trinitarian formula for interpretation cannot be overstated, especially as it relates to a Christian interpretation of the Old Testament. Within a Trinitarian framework, the glory of the Old Testament is fully revealed.[50]

The Trinitarian formula is given at baptism. Baptism is linked with making disciples. Making disciples cannot be accomplished apart from knowing God. Torrance, linking the mission of the church and Trinitarian articulation, says, "The Church may be described as the space in space and time where knowledge of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit becomes grounded in humanity, and union and communion with the Holy Trinity becomes embodied with the human race." He further says, "Through baptism the Church does not exist in its own name but in the supreme name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by which it has been sealed, and thus precisely as the Church looks beyond itself to its transcendent Source and Ground in the Holy Trinity."[51]

"Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." From the beginning, God has been forming a people through obedience. From the command to abstain from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, to the giving of the law at Sinai, God's commands have always been intended to form a people after God's holiness. Obedience is not static but responsive and guided through faith. God's commandment to Adam and Eve in Eden was intended to forge a relationship, a relationship between Creator and creature based upon the creature's faith-filled worshipful obedience. God's

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[49] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Discourses against the Arians* 1.8 (*NPNF*^{2}, 4:321). "Scope" in this sense is another way of saying "outline."

[50] Another connection could be read in the canonical context of John 1:14. John makes a specific reference to beholding the glory of God in the incarnate Son. Moses's desire to see the glory of God is fulfilled in the Son, which may be a reason he appears, along with Elijah, at the Mount of Transfiguration.

[51] Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 256.

prohibition to Adam and Eve was his way of teaching them to live by faith and not by sight. The tree, which was desirable when seen, had been deemed by God as forbidden. Adam and Eve's response proved that they did not have faith in God's Word.

The pattern of disobedience is repeated throughout the pages of Scripture, and the root of disobedience is always the same—unbelief. The prophets long for a day when sinning will cease, a day that will only come through renewal and rebirth—a new heart causing the obedience of the people of God that comes through redemption. Jeremiah prophesies of a day when God says, "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God and they shall by my people" (Jer 31:33).

Jesus's call to his disciples to obey his commands means that the longed-for day when God will cause obedience is coming. The way that it has come is through the redemption of the Son. As Brian Vickers points out, "The giving of the law itself is an example of the space between God and the people because although they do have God's righteous law revealed to them, they receive it only through Moses' mediation."[52] Through the fulfillment—not the abolition—of the law, Christ as the mediator means that he is the provision of our obedience.

Though one could point to all that Jesus teaches specifically through the Gospel of Matthew, all of his commands are summarized in Matthew 22:37-40: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first commandment and the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend the Law and the Prophets." Vickers provides further insight, saying, "The call to love God with your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself is rooted in ancient intentions and actions. In turn, the great commandment becomes the focal point of obedience in the

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[52] Brian Vickers, *Justification by Grace through Faith: Finding Freedom from Legalism, Lawlessness, Pride, and Despair*, Explorations in Biblical Theology (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2013), 114.

new covenant."[53]

"And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age." This last phrase of Matthew sets the hope and focus of all of humanity for all time in the Great I Am.[54] To learn the importance of this verse, one must recall again the garden of Eden, where humanity had access to the presence of God. That presence was interrupted by Adam and Eve's willful choice to go their own way. As a result, God drove them out of the garden, thus expelling them from his presence (Gen 3:24). The experience of every human after expulsion from the garden is fear when confronted with the presence of God.

The longing, as many songs of Advent remind us, is for Immanuel to come, for one who will be God with us. Matthew emphatically says that Jesus is the fulfillment of what Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 7:14. Commenting on this passage, Hamilton says, "Matthew saw a particular pattern of events in Isaiah 7-8, and he claimed that this pattern of events was *fulfilled* in the corresponding, intensified pattern of events surrounding the birth of Jesus at the dawn of the new age. In the life of Jesus the pattern came to its fullest expression."[55]

Matthew's opening genealogy makes a declarative statement that with the birth of Jesus, the long-expected messianic age had dawned—the messianic age where the curse is undone and God has made his permanent dwelling with humankind. Morris points out that "Jesus says, not, I will be with you, but I am with you."[56] He goes on to say that the Gospel ends the same way that it began—with the assurance of God's

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[53] Vickers, *Justification by Grace through Faith*, 105. Vickers overviews the law, linking faith and obedience with the importance of having the ability to obey, an ability that comes through redemption, 99-103.

[54] The Greek construction of this verse reads, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσαςτὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος. The text literally reads, "And behold, I always with you am . . . ." The ἐγὼ εἰμι segment is "interrupted" by μεθ' ὑμῶν.

[55] James M. Hamilton Jr., "'The Virgin Will Conceive': Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18-23," in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 242 (emphasis original).

[56] Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 749.

presence. Jesus is the glorious reversal of what was lost in the garden. In this one phrase, one finds a distillation of the gospel. God came looking for humanity after they sinned, knowing that they had sinned, all to seek and save (Gen 3:8). People have speculated what it must have been like to walk with God in the garden. Through Jesus, Immanuel, the kingdom has come upon us (Matt 12:28); therefore, Christ commands us experience what it is like to walk with God in the Spirit.

People may wonder what it must have been like to walk with God in the garden. Here, now, that the kingdom has come (Matt 12:28), and people are commanded to experience what it is like to walk with God in the Spirit.

Conclusion

Matthew ends his gospel in dramatic fashion. There is great anticipation as one turns the final page of Matthew, an anticipation to see a people following Jesus's command to make disciples. Jesus arms his followers not only with the assurance of his solitary life but with the assurance that all of history, since the beginning, had been headed toward his very life. By using these theologically loaded phrases, Matthew assures his readers that the history of the world is the story of what the Father has been doing through the Son by the Holy Spirit. The Father has sent the Son to relive the story of Israel in the power of the Spirit, assuming what needed to be healed and healing our brokenness through his indestructible life.

If one is to understand Matthew, or the apostolic presentation of Jesus, the Old Testament types, patterns, and narratives are indispensable. Now that Christ has come, lived a perfect life, died a substitutionary death, and been raised to offer life to all who trust in him, we are able to say with the apostle Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). We would not know that he had lived our story unless he followed the established the pattern

of the Old Testament. This demonstration of the implications of Irenaeus' textual worldview shows how exegesis can be theologically Christocentric.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: A PATHWAY TOWARD RETRIEVAL

The modern age is far removed from the cultures of the apostles and those first to interact and spread the apostolic message. The distance of time and the distinctions of culture should not hinder learning from the past. The earliest Christian interpreters of Scripture faced a society that was dominated by a Greco-Roman culture and mostly pagan. The values and morality that Scripture gave to the society in which the early Christians found themselves was not an altogether different reception from our own. Culture, by and large, though affected often in ways unbeknownst to many by Christian confession (especially in the West), is secular, and in the climate of our times increasingly so. The tides of secularism are battering the ramparts of a culture mostly unaware of their own foundation and especially unaware of the transcendent truths that keep them in common. Such a condition means moderns have more in common with the early church than they may realize. Should modern evangelicals have the church fathers as their conversation partners? Is there a case for theological retrieval among evangelicals?[1] More specifically, how does the early church relate to the hermeneutical discipline called biblical theology?

The hope of this project is to open the eyes of those who are hesitant when

[1] Gavin Ortlund, *Theological Retrieval for Evangelicals: Why We Need Our Past to Have a Future* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019).

considering pre-critical exegesis, especially that of Irenaeus in particular. Irenaeus has been emphasized due to the place where he stands. Irenaeus stands in-between the apostles and the apologists as the first major post-apostolic theologian of the church.[2] Additionally, Irenaeus' notion of the rule of faith and his defense against his opponents, wherein he suggests that they misinterpret Scripture makes him worth consideration. The proper interpretation is according to the rule of faith, or Christ according to Scripture. Further, Irenaeus has been placed in conversation with modern hermeneutics, with an eye toward biblical theology. Of all the different disciplines, biblical theology was chosen due to its insistence on the unity of Scripture. As stated by Gerald Bray, "If we believe that 'biblical theology' is the attempt to grasp Scripture in its totality, according to its own categories and inner dynamic," then we can allow that the fathers were "biblical theologians."[3] Suggesting that the fathers were biblical theologians is a far cry from suggesting that they were doing biblical theology. In this chapter, brief reasons that biblical theology should appreciate the earliest post-apostolic Christian interpretations of Scripture are considered.

Scripture as Authoritative

The fathers had a high view of Scripture.[4] This high view means that Scripture set their theological agenda. Usually Paul's discourse on Mars Hill (Acts 17) is a case study that best illustrates how the early church thought of the pagan philosophers around them. Paul's engagement with the philosophies of his day were at points where they

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[2] Karlfried Froehlich, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church*, Sources of Early Christian Thought (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 13.

[3] Gerald Bray, "The Church Fathers and Biblical Theology," in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig Bartholomew et al., Scripture and Hermeneutics 5 (Bletchley, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004), 23.

[4] Christopher Hall makes this point time and time again throughout his work. See Christopher Hall, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

helped him make his case biblically. The true locus of authority for Paul was Scripture. A light reading of the earliest post-apostolic Christian discourse will find many of them with minds immersed in Scripture. Bray suggests, "As far as the influence of Hellenistic was concerned, the notion that a coherent, Christian philosophical system could be built up using only the evidence of nature and reason was anathema to the Fathers."[5] Specifically, the father under investigation in this thesis has been one who proves this point. Irenaeus attacked his opponents due to their misappropriation of Scripture, a misappropriation that existed because they deviated from the internal witness or unity of the text itself according to a "rule of faith" that outlined Scripture's fundamental teachings.[6]

Scripture as a Unified Whole

While the fathers saw the Scripture as a unified whole, they believed the New Testament gave a deeper meaning to the Old, a deeper sense not available until the historical event of Christ's passion. The Messiah, for whom the Old Testament longed and hoped, has come. Now, interpreters must approach to the text as a unified whole that has reached a climax in the coming Christ, for in this climax, the center is found. Both the climax and the center of Scripture is Jesus Christ. Robert Wilken, speaking of the rule of faith and the rest of the Bible, says,

> The rule of faith had a trinitarian structure whose narrative identified God by the things recorded in the Scriptures, the creation of the world, the inspiration of the prophets, the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

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[5] Gerald Bray, "The Church Fathers and Biblical Theology," 25.

[6] As Robert Wilken writes,
Without a grasp of the plot that holds everything together, the Bible is as vacuous as a mosaic in which the tiles have been arbitrarily rearranged without reference to the original design or as a poem constructed by stringing together random verses from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and imagining it was Homer. . . . So successful was Irenaeus' approach to the interpretation of the Bible that is informed all later interpretation. Whether one reads Athanasius against Arius, Augustine Against Pelagius, or Cyril of Alexandria against Nestorius, all assume that individual passages are to be read in light of the story that gives meaning to the whole. (Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought Seeking the Face of God* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003], 68)

> The rule of faith, which, of course, was drawn from the Bible, reverberated back on the Bible as a key to its interpretation.[7]

For example, when Paul uses Numbers 20 in 1 Corinthians 10, he does so without changing the meaning of Numbers 20. Paul's announcement that Christ was the rock from which they drank is a move that can only be a done theologically and in view of the whole, regardless of what hermeneutical label one attaches to it. Kevin Vanhoozer, commenting on this passage, states, "[Paul] is not changing *what* the human author of Numbers says but rather specifying what the author was (unknowingly) taking *about*. This explains 'how a text can "deepen" in meaning *without departing from its inherent* [i.e., literal] *sense*.'"[9]

Exegetes will need to answer the question of Scripture's intention. This shift of consideration is an ontological shift. As Vanhoozer notes, "It is not that new meaning has been added, but rather that the original meaning has finally reached its Christological *telos*. . . . It is therefore misleading to reduce God's authorial discourse to that of the original human author's."[10] This line of reasoning seems to be in line with Peter's address in 2 Peter 3:19, when he says, "We have the prophetic message more sure." In other words, "We now know what the Old Testament prophets were talking *about*."[11] Now we can be sure of their intent. Our assurance comes theologically by looking at the whole story of redemption with the proper understanding of Scripture's intention and the *one* who guided its intention, the *one* who superintended its inspiration.

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[7] Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, 66.

[9] Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Ascending the Mountain, Singing the Rock: Biblical Interpretation Earthed, Typed, and Transfigured," *Modern Theology* 28, no. 4 (2012): 787 (emphasis added). Vanhoozer also says, "I am not inclined myself to say meaning changes" (792).

[10] Vanhoozer, "Ascending the Mountain, Singing the Rock," 792.

[11] Vanhoozer, "Ascending the Mountain, Singing the Rock," 795.

Scripture as Revelation

Bray writes,

> The main difference between ancient and modern approaches to "biblical theology" is that the ancients thought that the Bible was an objective *revelation* from (and of) the eternal, unchanging God. Most modern commentators, on the other hand, thing more in terms of essentially subjective spiritual *insight* or *inspiration* occurring to the authors of the Script and so deriving authority from their experience, not from the God of whom they speak.[12]

In other words, it is a difficult task to accuse the fathers of not treating Scripture as revelation. Scripture is revelation, not a way to revelation. In this sense, the revelatory power of Scripture is not static but living. Vanhoozer points out,

> We too "figure" into the story. The figures that characterized Israel now define the church and her mission: we are a "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9) in our time and place as Israel was in hers. . . . We too, the divine addresses of Scripture, are being transfigured, transcending history not in the sense of leaving it behind but of participating in the mystery—the glorious theodrama—in its midst.[13]

He continues, "Exegesis is not an operation we perform on dead texts."[14]

The consideration of Scripture is an ontological consideration. Here, much can be learned from the fathers. Beginning with ontology will mean we address questions such as "Who and what is God?" "What is God's relationship with creation?" What is wrong with creation?" "Does God have a plan for creation?" Furthermore, and most specific to the task at hand, "What is Scripture?" Scripture addresses all of these questions. Bray asks, "Can the Fathers be accused of having distorted Scripture's principle intention(s) making it supply answers to questions raised within a hermeneutical grid alien to the text itself?"[15] The answer to the question comes from a view of Scripture. If Scripture addresses ontological issues, "then the Fathers of the church can be

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[12] Bray, "The Church Fathers and Biblical Theology," 27 (emphasis added).

[13] Vanhoozer, "Ascending the Mountain, Singing the Rock, 797.

[14] Vanhoozer, "Ascending the Mountain, Singing the Rock," 799.

[15] Bray, "The Church Fathers and Biblical Theology," 33.

integrated into the tradition of biblical interpretation."[16]

Addressing ontological issues over functional issues will mean, for example, that our focus will be not on the specific attributes of God that have long gotten much attention but upon the essential nature of who God is. Christian confession proclaims God as Trinity. God is essentially a Trinity. This fact separates Christianity from all other forms of religion, including Judaism, with whom Christians share a significant portion of sacred text. God as Trinity means that God acted in creation just as he did in redemption—personally. Or, in a more technical sense, creation and redemption were acts internal to the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity, not external to them.[17]

This understanding profoundly effects our view as interpreters of Scripture. As Bray writes, "To study the Bible, therefore, is not to read the opinions of past sages and prophets, but to discover objective truth."[18] Bray then encourages a reading of the fathers:

> Modern theology, and not least modern biblical theology, has done its best to escape from the ontological, and even to deny that it is present at all in the Scriptures. But the Fathers of the church, whatever their other limitations may have been, saw more clearly than moderns on this point. At a time when the ancient foundations of our culture are being increasingly questioned, and issues involving ultimate reality are being increasingly questioned, and issues involving ultimate realty are increasingly evaded, Christian interpreters of the Bible need to hear the Father's voice more than ever before. It is a voice which will point them toward ontology, the end of which is the supreme Being of God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[19]

It is to this end that this thesis has labored.

A Final Word

I have not advocated for an uncritical reading of Irenaeus or any of his contemporaries. I am not suggesting that we accept the methods of the early church

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[16] Bray, "The Church Fathers and Biblical Theology," 29.

[17] Thomas F. Torrance states, "God is always Father not always creator." Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 207.

[18] Bray, "The Church Fathers and Biblical Theology," 37.

[19] Bray, "The Church Fathers and Biblical Theology," 38.

uncritically or without seeking refinement in our retrieval. The strength of this thesis is to suggest engaging with the fathers fairly by giving *them* a hearing, as opposed to reading someone who has read them. There is no engagement with them apart from that with which they engaged—Scripture. Further, there is no true engagement with them apart from seeking that which they sought—the face of God. For them, Scripture was the way to seek God's face.[20]

[20] Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought*, 50-79.

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ABSTRACT

THE RULE OF FAITH AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Timothy Andrew Brown, DMin.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. James M Hamilton Jr.

The influence of the historical-critical method lingers as interpreters ponder the proper interpretation of the Bible as Christian Scripture. This influence is most readily seen by the underlying suggestion of "two meanings" for Scripture. In order to recover the center of biblical interpretation, one must reclaim the apostolic hermeneutic as demonstrated in passages such as 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 and Luke 24:27. Irenaeus is the first major post-apostolic interpreter who articulates this hermeneutic through his notion of the *rule of faith,* which suggests a Christo-centric reading of Scripture. In order to demonstrate this claim, this thesis, traces the resurgence of a Christ-centered hermeneutic and suggests that what lingers from the historical-critical method has left a gap in truly seeing Christ as the center of Scripture. Instead of seeing the Bible as a witness to revelation, this thesis suggests that the Bible is revelation. This means that the Bible progressively unfolds its one message with commentary of that one message at different points in history. The greatest historical event that provides the definitive commentary for interpretation is the passion of the Christ.

VITA

Timothy Andrew Brown

EDUCATION

AA, Truett-McConnell University, 2006
BS, Kennesaw State University, 2008
MDiv, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012
ThM, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016

ORGANIZATIONS

The Evangelical Theological Society
Evangelical Homiletical Society
National Patristic Society

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Teacher's Assistant, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina, 2016

MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Minister of Youth, Corinth Baptist Church, Hogansville, Georgia, 2001-2002
Minister of Youth, Friendship Baptist Church, Cleveland, Georgia, 2004-2005
Pastoral Intern, First Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, 2006-2008
Senior Pastor, Sorrell's Grove Baptist Church, Morrisville, North Carolina, 2009-2013
Senior Pastor, Oxford Baptist Church, Oxford, Georgia, 2013-2018
Executive Pastor, First Baptist Church, Newnan, Georgia, 2018-